



Foster Grandparent Program

Policies & Procedures

**Office of Community & Economic Development
2013**



OFFICE OF COMMUNITY &
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Office of Community & Economic Development of Washtenaw County provides detailed policies and procedures for the current Foster Grandparent Program. Any questions or comments can be directed to the Program Supervisor, Cresha Reid at 734.222.3767 or reidc@ewashtenaw.org.

FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM POLICIES & PROCEDURES

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BRIEF OVERVIEW

Since 1965, the Foster Grandparent Program has provided valuable aid to children and youth with special needs. Foster Grandparents are role models, mentors, and friends. Serving at one of thousands of local organizations—including faith-based groups, Head Start Centers, schools, and other youth facilities—Foster Grandparents help children learn to read, provide one-on-one tutoring, and guide children at a critical time in their lives. Put simply, they give the kind of comfort and love that sets a child on the path toward a successful future.

The purpose of the Foster Grandparent Program is to:

- Connect generations
- Provide volunteer service that addresses community needs
- Create meaningful relationships that support special-needs children to thrive in their setting
- Produce opportunities for our volunteers to feel fulfilled in their service and time commitment

Foster Grandparents volunteer 20 hours a week and earn a tax-free, hourly stipend. They must be 55 years of age or older and meet low income eligibility. Volunteers receive pre-service orientation, monthly in-service training, meals while on duty, annual physical examinations, recognition events, and assistance with transportation.

The Foster Grandparent Program benefits the children, but also the volunteers themselves. Volunteering leads to new discoveries and new friends. Plus, studies show that volunteering helps participants live longer and promotes a positive outlook on life.

The Foster Grandparent Program is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CNCS is a federal agency that engages more than 4 million Americans in service through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and the Social Innovation Fund. These programs include projects in six priority areas: disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

- Age 55 years and older
- Meet income eligibility requirement
- Medically cleared to volunteer
- Pass state and federal background checks

Eligibility to be a Foster Grandparent may not be restricted on the basis of formal education; experience; race; religion; color; national origin, including limited English proficiency; sex; age; handicap; or political affiliation.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

IN-SERVICES TRAININGS

Volunteers must complete an average of 4 hours per month of in-service training. These required trainings cover a variety of relevant topics, like nutrition, exercise, local community resources, budgeting, and interventions to use with children.

MEALS & TRANSPORTATION

Transportation assistance is provided to volunteers when traveling between the volunteer's home and place of assignment, as well as between the home and place of monthly in-service training. Travel time between the volunteer's home and place of assignment may not be considered part of the service schedule and is not counted when calculating the volunteer's stipend hours.

Foster Grandparents who have a car to drive to their site must also have a valid driver's license and current auto insurance. Drivers will be reimbursed for mileage on a monthly basis. Those who do not drive or walk to their site will be provided transportation aid that meets their needs.

If the program provides you with public transportation scrips, please note:

- These can ONLY be used for program related activities.
- You will be given the exact quantity you need each month, so you should never run out. We will not be able to provide you with more once you have used the allotted amount.
- Once we hand these to you, they become your responsibility and cannot be replaced.

Meals are provided by the sites while volunteers are on volunteer duty. Meals are also provided during monthly in-service trainings.

HOURS

Washtenaw County Foster Grandparents must volunteer a minimum of 20 hours per week and a no more than 40 hours per week. A Foster Grandparent may not serve more than 2,088 hours per year. Volunteers report to duty 4 times a week for 5 hours each day.

Volunteers have one 15-minute break to take during the day. The timing of this break will be agreed upon between the Site Supervisor and the volunteer.

If a volunteer develops an illness or injury that limits their participation in the program, the Program Supervisor may approve a temporary reduction or suspension of required hourly commitment. Any reduction or suspension due to illness or injury will only be approved with appropriate documentation from a medical provider and may not last longer than 4 months. Volunteers that do not meet the minimum required hours may be retired from the program.

STIPEND

Foster Grandparents receive a stipend of \$2.65 per hour to enable them to serve without cost to themselves. The hourly stipend is determined by CNCS and may not be altered by local programs.

