

How we live together: Guidelines for Volunteers

Welcome to Cadmus Lifesharing Association!

Thank you for your commitment to a year of lifesharing and social renewal.

We look forward to sharing our lives and experiences with you throughout your time of service. Your contributions to Cadmus are great, and we recognize that we could not do what we do without you. Our basic concept of lifesharing includes your presence in our homes. You bring us your goodwill, customs, foods, languages and your life experiences that will be a part of who we are long after you are gone.

You are going to play a significant role in the lives of the people with disabilities whom we support. It is important you that are aware of this and how you help shape their lives. Former volunteers have spoken about the bond that is developed with the individuals that they never expected. Others are surprised to find that they start their year of service with the expectation that they are here to do work but end up developing life-long friendships.

Over the next months you are going to experience challenges and joy, difficulties and successes, fatigue and calmness. Hold the individuals to their potential so that they continue to learn and grow. Don't do for them just because it might be quicker or easier. It's also important to recognize that what looks like baby steps can be giant strides when an individual learns something new.

Within the Cadmus culture of anthroposophy, you can expect a period of self-recognition and awakening as you discover new things about who you are. Be open to new experiences, despite feelings resistance or fear. Be open to the learning that comes with new experiences. Know that you will leave here a different person than when you first arrived.

The information in these next pages is meant to give you some general information for standards that should be followed while living within a Cadmus household. The head of your household will spend time with you to give you more detailed information that is specific to that household and the individuals living there.

While you are with Cadmus, you are a member of a partnership with the head(s) of the household and their family members, the individual with disabilities we support and their family, office staff and a large number of community resources such as Community Access to the Arts (CATA), Blue Rider Stables, the library and local coffee shops. **The reason we are all here is the people we support, and they will always be our primary concern.** We also recognize in order to provide for those individuals we need to take care of the collective team: houseparents, office staff and volunteers to make sure everyone is satisfied with what they are doing, to the best of our ability.

There are many aspects of your role as a member of this partnership and several things to keep in mind:

- Many of our households have been together for a long time, and they will continue to be together for long into the future. We want you to feel empowered to take an active role in the household and hope that you will feel comfortable to make suggestions if you see how to do things differently. You should also recognize that the head of the household has the final say on how things are done, and they may not always take your suggestions.

- The head of your household will spend time with you, especially in the beginning of your service year, to train you in the routines and rhythms of the household, as well as what each individual will need from you. Watch and listen to what happens around you and learn by doing. We know that you will make mistakes sometime, but we hope that you will ask for help and learn from those experiences.
- Take initiative when you see that something in the household needs to be done, from sweeping a dirty floor to engaging an individual in a game. Don't wait to be instructed once you are familiar with the household routines and activities. You might need to pick up the slack and help out if someone is not feeling well, busy with an unexpected task or off for the day.
- It's also important that you clean up after yourself, especially in any common areas, but also in your bedroom.
- Sharing meals is one of the most essential parts of our day, as it is an integral way to build community. This is a social time, to talk about experiences and engage all those around the table in the process. We expect that everyone will eat together and share the same food. If you have a special diet, householders will do their best to accommodate it within the household menus.
- One of the most important things about living within a household is communication. Ask for help if you need it. Speak up if there is something you don't understand. Listen to instructions and advice. Be confident in speaking English.
- When in doubt – about anything – talk to your head of household
- We are all in this together, so the expectation is that we all give a hand in making sure that our households run as smoothly as possible for the benefit of the individuals we support.

Orientation/Training/Monthly Meetings

Upon your arrival, you will complete paperwork that is required for the protection of the individuals with disabilities. You will be required to do fingerprinting as part of a background check. You will also spend time in two days of Orientation provided by different Cadmus community members designed to give you an introduction to what your life will be like during your service year. Some of the information we will give you is required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for everyone who spends time with people with developmental disabilities in our homes. Some of the information is required by Cadmus and includes topics that are specific to our agency. Some of the time will be spent getting to know the other volunteers in Cadmus houses.

Throughout your time with us, you will have the opportunity to attend training sessions held in our region where you will meet people who work in other programs throughout Massachusetts in other kinds of settings. This will expand your knowledge about how services for people with disabilities are delivered in the United States. Again, some of these are required for everyone and some you may choose to attend because of interests you have.

The third component of your training will be monthly meetings for all volunteers held with the Cadmus Director or others within the agency. These meetings are a combination of training and check-in to ensure that you are getting the experiences that you had hoped when you chose to volunteer with us.

