

Brooklyn Heights Synagogue (BHS) Homeless Shelter
131 Remsen Street (Lower Level), Brooklyn, NY 11201

OVERNIGHT VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES 2017-18

On behalf of the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue and our guests, **thank you** for staying overnight at the Shelter. Your commitment allows us to provide our guests with a safe and warm place to sleep.

If you are unable to fulfill your commitment to spend the night: Please contact a Coordinator **immediately** and make every effort to find a replacement. The shelter is entirely volunteer-run. Last-minute cancellations might prevent us from opening that night.

CONTACTS

CAMBA – The social service agency provides services to the homeless, sends us up to 10 guests, and provides 24/7 on-call support to BHS shelter volunteers

Yehudit Moch: 347-728-8247

Joshua Foss: 347-992-9757

BHS Shelter Coordinators

Anne Landman: 917-514-2696; landman798@gmail.com

Sasha Burgansky: 646-242-3334; sburgansky@gmail.com

[Addendum to the Overnight Volunteer Guidelines for December 2017 and January 2018](#)

Until the linen shortage is resolved by CAMBA, the guys will label their beds with their names written on masking tape. In the morning, they will fold up their beds with their sheets still on them. Their blankets and pillows will go on top of the folded bed frames. If new guys arrive the next night, they will take an unclaimed bed, put the used sheets in the laundry bags (which have to be set up in the evening) and get themselves new sheets.

When volunteers arrive in the evening, they should put the beds around the room next to the chairs, but beds should NOT be unfolded, thus keeping the names easily visible. The guys will unfold them. The volunteers do not have to do anything else except be available for questions. If the guys mess up the folded linens in the closet, please ask them to return the linen shelves to the neat way they were.

SPENDING A NIGHT AT THE SHELTER

*2 adult volunteers stay over each night.

*Arrive in the lower level kitchen by 7:00 p.m. and leave by 6:00 a.m.

*The Evening Coordinator will show you where everything is, and stay until you are comfortable

*Shelter guests sleep behind a closed door in a large open room with two bathrooms

*Volunteers sleep in the hallway near the office, with two nearby bathrooms designated for volunteer use only. One volunteer can sleep in the dining room nearby if he/she wants.

*A volunteer-use only bed, 1 pillow, 2 sheets and blankets are provided for each volunteer.

*Wifi is available. Called BHS guest; password 7185222070

7 p.m. (6:30pm on Sundays) Evening Coordinator and Overnight Volunteers Arrive

- Put your belongings in the copy room outside the office.
- Sign your name in the logbook (a black 3 ring notebook in the kitchen).

Set up the Multi-Purpose Room and Volunteer Beds:

- Take beds out of the large closet, and set up dormitory style, with heads against the walls.
- Distribute onto each bed, 1 pillow, 1 blanket, 2 sheets, and a towel
- Place a chair beside each bed

- Set up the volunteer beds in front of the copy room. They are stored just outside the kitchen.

Set up Laundry for the Morning

Place 2 clear bags on the back of 2 chairs with towel and sheets signs on the seats. The evening coordinator will tell you if you need to put out a bag for the cotton blankets.

Prepare for Dinner:

- Set table, including places for yourselves. Dishes and food supplies are in the locked Shelter Pantry. Combination is 127.
- A prepared meal should be on the counter or in the refrigerator. If the meal seems to lack any element, look in the refrigerator and freezer or in the Shelter Pantry for items to help you augment the meal.
- Follow instructions on the oven, including turning on vents when cooking.
- Put out fresh fruits.
- Put juices, milk, water, butter, salt/pepper & condiments on the table.
- Plug in the hot water urn. You can make brewed coffee, if you wish.

8 p.m. (-ish) Guests Arrive

When the guests arrive, doorbell at the lower level door will sound like a telephone call. If the phone screen says "Lower Level Door," answer the phone, enter the code (16), **press the orange RLS button on the phone**, then go to the lower level door to let the guests in.

NOTE: *The lower level door is the only door you will use to enter or exit the building. One volunteer must remain inside the building at all times. **Be aware that both the inner and outer doors will close and lock automatically unless you make sure to hold them open.***

- An escort from CAMBA will give you 2 copies of the manifest with the names of all the evening's guests. Note on the manifest and in the logbook the time the bus arrived. One copy will go back to CAMBA in the morning with the guests; one stays in our logbook.
- **Only the guests brought to the shelter from the drop-in center may spend the night; no one may stay at the shelter unless they have arrived with this group.** Verify that all guests are on the manifest, and that all those listed have arrived. If a guest name appears on the manifest but the guest is not present, make a note on both copies and call CAMBA. If a guest arrives whose name does not appear on the list, call CAMBA.
- Show guests to the Multi-Purpose Room and the adjacent guest bathrooms

8:15-8:30 Serve Dinner

- Once the guests have settled in, invite them to the table for dinner. Have them sign into our logbook. Those who don't eat still have to sign the logbook.
- Do not allow guests to help themselves in the kitchen. (Against Department of Health rules)
- The volunteers' role is to be as hospitable as possible. Joining the guests at the table is one of the nicest gestures you can make, and will make your experience more rewarding.
- If a guest asks you to pack up leftovers for their lunch the next day, plastic containers and Ziploc bags are available in the Shelter Pantry. The bus driver can no longer take leftovers.
- Clean up the dining area and kitchen. Unplug the hot water urn. Run the dishwasher.
- All leftovers **should be labeled with the date**. Markers and tape are in the Shelter pantry or on the Shelter refrigerator door.