In accordance with the Domestic Volunteer Service Act, the stipend is not taxable income and this volunteer position is not to be considered employment.

The stipend will not affect any income-based assistance the volunteer may receive, such as social security income, Medicare/Medicaid eligibility, and disability, among others. If a volunteer needs a letter verifying that they are not receiving income, Program Staff will provide one.

INSURANCE

The Foster Grandparent Program provides supplemental insurance through CIMA, which covers all volunteers for accidents, personal liability, and excess automobile insurance while the volunteer is working at the site or attending Foster Grandparent Program events or related activities.

APPLYING TO THE PROGRAM

APPLICATION PROCESS

PRELIMINARY PHONE INTERVIEW

Applicants will complete a preliminary phone interview to determine eligibility and if the program is a good fit for the interested party. During the interview, the Program Supervisor gauges the volunteer's level of interest in working with various age groups and sites to determine a good match between the volunteer's interests and the site placement's needs. Personal stability, health status, interpersonal skills, experience with children, and ability to follow supervisor's direction are among the factors considered when accepting an applicant. Once it is determined a volunteer meets the program criteria, a time to complete an application and paperwork will be scheduled.

APPLICATION

Once applicants are screened, they will complete an application with the Program Supervisor. This includes reviewing income documents, completing human resources paperwork, setting up stipend payments, and an introduction to the program. Future training information will be given at this time.

Documents needed to complete an application are:

- Valid State ID/Driver's License & Social Security Card OR Current Passport
- Social Security Card
- Medical insurance card
- Voided check
- Proof of income documents (such as social security, pension, disability, etc)

INCOME REVIEW

To be enrolled and receive a stipend, a Foster Grandparent cannot have an annual household income exceeding the income eligibility guidelines for the state of Michigan. Household refers to related or unrelated persons living under the same roof and sharing common living expenses.

Income is reviewed annually. If a volunteer exceeds the income limit, they will no longer be able to receive a stipend while volunteering. The Program Supervisor has the current income guidelines to determine eligibility.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

All applicants must undergo and clear a Department of Human Services (DHS) background check, as well as a federal and state criminal background check, before officially beginning the program. These background checks include a fingerprinted FBI background check. Applicants who have murder and sex offender charges on their records will not be able to volunteer with the program. All other charges on record will be screened on a case by case basis depending on severity, type, and date of charge.

PHYSICAL EXAM

Foster Grandparents must be declared capable of serving children with exceptional or special needs by their doctor. A complete physical exam, including a TB test, is required prior to service. A yearly physical is required thereafter. If a volunteer is found to be medically unable to serve at any time, the Foster Grandparent would have to retire from the program.

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

PRE-SERVICE ORIENTATION & TRAINING

New Foster Grandparents must train for 20 hours before working at their placement. During orientation, Foster Grandparents will be introduced to the Foster Grandparent Program policies, procedures, and regulations. Training will include shadowing a Foster Grandparent at their placement site to learn the daily activities of volunteering and familiarization to the needs of the children served. New volunteers will also have the opportunity to attend an in-service training and meet the other Foster Grandparents.

ONGOING IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Foster Grandparents must complete an average of 4 hours per month of in-service training to be in the program. This is in addition to the 20 hours of pre-service training provided to new volunteers. In-services provide training to Foster Grandparents that relates to working with the children or that further volunteer education on relevant topics such as nutrition and budgeting. Trainings are part of the regular work week (volunteers attend the training instead of their placement site that day).

PROBATIONARY PERIOD & 90 DAY REVIEW

Foster Grandparents are on a probationary period for 90 days to determine their fit in the program. A performance evaluation of the volunteer will be completed by the placement site to determine what is going well and where there is room for improvement.

If a volunteer is struggling with a placement or assigned child, the program and site will provide necessary support and additional training as needed, or match the volunteer to a different site when appropriate. However, the determination of satisfactory conduct and work performance shall be solely at the discretion of the Program Supervisor and volunteers may be dismissed from the program for unsatisfactory conduct and/or performance.

