



# CONNECTIONS FOR HEROES

## Volunteer Handbook

*Serving Those Who Serve*

Veterans • First Responders • Families

Connections for Heroes, Inc. | West Chester, PA  
[www.connectionsforheroes.org](http://www.connectionsforheroes.org)

## 1.0 About Connections for Heroes

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Connections for Heroes is a nonprofit organization dedicated to renovating and building homes for veterans, first responders, and their families. We repair and rebuild homes that have fallen into disrepair, make critical accessibility modifications for those living with service-related injuries, and construct new homes for heroes and their families in need. Our services are offered to qualifying homeowners at no cost, and volunteers carry out some of the work.

Our vision is a nation in which no veteran or first responder lives in an unsafe or unsuitable home because of the sacrifices they made in service to others. For more on our Mission, Vision, and Core Values, see the Connections for Heroes website at [www.connectionsforheroes.org](http://www.connectionsforheroes.org)

### 1.1 Our Volunteers

Our volunteers serve as carpenters, electricians, plumbers, roofers, general contractors, project leads, mentors, and most importantly friends to the veterans, first responders, and families we serve. Many volunteers come with trade skills and construction experience; many others simply come with willing hands and hearts. Volunteers complete most of the work during scheduled build and renovation days, while Connections for Heroes staff and volunteer leaders plan, organize, and oversee every project.

We believe every volunteer regardless of background, trade experience, or military connection has something valuable to contribute. Veterans and non-veterans, first responders and civilians, tradespeople and first-time volunteers work side by side toward a shared purpose: giving back to the men and women who have served our communities and country.

For current volunteer opportunities, build schedules, and the communities we serve, visit the Connections for Heroes website at [www.connectionsforheroes.org/volunteer](http://www.connectionsforheroes.org/volunteer)

### 1.2 Volunteer Recognition

Connections for Heroes could not fulfill its mission without its volunteers. To show our appreciation:

- All volunteers receive a Connections for Heroes T-shirt after their second build day.
- Volunteers who complete 25 build days are presented with a challenge coin at a volunteer recognition event.
- Project Leads and Crew Chiefs are recognized for years of service in five-year increments, with their names added to a Wall of Service at the organization's headquarters.
- Volunteer milestones and anniversaries are also posted on the Connections for Heroes website and social media.

### 1.3 Code of Conduct

As a Connections for Heroes volunteer, you are a guest in the home of a veteran, first responder, or their family and an ambassador for our mission. We expect all volunteers to demonstrate the highest standard of conduct. This means that you will:

- Treat every homeowner with the honor, dignity, and gratitude their service and sacrifice deserve.

- Always be respectful of homeowners and their property and possessions.
- Work as a team with fellow volunteers, staff, and project leaders.
- Serve without judgment or expectation of the homeowners you work with.
- Never behave in a way that intimidates or demeans another person.
- Never use racist, sexist, discriminatory, or offensive language.
- Never engage in verbal, physical, or cyber bullying at any time.
- Be mindful that some homeowners may be living with visible or invisible injuries, including PTSD, mobility limitations, or other service-related conditions, and treat them with patience and respect.

## **1.4 Confidentiality**

You are expected to protect the security and privacy of our homeowners, staff, and fellow volunteers by safeguarding any information entrusted to you. Homeowner service records, medical or disability information, home addresses, and other non-public information related to Connections for Heroes must be kept confidential and shared only with those who have a genuine need to know it. If you have questions about how to handle information you access as a volunteer, talk to your Crew Chief or the Connections for Heroes Volunteer Coordinator.

## **1.5 Privacy**

Volunteers must respect the privacy of homeowners and fellow volunteers in all situations (e.g., bathrooms, changing areas, private conversations) and should intrude on a homeowner's personal space or belongings only to the extent that health and/or safety require.

## 2.0 Safety

Connections for Heroes is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for every volunteer, staff member, and homeowner. In turn, you are expected to obey all safety rules and guidelines and to exercise caution in every work activity.