Handling Emergencies/Safety Plans

You will find in every Cadmus home an orange safety binder that includes a Safety Plan that will tell you what to do in case of emergency. You should read these plans and become familiar with them so that you are familiar with what to do. Each of our houses holds regular fire drills, which are also noted in the Safety Plan.

The main thing to be aware of is 911 is the telephone number to dial for all emergencies, including fire, police and ambulance. Even if you are doubt about whether something is an emergency, **it is better to be safe than sorry and call 911. Once you have called 911, then notify your householder of the emergency.**

Medication and General Health

In each house there is information about the medications that individuals take. This includes instructions for how and when to give them, as well as side effects to be aware of. The head of the household will go through the details of medications with you in your first weeks of living with us.

You will get specific information and training on the medical issues of each individual in your house. These could include epilepsy or seizure disorder, special diets, diabetes and others. Be sure to pay attention to any signs or symptoms that someone might need medical attention. The householder must be notified if there is any reason to believe that one of the individuals may be not feeling well.

English only

English is our common and primary language, so it is important that you use English only when you are in the presence of individuals, other volunteers who speak a different language, and employees, as well as members of the general community. This includes any situation where you are responsible for or involved with individuals. We value inclusion in all aspects of our lives, so want to ensure that no one is kept out of conversations.

Many of you state that one of your goals for your service year in the US is to improve your English-speaking skills. Immersing yourself in the language and using it as much as possible is the best way for you to learn. Cadmus heads of household and staff will happily give you feedback and assist your learning. There is also an option of English-as-a-second-language classes as a group or with tutors for those interested in this extra help.

Household chores

Much of what you will do during your year with us are practical tasks that create an environment for learning and development. The work of running a house is shared by all of us. That includes cooking, cleaning, laundry and clearing up after meals. It also includes work in the yard – raking, clearing brush and gardening. There are daily, weekly and ongoing maintenance projects that all go into maintaining a household. A calendar will be available in each household that shows who is responsible for different chores. Each house manages these tasks in different ways, but the bottom line is that we are all responsible. It is important to complete these with the care that demonstrates a loving, genuine desire to maintain the order and rhythm of the household. Your householder will tell you the specific tasks and routines that you will be responsible for. You should also be prepared to help out with extra tasks when another member of the household is away or not able to pitch in. You should also be prepared to help with things like snow removal, even if it is your day off.

Driving Safety

When you are driving, your safety and that of all passengers if in your hands. Everyone in the vehicle must always wear seat belts. You must obey speed limits and other traffic signs. Be aware that the speed limit on most of our roads is lower than you might be used to. You must have your license with you any time you are driving and know where other documents, such as insurance information and registration, are kept in the car.

All accidents, even the most minor and those where there are no injuries, must be reported immediately to your householder and to the police by calling 911.

Parking tickets or moving violations like speeding, driving recklessly or going through a traffic light are your responsibility.

Vehicle Use for Time Off

The primary purpose of having vehicles in our homes is for the individuals, so it is a privilege to have access to a vehicle for your time off. This is not something that you can always count on – it must be arranged in advance with your householder.

You must get permission from your householder, in advance, for using a vehicle to go more than 50 miles away from your household, taking a vehicle overnight or driving it out of Berkshire County.

Any changes in agreed-upon plans need to be communicated to your houseparent.

All houseparents have the discretion to not give volunteers access to a car for time off.

Cell phones

We expect that you will have full presence of mind and undivided attention to the individuals, so there should be no cell phone use when you are with them. That includes during CATA classes or at the pool when others are with the individuals.

You must always have a cell phone with you when you are in the community with an individual so that you can call your householder or emergency help, if needed.

Talk to your householder about phone calls and data usage for your personal use.

International calls are not covered through house land lines, so please speak to your householder about the best way to make international calls.

Vacations and Time Off

Each volunteer will have a minimum of twenty-eight days of vacation/holiday during your service year. This must be scheduled with your householder before you make plans or purchase tickets to be sure that the needs of the individuals are met.

You will have one day off per week, which will be scheduled with your householder.

Down time and leisure time are available at other times. Please talk to your householder about this as needs vary from house to house. Some houses have rest hours, early bedtimes or sleep-in days that may allow for additional time off.

If you are not needed in your assigned household because of individual(s) being away, you may be asked to help with individuals in another household within the Cadmus community.

It is important to communicate to your houseparent if your plans change or if you will not be home as you had arranged.

