

# **HELP & SHELTER**



## **GOVERNANCE, POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL**

**Updated January 2018**

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# I OUTLINE OF THE ORGANISATION

## 1. About Help & Shelter

- 1.1 Help & Shelter is a non-governmental organisation formed as a response to the high incidence of violence, alcoholism and poverty in Guyana, the increase in family instability and the lack of support for victims wishing to leave abusive situations and/or in need of counselling and crisis services.
- 1.2 Help & Shelter was registered as a not-for-profit company under the Companies Act in November 1994 and the organisation was formally launched on 26 November 1995 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women).
- 1.3 The crisis service became operational in January 1996 in an office kindly provided by the Georgetown Legal Aid Clinic (now Guyana Legal Aid Clinic). It relocated on 1 March 1997 to the bottom flat of a building in the then Ministry of Labour Compound on Homestretch Avenue, Georgetown, provided courtesy of the government.
- 1.4 Help & Shelter's shelter for abused women and their children (the Ixora), was built in 1999 with funding provided by the Basic Needs Trust Fund on land donated by the government. First opened in November 2000, the shelter had to be shut for 3 months in 2003 and from February 2004 to March 2006 due to lack of funds. The re-opening on 7 March 2006 was made possible through an arrangement with the government for the shelter to be used as both a place of safety for victims of domestic violence and as a temporary home for female and under-14 male victims of trafficking in persons.
- 1.5 Help & Shelter has become a recognised leader in the fight against violence in Guyana, particularly in the areas of domestic, sexual and child abuse. Although Georgetown-based it is a national organisation because of its countrywide outreach and public education work and networking.

### Philosophy

Help & Shelter believes -

- That the culture of tolerance of violence must and can be changed through education.
- That everyone is a unique and valuable person.
- That everyone has the right to the power to take control of their own life.
- In the equal rights of all human beings.
- That no one has the right to be violent to another human being.

### Mission

Our mission is to contribute to bringing about a society where attitudes to the use of violence and practices of violence have been transformed.

Help & Shelter includes sexual, physical and psychological abuse in its definition of violence.

### Goals

1. To work to build respect for the rights of women, children, youth and men to live free from violence and the threat of violence.
2. To assist women, children, youth and men to develop alternative ways of handling power and resolving conflict.
3. To widen options for victims of domestic violence.
4. To establish a resource base to ensure the sustainability of Help & Shelter.

## **Objectives**

**For Goal 1:** To actively foster a high level of awareness among all sectors, both governmental and non-governmental, about the prevalence, causes and costs of violence, including violence in the home and in other personal relations, and about alternatives to the use of violence.

**For Goal 2:** To provide progressively enhanced counselling for women, children, youth and men who are the victims or perpetrators of violence.

**For Goal 3:** (1) To provide temporary (up to 6 months) shelter for abused/trafficked women and their children, with training that can develop psychological and practical skills needed for increased self-sufficiency.

(2) To contribute to improved legal recourse for victims of domestic, sexual and child abuse.

**For Goal 4:** (1) To work towards the economic self-support of the shelter.

(2) To develop and implement a well-articulated fundraising plan.

## **Related Areas of Action**

1. Public education, advocacy and networking with like-minded individuals and groups, including men, youth, children and children's advocates organising against violence.
2. Provision of counselling services, including a 24-hour crisis hotline.
3. The maintenance of the shelter.
4. Lobbying for the strengthening of relevant laws and implementation mechanisms where necessary.
5. Fundraising.

## **The Work of Help & Shelter**

The work of Help & Shelter is carried out by such employees and contractors as available funding enables the organisation to pay (collectively called personnel) and volunteers.

No board member can be an employee of Help & Shelter but a suitably qualified board member may be contracted to provide specific services to Help & Shelter as an independent contractor.

Anyone can become a Help & Shelter volunteer as long as s/he supports the organisation's philosophy, mission and goals and subscribes and adheres to the sensitive and other issues and child protection policies.

Volunteers are always needed and play a vital part in counselling (both face-to-face and hotline), public education and advocacy, operating the shelter, fundraising and administration.

New volunteers are given orientation in the work of Help & Shelter and training in counselling and public education skills is provided to those wishing (and considered suitable) to become involved in those areas.

## **Relationships**

The relationships within Help & Shelter are based on mutual interest and shared commitments to human rights and the eradication of all forms of violence, and are constantly intensified through the Help & Shelter governance structures as well as through its common activities. Help & Shelter engages with a diverse range of external stakeholders, including government, civil society organisations, the media, academics and the general public. Help & Shelter aims to continually build on these relationships in an effort to forge strategic alliances in the fight against violence.

## 2. Help & Shelter Governance Structure

### 2.1 General

Help & Shelter is a company limited by guarantee incorporated on 24 November 1994 under the Companies Act, Chapter 89:01, and continued under the Companies Act 1991. As it is a company limited by guarantee (i.e. has charitable purposes), it is permitted to dispense with 'Inc.' as the last word in its name.

Help & Shelter is governed by its members through general meetings, including the annual general meeting (AGM), at which the board of directors is elected to direct and oversee the management of the company/organisation. The board is assisted by a coordinator, who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

Help & Shelter's structure is governed by its articles of incorporation and by-laws (available from the Help & Shelter office and on our website [www.hands.org.gy](http://www.hands.org.gy)). These deal with the following issues:

#### Articles of Incorporation:

- Name of the company
- Purpose for which the company was formed
- Minimum and maximum number of directors
- Not-for-profit nature of the company
- Legal liability of the company's members
- Provision for the distribution of assets on dissolution

#### By-laws:

- Membership
- General meetings
- Appointment and retirement of directors
- Powers and duties of the board
- Accounting requirements
- Provisions for the winding up of the company

## 2.2 Accountability & Transparency

### 2.2.1 Accountability

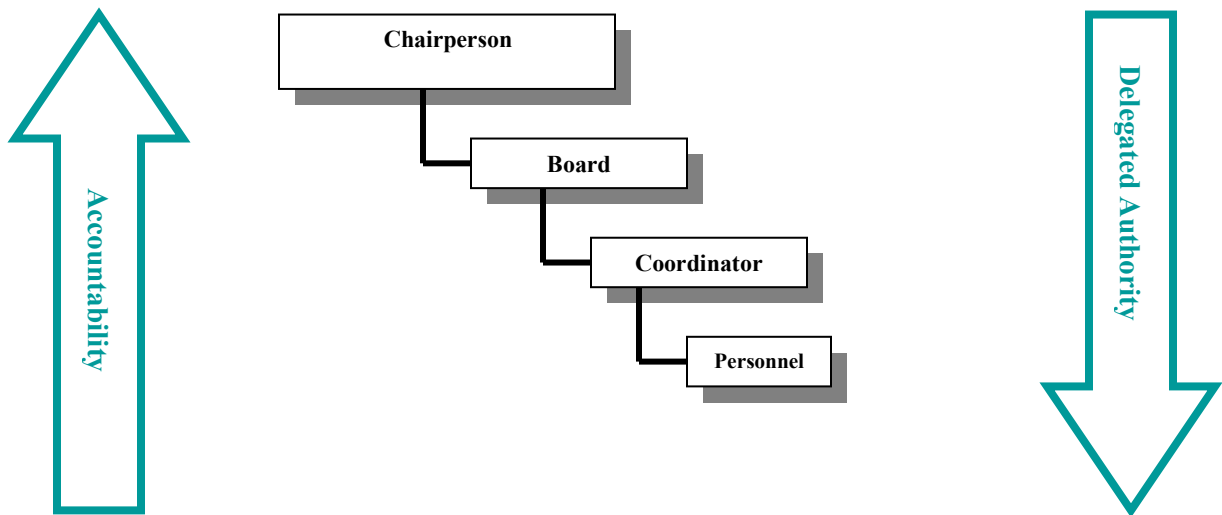
The organisation is accountable to:

- Its members
- Its beneficiaries
- Its funders
- The public
- The state

### 2.2.1 Transparency

Transparency is achieved by Help & Shelter making its aims, objectives and work known to its beneficiaries, funders, other organisations and the general public by:

- Publishing and disseminating annual narrative and financial reports, as well as reports on particular activities.
- Using the media to tell the public about the organisation's work.
- Mounting public education campaigns.
- Maintaining regular dialogue with government and other agencies.
- Participating in NGO networks.



## 2.3 Membership

The members of the company are the persons who ‘own’ it in the sense that in general meeting they have the power to change the articles of incorporation and by-laws and to elect directors and so decide who will exercise the powers of the company on their behalf.

The liability of each member of the company is limited by her/his guarantee that if and when the company is wound up s/he will, if necessary, pay up to \$1,000 towards the company’s debts.

Rules for membership are laid down in the by-laws, which include provision for the expulsion of members who consistently fail to play an active role in the organisation without good reason.

