

Hope belongs to all of us

EMPOWER “U”, INC.



“A NOT FOR PROFIT PEER BASED ORGANIZATION”

Volunteer Handbook

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Organization Background

Empower U, Inc. was founded in 1999 by two women living with AIDS to give people living with HIV infections an opportunity to be involved in the administration and delivery of HIV/AIDS services at the community level. The founders believed this would increase the self-efficacy of the African American PWA community if they took an active role in HIV/AIDS health education and health promotion. Since its inception Empower U has gained a reputation of finding and connecting to care people living with HIV infection who have been lost to the system of care. Empower U focuses its' efforts in the service areas: 1) Street Outreach, 2) Medical/Social Service Case Management 3) Prevention Case Management 4) HIV Counseling, Testing and Referral/Care Coordination, 5) HOPWA Housing Service, and 5) advocacy, leadership and mentoring. Empower U is the only African American HIV/AIDS CBO organized and managed by people living with HIV infection.

Mission Statement

The mission of Empower U, Incorporated is to empower, educate, and promote better health care choices for individuals & families infected with and affected by health disparities, particularly HIV/AIDS spectrum disease, and populations at risk for HIV infections within communities of color.

Vision Statement

When Empower U accomplishes its mission, all PLWH will have equitable access to care thus live longer, healthier lives, and new HIV infections will be eliminated.

Our Motto

Hope belongs to all!

“Now faith is the substance of things Hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”

Hebrews 11:1

Until there is a cure!

Our Services

Street and Club/Bar Outreach
HIV Counseling, Testing, and Referral
Care Coordination Case Management
Prevention Services
Housing Services
Emergency Support Services
HIV Health Education
HIV Community Awareness Events

Current Board of Directors

Charles Sawyer-Jackson, President
Vanessa Mills, Vice-President
Yamille Marrero, Esq., Secretary /Treasurer,
Franz Andre, Director
Vandilla McClendon, Director

Current Staff

Sandra Acuña, Front Desk Coordinator
Metris Batts, Prevention Program Manager
Ernest Udofot Essien, Housing Specialist
Michael Fields, Outreach Specialist/Testing Counselor
Nicole Fiol, Housing Specialist
Melvin Fort, Mpowerment Program Coordinator
Allen Gainer, Housing Specialist
Don Henderson, Case Manager/Assistant Supervisor
James Jacques, Outreach Specialist
Theresa Jones, CTRL Coordinator
Claire Malebranche, Case Manager
Pamela Michel, CRCS Manager/Safety Counts Facilitator
Glenn Mills, Case Management Assistant
Vanessa Mills, Executive Director
Reamonia Moore, Peer Educator
Felicita Morales, Housing Specialist
Oscar Morley, Housing Inspector
Lirian Oquendo-Horn, Case Manager
Kerry Ann Ramsey, Peer Educator
Angel Refuse, Mpowerment Program Assistant
Alphene Rhone, Fiscal Assistant
Johnny Rogers, Case Manager Supervisor
Stephanie Samuel, Social Marketing Coordinator/Office Manager
Carol Sanders, Housing Specialist
Adron Shephard, Outreach Specialist/Testing Counselor
Glenn Stepherson, Outreach Specialist/Testing Counselor
Christine Stroy-Martin, Director of Finance & Human Resources
Ruth Weber, Data Analyst/Program Evaluator

Volunteers and EU

Volunteers make our dreams become a reality. Year after year, day after day, volunteers are very much a part of our everyday life. In order to provide the highest quality services possible, we depend on the commitment of a strong corps of dedicated volunteers.

The actual services volunteers provide not only assist us in continuing our work, but maybe even more importantly, when a volunteer contributes his or her time, talent, and love to our program, they touch a very special place in the hearts of our staff, clients, and the community. Their spirits inspire and motivate us in way that cannot be counted on any form or record

Benefits of Volunteering

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with EU. As you share your time, talent and skills in this partnership, we hope you will also recognize the many benefits that are available to you. Through your experience in this position, you can...

- Develop an understanding, knowledge and appreciation of our clients
- Participate in training offered to employees: computers, exercise, assertiveness, safety procedures, etc.
- Request letters of reference
- Gain valuable experience
- Make use of your talents and abilities
- Achieve new skills
- Explore career possibilities
- Improve communication skills
- Stimulate new friendships
- Confront community issues
- Earn tax deductions as allowed by the IRS for the cost of travel allowance or mileage bases

What You Can Expect from EU

EU volunteers have the right to:

- receive a job description for your volunteer assignment.
- be assigned appropriate assignments according to skill, interests, availability, and training.
- be trusted with confidential information that will help carry out assignments.
- be given appropriate expressions of appreciation and recognition.
- receive orientation, training and supervision for the jobs you accept.
- expect that your time will not be waste by lack of planning, coordination and cooperation within the agency.
- be reimbursed for out-of-pocket costs, if that is the only way you can volunteer.
- receive regular consultation for a review of your job performance.
- have your suggestions and recommendations about your assignment and the EU volunteer program.

