

GATEWAY

CENTRE FOR LEARNING

Putting the Unity in Community

Volunteer Handbook

488 Dominion Avenue
Midland, Ontario
L4R 1P6



705-527-1522



705-527-0693



volunteer@gatewaycentreforlearning.ca



www.gatewaycentreforlearning.ca



www.facebook.com/gatewaycentreforlearningmidland



www.twitter.com/Gateway_Midland

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Our Value Statement

We believe in **respect** for others and **accountability** for what we do. We are **results oriented** and strive for **personal growth** in a **safe** and **trusting** setting.

Our Vision

A community where everyone has the opportunity to develop the literacy skills to live, learn and work.

Our Mission

To teach reading, writing, math and computer skills to adults in a manner that meets their individual needs.

Background

Up to December 2012, we were formally known as Midland Area Reading Council. In the past 35 years, we have grown tremendously and our new name, Gateway Centre for Learning (GCFL), better reflects the significant expansion of services and programs we currently provide.

GCFL is a non-profit, incorporated, charity, governed by a seven member Board of Directors. We believe that literacy is a basic human right and each citizen should be able to function fully and comfortably in their community. We believe in people helping themselves and each other.

For adults who want to improve their reading, writing, math, computer, employability and other essential life skills, we offer private and confidential one-to-one tutoring, small group workshops and computer assisted learning programs. Lesson times are flexible (days, evenings and weekends), and financial assistance may be available for daycare and transportation costs.

Gateway also offers computer training to individuals and businesses for a fee. Additionally, GCFL operates Bookmark Used Books. All revenue from the bookstore and computer training supports our literacy programs and services.

Our programs rely heavily on fundraising activities and community partnerships. We usually hold at least two fundraising/awareness events per year.

Membership

The membership shall be comprised of all active learners, tutors and volunteers. Membership will commence after three months of association with Gateway and will expire after one year of inactivity. Active shall be defined as participation in a program or event as a learner or tutor or provision of services in a volunteer capacity.

It is expected that our active members will attend the Annual General Meeting to vote on matters that affect Gateway.

Volunteers have a special place in our organization. They can serve in such roles as directors, tutors, committee members, fundraisers, general helpers, bookstore staff, office assistants and more. We believe that volunteers are essential to the delivery of individualized, caring, flexible literacy training to adults in our community. Without our volunteers we would be unable to offer the personal service that many learners require.

Volunteers are accepted, encouraged and trained at all levels of the organization, based on their suitability to the various tasks and activities. Volunteers are treated as equals to the paid staff, in terms of respect and dignity. They are valued for their input, and called upon for their opinions. Volunteers have the opportunity to effect change in programs, through their suggestions and input. No major initiative will go without an assessment of its implications for volunteers, and without their appropriate and timely input. This recommendation is not meant to imply that impact on volunteers always be the deciding factor, but that they be carefully considered.

We reserve the right to deny membership or terminate a volunteer's relationship with Gateway if the volunteer does not meet the standards and requirements established within our Policies.

Gateway welcomes relatives of staff, volunteers and learners as volunteers. However, a family member cannot directly supervise a volunteer. Arrangements will be made to ensure that alternative supervision is available.

Screening

All volunteers must undergo appropriate screening. All information obtained through any Police Criminal Record/Vulnerable Sector and Record Suspension Check with local police authorities is for the sole purpose of decision-making as it pertains to volunteering and will be kept strictly confidential. The applicant will pay for any Police Criminal Record Check when required. In cases where an

applicant Police Criminal Record Check comes back positive, successful applicants will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Discussion of the contents of a positive Police Criminal Record Check will be kept confidential by the Executive Director and the President of the Board. Additional Board members will be advised on a 'need to know' basis only if the President requires input. All new volunteers must present a copy of the Police Criminal Record/Vulnerable Sector and Record Suspension Check for his/her files before starting with Gateway.

An Annual Offence Declaration form must be signed by all volunteers.