NOTE: *Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the building. Guests can smoke outside prior to 9:30pm, but must close the lower level door and ring to be re-admitted. **The outside door cannot be propped open!** Our office staff has requested that guests smoke up on the sidewalk; smoking just outside the door causes smoke to accumulate and linger in the office. Guests should notify you when they step outside for a cigarette. **Occasionally there is a problem with the doorbell, so it's very important to be aware when anyone steps outside, to insure that no one is locked out.***

9:30pm

- Lights out, door closed no later than 9:30pm. Count the guests.
- **Empty the dishwasher before you go to sleep please, or in the morning -important!**

NOTE: *For everyone's safety, guests who leave the building for any reason other than briefly to smoke may not re-enter the building. Call CAMBA to report such an incident.*

Morning Routine

5:00 a.m. Volunteers wake

- Fill and plug in hot water urn for coffee and tea and oatmeal. Make brewed coffee if you like. We have paper hot cups and lids so they can take coffee/tea with them
- We do not serve breakfast.
- Put out fruit, muffins, cereal bars, oatmeal and any leftovers guests requested/labeled for themselves. You can give them food from the shelter refrigerator/pantry if they ask.

5:15 a.m. Wake up guests

Remind the guests that before they leave, they should:

- Strip beds and place linens in the appropriate, labeled clear laundry bag. Wool blankets will be washed when necessary.
- Fold beds; return beds, with pillows and blankets on top of frames, to storage closet
- Check both bathrooms so no towels or other items are left behind.
- Ask the guys to tie up the clear laundry bags and put them in the laundry cart
- Fold Volunteer beds, putting blankets and pillows on top of folded beds, and put in the kitchen vestibule where you found them. Put your used linens in the laundry.

5:15-6:00 a.m.

- **The guests are generally eager to leave in the morning but should be reminded that they are not to be in and about outside the multi-purpose room earlier than 5:15 am.**
- They should not be in the kitchen without a volunteer present.
- If there is a bus driver, then one copy of the manifest should be given to the bus driver in the morning.
- If there are metro cards, then each person has to sign for receipt of his metro card and the manifest should be given to one of the last two people who will be returning to CAMBA.
- Guests can leave when they sign the manifest for receipt of their metro card, BUT THE LAST 2 MEN MUST LEAVE TOGETHER (CAMBA rule). So, the second to last guest cannot get his metro card until the last guest is ready to leave.
- **If there are no metro cards, guests must wait for the bus INSIDE THE BUILDING, so as not to disturb our neighbors.** This is extremely important. We have had complaints and we don't want to have to close the shelter for this reason.
- Count the guests as they leave; all guests must leave the building.

Before You Leave (fill out the checklist):

Laundry

- Make sure dirty linens are bagged, tied and placed in the laundry cart
- Make sure bags are not over-stuffed (1/2 - 2/3 full at most—the laundry service will not accept bags that are full).
- There should be no loose linen in the laundry bin.

Kitchen

- Unplug hot water urn, make sure dishwasher is empty, dishes are put away in the Shelter Pantry and lock the shelter pantry.
- PLEASE LEAVE THE KITCHEN CLEAN AND NEAT.

Notes

- Please note in our logbook any information or observations that might be helpful to the coordinators or other volunteers.

Situations – Both Emergency and Non-Emergency

At no time will you be expected to give anyone access to the building without explicit instructions from the shelter coordinators. If the doorbell rings and all the evening's guests are inside the building, **DO NOT GO TO THE DOOR. IGNORE THE RINGING BELL.**

If any situation or issue arises (anything that causes you even the slightest concern), call our liaison at CAMBA, **even if it is the middle of the night.**

Medical or Other Emergencies

- Call 911 first and then CAMBA.
- Note incident in the shelter logbook and complete an incident report (in logbook)
- If emergency personnel take a guest to the hospital, he will not return to the shelter that evening. His belongings should go with him to the hospital

Please call CAMBA if:

- The bus does not arrive in the evening by 8:30 p.m.
- The bus does not arrive in the morning by 6:00 a.m.
- There is any problem (no matter how minor) with a guest's behavior. Also call one of the shelter coordinators for support. Note the incident in the shelter logbook.