What EU Expects from You:

EU expects that as a volunteer you will:

- be prompt and pleasant.
- follow the policies and procedures of EU
- cooperate with staff and your fellow volunteers and maintain a good team attitude.
- take every opportunity for personal development that is offered to you.
- voice your opinions and contribute your suggestions to improve the quality of EU.
- try to attend all training sessions.
- inform your volunteer coordinator as soon as possible of any planned absence or lateness.
- keep all communications with or concerning clients confidential.

The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997

Responding to the growing hesitance of many Americans to volunteer for nonprofit organization for fear of facing unwarranted lawsuit, Congress passed the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997. The law makes sure that people who volunteer their services – whether it be through serving on a nonprofit’s board of directors or spending time at a local community center – can do so without worrying that their offer of free services ends up costing them in legal fees. The law’s key provisions include:

Liability Protection for Volunteers: With certain exceptions noted below, the law provides that volunteers for nonprofit organization or governmental entities cannot be sued for actions taken during their work for the organization or entity if:

- the volunteer was acting within the scope of his/her responsibility;
- if appropriate or required for the activities in which he/she was engaged, the volunteer was properly licensed or certified by the appropriate authorities
- the volunteer did not engage in willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed by the volunteer; and
- the harm was not caused by the volunteer operating a motor vehicle, vessel, aircraft or other vehicle for which the State requires a license and insurance.

Volunteers Covered: The law covers volunteers for States and their subdivisions, as well as volunteers for nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations entitled to the law’s protection include those exempt from taxation under Sections 501(a) and 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and “any not-for-profit organization which is organized and conducted for public benefit and operated primarily for charitable, civic, educational, religious, welfare, or health purposes.”

No Punitive Damages Against Volunteers: The law provides that plaintiffs cannot collect punitive damages from volunteers unless the plaintiff establishes by clear and convincing evidence that the volunteer’s actions amounted to willful and criminal misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed.

Exceptions to Liability Protection for Volunteers: The VPA does **not** immunize volunteers from liability for crimes of violence, hate crimes, sexual offenses, violations of civil rights laws, or actions taken under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Values & Priorities

We emphasize self-sufficiency and minimize dependency
A "Hand Up" is always better than a "Hand Out"
We recognize the potential in each human being
We learn from each other
Not everyone will see success the same way
We give a constant message
We do not make easy excuses
Adults are expected to act like adults
Everyone in the organization will be treated with respect and dignity.

Staff Volunteer Coordinator

Each program area has a designated staff member who acts as a Volunteer Service Manager. This person is an important point of contact between you and the agency. They are the most efficient and effective channels for the communication of your ideas, concerns and questions, or schedule changes.

Boundaries

Boundaries assist in telling each of us where to go and where not to go. As a volunteer you are expected to have a friendly, but professional relationship with clients and staff. Please do not offer counseling, give money or gifts, invite clients to your home, give clients personal or business telephone numbers, or do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. Do not meet one-on-one in private places, and if you hear stories that are highly critical of staff or the agency, please speak with a Staff Volunteer Coordinator or the client's case manager and program manager. Anytime you have a question speak to a staff member. "Ask first" is a good rule.

Volunteer Support

As a volunteer, you are an integral part of our program and community. We value all that you give the program. Our hope is that you will also gain a great deal through your work with us.

Please do not hesitate to contact staff if you have any questions or concerns. We consider nothing too small and we are always pleased to be of assistance to you.

If you want to learn more about HIV/AIDS, we have an extensive library of literature and videos that you are welcome to borrow.

Confidentiality

As a volunteer you must respect the rights of our client customers!

As a customer of our services and programs, our clients have the right to:

- ❖ Have access to their information for review;
- ❖ Amend and change their information
- ❖ Restrict access to their information; and
- ❖ Know to whom or what agency their information has been disclosed.

Protection of our Customer's Information

We will protect all information collected about our customers, and we will restrict access to personal information by maintaining physical, electronic, and procedural safeguards.

Employees and volunteers will be held responsible and accountable for information under the HIPPA practices and procedures.

As a volunteer, you will learn and hear many personal things about those who live here. Due to the sensitivity around AIDS, we expect that you will keep the information about our clients in strict confidence. This includes not divulging to those outside of EU, the names, addresses, telephone numbers, or confirming HIV status of anyone you come in contact with as a result of your volunteer work.