Volunteer Training, Supervision and Support

GCFL believes that volunteers are an essential part of the GCFL team and have the right to be consulted on all major decisions that will impact his/her performance. We encourage volunteers to offer input and opinions especially on important decisions.

All volunteers will receive respectful support, supervision and appropriate training.

1. A reporting structure will be clearly outlined from the onset.
2. Volunteers will receive a clear description of the tasks and activities that they are to carry out.
3. Volunteer candidates will complete a Volunteer Application Package.
4. Upon acceptance, the volunteer will be provided with adequate orientation, training and evaluation, either directly or through assigning a mentor to the new volunteer.
5. All volunteers interested in becoming tutors must take a certified Tutor Training workshop at their earliest convenience.
6. Volunteers will be offered opportunities to participate in upgrading workshops.
7. All volunteers (not including Directors) will be assigned to an immediate supervisor and be ultimately responsible to a staff member.
8. Volunteers will be given contact numbers to call in the case of an emergency related to their volunteer duties.
9. Volunteers will track their hours worked on behalf of the organization. These hours will be submitted monthly to the appropriate staff member.

Gateway Centre for Learning

All volunteers are subject to a probationary period of 60 days, after which time he/she will be contacted to determine whether the needs of the organization and the volunteer are being satisfactorily met. An annual satisfaction survey will also be provided.

Volunteers are expected to be punctual. If more than fifteen minutes late, the volunteer should call the office. Chronic tardiness will be a matter for review. If unable to meet commitments, volunteers are expected to call the office as early as possible so that the appropriate people can be notified.

All volunteers and staff of GCFL will adhere to the code of Ethical Conduct as established in the policies and procedures.

GCFL believes in supporting volunteers who wish to, or must, cease their activities. All exiting volunteers will be contacted upon their departure from the organization for the purpose of an Exit Interview.

A letter of reference may be provided by GCFL, for services rendered, upon request.

GCFL is committed to recognizing publicly the contribution of volunteers and supporting community partners.

GCFL will use opportunities throughout the year to publicly honour and thank our volunteers and community partners.

Special Case Volunteers

GCFL recognizes true Volunteers who give their time and effort without obligation of any kind. Individuals who come forward to offer his/her service in fulfillment of other obligations, through social service agencies, schools, the justice system or the workplace, will NOT be considered volunteers in the true definition of the term, but will have the title of Special Case Volunteers.

Special Case Volunteers will be subject to the same policies as other volunteers but may have additional requirements as agreed upon with his/her originating agency.

GCFL reserves the right to refuse to accept the services of any individual whose intentions cannot truly be defined as voluntary, whose motivation is not to the cause of literacy, who is receiving remuneration by a third party, or who is being obliged, ordered or coerced to offer his/her services.

GCFL accepts Special Case Volunteers only when the referring agencies have signed agreements, which identify responsibility for managing and caring for the volunteers.

Tutor/Learner Relationship

GCFL supports the establishment of a sustained, equal, and appropriate relationship between tutor and learner. It is recommended that tutor and learner pairs be matched for a minimum of one year. There may be compelling circumstances that indicates a match longer than one year is in the best interest of the tutor and learner. In these cases the decision will be made jointly between the tutor/learner and staff.

All volunteer tutors will have a monitoring/evaluation process conducted annually.

1. Monitoring and evaluation procedures will be constructive, supportive, and flexible exchanges where the volunteer tutor and staff member share information and plan future activities, with the ultimate goal of supporting our organization's goals.
2. The staff person responsible for tutor/learner matches will schedule regular meetings with each tutor to share constructive feedback, resources and strategies. At this meeting the staff will access the work of the tutor.
3. The evaluation will be informal and verbal, unless there are specific issues, which either party would like documented.
4. If deemed necessary tutors will be offered various opportunities to improve his/her skills.
5. Staff may regularly review the tutor's written lesson reports.
6. Staff may survey learners by telephone or other methods from time to time to get feedback on each tutor's performance.
7. Staff will make every attempt to discuss with tutors, on a regular basis, their work and learner's progress.
8. Tutor/learner pairs will be consulted on the development of the learner's learning plan on a regular basis.