### 2.1 Injuries and Reporting

**If you or another volunteer is injured, regardless of severity,  
contact your Crew Chief immediately.  
Dial 9-1-1 or seek help from outside emergency services if needed.**

Contact information for local emergency response agencies is available in the Health and Safety Kit on site or from your Crew Chief. You must also complete a Connections for Heroes Incident Report so that any safety hazard can be corrected. Report forms are available from any Connections for Heroes staff member or Crew Chief.

In addition to reporting accidents or injuries, you should report all potential safety hazards, safety suggestions, and health-and-safety concerns to your Crew Chief immediately.

### 2.2 Safety Guidance

#### 2.2.1 General

- Be mindful of safety throughout the build day.
- Keep the worksite clean and free of hazards.
- Report any broken or damaged equipment to your Crew Chief.
- Familiarize yourself with hazards on the worksite (loose railings, rotted flooring, exposed wiring, etc.).
- If you are unsure how to use a tool or complete a task, ask your Crew Chief or Tech Advisor before beginning work.

#### 2.2.2 Tool Safety

- Always unplug power tools before making adjustments or changing blades, bits, or attachments.
- Use proper technique and common sense with hand and power tools.
- Do not use power tools unless you are experienced or directly supervised — check with your Tech Advisor first.
- Position yourself securely before using any tool, especially on ladders or scaffolding.
- Use sharp cutting tools; dull tools are more likely to cause injury or damage materials.
- Use grounded plugs and GFI-protected outlets when working outdoors or in wet areas.
- Wear all required personal protective equipment for the task.

#### 2.2.3 Safety Equipment

- Safety Goggles — protect eyes during power tool use, demolition, or overhead work.
- Dust Mask — protects lungs when sanding, during demolition, or installing insulation.
- Cartridge Respirator — protects against certain paint and solvent fumes.
- Gloves — protect hands from chemicals, insulation, and sharp or abrasive materials.
- Ear Protection — protects hearing when using noisy power tools.
- Hard Hat — protects the head during demolition or when working in low-clearance basements, crawl spaces, or attics.

#### **2.2.4 Ladder Safety**

- Place the ladder on firm, level ground. Raise extension ladders by walking them into an upright position, then move the base out a distance equal to one-quarter of the ladder's extended length.
- Confirm that rung hooks on an extension ladder are properly locked in place.
- Stepladders: ensure the extension arms are fully locked before climbing.
- Watch for overhead wires and other hazards before raising a ladder.
- Get on and off the ladder by stepping onto the first rung to maintain stable positioning.
- Keep your hips between the ladder rails while climbing; do not lean or overreach.
- Have someone support or foot the ladder from below whenever possible. Only one person on a ladder at a time.
- Never climb above the manufacturer's indicated maximum rung height.

### **2.3 Electronic Devices**

While most volunteers use cameras, phones, and other devices responsibly, it is easy to unintentionally invade someone's privacy. You must not use any device capable of recording or transmitting images in restrooms or other areas where privacy is expected. You must not photograph, video, or otherwise capture a homeowner, their family, or a fellow volunteer without that person's knowledge and permission — this is especially important given the personal and sometimes sensitive circumstances of the veterans and first responders we serve.

Use of earbuds is discouraged on the worksite, as is frequent texting or checking your phone, except in an emergency. Music played on a worksite must be appropriate in content and volume.

### **2.4 Attire**

Appropriate clothing is expected and necessary for your safety on every build day. You will be on active construction sites, indoors or outdoors, in varying weather. Dress for the work, the season, and the conditions. Long pants are recommended. Examples of inappropriate attire include open-toed shoes, short shorts, tank tops, clothing with offensive words or graphics, and excessive or dangling jewelry. Long hair should be tied back or clipped.