- If you are out with a client and run into a friend, please do not identify the person as a client of EU. It is acceptable to introduce the client by their first name.
- Please do not discuss identifying characteristics of clients with your family or friends.
- There are confidentiality laws in Florida that protect people with HIV/AIDS. Florida Statute states:
 - (e) Except as provided in this section, the identity of any person upon whom a test has been performed and test results are confidential and exempt from the provisions of s. 119.07(1). No person who has obtained or has knowledge of a test result pursuant to this section may disclose or be compelled to disclose the identity of any person upon whom a test is performed, or the results of such a test in a manner which permits identification of the subject of the test...

There are very specific exceptions to this rule. For further information, please ask staff.

- Information obtain from conversations with staff regarding clients should not be discussed with other clients or outsiders.



- During your orientation you will received a detail in-service on the confidentiality of personal and health care information protected by the Health Insurance Privacy and Portability Act of 1996. Please review the major areas of HIPPA policy at this time with your Volunteer Coordinator and/or the Executive Director or Human Resource Director.

Notice of Privacy Practices

The Health Insurance Privacy and Portability Act (HIPPA)

Notice of Privacy Practices

All identifiable health care and personal information provide to us is confidential. Our Board members, staff, and volunteers sign a confidentiality agreement to protect your health care and personal information in accordance with the statues of Florida law and in Federal laws. Statements are read, signed, and also witnessed by the appropriate supervisor and/or administrator.

Violation of this agreement will result in immediate removal from the board, termination of employment or volunteer status, and/or punitive action pursuant to Florida Law.

Right to Know

Clients have a right to know what we do with the personal and confidential information we collect about them in the normal course of providing you with service. All information which identifies clients is maintained in individual non-identifying client files. Files are labeled and identified with a unique number, no personal or identifiable information is on the outside of the file. All files are stored in a locked file cabinet within a locked room and labeled confidential. These files are available for viewing only by the appropriate EU staff.

We value our relationship with each client and want to assure you that we properly safeguard their important information

Personal Information We Collect

We collect personal and health information about clients during the eligibility screening process in the form or lab slips, doctor's letters, assessment and in developing a plan of care. In addition we will maintain information about service we provide and referral that we give. Furthermore, we may obtain additional information from other parties which may include employers, other health care providers, and community agencies in the course of processing our client request for service.

How We May Use the Information

In order to provide the client with the highest level of services, we may use or share their information for the purposes of treatment, payment, and business operation only. To protect the privacy of information we require business associates to appropriately safeguard information as well. When information is disclosed, the amount of information provided is kept to a minimum.



How We May Disclose Information

We may disclose information only with the clients written authorization, however there are a few exceptions. We will not disclose any information about any clients or former customers except as authorized by law, as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices or as otherwise communicated to the client.

Law requires disclosure of information in case of:

- ❖ Child Abuse and neglect;
- ❖ Elderly abuse and neglect
- ❖ Serious threats to health and safety of a person or the public;
- ❖ Public health activities;
- ❖ Health oversight activities; and
Law enforcement activities.

Chief Privacy Officer

Please review our Privacy Practice Policy with the Chief Privacy Officer. Any concerns regarding this Notice of Privacy Practices or complaints related to the use and handling of personal and health information may be forwarded to the Chief Privacy Officer, Ms. Vanessa Mills at Empower U, Inc 8309 NW 22 Avenue, Miami, FL

What is AIDS?

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the name that has been given to describe the disease caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). “Acquired” means that the problem is not inherited. “Immune Deficiency” refers to the breakdown of the body’s defense system. “Syndrome” means AIDS is not a single disease or illness, but rather a collection of symptoms or infections.

Nobody knows where HIV came from or how to cure a person of it. However, some drugs and alternate therapies appear to slow the reproduction of HIV, while others can prevent or treat infections that result from HIV disease.

A person can be infected with HIV if he/she comes into contact with HIV-infected blood, semen, vaginal fluids or breast milk. The types of contact that transmit the virus are very intimate. HIV can only be transmitted through:

- Unprotected sex (vaginal, oral, anal)
- Shared needles
- From mother to child (during pregnancy, birth, breast feeding)

Despite the various routes of transmission, it is important to recognize that HIV is an extremely fragile virus. It is not spread through casual contact and it is not known to live long outside the body. You **CANNOT** get HIV from:

- Shaking hands
- Hugging or kissing
- Toilet seats
- Sharing a drinking glass
- Touching a doorknob
- Coughing or sneezing

As a volunteer with EU, you will have no risk of contracting HIV. It is common to have fear and wonder, "Can I get HIV from being at EU or from people working with people there?" You should know, you are not at any risk. Risk for HIV transmission is related to behaviors such as unprotected sex, substance abuse, multiple sex partners, etc. and not from casual contact.

Universal Precautions

Treat all blood as potentially infected.

