



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT*
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

YMCA COMMUNITIES HOST HOME PROGRAM

Serving Homeless Youth

Community Host Home families are caring volunteers in Anoka, Hennepin and suburban Ramsey counties willing to open their homes temporarily to youth (ages 16-22) in need. The program connects homeless youth to caring adults in their communities who are willing and able to provide a supportive and safe environment. The hosting home will provide basic housing needs while the youth receive ongoing case management from a YMCA Youth Support Specialist to help work on personal goals aiming to become an independent, self-sufficient, community member. Providing a safe and caring supportive system, will enable the youth in need become successful members of society.

Volunteer General Responsibilities:

- Support youth and create welcoming spaces
- Provide a spare fully constructed bedroom and consistent meals for the youth during their stay
- Build a caring relationship and create a safe and nurturing space for the youth to grow and learn
- Create inclusive environment welcoming to all dimensions of diversity including GLBT
- Some hosts choose (but are not required to):
 - Provide occasional transportation for youth to appointments, work, school, etc.
 - Give youth access to a computer and/or the internet or a TV
 - Provide house chores or yard work to earn allowance

Requirements

- Provide a spare bedroom with a door and food for the youth during their stay
- Provide proof of renter's/homeowner's insurance
- Complete Volunteer applications
- Face-to-face interview and home visit with the Family Advocate
- Pass a Criminal Background Check (required for all household members ages 16 and older)
- Reference Checks
- Signed Code of Conduct and Wavier of Liability
- Completion of online New Volunteer Orientation (NVO)
- Successful completion of Host Home volunteer training
- One-hour monthly meeting with the youth, Youth Case Manager & Family Advocate and communicate regularly with the Family Advocate
- Abide by the YMCA four core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility
- Clear and direct communication skills (with youth and case manager)
- Dedicated to the Y mission and philosophy

Additional Notes:

This volunteer opportunity represents the primary needs identified at this time but is not intended to be all-inclusive. The volunteer will also be responsible for taking direction from the Family Advocate or Program Manager. It is recommended that hosts are very clear in their communication with youth around any expectations they might have. Explain an unwritten rules or traditions and writing expectations down together is a good tool for this.



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TOPICS TO CONSIDER BEFORE HOSTING

What are the rules of your home?

Think about sharing your living space with a youth you don't know very well. Think about the rules and expectations that will be important for that person to know (i.e. no phone calls after 10 pm). Keep in mind, the youth moving in will also have rules of his/her own. (i.e. knock before you enter).

What are your expectations of the youth while s/he lives with you?

The Host Home Program is an opportunity for youth to live in a safe and healthy environment while s/he works on self – determined goals (i.e. attending/finishing high school, getting their GED, securing a job, learning a skill or trade, paying rent). The Case Manager will work with the youth to develop a case plan with clear goals that may or may not be shared with the host.

What is your financial commitment to this youth?

You will be responsible for providing food for this youth for the duration of their stay. Expect your utility and groceries bills to go up. Aside from food and a safe home, you will not be responsible for other expenses. The Family Advocate will work with you on setting appropriate boundaries around expenses.

Is your living space ready for a young person?

The youth must have their own room or private space. That room/space should be clean when the youth moves in. Make sure that your smoke alarms work and that you have accessible fire extinguishers. If you have alcohol or prescription medication in the house, it should be kept in a safe place where the youth is less likely to have access to it.

Would you be open to sharing your home with a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning youth?

There is a disproportionate number of homeless youth who identify as GLBTQ. You will go through a training that discusses sexuality and common GLBTQ issues and misconceptions. We ask that you reflect and be aware of how you personally feel about these issues before you make the commitment to be a volunteer host home. Even many people who identify as GLBQ may not be aware of specific transgender issues. **NOTE: You MUST be affirming to be considered a host. You MUST be willing to take in a youth who might or might not identify as GLBTQ.**

Are you aware of how race and privilege impact your life and the larger community?

The majority of hosts in existing host home programs are white, whereas a significant percentage of the homeless youth population is not white. Privilege can be challenging to look at, but it is necessary to explore and be aware of to create a safe space for all youth. Topics and conversations around privilege and awareness will be an ongoing theme during the training and throughout the duration of your participation as a host home.

Are you willing to put in the time to create a positive relationship with a youth?

Developing a trusting relationship with a youth will take time and hard work. This will require you to have an ongoing conversation about how you can best support the youth in achieving their goals. Some youth might not reciprocate the willingness to maintain a relationship, which is OKAY! This will require patience and continuous communication from both sides, but remember, by providing a youth with a safe and stable place to be, you are doing enough. At the end of the day, it is up to youth to determine what host/youth relationship looks like.

Are you capable of living with a youth who may be working through difficult issues?

Be conscious that the youth who participate in the host home program may have experienced various levels of trauma. Some have been abused, some may be in recovery for substance abuse, and some have never had a healthy adult/youth relationship. Other youth may not have these experiences and simply need a safe place to be. Harm Reduction and Trauma Informed Care best practices will be discussed during the training.



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HOST VOLUNTEER PROCESS

1. Potential host home applicants attend informational meeting or meet with the Program manager
2. Applicants fill out application and email to Betty Notto, Youth Support Program Manager at Betty.Notto@ymcamn.org
3. Applicants have a home interview with Family Advocate
4. The YMCA performs background checks and sends reference requests.
5. Applicants are chosen as host volunteers.
6. Applicants completes YMCA volunteer and Host Home online trainings
7. Host volunteers are matched with youth.
 - *Youth review host files, including the host letter to youth participants.*
 - *Meetings of youth with potential hosts (with youth case manager and family advocate)*
 - *Release of Liability waivers signed*
 - *Review goals, expectations, etc.*
 - *Youth moves in*
8. Family Advocate provides support to hosts including monthly home visits.
9. Youth meets with YMCA Youth Support Specialist on a regular basis and is connected to community resources.