## 2.5 Connections for Heroes Gun and Firearm Policy

Volunteers may not possess or use any gun or firearm at any time while on property owned, leased, or controlled by Connections for Heroes, including offices, warehouses, and storage facilities. Possession or use of a gun or firearm is also prohibited at any location where a volunteer represents Connections for Heroes, including a homeowner's property during a build or renovation day. This prohibition applies regardless of whether a volunteer holds a valid concealed carry permit or is otherwise legally permitted to possess or use a firearm.

Volunteers who violate this policy will be prohibited from further service until the firearm is secured off-site. Connections for Heroes reserves the right to take additional appropriate action based on the facts and circumstances of any violation.

## 3.0 Working with Youth

In addition to our Code of Conduct, Connections for Heroes has adopted a Safe Ministry and Youth Protection Policy for the safety and well-being of every volunteer, adult and youth alike. While these guidelines primarily protect youth volunteers under age 18 — including homeowners' children present on-site — they also protect adult volunteers. To maintain a safe environment, Connections for Heroes has adopted the following guidelines:

### 3.1 One-on-One Contact

One-on-one, private contact between unrelated adults and youth is not permitted at any time during a build day or other Connections for Heroes activity. If you have questions about this policy, discuss them with your Crew Chief.

### 3.2 Abuse

Any adult who observes or receives a report of alleged abuse is required to report the incident immediately to the Crew Chief in charge. All allegations are taken seriously. Any individual who is the subject of a report will be required to refrain from all youth activities until the incident report is resolved. If an individual must be removed from an activity, this will be handled discreetly, recognizing that an investigation will be conducted.

## 4.0 Policy Violations

Connections for Heroes expects every volunteer to act in a way that honors our mission and the veterans, first responders, and families we serve. If a problem arises, Connections for Heroes will review the situation and consider the relevant facts and circumstances. We reserve the right to take any action necessary to protect our mission, including refusing future participation of an individual or organization. While it is impossible to list every type of unacceptable behavior, examples include:

- Violations of the Code of Conduct
- Violations of the Safe Ministry and Youth Protection Policy
- Theft, or inappropriate removal or possession, of Connections for Heroes or homeowner property
- Misuse of Connections for Heroes equipment or materials

- Falsification of records
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol, illegal drugs, weapons, or fireworks at the worksite
- Fighting or threatening violence at the worksite
- Boisterous or disruptive activity at the worksite
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to property damage

## 5.0 Raising Concerns

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Connections for Heroes recognizes that a respectful working environment benefits everyone and helps us fulfill our mission more effectively. If a concern or misunderstanding arises, please raise it in a timely manner so it can be resolved promptly.

- Most situations are best addressed by your Connections for Heroes Crew Chief or your volunteer organization's leader, if applicable.
- If a situation cannot be resolved at that level, or you are not comfortable raising it there, speak with the Connections for Heroes Operations Director on the build day. If it remains unresolved, contact the Volunteer Coordinator. Contact information is available on the Connections for Heroes website.
- Depending on the situation, Connections for Heroes may conduct a formal investigation and take appropriate action based on its findings. The Executive Director reviews any such investigation and makes the final recommendation. If the Executive Director is the subject of your concern, the Volunteer Coordinator will contact the Chair of the Board's Human Resources Committee directly.

## 6.0 Volunteer Roles

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Connections for Heroes offers a variety of volunteer opportunities. For more information on any of these roles, contact the Connections for Heroes volunteer coordinator.

- Ambassador / Greeter
- Application Interviewer
- Assistant Operations Director
- Crew Chief / Work Crew Leader
- Homeowner Liaison
- Lunch Coordinator
- Materials Coordinator
- Office Support / Tech Advisors
- Photographer
- Skilled and Unskilled Build Volunteers
- Warehouse assistant

Note: There may be other opportunities to serve using your unique knowledge, skills or talent. Please contact the volunteer coordinator via the website: [www.connectionsforheroes.org/volunteer](http://www.connectionsforheroes.org/volunteer)

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Effective Date: 9/13/2026  
Reviewed: 9/13/2026