Schedules/Activities

Each household displays a weekly schedule that will show where individuals need to be at different times. It is important to be familiar with this schedule and with the various activities so that you are sure to get to places on time. You should also anticipate how much time it might take to prepare to leave the house, as this can vary among individuals. It is disrespectful to others to arrive late to activities.

Much of your time will be spent taking individuals to various activities and assisting them to participate. If you are with individuals at another location, such as CATA or Blue Rider Stable, and are unsure how you should participate there, ask the people directing that activity. Even if someone from another location is leading or teaching an activity, you are expected to pay attention to the individuals in your care throughout the activity.

Pocket Money

At the beginning of each month, you will be given pocket money. This is meant to be used for your recreational and leisure activities, as well as personal hygiene products, such as soap, shampoo, etc.

Smoking/Vaping

There is no smoking allowed in any Cadmus home or car. There is no smoking allowed when you are responsible for the care of individuals.

Drinking Alcohol or using Marijuana

In Massachusetts, it is unlawful to use marijuana and alcohol if you are under 21 years of age. It is also unlawful to provide someone under the age of 21 with marijuana or alcohol.

Regardless of your age, you may not use marijuana or alcohol when you are responsible for the care of individuals.

Regardless of your age, you may not drive while drinking from an open container of an alcoholic beverage.

Driving While Under the Influence of Alcohol or Marijuana

By Massachusetts law, persons may not drive while under the influence of alcohol or any intoxicating substance. If a police officer has reasonable grounds to believe that a person is driving under the influence, a breathalyzer or blood test may be required. The driver has the right to refuse to take the test, but this will result in the automatic loss of license for a period of 120 days.

If you refuse to take a required test or are found to be driving while under the influence of alcohol or intoxicating substance, you will be dismissed from your volunteer service with Cadmus.

A conviction of driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol and result in a fine of \$500 - \$5000 and up to two and a half years in jail.

It is unlawful for someone under the age of 21 to drive a car with alcohol in it unless accompanied by a parent.

Social Media/Use of Photographs

Photographs of individuals should not be posted on any personal social media site. We do ask that you take photos while you are with the individuals and send them to the Cadmus office staff so they can include them in official Cadmus social media pages once we get the required proper permission.

If you are interested in working with office staff to keep social media pages current, please let the Cadmus Director know.

Photographs of the individuals can be privately shared with your friends and family but should not identify anyone's surname.

Confidentiality

We are required by federal law to keep all information about individuals confidential, unless we have written permission from their legal guardian to share it. This is why you cannot post photos on personal social media sites. When in the community with individuals, introduce them using their first name only. The only place details can be shared is at hospitals, doctors or dentists, as we have permission in place for these sites.

Quarterly Evaluation Tool

You will meet with your householder at least one time per quarter to have a conversation about how you are doing in your service with the individuals and within your household and the broader Cadmus community. This information will be used to complete your reference letter at the end of the service year.

Process of Separation

We recognize that the placements we make after "meeting" over the phone or by Skype may not be the best match for everyone. Either the volunteer or the householder may request a change of placements, either within Cadmus or to another agency in Great Barrington or elsewhere. This request should be made with the Cadmus Director.

Once the request is made, the volunteer and householder will meet with the Director to determine the best course of action. The volunteer agency which sent you to Cadmus will also be notified and involved in the decision-making process. Every effort will be made to find an appropriate place for the volunteer, but it might take some time.

It is expected that in this situation, the volunteer will continue their commitment to the individuals in the household and carry out responsibilities as previously established.

Zero Tolerance Rules of Conduct

Your off-duty time is yours to do as you wish, but as your sponsor while in the United States, you are ultimately responsible to Cadmus. If you put Cadmus, any of our homes or our license at risk due to your behavior, you will be asked to leave your volunteer service without working to find another placement for you.

If you put any person – an individual, another volunteer, householder or anyone you spend time with – at risk due to your behavior, you will be asked to leave without working to find another placement for you.

If you consistently fail to fulfill your responsibilities or take an active role with the individuals and your household, you will be asked to leave without working to find another placement for you.

If you are found to be aggressive, abusive or neglectful toward any individuals, you will be asked to leave without working to find another placement for you.

As mentioned above, this booklet is meant to be a general guideline for you. You will get more specific training in your initial orientation and within your household. Read through the guidelines before you arrive and then again once you are here. Make notes in the margins if you have questions; we will review these guidelines in your initial orientation to Cadmus. Hold onto this booklet in case you have questions throughout your service year.

Some questions for you to think about as you prepare for this life-changing experience are:

What do you want to bring to Cadmus?

What will you want to leave with us?