Help & Shelter members are expected to:

- Subscribe to the organisation’s philosophy, mission, goals and objectives
- Subscribe and adhere to the organisation’s child protection policy, policy on sensitive and other issues and codes of conduct
- Play an active role in Help & Shelter’s work
- Participate, where possible and applicable, in Help & Shelter’s organised events

Each member of Help & Shelter is entitled to one vote at general meetings in person or by proxy.

## 2.4 Company Meetings

In addition to the annual general meeting, special general meetings can be called by the board and or extraordinary general meetings can be requisitioned by one tenth of the members.

## 2.5 Functions and Membership of the Board

In so far as possible, members of the board should have a broad range of qualities and expertise, including professional skills, management experience and recognition among stakeholders and the public, and should complement each other and the organisation’s personnel.

In so far as possible the board should also be gender-balanced and should include persons from different age and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The primary function of board is governance. The board is responsible for protecting the interests of Help & Shelter and its stakeholders.

The main responsibilities of the board are:

- Policy
  - Formulate broad policies and objectives for the organisation.
  - Determine, monitor and strengthen the organisation's programmes and services.
- Strategy
  - Assign priorities within Help & Shelter's mission and objectives.
  - Ensure effective organisational planning and the acquisition of sufficient resources for the proper functioning of the organisation.
- Ownership
  - Represent Help & Shelter to all important stakeholders.
  - Govern the organisation.
  - Ensure the organisation's sustainability.
- Oversight
  - Safeguard Help & Shelter's mission and philosophy.
  - Determine and monitor the organisation's activities.
  - Account to the public for the work of Help & Shelter, including through fiscal accountability.
  - Ensure that the organisation is responsive to the needs of its stakeholders.
  - Evaluate the performance of the coordinator, other personnel and itself.
  - Ensure that systems are in place for the efficient recording, collection and evaluation of data.
  - Ensure the correct functioning and application of internal control policies and procedures.
  - Ensure compliance with all relevant policies and procedures and codes of conduct.
  - Ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and donor requirements.
- Impact
  - Assess the organisation's impact, relevance and efficiency, by monitoring activities
  - Enhance the organisation's public standing.
- Leadership
  - Provide continuity for the organisation.
  - Develop the long-term vision to lead the organisation in strategic directions.
  - Guide and support the coordinator and other personnel.
  - Recruit and orient new board members.
- Management
  - Responsible for overall strategic and operational management of Help & Shelter.
  - Ensure implementation of policies.
  - Establish and monitor the work of board committees to deal with various aspects of the organisation's work.
  - Manage the human, financial and physical resources of the organisation.

### **Composition of the Board**

The Board elected at the AGM comprises:

- Chairperson
- Vice-Chairperson
- Treasurer

The term of office of a board member is one year. All board members are eligible for re-election.

The board appoints the secretary, who may, but need not be, a member of the board.

The board meets at least monthly.

## 2.6 Board Member's Responsibilities

A board member is willing to dedicate time, resources and skills to the organisation. In particular, a board member

- Serves the organisation first and avoids conflicts that could harm the organisation.
- Is able to think strategically.
- Is able to maintain objectivity, exercise good judgement and serve with fairness and integrity.
- Is able to work in a team.
- Regularly attends board meetings and important related meetings.
- Makes a serious commitment to participate actively in the board's work.
- Volunteers for and willingly accepts assignments and completes them thoroughly and on time
- Stays informed about board matters, prepares him/herself well for meetings, and reviews and comments on minutes and reports.
- Gets to know other board members and builds a collegial working relationship that contributes to consensus.
- Is an active participant in the board's evaluation and planning efforts.
- Is an active participant in efforts to maintain good relations with donors and in fundraising for the organisation.
- Is an active participant in evaluation of the performance of the organisation in achieving its mission.
- Is a partner in achieving the organisation's mission.
- Is an active participant in monitoring financial planning and financial reports.
- Is an active participant in discussion of issues confronting the organisation.
- Is a member of and an active participant on one or more board committee.
- Is a spokesperson for Help & Shelter.
- Plays a role in relations with donors and in fundraising activities.
- Maintains good relationships with the other directors, the coordinator and other personnel and volunteers.

## 2.7 Officers' Responsibilities

### 2.7.1 Chairperson

In addition to the responsibilities outlined in board Member Responsibilities (see 2.6 above):

- Is chairperson of the board and of the whole body.
- Provides leadership to the board.
- Chairs meetings of the board.
- Encourages the board's role in strategic planning.
- Helps guide and mediate board actions with regard to organisational priorities and governance concerns.
- Informally evaluates the participation and effectiveness of board members.
- Leads the personnel performance evaluation process.
- Serves as point of reference for any issues that cannot be worked out mutually by employees, in line with the procedures laid down in the Help & Shelter Employment Policy (see Section III, 1.).
- Acts as chief spokesperson for Help & Shelter.
- Performs other responsibilities assigned by the board.

### 2.7.2 Vice Chairperson

In addition to the responsibilities outlined in board Member Responsibilities (see 2.6 above):

- Performs chairperson responsibilities when the chairperson cannot be available (see 2.7.1 above).
- Reports to the chairperson.
- Works closely with the chairperson and secretary.
- Performs other responsibilities as assigned by the board.



### 2.7.3 Treasurer

In addition to the responsibilities outlined in board Member Responsibilities (see 2.6 above):

- Is responsible for overseeing the effective financial management of the organisation.
- Works with the coordinator and finance officer to provide budgets to the board.
- Ensures development and board review of financial policies and procedures.
- Ensures implementation of financial policies and procedures.
- Ensures that the financial resources of the organisation meet its needs.
- Liaises with personnel and volunteers about financial matters.
- Works with the coordinator, finance officer and auditor on the production of the annual audited accounts for discussion and approval in the first instance by the board and subsequently by the AGM.

### 2.7.4 Volunteer Representatives

A board member is assigned to represent and oversee the volunteers as outlined in the Volunteers Policy.

### 2.7.5 Secretary

- Maintains records of board meetings and ensures effective management of Help & Shelter' records.
- Ensures minutes are distributed to members shortly after each meeting.
- Prepares and sends out notices of and agendas for meetings.
- Is sufficiently familiar with legal documents (articles, by-laws etc.) to note applicability during meetings.
- Maintains records of all AGMs.
- Makes annual returns and files appropriate documentation with the Companies Registry as required.
- Advises the board on statutory obligations and procedures.

## 2.8 Role of the Coordinator

Overall, the coordinator has the following roles:

- Manager – Is responsible for the coordinating the day-to-day operations of Help & Shelter and the work of personnel and volunteers and for implementing courses of action. S/he assists the board in managing the human, financial and physical resources of the organisation.
- Leader – Liaises with volunteers and personnel to ensure their active participation in the work of Help & Shelter.
- Information Bearer – Ensures that the board and personnel have sufficient and up-to-date reports and information.
- Networker – Ensures that the organisation's networking linkages are maintained, enhanced and expanded.

The coordinator attends board meetings but is not a member of the board.

## 2.9 Volunteers

Much of the work of Help & Shelter depends upon the commitment and active involvement of volunteers. Volunteers are involved at all levels of the organisation and mechanisms are in place to ensure the effective integration of voluntary with paid work.

A register of volunteers is maintained and regularly updated.

Volunteers who have demonstrated an active commitment to the work of Help & Shelter may but are not required to apply for membership.

Help & Shelter volunteers are expected to:

- Subscribe to the organisation's philosophy, mission, goals and objectives.
- Subscribe and adhere to the organisation's child protection and sensitive and other issues policies and codes of conduct.

- Comply with all applicable guidelines, policies and procedures.
- Play an active role in Help & Shelter's work.
- Participate, where possible and applicable, in Help & Shelter-organised events.

## II FINANCE

### 1. Budget Process and Responsibilities

Help & Shelter's financial year runs from 1 January to 31 December.

Help & Shelter has such bank accounts (savings and current) for its own funds as the board considers necessary having regard to sound financial management and opens and operates such additional accounts as are required for the proper administration of project funds.

The annual budget and budgets for specific projects are drafted by the coordinator and finance officer in consultation with the treasurer. They are then discussed with and approved by the board.

The table below illustrates Help & Shelter financial transactions:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Payroll</b>	<b>Monthly</b>
<b>Bank reconciliations</b>	<b>Monthly</b>
<b>Year End reconciliations</b>	<b>January/February</b>
<b>Audit</b>	<b>March-April</b>
<b>AGM</b>	<b>July</b>
<b>Budget process</b>	<b>January/February</b>
<b>Donor reports</b>	<b>As stipulated in relevant agreement</b>
<b>Activity reports</b>	<b>As stipulated in relevant agreement</b>
<b>Action Plan</b>	<b>January/February</b>
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>As renewals fall due</b>

### 2. Audit Arrangements

The auditor, who/which must hold a practicing certificate from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Guyana and be independent of the organisation and its officers, is appointed on an annual basis by the AGM.

The finance officer and coordinator provide the auditor with all necessary documentation in relation to the audit. The auditor completes the audit and presents a draft for discussion with the coordinator, finance officer and treasurer. The final draft is presented to the board by the treasurer. If all is found to be in order, the document is approved by the board and signed by two of its members, normally the chairperson and the secretary.