Three Strikes Rule

Any learner, who consistently misses 3 planned lessons without just cause and prior notification, may be subject to removal from the one to one tutoring program.

1. When a learner consistently does not attend planned lessons, the tutor has the right to refuse to continue to tutor the learner. The Program Co-ordinator will give a verbal warning to the learner.
2. If the learner is assigned to alternate tutors and continues to miss planned lessons, he/she must attend and complete 8 hours of small group lessons. Once the 8 hours is achieved the learner will be re-matched with a tutor at the first available opportunity. Every attempt will be made to ensure that any barriers for the learner are removed.
3. If the learner does not achieve the required 8-hour small group lessons, they may be exited from the one on one program by the Program Co-ordinator, with the approval of the Executive Director.
4. The Program Coordinator will inform the Executive Director of the dismissal of the learner at the earliest convenience.

Employees as Volunteers

GCFL supports paid employees who wish to take on volunteer duties on his/her own time as this will form a direct connection with the organization's mission.

Paid employees may not serve as a Director of the organization while employed by the organization.

A staff member who chooses to perform volunteer service for the organization is expected to adhere to volunteer policies.

Ownership Rights of Materials Produced

All material produced by any staff member, for the exclusive use of GCFL, becomes the property of the organization, although authorship will be acknowledged.

Materials produced by GCFL staff, for non-exclusive use of GCFL, will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as to ownership, copyright, and distribution.

Materials include, but not limited to, assignments, tests, forms or computer programs, produced by learners and/or volunteers, are considered personal. GCFL will request permission, in writing, to publish or reproduce any such documents.

Non-Smoking Workplace

The “Ontario Smoking in the Workplace Act” prohibits smoking in all enclosed areas, except designated smoking areas. GCFL will support any local or county legislation as well.

Soliciting of Business

Home sales consultants may not sell or actively market products within the GCFL office during working hours unless approved by the Executive Director, for fundraising initiatives. This policy applies equally to all businesses regardless of their relationship with staff, volunteers, learners or product base.

Code of Conduct

Volunteers of GCFL are expected to exemplify, by their personal conduct, respect for our learners, employees and volunteers in accordance with our Guiding Principles.

It is the expectation that all volunteers conduct themselves in the performance of their duties in a thoroughly professional, respectful and humane manner. Violations of the Code of Conduct will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

All disciplinary actions should be timely and clearly identify the action, acceptable performance/behaviour and the consequences of failure to maintain proper standards of conduct.

Volunteers are expected to demonstrate the following in their conduct:

1. Accept that they are in a position of trust.
2. Respect the privacy, feelings and concerns of all learners receiving services.
3. Adhere to all policies, procedures and practices of GCFL.

4. Use in a professional and appropriate manner any information obtained in the course of professional relationships.
5. Report in writing any conduct or behaviour that violates the code of conduct.
6. Work cooperatively with other persons and/or agencies.
7. Be responsible for their professional conduct.
8. Strive to increase their professional competence and to be prepared to share knowledge and experience with colleagues.
9. Present oneself as positive and professional in appearance, attire, hygiene and conduct.

Dress Code

It is essential that all volunteers remember the importance of dress in relation to the position held or particular assignment being carried out on behalf of the organization. An individual's appearance and the manner in which they care for themselves may reflect the manner in which they care for others.

Dress and conduct reflect respect for oneself, the organization, employees, learners, community partners, and volunteers.

The need for comfortable clothing is essential. However, all clothing must be neat, clean, in good repair, and appropriate for the position.

Volunteers are expected to maintain acceptable standards of personal grooming and hygiene while performing their duties.

The interpretation of the above dress code is at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Fragrance-Free Workplace

GCFL strongly discourages staff, volunteers, learners and Board of Directors members from wearing or bringing into the workplace natural or artificial scents. This includes perfumes, colognes, lotions, scented candles, potpourri, etc., that are perceptible to others. The policy is intended to protect individuals with sensitivities or allergies to fragrances and products that emit scents. It provides that staff, volunteers and learners with a medical necessity for lotions or skin creams that emit odors or scents may request reasonable accommodation.

