Family House Group Volunteering FAQ

- **How can I volunteer in a group?**

  Family House organizes group volunteers to help with dinners and group activities for our guests. It is truly meaningful to have volunteers make hot meals for and offer their time and support to our guests who spend long days in the hospital.

- **How do I schedule a date to volunteer?**

  If you are interested in a group volunteering opportunity, please contact our Manager of Volunteer Programs Leo Bake (lbake@familyhouse.org) with the following information:

  - Date(s) of interest
  - House preference (Neville, Shadyside, or University Place)
  - Type of event (dinner, baking, etc.)
  - Group arrival time
  - Serving time
  - Menu selections

  *If you do not have all this information available to you right away, please let us know at least 1 week in advance of your group’s scheduled date.

- **What time should I come to volunteer?**

  We ask that dinners are prepared to serve between 5:30 pm and 7:00 pm. You may arrive as early as 3 pm (when our staff is done cleaning the kitchens) in order to prepare the meal you are cooking for our guests. We have available days all throughout the week for which you can volunteer to cook.

  If you would like to make a breakfast, you may come in as early as 7:00 am. We prefer that breakfasts are kept to Friday, Saturday, or Sundays, because Family House is able to provide a light continental breakfast for guests Monday-Thursday.

- **What are the days of highest occupancy (i.e. when are the most amount of people staying at Family House) so that my volunteering is most impactful?**

  We have our times of highest occupancy from Monday through Thursday. These tend to be the most impactful days of the week for groups to volunteer.

- **Can I volunteer on a weekend?**
Absolutely! We encourage volunteers to make one of the following meals if they would like to serve on a weekend; Friday breakfast, Saturday breakfast, or Sunday dinner. We tend to have less guests over the weekends so this may mean less engagement with our guests.

• **How many people can I bring to volunteer?**

  We prefer to have a maximum of 8-10 volunteers at one time. This is because it can get crowded in our kitchens when a lot of people are cooking at once.

• **How many people am I cooking for?**

  This will depend on which house you wind up cooking for. Generally, you should prepare to serve around 50 guests for a meal.

• **What facilities does Family House provide?**

  Each Family House location is equipped with a double kitchen – two ovens, two available stovetops, and two large refrigerators. Family House has pots, pans, and kitchen utensils available for your use but, you are also welcome to bring your own. We have some limited food storage containers available for your use but, if you are cooking hot food we recommend that you bring disposable aluminum pans, which allow for easy storage and clean-up. If you are interested in grilling food, only the Neville and Shadyside House locations have grills. If you are interested in touring some of Family House’s facilities before you volunteer, you may contact our Manager of Volunteer Programs Leo Bake ([lbake@familyhouse.org](mailto:lbake@familyhouse.org)) for more information.

• **What are my responsibilities as a volunteer?**

  We ask that you be responsible for bringing all of the ingredients you are planning to use for your meal preparation. Additionally, we ask that you provide enough paper products for guests to use while eating your meal. We also ask that you are responsible for preparing/serveing the food to our guests. We also ask that your group take care of post meal clean up, once the guests have enjoyed their meal and your event is over.

  In addition, we ask that you please wear gloves when you prepare the meal for our guests in order to prevent the spreading of germs (our guests here at Family House are primarily hospital patients and this is particularly important!) - You can either bring gloves or ask for some from the front office in each of the houses.

  Each of these responsibilities are extremely important to the success of your group event and how it impacts our guests here at Family House. We want your group to enjoy serving our guests as much as they enjoy the food you provide for them!

• **What are some recommended food or menu items to prepare?**
Whatever you plan on making should be a part of a well-balanced meal that is relatively easy to prepare for 50 people. Please note that, while it is easy to make, simply pasta is not a well-balanced meal—add on a tossed or fruit salad, too!

Some successful meals in the past have been: breakfast for dinner, stir fry, chicken with veggies, baked potato bar, chili and salad, and soup and salad bar.

- **Can I make food at home to serve the guests?**

  Only if it is prepackaged or prepared by a professional facility. You could bring Chips Ahoy chocolate chip cookies or a rotisserie chicken from Giant Eagle, but not a lasagna from home, unfortunately. However, you are welcome to make your special homemade dishes using our house facilities!

- **Should I bring beverages?**

  You are welcome to bring beverages if you like. Family House has coffee machines, tea bags, and water machines available. We do have an ice machine but it is designed for single servings (if you need to fill a cooler, please buy a bag of ice). Please note that Family House does not allow alcoholic beverages in any of our houses.

- **What do I do about leftovers?**

  Any leftovers that you have can be properly preserved in the community refrigerator. If you did not get as many guests as you expected for the meal that you prepared, this is likely because guests are still in the hospital visiting their family members. Any extra food that you are able to save for the guests for later is always greatly appreciated!

- **Do I have to be concerned about dietary restrictions for the guests?**

  We do not require that you make gluten-free, vegetarian, or other restricted diet options. You are, of course, welcome to make those options on your own if you would like.

- **What are the addresses and phone numbers for the houses?**

  **University Place House:**
  116 Thackeray Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213
  412-578-3183

  **Shadyside House:**
  5245 Centre Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15232
  412-802-8210
• Where can I find parking for my group?

Available parking varies depending on which house you will be volunteering with. Parking tends to be limited at all of our houses.

**University Place House:**

Parking is the most limited at University Place. You may pull up to the house to unload your group and materials however, the spaces in our lot are designated to the managers and guests. You are welcome to use the metered parking nearby, which lasts until 6PM (and is then free) or park in the UPMC Presbyterian Hospital parking garage, for which Family House can provide a voucher that will bring the parking price down to $5.

**Shadyside House:**

Parking at Shadyside is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Typically, the spots in the Shadyside lot are filled by our guests. If there is room you are welcome to use those spots. Metered street parking is also available nearby or, alternatively, the managers at the Shadyside House can provide vouchers for the Aiken and Cypress garages, which are affiliated with the Shadyside Hospital (this voucher will bring your parking price down to $5).

**Neville House:**

Parking at Neville is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Usually these spots are filled by our guests, but if there is room you are welcome to use those spots. There is one-hour permit only street parking on Neville until 6 PM which means that if you park at 5 PM or later, your car will be safe until the end of your volunteering time. Alternatively, if Neville is full, there is street parking available one block away on both Centre and Fifth Avenue.

• I’m feeling a little sick the day that I’m supposed to volunteer. Should I still go help out or stay home?

If you or a member of your group are sick the day you are supposed to volunteer, please do stay home. Some of our guests have compromised immune systems and are more at risk for catching symptoms from outside sources.

• Is there anything else I should know?
We couldn’t do this without you! The lifeblood of Family House are the volunteers who bring our guests comfort, laughter, and a true “home away from home”.

Thank you for all that you do as a volunteer!

- **Unanswered questions?**

You may contact our Manager of Volunteer Programs Leo Bake via email (lbake@familyhouse.org) or by phone (412-647-4917), with any unanswered questions that you may have about volunteering with Family House.