The final audited accounts are made available with the notice of the AGM for discussion and formal adoption if approved. Copies are subsequently lodged with the Companies Registrar.

### 3. Delegated Authority

Area of Authority	Limits	Delegated Persons
Legal documents		Any two of chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer, secretary
Cheques		Any two of chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer, secretary, coordinator, one or more designated board member(s)
Capital Expenses	Up to \$20,000	Coordinator
Capital Expenses	Over \$20,000	Board
Employee Advances		Any two of the authorised bank signatories
Leave		Any one of chairperson, vice-chairperson or treasurer with no objection of the board
Contracts of Service & for Services		Any one of chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer or secretary with approval of board
Project Agreements		Any one of chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer or secretary with approval of board

### 4. Accounting Policies & Procedures

#### 4.1 Accounting Policies

##### 4.1.1 Accounting convention

Accounts are to be prepared under the historical cost convention. The day-to-day transactions should be recorded at the monetary value of the goods or services.

##### 4.1.2 Basis of Accounting

Accounts are maintained on the accrual basis, except for income, which is accounted for on a cash basis.

##### 4.1.3 Income

Income represents grants from donors, cash donations, proceeds from fundraising and self-sustainability activities and interest received from bank deposits and on investments.

Grants, cash donations and interest received from bank deposits and investments are to be recognised as income in the period in which they are received.

#### **4.1.4 Expenditure**

Expenditure represents expenses incurred by Help & Shelter. These are recorded on the accrual basis.

#### **4.1.5 Depreciation**

Depreciation is provided for on the straight line basis at rates sufficient to write off the cost of the assets over their estimated useful lives. A full year's depreciation is charged in the year of acquisition and none in the year of disposal.

#### **4.1.6 Taxation**

No provision is made for taxation payable as Help & Shelter has been accorded charitable status and is therefore exempt from taxation.

#### **4.1.7 Currency of accounts**

Accounts are created to reflect the budget line items of approved project budgets. All accounts are prepared in Guyana currency to comply with legal requirements. Supplemental financial statements in foreign currency may be prepared to meet donor requirements.

### **4.2 Procedures**

#### **4.2.1 Objectives of accounting procedures**

- To record and classify all transactions accurately and completely
- To maintain a complete record of all:
  - Revenue received
  - Expenditure incurred
  - Assets owned
  - Liabilities to third parties
- To report to donors on all required financial information.

#### **4.2.2 General ledger**

The General Ledger Accounting System is designed to improve the timeliness and quality of information available to management. Financial information includes information on assets, liabilities, revenue, funding and expenses.

The finance officer is responsible for producing all final general ledger outputs. Among the principal responsibilities are:

- Receipt and coding of all source information into the general ledger.
- Verification and input of the information related to expenses, budget, funding, revenue, assets and liabilities.
- Production and distribution of financial statements including general ledger reports to the directors, donors and other interested parties.

The source of data for the general ledger system is the other sub-systems: budgeting, fixed assets, cash and payroll systems. This data is used in the preparation of management and financial reports.

The general ledger has separate accounts for each budget line for each donor.

#### **Procedures**

##### **Monthly**

- Record expenditure by project activities.
- Record other payments not relating to projects.
- Record grants and other income received during the month.
- Extract monthly trial balance.
- Identify and record (pass) journal entries for accrued charges and prepayments (if required).

### **Yearly**

- Prepare end of year trial balance.
- Make adjustments for accruals, depreciation and any other non-cash entries as appropriate.
- Reverse year-end accruals after close of financial year. This is required to avoid overstatement of expenses.

## **4.2.3 Cash management and disbursement**

### **Procedures**

- All cash received is properly accounted for by the issue of numbered receipts and entries into the cash book.
- All cash received is deposited intact in the respective bank accounts within two working days of receipt.
- A separate bank account is where possible opened for each project and where not possible, a separate cost code within the general ledger is maintained.
- There is separation of responsibility for requisitioning and approving payments by cash/cheque.
- There is separation of responsibility for handling the cash/cheques and that of recording.
- All cash transactions are properly captured by the general ledger system.
- All payments are properly verified and approved prior to payment.
- All payment vouchers are numbered.
- Creditor payments are made by cheque wherever possible.
- All vouchers and supporting documentation are properly stamped “paid” before cheques are dispatched.
- Proper and timely bank reconciliations are prepared and independently reviewed.
- The Crisis service petty cash float does not exceed \$25,000.
- The Shelter petty cash float does not exceed \$50,000.
- Petty cash is physically checked against the general ledger every week.
- Petty cash floats are kept physically separate.
- All petty cash is secured in metal cash boxes.

### **Donor requirements**

All specific donor requirements in relation to the incurring of expenditure and documentation will be complied with.

## **4.2.4 Budget and expenditure**

Budgetary control is exercised by:

- Recording daily expenditure under budget headings.
- Recording cumulative expenditure under budget headings .
- Comparing and monitoring cumulative expenditure by budget headings to the original (or revised) budget.
- Obtaining donor approval in advance for revisions of budgets.

## **4.2.5 Fixed assets**

Fixed assets are tangible assets that have been acquired either through purchase or donation with the intention of being used on a continuing basis for a period exceeding one year.

All fixed assets are included in a fixed asset register. Other assets are monitored but are not included in the register.

To facilitate proper financial and management control, fixed assets are grouped into two categories: Crisis Service and Shelter.

Fixed assets are recorded at cost of purchase or market value for donated assets.

### **Procedures**

Principal activities:

- Recording opening balances of existing fixed assets in the asset registers (either at cost for asset purchases or fair market value for asset donations).
- Updating the registers for additions in the month of purchase or donation.
- Updating the register for disposals in the month of disposal.

- Recording additions and disposals of fixed assets in the general ledger.
- Verifying the existence of each item listed by performing a quarterly physical inventory count.
- Assigning asset tag numbers or a suitable reference number to each asset.
- Removing fully depreciated or obsolete assets from the register.

#### 4.2.6 Procurement of goods and services

The purpose of the procurement procedures is to ensure that:

- Help & Shelter obtains the maximum value for money on all its procurements of goods and services.
- Procure goods and services are delivered in the correct quantity and quality and in a timely manner.

#### Guiding principles

- No person working with Help & Shelter in any capacity may participate in the selection, award or administration of a contract if a real or apparent conflict of interest would be involved.
- The coordinator must review grant agreements to ensure the donor regulations on the persons to be excluded from participating in the procurement of goods and services are effectively excluded.

#### Procedures

- Expenditure on goods or services of \$20,000 or less may be made by the coordinator using her/his best judgement and subject to budget.
- Expenditure on goods or services of more than \$20,000 must be approved by the board.
- Goods and services valued at more than \$20,000 are procured as follows:
  - The coordinator obtains quotations from at least three different known suppliers of the required goods or services .
  - The coordinator compares and analyses the quotations and documents justification for recommending a particular vendor.
  - In making a recommendation, in addition to prices, the coordinator must consider other factors such as reliability, previous satisfactory performance, quality products/services and delivery schedules.
  - The board approves the coordinator's recommendation unless there are cogent reasons for not doing so.

#### 4.2.7 Reporting Requirements & Procedures

Help & Shelter prepares the following types of reports:

- Financial and programme reports to the board.
- Financial and programme reports to donors.
- Statutory reports (e.g. annual report with copy of audited accounts attached).

Reports are prepared monthly, quarterly, semi-annually and/or annually depending on the needs of each category of users.

The reporting officer should always refer to the grant agreements to ensure that the reporting requirements of each specific donor are complied with.

#### Procedures

All financial reports are to be

- Prepared by the finance officer.
- Submitted to the treasurer (with copy to the coordinator) for verification.
- Submitted to the board for approval.
- Submitted to donors or other third parties as required.

#### 4.2.8 Payroll

The purpose of payroll procedures is to ensure that:

- Employees are paid in accordance with their contracts of employment.
- Payments to employees are properly accounted for.
- Statutory and voluntary deductions are properly accounted for and remitted to the appropriate authorities.
- Salary advances are properly accounted for and recovered from salaries.

## Procedures

### 1. Personal payroll records

A personal record is prepared and maintained by the coordinator for each employee based on information contained in contracts of employment, notifications of changes in pay and disciplinary action.

The coordinator regularly checks the payroll data and verifies information against the personal payroll records

### 2. Advances against salary

- Advances of not more than 1 month's salary may be made at the discretion and on the authority of the board.
- All advances/loans must be repaid within 4 months or at the discretion of the board.
- No advances may be made out of project funds.
- A written request must be made for a salary advance including the reason for the request.