Books/Resources/Computers and Other Equipment

These can be bought or borrowed. Ask us for prices. If you borrow our books, please don't write in them. Use a notebook or binder to do your work. There is a sign-out binder for the Adult Program. Please return the books as soon as you're done with them.

The use of computers and other office equipment shall be subject to policies and procedures, which will be readily accessible to all members.

Social Media

GCFL believes in using social media in a way that informs, inspires and shows respect for people. Our goals in making better use of new online communication tools (e.g. social media, or social networking sites) are:

- Expand and strengthen GCFL's advocacy work in providing to our communities where everyone has the opportunity to develop the literacy skills to live, learn and work;
- Expand our learners, volunteers and membership;
- Better communicate with existing members and target audiences;
- Strengthen our relationships with our learners, members and supporters;
- Fulfill our mission to teach reading, writing, math, computer and employability skills to those wishing to upgrade through one on one tutoring or in small groups run by professional staff and volunteers;
- Fundraising

Any proposal by GCFL employees and volunteers to use social media applications to expand GCFL service, or promote GCFL, requires the approval of the Executive Director.

GCFL employees and volunteers representing GCFL on social media sites express the official position of GCFL on any issue.

Volunteer Recognition

Gateway is committed to recognizing publicly, the contribution of volunteers and supporting community partners.

We will use opportunities throughout the year, such as the Annual General Meeting in September, newspaper articles, Gateway website, Facebook and

other testimonials to publicly honour and thank our volunteers and community partners.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The goal of the AODA is to create a more accessible Ontario by identifying, preventing and eliminating barriers experienced by person with a disability to the extent possible. A standard for customer service has been established under the AODA to ensure goods and services are, where at all possible, equally accessible to every Ontarian. Gateway will provide training to volunteers, as required under the AODA.

Human Rights

GCFL values respect, inclusion and accessibility:

- We respect diversity in all its forms;
- We adhere to the Canadian Human Rights Act and all appropriate government legislation; and
- We follow the Customer Service Standard of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Confidentiality

1. Volunteers are required to sign a Pledge of Confidentiality and compliance with that agreement is a condition of their participation in our program.
2. Volunteers must never reveal any identifying information about any learner to anyone outside Gateway without the specific written permission of the learner via a release of information form provided by Gateway.
3. Failure to maintain confidentiality could result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with the organization.
4. It is not appropriate to discuss one learner with another learner.
5. Within Gateway, information that is pertinent to the learner's progress may be shared or discussed with authorized and appropriate personnel.
6. Tutors will be encouraged to devise means of non-identifying contact if the learner does not want anyone at his/her residence to be aware of his/her involvement with Gateway.
7. Tutors must return the assessment, and all other information, on termination with a learner.

Health and Safety Policy Statement

Gateway Centre for Learning is committed to preventing the accidental loss of any of its resources, including employees, volunteers and physical assets.

Safety and Security

1. GCFL does not reimburse volunteers for any loss or theft of personal belongings. Volunteers are responsible for placing their personal belongings in a safe place during their volunteer hours. Highly valued personal items should not be brought to the workplace if possible. Theft should be immediately reported to the Executive Director.
2. Any suspicious-looking individuals loitering in the office should be reported to the staff.
3. Any malfunctioning equipment should be reported to the office staff.
4. Any safety hazards within the office or the building should be reported as soon as they are identified to staff.
5. Emergency number is 911.
6. A first aid kit will be kept in the office. Please ask staff for its current location, and notify staff of all injuries as soon as they happen.
7. Any volunteer who has a serious health condition or allergies should disclose this information.
8. Volunteers with a contagious disease are required to cease their duties (or their lessons) for as long as it takes to recover.
9. Volunteers and learners are encouraged to meet at the office for tutoring sessions. Gateway will not be held liable for incidents occurring to tutors or learners who choose to meet off site. Special circumstances may make it mandatory to meet at the office.
10. No personal information about a tutor (e.g. last name, address or telephone number) or personal information about a learner (last name, address or telephone number) will be revealed by staff until the people involved exchange it voluntarily.
11. All volunteers must know the location of each fire exit, and be aware of Gateway's fire drill procedures.

