

VOLUNTEER PROTOCOL



V1 - April 2026

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with the Alberta Homeless Foundation (AHF); your time and compassion make a meaningful difference in our community. This guide is intended to assist you by providing information that is essential to a safe and successful distribution. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to seek clarification from the team - we're here to support you! We hope you find your time with us to be meaningful and rewarding.

HIGHLIGHTS

This section contains vital information - please ensure you are able to access this information easily, as it will guide steps in cases of emergency and act as a quick reference.

EMERGENCY

- 911 – Do not hesitate to call if appropriate!
- Inform team lead
- Ensure team members are accounted for and safe

CONTACTS

- Please ensure that you have shared your emergency contact information with AHF prior to your shift; if you'd like, check with the team lead who can verify.
- HR email: hr@albertahomelessfoundation.ca
- Share your contact information with the distribution lead at the start of the shift in case you need to be reached during an emergency.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Calgary Drop In Center](#)
- [Calgary alpha house](#)
- [211 Alberta](#)
- [Calgary Distress Centre](#)
- [CUPS](#)

- [Inn from the cold](#)
- [Mustard Seed](#)

OVERVIEW

The intention of distribution shifts is to provide unhoused individuals in Calgary with care kits that contain essential items. Each kit is tracked and visible on an interactive map found on the Alberta Homeless Foundation website. Volunteers are not expected to provide medical care or professional counselling. Volunteers will act within their scope and professional boundaries and maintain a mindset focused on de-escalation in any scenario.

Care Kit Contents

The Alberta Homeless Foundation produces various kit types containing various add-ons; however, the typical kit contains the following:

- Fluoride Toothpaste
- Toothbrush
- Deodorant soap
- Wipes
- 5-inch Comb
- 1 oz Shampoo
- Stainless Steel Nail Clippers
- One-Sided Info Card
- Bandages

Media & Social Media

Please note that volunteers are expected to respect privacy and confidentiality. We ask that you refrain from posting photos, videos, locations, or stories on any platform without prior approval from AHF and community member consent.

SHIFT PREPARATION

Prior to attending the volunteer shift, individuals should be familiar with the contents of this protocol and appropriately seek clarification from team members if required. Volunteers are expected to arrive at the designated meeting point for a brief check-in where shift-specific details will be shared (e.g., routes). Volunteers should dress appropriately for the weather, wear the organization's recognized clothing, and remain flexible if the original plan changes.

Weather & Unsafe Conditions

The occurrence of a shift is highly dependent on environmental conditions and thus is subject to change with little prior notice, for which we apologize in advance. Shifts may be modified, delayed, or cancelled due to unsafe weather, poor visibility, smoke, extreme temperatures, or route concerns. In this case, communication indicating the status of a shift and any specific instructions will be shared as soon as possible.

Transportation

During distribution shifts, volunteers may be required to travel between multiple locations within Calgary or other service areas. Public transit may be used during shifts where appropriate. Volunteers are expected to follow all applicable transit, traffic, and parking regulations while participating in AHF activities.

Volunteers are responsible for arranging and covering their own transportation to and from distribution shifts, including shifts located outside Calgary and elsewhere in Alberta, unless otherwise explicitly approved by AHF. Volunteers are also responsible for arriving punctually at the designated meeting or distribution location.

Personal Belongings

Volunteers should refrain from bringing valuables or items that cannot be carried for long periods of time, as secure storage may not be available during outreach activities.

Additional Resources

These additional resources that may be offered to individuals who may require further assistance:

- [Calgary Drop In Center](#)
- [Calgary alpha house](#)
- [211 Alberta](#)
- [Calgary Distress Centre](#)
- [CUPS](#)
- [Inn from the cold](#)
- [Mustard Seed](#)

Pre-Shift Checklist

- ☐ Review protocol
- ☐ Review meeting location
- ☐ Weather-appropriate clothing
- ☐ Closed-toe, walking shoes
- ☐ Charged phone
- ☐ Timely arrival

DURING SHIFT

Shift Overview

The distribution shift entails completing the route and disseminating care kits. Volunteers should expect to be standing and walking for extended periods of time, as shifts will range from 3 to 5 hours. Volunteers should expect to be outdoors for the duration of their shift. Care kits and supplies should be distributed fairly and tracked as instructed. Engagement with individuals should be respectful, consent-based, and non-intrusive. When approaching an individual, inform them that you are with the Alberta Homeless Foundation and providing care kits containing essentials; respect refusals. Prior to distributing a care kit, inform the team lead so they are able to take a photograph of the kit for it to be tracked at a later time. Volunteers should use calm, non-judgemental communication and keep interactions within appropriate boundaries; avoid making promises or providing services outside of your role with AHF. When appropriate, volunteers may share information about additional supports such as [Calgary Drop-In Centre](#) and [Alpha House Society](#). Any incidents, safety concerns, or emergencies must be addressed in accordance with established protocol and promptly reported to the team lead. The team lead is responsible for notifying HR by email with a clear summary of the situation, regardless of whether the incident appears to be minor.

Volunteers are required to abide by applicable laws at all times.