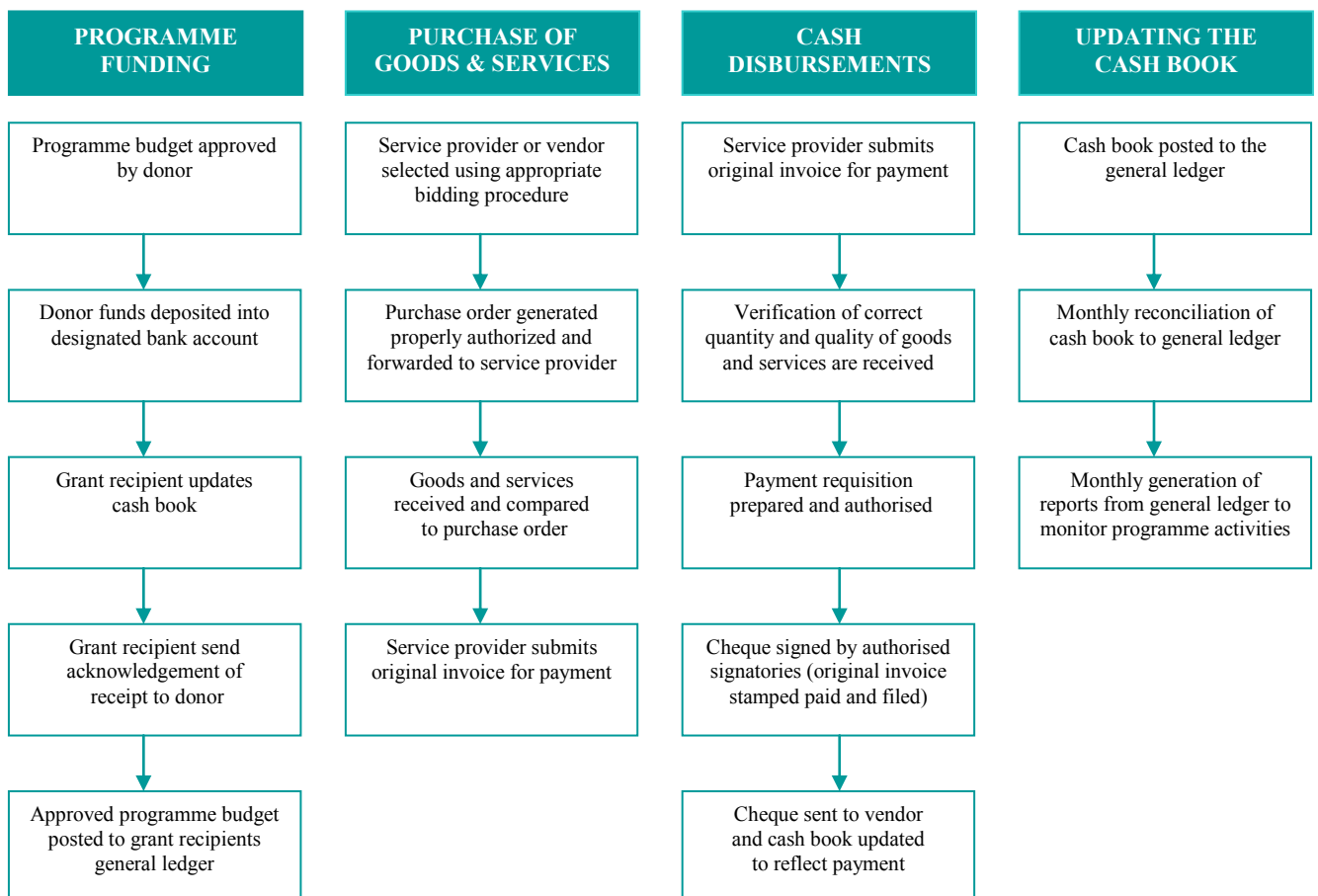
### 3. Preparation of monthly payroll

The following procedures apply for each employee:

- Basic pay is entered.
- Any allowances are entered.
- Salary-related employee deductions (NIS and PAYE) are calculated and entered.
- Any repayment of advances is entered.
- The total of all deductions is calculated and entered and this amount deducted from the gross pay to give the net amount payable to the employee.

If any employees receive their salaries through the bank, a list is prepared and details of employees' bank accounts and amounts to be credited are provided to the bank together with a cheque for the total amount.

## Interface Description





# III HUMAN RESOURCES

## 1. Human Resource Policy

### 1.1 Statement of Principles

Help & Shelter is very largely dependent upon donor project funds to carry out its work. Whenever possible Help & Shelter will employ persons under contracts of service rather than contracts for services but project funders frequently specify that their funds may not be used to pay salaries. What follows in this section and section 2 applies only to employees and not persons engaged as independent contractors, to which section 3 below applies.

Help & Shelter aims, as far as is possible within the constraints of its resources, to provide working conditions that are in line with best practice in comparable domestic organisations and which allow employees to work in an enjoyable, effective and productive manner. Help & Shelter will seek to apply the same principles without binding itself to all other individuals working in Help & Shelter where possible.

### 1.2 Recruitment and Selection

#### 1.2.1 Advertising

Recruitment and selection of suitably qualified employees will be made from the widest possible field. Positions will normally be advertised internally and externally at the discretion of the board.

#### 1.2.2 Criteria

Help & Shelter is an equal opportunities employer and will ensure that the principles of employment equality are applied to recruitment, promotion, training and work experience and to all terms and conditions of employment.

Specifically this means:

- Equal access to employment, promotion, training and work experience on merit.
- Equality in conditions of employment.
- A working environment free from harassment.

#### 1.2.3 Documents

A job description will be drawn up for each post to be filled, detailing the core responsibilities and tasks relating to the job. All job descriptions are subject to continual review and may be amended by the board in consultation with the relevant employee(s).

A personal specification will be drawn up for each post to be filled, describing the experience, skills, qualifications, knowledge and personal qualities required to carry out the job satisfactorily. This ensures that, before the recruitment process gets underway, there are agreed criteria against which all applicants are to be assessed.

#### 1.2.4 Short-listing and interviews

Short-listing of candidates will be carried out by not less than two people.

The interview panel shall consist of a minimum of two directors and may include the coordinator and shall be constituted on the basis of the panel's expertise and experience with the type of post being advertised.

Any candidate who feels that s/he has been unlawfully discriminated against has a right of complaint, which can be exercised by writing to the secretary. If the complaint is upheld an appropriate remedy will, if possible, be offered. If the complaint is not upheld by the board, the complainant still retains the right to have the complaint investigated by the appropriate mechanisms of the state.

### **1.2.5 Decision-making**

Decisions of the interview panel will be based upon the agreed criteria in the person specification and job description and shall be communicated by the secretary to all board members.

## **1.3 Contract of Employment**

A letter from Help & Shelter offering employment sets out the conditions under which the employee will be employed and when signed by the offeree as acknowledgement and acceptance of the terms and conditions constitutes the contract of employment. The employee will keep a copy for his/her reference. All contracts will be subject to a probationary period, the duration of which will be specified in individual contracts.

Employees on temporary or fixed term contracts will receive full information on a regular basis regarding the status of their contracts. In cases where an employee is being offered an extension to her/his contract s/he should receive a new contract letter as early as practicable. The employee will be required to sign the contract letter as acknowledgement and acceptance of the terms and conditions set out. S/he will keep a copy for her/his reference.

The contract will specify the employment relationship between Help & Shelter and the specific employee, i.e. permanent or fixed-term, full-time, part-time or job-share.

While Help & Shelter would like to provide permanent employment, at least for core positions, our funding situation frequently dictates that employees are employed on fixed-term and/or part-time contracts tied to specific projects.

Help & Shelter aims to provide, where possible, consistent terms of employment for all employees.

Employees undertaking other outside employment are expected to ensure that the other employment will not impair the efficiency of their employment in Help & Shelter and will not conflict with the interests of the organisation. Some positions do not lend themselves to being combined with outside jobs. Changes in contract status will be decided by the board in the light of the overall staffing arrangements at the time and the board decision will be final.

## **1.4 Termination of Employment**

In the event of termination of employment, employees will be entitled to receive one month's notice or such longer period of notice of termination of employment as has been contractually agreed. Where it is mutually agreed, a lesser period of notice may be given. However, Help & Shelter reserves the right, in appropriate circumstances (e.g. in the event of gross misconduct and in accordance with its disciplinary procedure), to summarily dismiss employees without notice and without payment in lieu of notice.

In the event of an employee terminating their employment with Help & Shelter, the period outlined above or those contained in individual contracts of employment will apply. The right to pay in lieu of notice is reserved by Help & Shelter.

## **1.5 Severance and Redundancy**

### **1.5.1 Redundancy**

Help & Shelter may terminate employment due to redundancy in accordance with the provisions of the Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act.

### **1.5.2 Severance or redundancy allowance**

Upon termination of employment otherwise than by summary dismissal or resignation by the employee, s/he will be entitled to receive a severance or redundancy allowance in accordance with the provisions of the Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act.

## **1.6 Payment**

### **1.6.1 Salary scales**

Each job in the organisation shall be graded, either on the basis of a job evaluation scheme, or by comparison with existing comparable grading systems in other organisations.