Use of disposable latex gloves: Gloves should always be worn when touching another person's blood. Gloves should also be worn while handling items or surfaces soiled by blood, semen, or vaginal secretions. Gloves should be removed and disposed of after each use in the same fashion as soiled sanitary pads. They are to be placed in a plastic bag with the top knotted, and then discarded. The person should also wash his/her hands before gloving and after disposing of gloves. All staff or volunteers who come in contact with visible blood should practice gloving.

Hand washing: The washing of hands and skin is the single most effective health precaution for all viral and bacterial exposures. Use warm soapy water, wash after using the bathroom, eating, or handling food; wash all wounds, and wash between fingers and under finger nails. Wash skin and hands immediately after contact with another person's blood, semen, or vaginal fluids. You should also wash your hands thoroughly after removing gloves.

Proper Covering of Wounds: Intact skin is the best barrier to infection. You should always cover open wounds or cuts with appropriate bandages. Small cuts should be covered with band-aids. Workers should always have access to a first aid kit that includes bandages and other materials for dressing wounds.

Cleaning Visible Blood & Bodily Fluids: Visible blood and bodily fluids should be removed using a fresh solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. Clorox is the best to use. Disposable latex gloves should be worn when cleaning up spills, particularly blood, semen, vomit, menstrual secretions, urine, and feces. Use leak proof bags and wash in water that is 160 degrees or higher, or use bleach (½ cup per load). Most laundry going through the dryer will be disinfected by the dryer's heat.

Transportation

You may be asked to transport a client to a meeting or appointment. If you are providing transportation, we ask the following:

- Please make sure to pick up the client at the scheduled time.
- Do not make other stops at the request of a client. Staff will let you know of any changes either in person or in writing.
- You must have a valid drivers license (EU has insurance that covers hired and non-owned automobiles such as yours when used in the course of business.
- Your mileage expense will be reimbursed at the Federal rate of 0.34 cents per mile.

When you begin, you may wonder what to talk about while driving a person. You may also wonder if talking about HIV/AIDS is acceptable. To volunteers, most residents are open about having HIV/AIDS. If you are a regular transportation volunteer, you may even find that clients will begin to share parts of their lives with you. There really are no limits on conversation topics. It is likely that you will even be able to sense what is appropriate and comfortable for all involved. Please do not hesitate to ask if you have any further questions.

Some General "Do's"

Treat all clients, staff and volunteers with respect.

Listen to what clients have to say. If something concerns you, report it to a staff member. **Do not** enter into counseling with a client.

If you are unsure what to do, always talk with a staff member first.

Respect boundaries – they exist for the benefit for all.

Honor commitments to show up – clients, staff and other volunteers count on you. If you cannot, please call as far in advance as possible.

Enjoy your self, and enjoy getting to know the people around you. Know that you make a difference in the lives of the clients and staff of EU. What you do assists clients in reaching their goals and assists staff in doing their jobs.

THANK YOU!!
Welcome to Empower "U" Inc.



AFFIDAVIT OF UNDERSTANDING OF CONFIDENTIALITY

I, _____, a volunteer of EMPOWER "U", INC. understands that I am required by state law, 39.0132 (4) (a) and 39.202, F.S., to hold all EMPOWER "U", INC. program participant information obtained during my employment as "SUPERCONFIDENTIAL". I further understand that I cannot release any confidential information to any person or entity unless specifically authorized in writing by the client.

Further, I understand that there are strict procedures, which I must adhere to, for all HIV/AIDS related programs under which I will work and/or interact coordinating client services concerning the exchange and release of information.

Further, I understand that I may be guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree and/or liable to civil suit if I violate that confidentiality.

Further, I understand that whether confidentiality is breeched directly or indirectly it will constitute grounds for disciplinary action and/or my immediate dismissal as an employee of Empower "U", Inc.

Signed

Date

Witness

Date



Receipt & Acknowledgement Of the Empower “U” Volunteer Handbook

This Volunteer Handbook is an important document intended to help you become acquainted with Empower “U” (EU). This Handbook will serve as a guide; it is not the final word in all cases. It will illustrate our Mission and our Vision that will serve our clients and the community.

Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate your receipt and acknowledgement of the Empower “U” Volunteer Handbook.

- I have received and read a copy of the Empower “U” Volunteer Handbook. I understand that the policies, rules and benefits described in it are subject to change at the discretion of EU.
- I further understand that my volunteer services are terminable at will, either by myself or EU regardless of the length of my volunteer services.
- I am aware that during the course of my volunteer confidential information may be made available to me. I understand that confidential information must not be released within or outside EU premises.
- I understand that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand the above statements and received a copy of the Empower “U” Volunteer Handbook.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Volunteer Coordinator Signature

Date