At the end of the 90 day probationary period, the Foster Grandparent and Program Supervisor will meet for a 90 Day Review to talk about the volunteer's experience and any questions or concerns that may arise on behalf of the volunteer, the placement site, or the Program Staff.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Our volunteers are committed to serving 20 hours per week at their designated site and attending monthly in-service training. However, it is understood that absences occur. Our volunteers receive sick, vacation, funeral, and Emergency Time Off (ETO) days to use for these absences. These days **do not** roll over into the next year. They also receive paid holidays off, listed below.

Inconsistent attendance due to unexcused absences will lead to program retirement. This includes attendances to in-service meetings. All volunteers may have one unpaid unexcused absence to in-service and one unpaid unexcused absence to their site. A second will result in a warning letter. A third unexcused absence will involve a meeting with the program supervisor and possible retirement from the program.

HOLIDAYS

Foster Grandparents do not have to report to duty on Federal holidays. Volunteers will receive their regular stipend for the following holidays if they occur on a regularly scheduled volunteer service day.

January

New Year's Day

Martin Luther King's Birthday

February

President's Day

May

Memorial Day

July

Independence Day

September

Labor Day

October

Columbus Day

November

Veteran's Day

Thanksgiving Day (including the Friday after)

December

Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

New Year's Eve

TYPES OF ABSENCES

Type	Days per Year	When to Use them	Special Instructions
Sick	4 quarterly, 16 total	Illnesses and medically related absences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify site and Program Staff of illness. • Illness longer than 5 days or chronic absences due to illness requires a doctor's note. • Vacation days will be used when a volunteer runs out of sick days.
Vacation	4 quarterly, 16 total	Time away from volunteer duties, such as a vacation or a funeral of a non-immediate family member.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacation days can only be used after a month of volunteer service. • Scheduled vacations need to be cleared with the Program Supervisor at least 2 weeks in advance. Then the site can be notified. • If ETO is no longer available, vacations days can be used to cover days a site is closed for a break (e.g. Winter Break)
Funeral	6	Death of immediate family members, including spouse, children, grandchildren, parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt/uncle, niece/nephew, as well as in-law and step-relations.	Notify the Program Supervisor and the site when taking funeral leave and what family member it is.
Emergency Time Off (ETO)	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad weather days at volunteer discretion • Site closures (due to weather, flu outbreaks, no power, etc) • Field Trips or Parent Teacher Conference days or days that do not require volunteer assistance • Transportation issues (public transportation fails, car issues, carpool driver unavailable) • Volunteer's Birthday- to be used in the same month as the birthday day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If available, ETO days can be used when a site is closed for breaks, such as Spring Break and Winter Break. Vacation days can also be used for this once ETO is no longer available. • Foster Grandparents should listen to their local radio stations or watch local tv channels to learn if their site is closed due to weather conditions. WAAM (1600 AM) or WEMU (89.1 FM) are good radio stations to learn about site closures due to weather. If a site remains open, but the volunteer cannot attend due to weather conditions, ETO may be used. Program staff encourages volunteers to consider their safety first.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

If a leave of absence is needed for any reason (medical or personal), Foster Grandparents must notify the Program Supervisor as soon as possible. A formal request should be in writing and includes the reason and predicted length of time of the absence. If the absence is longer than a month, volunteers must understand that their vacancy may need to be filled at their site. When returning to the program, the Foster Grandparent may be reassigned to a position once one becomes available.

During a leave, available sick and vacation days may be used and holidays are still paid. Otherwise, leave of absences are unpaid. If a Foster Grandparent on leave is medically cleared to attend the monthly in-service, that would help to keep the volunteer abreast of any trainings and program changes.

If a volunteer needs to be on leave for a period longer than 3 months, then they must resign from the program. To return to duty, a Foster Grandparent needs to contact the program supervisor to talk about availability for returning to the program. If the leave of absence was due to illness, the volunteer must receive medical clearance from their doctor.