### **1.6.2 Review of salary scales**

The board will periodically review all salary scales, to check if the scales applying are still appropriate on the basis either of the job evaluation that took place or the comparable grade that was used.

### **1.6.3 Project constraints**

Help & Shelter will negotiate with project funders for salaries for project work that are in keeping with the organisation's salary scales.

### **1.6.4 Payments from other organisations**

Employees in receipt of reimbursements for activities carried out in the name of Help & Shelter, and as part of their work for Help & Shelter (e.g. radio interviews, workshop fees, etc.) must pass all amounts received to Help & Shelter.

## **1.7 Hours of work**

### **1.7.1 Working week**

The standard working week shall be 35 hours, Monday to Friday, with normal office hours being from 08.00 to 16.00, less one hour for lunch. However, from time to time it may be necessary for the purposes of carrying out the job to work beyond and outside these hours and time off in lieu (see 1.7.2 below) of such time worked shall be allowed.

### **1.7.2 Time off in lieu**

Employees are entitled to time off in lieu for hours worked outside the standard office hours, to be taken at a mutually agreed time. (see 1.7.1. above).

### **1.7.3 Recording time**

The time worked by employees will be recorded on a standard time sheet by each employee. Employees will record the reason for any time worked outside standard hours as agreed in advance with the coordinator on the time sheet. The time sheets, showing accrued time owed or owing, will be given to the coordinator at the end of every month. The coordinator will maintain the records on time owed to employees. All employees will have access to the records.

### **1.7.4 Working from home**

Employees may work from home only in exceptional circumstances as agreed with the coordinator. Employees working from home should be available for standard working hours (see 1.7.1 above).

Employees working from home should acknowledge the impact this has in the office and ensure that employees in the office do not have to carry any extra work as a result if this is possible.

### **1.7.5 Working outside the office**

When employees are working outside the office they should notify the coordinator and a written record must be made in the out-of-office log book.

### **1.7.6 Part-time hours**

The minimum working hours which a part-time employee can work is 17.5 hours, or 2.5 days.

## **1.8 Leave Entitlements**

### **1.8.1 Annual leave**

The holiday year runs from 1st January to 31st December each year.

Employees in full time employment shall be entitled to one day's leave with pay for each month worked and employees in part time employment shall be entitled to one day's leave with pay for each 160 hours worked (in addition to public holidays, see 1.8.2. below).

Annual leave dates should be approved by the board.

Annual leave is not cumulative, except at the discretion of the board.

In the event of termination of employment for any reason employees shall be entitled to annual leave, or pay in lieu thereof, based on the number of months/hours worked less any holiday leave already taken. Where holidays have been taken in excess of accrued entitlement at the date of termination such excess shall be deducted from monies due.

Employees going on leave of more than five working days should do a hand-over briefing to ensure that issues s/he is handling are tracked.

The coordinator is responsible for keeping a record of leave. All employees will have open access to the record for the purposes of helping them to plan their own leave schedule.

Each individual employee should also keep a record of the leave they have taken.

### **1.8.2 Public holiday entitlements**

In addition to annual leave (see 1.8.1. above) employees are entitled to paid leave on public holidays.

### **1.8.3 Absence/sickness**

Employees, unable to attend work due to illness or for any other reason should contact the coordinator or finance officer as soon as possible on the first day of absence and if possible before 9 a.m. Payment will be made for absence from work due to sickness or injury for the first 2 days without a medical certificate. A maximum of 5 uncertified days are allowable per annum (January to December).

A medical certificate will be required for continuous absence in excess of 2 days. Should employees fall ill whilst on annual leave and furnish appropriate medical evidence, the period covered by that evidence shall not be counted as part of annual leave. In the event that employees become entitled to statutory sick pay benefit from the NIS, Help & Shelter will make up any difference between those statutory benefits and the employee's normal salary for the following periods of time within any period of 12 months service, depending on the employee's length of continuous service with the organisation:

- Under 6 months continuous service - no entitlement;
- 6 to 12 months continuous service - up to 2 weeks;
- 12 to 24 months continuous service - up to 4 weeks;
- 24 to 36 months continuous service - up to 8 weeks;
- Over 36 Months – up to 8 weeks

Payment beyond 8 weeks for certified absence due to illness will be at the discretion of the board.

Separate periods of absence from work due to the same illness or condition will be treated as continuous if they occur within 3 months of each other.

For the purposes of this clause continuous service is taken to mean contractual employment with Help & Shelter for a minimum of 17.5 hours or more per week.

## **1.9 Special Leave**

### **1.9.1 Compassionate leave**

Subject to approval of the board, an employee will be allowed compassionate leave with pay, on the death of a spouse, co-habiting partner, son, daughter, father, mother, guardian, brother or sister.

In all other cases (i.e. death of a family member not mentioned above, hardship or difficulty which might arise from urgent domestic distress or upheaval or urgent exceptional personal circumstances and necessitate a request for absence from work) compassionate leave may be allowed with or without pay at the discretion of the board.

Requests for special leave should be made to the board.

### **1.9.2 Paternity/adoptive leave**

Employees are entitled to unpaid paternity/adoptive leave for up to 10 working days. This leave may be taken up to 1 month before and within 4 months after the child's birth/adoption with the prior consent of the board.

### **1.9.3 Maternity leave**

Employees are entitled to 22 weeks unpaid maternity leave and to paid time off for ante-natal and post-natal visits, provided one week's notice is given.

Help & Shelter requires a certified notification of pregnancy and at least 4 weeks notice before the beginning of any maternity leave.

Employees who return to work for at least 12 weeks will be paid an honorarium equivalent to the difference between their pre-maternity leave salary and maternity benefit received.

Where a fixed term contract expires during the period of maternity leave and is not renewed, then maternity leave and entitlement to honorarium will cease on the last day of the contract. Help & Shelter cannot guarantee to extend contracts.

### **1.9.4 Trade union duties**

No trade union is currently in place within Help & Shelter. However, Help & Shelter has no objection to there being a union and in the event that such is established Help & Shelter will allow reasonable time off with pay to the employee representative/s in order to carry out industrial relations duties, including local negotiation, representing members in grievance or disciplinary procedures and attending training courses.

### **1.9.5 Jury service**

Employees will be granted paid leave to attend for jury service.

### **1.9.6 Miscellaneous reasons**

Short periods of paid or unpaid leave may be granted as required, but at the discretion of the board, to which advance applications must be made.

## **1.10 Performance Appraisal**

Regular performance appraisals will be carried out with all employees under the direction of the board. The performance appraisal of the coordinator will be conducted by the board.

## **1.11 Expenses**

### **1.11.1 Travel expenses**

Help & Shelter is agreeable to bus and, where appropriate, taxi fares incurred while carrying out Help & Shelter business.

### **1.11.2 Out of pocket expenses**

Help & Shelter is agreeable to paying all necessary out of pocket expenses incurred by employees while carrying out their duties. Such expenses will require the prior approval of the coordinator.

In both cases, employees will be required to complete an Expenses Claim Form and where possible provide documentary evidence (receipts, etc.) in respect of all such claims.

### **1.12 Changes in Employees' Circumstances**

Employees are required to notify the coordinator of changes in their circumstances such as marital status, number of dependents, address and telephone numbers within one week of the change taking place.

### **1.13 Changes in Terms and Conditions**

From time to time employees' main terms and conditions of employment may be subject to variation. Should this occur employees will be consulted and agreements as to the changes in terms and conditions will be in writing.

## **2 Employee Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures**

### **2.1 Grievance Procedure**

This procedure set out below is to be followed if any employee feels that s/he has a grievance against the operation or decisions of the coordinator, board or another employee, which affects her/his ability to perform her/his job satisfactorily and which cannot be resolved in the normal course of work.

It is agreed that all disputes and grievances will be dealt with without undue delay and at the earliest possible level of this procedure.

Help & Shelter wishes to provide a fair and equitable system for dealing with employee's grievances as speedily as possible. At each stage of the procedure employees have the right to be accompanied by another person of their choice, if they so wish.

On any occasion of disciplinary action being taken against an employee, s/he will be advised that s/he is entitled to union representation.

#### **Stage One:**

In the event that an employee has a grievance or wishes to raise any matter directly concerned with their employment this should first be raised with the coordinator as appropriate. Where the coordinator has a grievance, or where the grievance is with the coordinator, the matter will be raised verbally with the chairperson (or the vice chairperson in her/his absence). The appropriate person will do her/his best to resolve the matter as soon as possible and in any event within ten working days.

#### **Stage Two:**

If no solution can be reached at Stage 1, the matter may be referred to the chairperson (or to the vice chairperson in his/her absence) for further consideration within a period of five working days. The chairperson will make every effort to resolve the issue at this stage.

#### **Stage Three:**

Failing resolution of the problem at stage two, the chairperson will refer the matter to the board, which will investigate the matter and hear representations from the persons concerned within ten working days and will make a formal proposal for its solution as soon as possible and not later than five working days from the complaint being heard by them.