In Case of Smoke or Fire:

- Leave the fire area, taking any persons in the immediate vicinity with you
- Close all doors behind you
- Alert Senior Staff
- Exit the building
- Report to Staff in the parking lot on Dominion Avenue, beside Gateway, for attendance so that Emergency Responders know that the building is clear of staff, visitors and volunteers.

Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace

GCFL prohibits the possession, sale, consumption, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs by employees, learners, volunteers and Board members while in the office, during working hours outside the office, or while on organizational business. Any employee, learner, volunteer or member of the Board found possessing, selling, consuming, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages while on duty will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Any employee, learner, volunteer or member of the Board who is using prescription or over-the-counter drugs that may impair their ability to safely perform the job, or affect the safety or wellbeing of others, must notify a supervisor of such use immediately before starting or resuming work while under the influence of such prescription or over-the-counter drugs.

Failure to comply with the policy may result in immediate termination.

Harassment

GCFL does not tolerate or condone ANY degree of harassment by anyone associated with the organization.

GCFL believes in the prevention of harassment and promotes a harassment-free environment in which all people respect one another and work together to achieve common goals. Please report the incident to the Executive Director in person, by phone (705-527-1522), or email: ed@gatewaycentreforlearning.ca.

Public Relations

The principal spokespersons for GCFL are the Executive Director and the President of the Board. All media interviews and inquiries are to be coordinated through the Executive Director. Board members, GCFL staff, volunteers and its members are not to speak with the media unless specifically instructed.

Customer Service Charter

Gateway is committed to quality customer service. Customer service is a priority for us, and we show this by embedding customer service in our mission, core values, policies and operating procedures.

Gateway creates a welcoming environment for all. We do our best to provide our services in a timely manner that meets or exceeds customers' expectations and needs.

Gateway honours the privacy of our customers. We protect the privacy and personal information of our customers with privacy policies and procedures that meet the requirements of government legislation.

Feedback Requests

We actively ask for feedback at our meetings and training workshops. We have comment card boxes in a public place in our office, our bookstore and from our website. Comment cards are available upon request.

We ask the customers we support to complete a yearly questionnaire, seeking feedback about our services and asking for suggestions for improvement.

Our organization actively consults with our community partners about how we could best serve their needs and the needs of their clients.

We meet regularly with other local community service providers to determine how best to meet the needs of our community.

Complaint and Resolution Process

Gateway values its customers. If anyone has concerns or complaints about our services, we want to know about them. Our customer complaint procedures are visible and accessible. We will handle all complaints in confidence.

If you have a complaint, please contact our Executive Director:

- In person at our office
- By telephone at 705-527-1522
- By email at: ed@gatewaycentreforlearning.ca

Compliments

Gateway would greatly value knowing when you have been impressed or pleased with our services.

Please tell us about your positive experiences via the comment card, email, telephone, mail or our website. We will use these compliments to further improve our services and increase the morale of our staff and volunteers.

Office Information

1. Usual hours of operation of the office are:
Monday to Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
2. The office will be closed on the following statutory holidays: Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Civic Holiday, Labour Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day.
3. During the summer, office hours may be reduced if learners and tutors plan to take a break from tutoring. A summer schedule may be proposed by staff after considering the needs of all learners and tutors.
4. Staff will be on duty whenever the office is open. Gateway members may use the office after hours (for tutoring or meetings) only with permission, and given the proper means of access.
5. In the event of bad weather or a possible emergency closure, Gateway will post the reason for the closure, its anticipated duration and any updated information to the public entrances (if we can access the building), our website, Facebook, our telephone voicemail greeting, The Dock 104.1 FM and KICX 106 FM. Please check before coming in.
6. Volunteers are encouraged to book use of the computers and/or use of the tutoring rooms in advance.

Any new or updated information since the publication of this handbook can be found on our website www.gatewaycentreforlearning.ca.