RESIGNATION/ RETIREMENT

If a Foster Grandparent wishes to leave the program for any reason, he or she must fill out the appropriate resignation form and provide this written notice at least two weeks before the last day of volunteering.

In the event that circumstances dictate a retirement of a volunteer, the program supervisor will provide written and verbal notice to the volunteer stating the reason. Reasons can include, but are not limited to, extensive or unexcused absences, misconduct, inability to perform assignments, failure to follow directions, or having income in excess of the eligibility level.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

In the event that a volunteer would like to appeal a retirement or other program decision, the volunteer should submit a written request to the Program Supervisor requesting the appeal. The Program Supervisor will respond within 10 business days. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, the volunteer may contact the Human Services Manager of the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED). Our funder, CNCS, may be consulted at this time as necessary.

VOLUNTEER SITES AND SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Volunteer placement sites are public agencies and non-profit organizations (secular or faith-based), such as hospitals, homes for dependent and neglected children, schools, and day care centers. For the Washtenaw County Foster Grandparents Program, most sites are Elementary Schools, Head Start Programs, and Day Cares.

Within these sites are the special needs children that our volunteers serve. Special needs children may have a disability (e.g. developmental, physical, learning) or an impairment (e.g. hearing, speech, emotional). The child may be in foster care, an adjudicated youth, or a victim of abuse or neglect. Other reasons they need special attention is because they are behind in reading level or they have trouble focusing on their school work. Whatever the reason, these children are matched with our Foster Grandparents because they need extra attention and support that our volunteers can provide. By providing this support, the children may improve in their social skills and reading skills, as well as thrive in their environments.

EXAMPLES OF PLACEMENTS AND VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

SETTING	POSSIBLE VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES
Public schools, state schools, private schools, and alternative schools	Providing emotional support, helping to develop basic learning skills, tutoring in reading, and helping to prevent or delay children being placed in an institution
Head Start centers, day care centers, or pre-schools enrolling children with special or exceptional needs	Helping to develop reading readiness; providing emotional support; and assisting with and teaching self-care.
Adolescent and Youth Correctional facilities	Assisting in mitigating the effects of institutionalization by creating a family atmosphere, acting as links to the community, and helping incarcerated youth prepare to reunite with their families, transition to foster care, and assume the responsibilities of adulthood.
Status offenders and delinquent youth offenders	Helping them remain in the community as an alternative to institutional commitment
Abused or neglected children	Serving as positive adult role models and providing emotional support and empathy.
Institutionalized children	Assisting children with self-care, helping to develop motor skills, providing stimulation and learning experiences, and assisting them to achieve independent living whenever possible

PLACEMENT & SERVICE ASSIGNMENT

Volunteers and sites are matched up according to volunteer interest, site needs, and distance between the site and the volunteer’s home. If a volunteer drives to the site, the distance from the site to the volunteer’s home can be up to 5 miles, but no more. Matches are at the discretion of the Program Supervisor and can be changed as needed.

A volunteer site will select 4-6 special needs children to be matched with each Foster Grandparent. A Volunteer Assignment Plan will be determined that guides the volunteer in their work with each child.

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT PLAN

The plan defines the impact of the assignment on the child's development as a result of the relationship with a Foster Grandparent and the specific activities to be performed by the Foster Grandparent in the assignment.

The Student Assignment Plan must be approved by our program and accepted by the Foster Grandparent. This plan includes the following:

- Child served
- Roles and activities the volunteer will perform
- Expected outcome for the child
- Period of time the child will receive services

CONFIDENTIALITY

The names and personal information (family situation, income, address, medical condition, etc) of the children at the site is confidential and must be respected at all times. Foster Grandparents may not discuss, outside of Site and Program Staff, any confidential information regarding the personal lives of the children they serve. If an issue should arise, volunteers can discuss these with their Site Supervisor or Program Staff only.

TIMESHEETS

It is the Foster Grandparent's responsibility to complete his/her timesheet daily at the designated site. At the end of a two-week pay period, each Foster Grandparent must sign the timesheet in order for it to be processed. Once completed, Site Staff will also sign the timesheet and then fax or email it to Program Staff for processing.