#### **Stage Four:**

Should the matter still remain unresolved ten days after the end of the meeting at stage 3, it will be referred to an outside arbitrator for a recommendation.

No form of industrial action will be taken by either side until a recommendation has been issued and then not until fourteen days notice, in writing, has been given of such action.

During the operation of this procedure, employees, including the employee/s concerned, will continue to work as directed. By mutual agreement, any of the above stages may be omitted where there are exceptional circumstances or issues.

At each stage every effort will be made to resolve the issue and the time limits above may be changed by mutual agreement at each stage.

## **2.2 Disciplinary Procedure**

The following disciplinary procedure is operated if Help & Shelter feels that there has been a breach of general and/or specific conditions of employment, such as poor time-keeping, unauthorised absenteeism, misconduct, sub-standard work, breach of confidentiality or any other action which may be detrimental to the smooth running of Help & Shelter or injurious to its reputation.

The employee has a right to a short summary of the main areas of complaint before the meeting. The employee has the right to present her/his case and to be represented throughout the procedure. The employee must be informed of these rights before any meeting takes place. A written record must be kept of all such meetings.

The employee will have the right to appeal to the board at all stages of the disciplinary procedure, giving written notice to the board within seven days of the decision.

Help & Shelter's policy is that systematic warnings will be applied for minor offences. Such warnings will state the nature of the offence, the potential consequences should performance or conduct not improve and will provide a reasonable time period for such an improvement to be achieved. Where the board considers it necessary to take this type of disciplinary action, the following procedure will apply:

### **Stage One:**

In the first instance the coordinator will give the employee a verbal warning, outlining the nature of the complaint. This warning shall lapse after a period of six months of satisfactory work performance and/or conduct.

### **Stage Two:**

If the employee fails to meet the required standard within a six-month period following the issuing of the verbal warning, a written warning will be given to her/him by the coordinator. The written warning will refer to the fact that an oral warning has been given, specify the nature of the complaint, the action required for improvement and a period in which the improvement is to be made and indicate that further unsatisfactory work performance and/or conduct could result in more serious action being taken. The written warning will lapse after a period of one year of satisfactory work performance and/or conduct.

### **Stage Three:**

If there is no improvement within the timeframe specified under Stage two, the coordinator will issue a final written warning which will state formally the reason for the warning, the improvement required of the employee and that if no improvement is evident to the coordinator within 1 month, further disciplinary action may be taken, in the form of a suspension.

### **Stage Four:**

If the employee fails to meet the required standard, the coordinator will recommend to the board that the person be suspended. If deemed appropriate the coordinator will then suspend the employee without pay for up to one week.

### **Stage Five:**

Should the employee continue to fail to sustain the required standards following her/his return from suspension, the coordinator will recommend to the board that the person be dismissed. If deemed appropriate the board will then dismiss the employee. Suspension with pay may be used at any stage in the process of investigating a disciplinary issue if it is believed that it is not in Help & Shelter' best interests to allow the employee to continue to work in a post while the investigation is continuing.

### **Reversion:**

Following a warning at Stages 2 and 3 in this procedure, where an employee's record remains clear for a minimum of one year then the previous stage will be reverted to in the event of a further breach.

Following suspension at Stage 4 of this procedure, where an employee's record remains clear for a minimum of two years then Stage 1 will be reverted to in the event of any further breach.

### **Serious Misconduct**

An employee may be liable for serious disciplinary action which can be up to and including dismissal in serious cases of misconduct, such as fighting, assault, sexual harassment, theft, fraud, dishonesty, regardless of the amount or value, willful damage to property, reporting for work under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol, breaches of trust, breach of confidentiality, actions which are injurious to the reputation of Help & Shelter, conviction of a criminal offence whether committed within or outside the employment which renders the employee unsuitable for the work s/he is employed to do, etc.

The employee will be informed of the reasons for the proposed serious disciplinary action. S/he will be advised of her/his right to be accompanied by a union representative, if applicable, and the right of the employee to state her/his case. A full investigation into the situation will take place and the employee may be suspended with pay to facilitate this.

Following the investigation, Help & Shelter may decide to take serious disciplinary action, which may include summary dismissal.

## **3. Contracts for Services**

- 3.1 Help & Shelter will contract suitably qualified persons to provide specified services as independent contractors as required by projects or otherwise.
- 3.2 Contracts for services shall be signed, specifying the services to be performed, the period for performance of the services, the fee to be paid and all other relevant matters.
- 3.3 A board member may be selected to provide services as an independent contractor subject to the following requirements:
  - S/he shall not participate in the selection process
  - S/he shall absent herself from all board discussions relating to performance of the services contracted
  - S/he shall not vote on any decision relating to the contract
- 3.4 The following shall apply to persons providing services as independent contractors:
  - In the event of the death of a spouse, co-habiting partner, son, daughter, father, mother, guardian, brother or sister, the independent contractor shall be entitled to not more than 10 consecutive days compassionate leave with pay.
  - In all other cases (i.e. death of a family member not mentioned above, hardship or difficulty which might arise from urgent domestic distress or upheaval or urgent exceptional personal circumstances and necessitate a request for absence from work) compassionate leave may be allowed without or without pay at the discretion of the board.
  - An independent contractor unable to work due to illness or for any other reason should contact the coordinator or finance officer as soon as possible on the first day of absence and if possible before 9 a.m. Payment will be made for absence from work due to sickness or injury for the



first 2 days without a medical certificate. A maximum of 5 uncertified days are allowable per annum (January to December).

- A medical certificate will be required for continuous absence in excess of 2 days. Should an independent contractor fall ill whilst on contractually provided leave and furnish appropriate medical evidence, the period covered by that evidence shall not be counted as part of the leave.
- The board of directors may in its absolute discretion make an ex gratia payment to an independent contractor who is unable to work due to illness of an amount representing not more than the fee payable to the independent contractor and the amount to which s/he is entitled as statutory sick pay benefit from the NIS for a period not exceeding 4 weeks.
- Separate periods of absence from work due to the same illness or condition will be treated as continuous if they occur within 3 months of each other.

## **4. Stipends to Volunteers**

4.1 In recognition of the constraints to volunteering in Guyana, Help & Shelter will negotiate with project funders with a view to stipends being paid to suitably qualified volunteers who perform appropriate categories of project work.

4.2 A contract for services shall be signed with each volunteer who is to be paid a stipend for project work.

# IV OPERATIONS PROCEDURES

## 1. Policies and Procedures

### 1.1 Help & Shelter's Policy on Sensitive & Other Important Issues

This document must be read and signed by every person who works with Help & Shelter in any capacity.

To the extent that it is inconsistent with any previous policy, it supercedes that policy.

#### 1.1.1 Background

Help & Shelter's mandate is to contribute to the removal of the use of violence in our society. Frequently, associated issues arise, which, irrespective of our personal positions, need to be met with a common Help & Shelter response.

#### 1.1.2 General

- We will uphold and comply with all human rights/anti-discriminatory legislation and international conventions.
- We recognise that while we are unified in our commitment to end violence in all its forms, we are diverse in many other respects.
- We will respect our diversity at all times.
- We will not allow bigotry in any form to dictate the work that we do and the persons by or for whom it is done.

#### 1.1.3 Racial prejudice & discrimination

- We will not accede to requests that counselling, public education or other help be/be not provided by a person of a particular race.
- We will discourage racial prejudice and discrimination in all our work.

#### 1.1.4 Homosexuality

- We will apply our counselling skills and strategies to deal with issues of abuse and violence professionally and impartially whatever our individual feelings towards homosexuality and same sex relationships may be.
- We will not attempt to change people's sexual orientation.
- We recognise the need for further training with regard to specific issues that may arise.

#### 1.1.5 Religious, gender and other prejudices

- We will not pander to religious prejudice, sexism, ageism or other prejudices.
- We recognise however that some of our clients and public education partners may, because of perceptions of the quality of intervention, prefer to deal with persons of a particular religion, gender, age or socio-economic class.
- While we may meet a special request, we will engage the makers in straightforward discussion of the perceptions associated with that request.
- If in doubt as to whether to meet a special request, we may discuss it among ourselves.

#### 1.1.6 Abortion

- We recognise the right of every pregnant woman to make an informed choice as to whether or not she wants to give birth.
- We will encourage her to get information and advice on all options.
- We will tell her about the agencies (e.g. the Family Planning Association of Guyana, the Early Pregnancy Advisory Service and the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association) that give information and advice.
- We will not attempt to counsel on whether or not she should remain pregnant.
- If we are uncomfortable with a client's choice, we may refer her to another counsellor.

- In cases of pregnancy resulting from rape, we will:
  - provide rape trauma counselling.
  - refer the client to (an)other agency/agencies for appropriate advice and assistance regarding the pregnancy.

### **1.1.7 Corporal punishment**

- We will not condone the corporal punishment of children any time, any place, anywhere.
- We will do all that we can to educate parents and prospective parents, teachers and caregivers about non-violent disciplinary alternatives.