Roles & Authority

The team lead, an AHF representative, will be the most responsible individual on site. They are responsible for coordinating team activities, supporting volunteer safety, and ensuring outreach is conducted respectfully and efficiently. Responsibilities of the team lead include determining and communicating the distribution route, monitoring team organization and safety, ensuring all distributed kits are properly tracked and photographed, responding to incidents or concerns that arise during the shift, and making final decisions as needed.

Privacy & Photography

Each kit distributed by AHF is tracked and displayed on an publicly accessible map. To support this process, each kit is individually photographed just before handout. If photographing a kit, ensure that the image does not contain any faces, identifying features, tents, belongings, license plates, or private property. Please refer to a team lead if additional support or guidance is needed.

Safety

Volunteer safety is an absolute priority during outreach activities. At all times, volunteers must remain in groups of *at least* 3. Ensure the contact information for emergency services and team leads is saved in cellular devices to allow for easy and regular communication. Volunteers should pay attention to their surroundings and use appropriate judgement when approaching individuals; interactions should take place in open, public areas, and large groups should be avoided. Volunteers are prohibited from entering tents, encampments, and other personal property. Distribution should not occur in private buildings. If a situation becomes tense or unpredictable, volunteers should disengage immediately and move to a safe, visible area—and ensure all team members are accounted for. In the event of a medical emergency, overdose, or immediate safety risk, call 911. Volunteers should not intervene in conflicts or attempt to manage crises beyond their training. Volunteers are not required to participate in any interaction they are uncomfortable with, and no other volunteer or distribution lead may pressure or require them to do so. If a service user appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, volunteers should maintain a safe distance, avoid engagement where possible, and notify the team lead, as these situations may present increased risk and reduced predictability.

Separation Procedure

Volunteers should remain with their group for the entirety of the shift. In the instance a group member becomes separated, the team lead should be notified immediately. Distribution activities will come to a stop, and a location to safely re-group will be communicated. If you find yourself separated, do not continue distribution activities independently, communicate immediately with the team lead or another volunteer. Distribution will only resume once the team lead determines it is appropriate to do so.

De-escalation

In instances where volunteers find themselves in difficult situations, volunteers should attempt to use de-escalation tactics and recall their training, given it is appropriate and safe to do so, prioritizing the use of calm, non-confrontational responses while keeping safety in mind. Things to keep in mind and potential strategies include:

Quick Guide

- Stay calm: Remain respectful and non-confrontational
- Give space: Ensure there is a safe distance between you and the individual
- Listen & Acknowledge: Refrain from arguing or interrupting
- Don't engage conflict: Do not begin or entertain arguments
- Disengage early: Limit chance for further conflict; walk away if necessary

Please remember that your safety is a priority; if you feel at risk or unsafe, do not hesitate to leave the area, ensure you are in a public and visible space, and call 911 if appropriate. Please let a team member know right away if you ever feel uncomfortable. You do not have to engage in any activity you do not feel comfortable with. As one of our volunteers who's

dedicating their time to a cause they believe in, we want you to cater to your own mental and physical health.

Prohibited Activities

There may be cases in which it can be unsafe for the volunteer team to approach an individual or group. This section contains the anticipated activities that volunteers are prohibited from engaging with.

Volunteers are not to touch needles, drug paraphernalia, bodily fluids, weapons, or hazardous items. Additionally, volunteers must refrain from engaging with individuals that meet the following:

- Active drug use
- Intoxicated individuals
- Individuals engaged in conflict or displaying aggressive behaviour
- Aggressive individuals
- Sleeping Individuals
- Unconscious individuals
- Distributing items in private buildings

The above is not a comprehensive list, and volunteers must use their judgment in addition to this guide when engaging with the public. If you are unsure whether it is safe or appropriate to engage, please consult a member of the team or team lead . If you are unable to reach a team lead and are hesitant about approaching someone, it is best to refrain. Volunteers must follow the team lead's direction when advised to avoid a situation or group. However, volunteers may always inform the team lead if they are uncomfortable participating in any interaction.

POST SHIFT

Congratulations on completing your distribution shift! At the end of your shift, volunteers will regroup at the communicated location. During this time there will be a debrief where we will review the shift and any events or notable findings. We encourage volunteers to share their experiences, challenges, suggestions, or concerns at this time. All unused supplies, extra care kits, or borrowed vest should be returned. Volunteers must report any incidents, safety concerns, or injuries. You are welcome to email us at hr@albertahomelessfoundation.ca if there is anything that was not shared at this debrief that comes to mind at a later time. In logging the hours completed during the shift, a dedicated space will be available for any questions or concerns.

CONCLUSION

This protocol was designed as a guide for your experience with the AHF distribution team to ensure outreach activities are conducted in a safe, effective manner. By following these guidelines, volunteers help create a positive impact while maintaining the dignity, well-being, and safety of individuals we interact with and volunteers themselves. If you have questions at any point regarding this protocol, your shift, or AHF's mission, feel free to ask a member of the team.

Thank you once again for choosing to spend your time and make an impact with AHF!