In the event of an absence, the Foster Grandparent is responsible for listing the reason why the absence occurred (e.g. sick, school field trip, funeral). Program Staff will determine whether to use any available ETO, vacation, or sick days for the absence by using the reason listed.

The timesheet also asks the Foster Grandparent to indicate if they ate a meal and if they drove to the site themselves. This information will be used to collect data about meals provided, as well as pay the Foster Grandparent for mileage if they drove to the site. Program Staff will have mileage calculated from home to the site and back, as well as from home to the monthly in-service and back and will reimburse accordingly.

Volunteers must remember to only report the hours they actually worked. If the Foster Grandparent has to leave early for any reason, this should be reflected in their timesheet. Volunteers are only paid the hours they actually served at their site. Failure to record hours appropriately will result in disciplinary action.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Foster Grandparents agree to abide by a code of conduct while serving within this program (including rules and regulations established by the Foster Grandparents Program, the placement site, and our funder, the Corporation for National and Community Service). Violating the code of conduct will lead to disciplinary action or may result in retirement from the program. After an accumulation of 3 disciplinary warnings, the volunteer will be asked to retire from the program.

- Volunteers shall follow the dress code provided by the site, as well as adhere to good hygiene practices.
- Foster Grandparents are implement the activities outlined their Student Assignment Plan.
- Volunteers will be punctual to their sites and report actual hours served on their timesheet.
- Foster Grandparents will maintain good communication with their sites and the Program Staff in regards to any issues, absences, or needs. Volunteers are responsible for notifying the site and the Program Supervisor of any absences and the reason for the absence as soon as possible.
- Volunteers are to accept supervision, direction, and feedback from the Site Supervisor, as well as Program Staff.
- Foster Grandparents may not discriminate against any Site Staff or child for any reason, including but not limited to: race; religion; color; national origin, sex, age, handicap, religious/political affiliation.
- Volunteers must keep confidentiality at all times.
- Volunteers cannot give gifts to students unless it is approved by the school *and* program staff.
- Under no circumstances shall a Foster Grandparent subject a child to any form of abuse, whether verbal, emotional, or physical. Acts such as open rejection, hitting, rough handling, abusive language, kicking, striking, spanking, or referring to the child in a negative way will constitute grounds for immediate retirement from the program.
- Foster Grandparents cannot be left alone with the children. At least one other Site Staff member must be present at all times.
- Volunteers should never reprimand or discipline a child. This is left to Site Staff ONLY. Please report any issues with a child to Site Staff immediately and follow up with Program Staff.
- Foster Grandparents should not sleep during volunteer hours. If a volunteer is falling asleep, it's encouraged that the volunteer let the Site Staff know that they need to take a break.
- Volunteers may not take any children off school property or provide any form of transportation for them.

- Foster Grandparents may not offer or provide any medication, food, or drinks to children or Site Staff.
- Volunteers may not give religious instruction, conduct worship service, or engage in any other religious activity as part of their activities at the site or any program related events.
- Foster Grandparents may not engage in any political activity at any program related events.
- Volunteers may help a child with their school work, but may not complete the work for the child or provide the answers.
- Foster Grandparents may not bring any friends or family members to their site unless invited by Site Staff and approved by the Program Supervisor.
- Volunteers shall not serve in a staff role, such as a teacher's aid, or any other role that would detract from building one-on-one relationships with their assigned children.
- Program volunteers should not engage in gossip regarding other volunteers, Site Staff, or children and their families.
- Foster Grandparents may not use any legal or illegal substances, including tobacco, drugs and alcohol, while volunteering at the site. Any volunteer who reports to their site while under the influence will be dismissed immediately.
- If any issues should arise, Foster Grandparents are to discuss them with the Program Supervisor before taking any action. The Program Supervisor will work with a volunteer to resolve any issues at hand.

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Thank you for your support of the Foster Grandparent Program of Washtenaw County. Contact us at anytime with any questions, comments, or concerns.

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