### **1.1.8 Complaints and allegations of misconduct against Help & Shelter volunteers or personnel**

- We recognise that complaints/allegations of misconduct may be made against any of us.
- We will not investigate anonymous complaints/allegations.
- We will investigate complaints/allegations made by persons who are willing to be identified and to sign a written statement.
- We accept that investigation of a complaint/allegation made against us may be carried out before we are made aware of it.
- Investigations will be carried out by the board. Outside assistance will only be sought if the board considers it necessary.
- Our response to a complaint/allegation will be as follows:
  - We will ask the complainant's name and if s/he refuses to give it, politely state our policy of not investigating anonymous complaints/allegations.
  - If the complaint/allegation is made second-hand (i.e. the complaint/allegation has been made to the person contacting us by a third party), we will politely tell the person passing on the complaint/allegation that we will not investigate anonymous complaints/allegations.
  - If the complainant is willing to give her/his name and to sign a written statement, we will obtain contact information and brief details of the complaint/allegation and inform the complainant that the coordinator or a director will be in touch with him/her shortly to arrange for a written statement to be taken.
  - In no circumstances will we make any comment upon or engage in any discussion of the complaint/allegation.
  - All complaints and allegations must be treated with complete confidentiality.

### **1.1.9 Complaints about our service**

- If a complaint is made about Help & Shelter's handling of a particular case, we will find out the details of the case (name, year of occurrence etc.) and bring it to the attention of the coordinator or a board member so that the file can be found, checked and an appropriate response given.
- In order to ensure that we are able to respond to complaints, we will ensure that all files contain –
  - Full records of all meetings, phone calls, referrals and discussions.
  - Copies of all correspondence and all other relevant documents.
- We recognise that there will be persons who will not be satisfied with our services, but will endeavour to resolve any differences before we close a file.

### **1.1.10 The media**

- We recognise that the media is important to raise awareness about domestic violence and child abuse, and about our work.
- We will take full advantage of opportunities to carry out public education work through the print and electronic media.
- We will however resist any attempt to politicise our work or to introduce any partisanship into the work we do and if we receive a media request for a comment on any particular issue (i.e. on a matter that is related to 'news' rather than public education) we will refer it to a board member or the coordinator.
- We will whenever possible issue a print statement to the media if asked for a comment on any particular issue.

## **1.2 Help & Shelter's Child Protection Policy**

Help & Shelter's Child Protection Policy provides a framework to assist all those who work with Help & Shelter in any capacity (H&S representatives) in carrying out their responsibility to safeguard children's welfare.

All H&S representatives must be provided with a copy of the policy and agree to adhere to and be bound by it in writing.

The policy, which is incorporated into this manual by reference, is available in soft and hard copy and is posted on the organisation's website.

## **1.3 Guidelines & Procedures for Personnel & Volunteers**

The following guidelines and procedures are necessary for all persons who work with Help & Shelter in any capacity.

### **1.3.1 Personnel and volunteers will not condone or recommend violence against anyone**

#### **1.3.2 Confidentiality**

The identity of persons who have sought the services of Help & Shelter must not be disclosed. Information received or observed about a client must be held in confidence except in limited circumstances (see Ethics and Responsibilities of Counsellors).

The obligation of confidentiality continues indefinitely, including after contact has ceased with Help & Shelter.

Breach of confidentiality will result in termination of services and the making of a record against the name of the person in question.

#### **1.3.3 Private telephone calls**

- Everyone is asked to keep private telephone calls to a minimum.
- The coordinator's room should only be used for making or receiving calls with her/his permission.
- Only local calls may be made, if possible with the use of a phone card.

#### **1.3.4 The scope of Help & Shelter's assistance**

The primary purpose of the Crisis Service is counselling and support of victims of abuse. Our limited resources restrict the general provision of social services and our referral directory should be used to identify agencies that provide other assistance the client may need. A copy of the directory is in each room and the coordinator has a copy.

#### **1.3.5 Use of Help & Shelter's stationery**

All letters, notes etc. on Help & Shelter's letterhead or compliments slips must be signed or initiated by the coordinator, or a director. A duplicate of every letter, note etc. must be placed in the relevant file.

#### **1.3.6 Donations**

No one working with Help & Shelter in any capacity may under any circumstances solicit or receive any personal donations in cash or kind. If any client or other person wishes to make a donation, it must be accepted on behalf of Help & Shelter and be delivered to the coordinator as soon as possible after receipt, together with the name and contact information of the donor in order that a receipt and acknowledgement may be sent. Anyone found to have accepted a personal donation will be subjected to disciplinary procedures, which may result in summary termination of the relationship with Help & Shelter and/or expulsion from membership.

### **1.3.7 Objectives of public education**

- To advocate against violence, especially domestic violence, sexual violence and violence against children and for reform of legislation where necessary.
- To inform the public about Help & Shelter and its services.
- To inform the public about the resources which are available to help them.

## **1.4 Ethics & Responsibilities of Counsellors**

### **1.4.1 Do nothing that will harm the client**

#### **1.4.2 Maintain confidentiality –**

- Respect the private, personal and confidential nature of the information received. Do not discuss cases with anyone, except, if necessary other counsellors.
- Information must only be disclosed in the following circumstances:
  - If the client gives written permission.
  - If the client is suicidal and/or a danger to her/himself.
  - If the client is homicidal or is threatening to engage in behaviour which is likely to result in harm to others.
  - If the client is a minor and you have reason to believe that she/he is being abused.
- If disclosure is court ordered:
  - Clients will be the primary source of information about themselves.
  - Written permission must be received prior to using any electronic method of recording actual work done with a client.
- Unnecessary conversation regarding clients and their affairs must be avoided to prevent possible disclosure of information that could be detrimental to clients.

### **1.4.3 Recognise your limitations**

#### **1.4.4 Seek consultation**

- Obtain supervision and/or consultation in your work within the organisation.
- With written permission and in consultation with your supervisor, you may seek consultation with appropriate professionals.

**1.4.5 Treat the client with respect, dignity, kindness and honesty:** respect the client's right of self-determination.

### **1.4.6 Be aware of the individual and cultural differences**

#### **1.4.7 Gain and maintain counselling competency**

- Attend training programmes as recommended by the organisation.
- Attend supervision and consultation sessions regularly.

### **1.4.8 Develop personal self-awareness**

### **1.4.9. Review ethical standards regularly**

## **1.5 Guidelines & Procedures for All Counsellors**

### **1.5.1 General**

- Counsellors can provide services for individuals, couples, families and groups.
- Individuals and groups working together maximise the quality and quantity of services available (networking).
- Counsellors should maintain and/or increase their level of expertise through regular supervision and further training.
- Appropriate and adequate records must be made following each contact with a client. Case records are the property of Help & Shelter.

### **1.5.2 Access to clients' files**

Only the coordinator and senior counsellor, or in their absence, the finance officer are authorised to have access to the filing cabinet containing clients' files. A counsellor requiring a file should therefore request it from one of the persons listed above. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, none of the authorised persons is available, the volunteer should make notes on a sheet of paper to be subsequently attached to the file.

### **1.5.3 Opening of new files**

A new file should not be opened until a new client has been seen and it has been determined that Help & Shelter can assist the client, rather than referring her/him to another agency. The office assistant will give the counsellor a worksheet and after the session the counsellor will indicate whether or not a file should be made; this is order to save stationery.

### **1.5.4 Referrals**

If a client is referred to another agency s/he should be given a referral form to take to the agency and an in-house referral record should also be made.

### **1.5.5 Donations by Help & Shelter**

If foodstuffs have been given to Help & Shelter for distribution and a counsellor is satisfied that the client is in need, a donation may be made. Details of the donation should be noted on the client's file. A limit of \$5,000 per month has been put on monetary donations. Again, the counsellor should be satisfied that a client is in need and note details on the file.

### **1.5.6 Court reports**

Counsellors who accompany a client to court should, upon return, complete and hand in to the coordinator (or in her/his absence, the clerical assistant) the form provided. Any problems encountered with the court process (e.g. inappropriate comments by the magistrate; failure to conduct proceedings in camera) should be reported so that they can be taken up with the Chancellor.

### **1.5.7 Shelters**

Help & Shelter will try to arrange a suitable place of safety for women and their children who are escaping abusive situations either at our shelter or elsewhere.

Counsellors are NOT to give out telephone numbers of shelters to clients, as we cannot be sure a case is genuine. Counsellors should call the shelter themselves to make arrangements or arrange through the coordinator. If the case is referred by the police be sure it is genuine. (Get the name and number of the police officer and contact the police for reference).

### **1.5.8 Camera**

There is a camera, which may be used when necessary to take photographs of a client's injuries. The camera may be accessed through the coordinator, senior counsellor or finance officer. All photographs taken are subject to confidentiality.

### **1.5.9 Care & control of children**

It is the policy of Help & Shelter that we cannot assume care and control of child clients, this being a matter for state agencies. If a child has nowhere safe to stay contact should be made as soon as possible with the head of the Child Protection Agency.

Only if the circumstances are such that immediate contact with Children's Services is not possible and the situation is one of emergency should anyone acting on Help & Shelter's behalf assume responsibility for a child, and then only for so long as it takes to make contact with the Child Protection Agency.

While we cannot prevent anyone attached to Help & Shelter from assuming custody of children in their personal capacity, we suggest that very careful thought be given before doing so.

### **1.5.10 Failure to keep appointments**

All counsellors are asked to do their best to ensure that they keep appointments and that if, due to unforeseen circumstances, they are unable to do so, they inform the coordinator or the finance officer as early as possible in advance.

## **1.6 Guidelines & Procedures for Hotline Counsellors**

### **1.6.1 Functions of hotline counsellors**

The functions of the hotline counsellor are:

- To respond to telephone calls received by the Crisis Service during or after working hours by:
  - Providing information about Help & Shelter and its areas of expertise (sexual and domestic violence).
  - Using crisis intervention techniques to counsel callers.
  - Referring the caller to counselling provided by the Service or other support services.
- To record all calls on the prescribed form and deliver completed forms to the coordinator the next working day.

**1.6.2 Counsellors should prepare their families** (or anyone who may answer the telephone) by explaining the call forwarding system. The counsellor should answer the phone if possible; if not, whoever does should do so in a pleasant voice without identifying her/himself.

### **1.6.3 Disclosure of name/telephone numbers/meeting clients**

Counsellors are advised not to give their name/address/telephone number to a client, nor to volunteer to go out meet/visit a client.

Reasons:

- Personal safety: the counsellor's first duty is to protect her/himself.
- Avoidance of client's dependence on one counsellor: counsellors should assure the client that s/he is like any other counsellor who gives advice and is supportive and caring. The counsellor's name is therefore not important.

### **1.6.4 The Counsellor's Role**

The counsellor's role is to:

- Assist the client through listening, talking, and reassuring
- Attempt to calm the person so that s/he can begin to deal with the problem
- Assure the client that s/he has done no wrong rather that wrong has been done to her/him.
- Encourage the client to:
  - Report the matter to the nearest police station.
  - If the matter is of recent occurrence, visit a doctor.

If the counsellor feels unable to cope with the problem s/he should seek the advice of another counsellor.

## **1.7 Procedures in Cases of Sexual Abuse**

**1.7.1** When the person reports to the police station the police will take her/him to the nearest hospital/health centre for examination/tests and the issue of a medical certificate.

**1.7.2** At the police station the initial report should give basic details such as date, time, place of occurrence, etc. A detailed statement may be given later.

**1.7.3** If the client has not gone to the police and would like medical attention s/he can go to a hospital or a private doctor. A client who has received injuries such as cuts or bruises should be encouraged to get medical attention.

**1.7.4** If the client intends to press charges medical attention should be obtained as soon as possible, otherwise significant evidence will be lost. If a client has been raped tests for STDs and HIV/AIDS and, if appropriate, pregnancy should be carried out as soon as possible.

**1.7.5** Help & Shelter cannot advise on medication. The need for professional medical advice should be stressed.

## **1.8 Monitoring & Evaluation**

### **1.8.1 Importance of M&E**

Help & Shelter recognises that effective M&E practices lead to greater transparency, enhanced standards of accountability and improvements in project management and delivery of services, and in particular:

- Lead to informed decision making.
- Lead to transparency in decision making.
- Lead to improvement in the ability to respond to the needs of the community/target group.
- Facilitate project implementation .
- Enable planning for future interventions.
- Lead to identification of weaknesses that need improvement or phasing out.
- Facilitate tracking of progress made.
- Enable successes to be highlighted.

### **1.8.2 M&E Integration**

Monitoring & evaluation shall be integrated into all Help & Shelter activities. As such, the board of directors is responsible for ensuring that systems are in place for the efficient recording, collection and evaluation of data.

### **1.8.3 Data collection & reporting**

All Help & Shelter employees and volunteers are responsible for contributing to efficient and accurate data collection and reporting by ensuring that:

- Formally reported information is accurate.
- Recorded data is available that can be validated against reports submitted.

### **1.8.4 Counselling data collection & reporting**

- A full record must be kept of every client's visit, every hotline call and every court support attendance and the appropriate form/log must be completed and submitted in a timely fashion.
- Monthly and cumulative statistics must be compiled/updated every month and submitted to the board and donor agencies as required.
- Counselling evaluation forms must be given to clients who have had at least one previous visit. If necessary, clients will be assisted with completing the form.

### **1.8.5 Public education/advocacy data collection & reporting**

- A full record must be kept of every public education/advocacy activity and monthly reports must be submitted in a timely fashion to the board and donor agencies as required.
- Facilitators' evaluation forms should be completed and submitted in a timely fashion for every public education activity.
- Participants' evaluation forms should be used at as many public education activities as possible and thereafter submitted in a timely fashion.

### **1.8.6 The shelter data collection & reporting**

- A full record must be made of every shelter resident using the appropriate forms.
- Every departing resident must be requested to complete an evaluation form.
- Monthly resident data must be compiled and submitted in a timely fashion.
- The shelter committee shall conduct and report on monthly group evaluation meetings.

### **1.8.7 Evaluation**

Evaluation shall be carried out by the appropriate person/committee and reports submitted in a timely fashion to the board and donor agencies as required.



## **1.9 Access to the Office & Alarm Codes**

### **1.9.1 Key holders**

The board shall determine who shall hold keys to the office.

### **1.9.2 Spare sets of keys**

Two spare sets of keys shall be kept; one by the coordinator and one by the chairperson.

### **1.9.3 Authority to uplift and use keys**

The board may authorise certain persons to uplift a set of keys to access the office after hours or at weekends subject to the approval of one director.

### **1.9.4 Alarm codes**

- The coordinator shall be responsible for maintaining a full list of alarm codes and for providing a copy to the chairperson.
- The coordinator shall ensure that every person who is authorised to access the office after hours or at weekends has a separate alarm code.

## **1.10 Review**

This manual will be reviewed at intervals of not more than eighteen months.

## **2. Committees**

- The board may establish such committees as it considers appropriate for the smooth functioning of the organisation and its work.
- The scope/terms of reference and composition (including the chairperson) of each committee shall be determined by the board and documented.
- Committees are responsible to the board but are expected to use their initiative to carry out their work while keeping the board informed and consulting with it where necessary.
- Each committee must have at least one director but may co-opt volunteers and other persons as it sees fit.
- Each committee will report orally to the board at its monthly meetings and submit such written reports as are required from time to time.
- Each committee is free to appoint sub-committees and ad hoc groups as it sees fit.

## **3. Principles Applicable to Projects**

The following principles apply to all projects:

- All contracts and agreements for work must be signed by any one of the secretary, chairperson, vice-chairperson or treasurer after agreement by the board. In cases of urgency, the coordinator may be authorised by the board to sign.
- Provision for administration fees must be adequate, 10% being the normal amount.
- Separate agreements for project coordination will not be signed.
- Help & Shelter employees will not receive additional payments for project work done during agreed working hours.
- All other persons who are to be paid for project work, including persons who are normally volunteers (including directors) must sign an agreement for services. Working persons who are to be paid for services during their normal working hours must obtain their employer's prior consent as to time and payment.

## 4. Help & Shelter Representation

- All requests for Help & Shelter representation on other bodies or at events, conferences etc. will be channelled through the board.
- Upon receipt of an invitation the coordinator or secretary will, where possible, request the organisation tendering the invitation to provide brief specifications outlining the skills that would be advantageous.
- The invitation will be forwarded to all directors by the coordinator with all relevant information about the body/event/conference/task.
- The board will consider the information presented by the coordinator and decide on representation.
- Should a decision be required at a time when the board has not scheduled a regular meeting, it can be taken by the chairperson and vice-chairperson collectively, and reported to the next meeting for the record.
- Persons appointed shall represent and be responsible to Help & Shelter.
- In cases of representation on another body:
  - Whoever is appointed shall serve on the body in question for whatever term of office its constitution specifies. If the question of serving a further term arises, the Board of Help & Shelter shall decide whether or not to renew the appointment
  - In the event of a representative retiring before the expiration of her/his term of office the successor will be appointed by the board
  - The board shall be empowered to cancel or withdraw the appointment of anyone representing it on another body, in writing to its representative and to the body concerned

## 5. Computer Information Systems

- Back ups of information should be carried out on a daily basis. Weekly backup copies should be stored off site to ensure their safety in the event that files at the processing location are destroyed.
- Anti-virus software should be loaded.
- Where appropriate, systems should be password protected to restricted unauthorised access and to ensure the integrity of information processed and passwords should be changed on a periodic basis.
- Personnel should be given training to properly use the systems and derive maximum benefits from them.
- Access to computer information should be restricted to appropriate personnel.

## 6. The Shelter

The special policies and procedures applicable to the Ixora, Help & Shelter's shelter for abused women and their children and female and pre-pubescent male victims of human trafficking are set out in a separate manual.



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