



Volunteer Manual



1601 S. Georgia St.

Amarillo TX 79102

(806) 414-2864

panhandlepromiseproject@gmail.com



With a positive influence, children that have a parent that is incarcerated are five times more likely to become incarcerated in their life. The Promise Project seeks to break the cycle of generational incarceration by providing various activities and services for free. The Promise Project is dedicated to providing safe and healthy environments for at-risk and marginalized youth. This handbook outlines policies, guidelines, and best practices to help keep youth, staff, and volunteers safe. For policy questions contact the Panhandle Promise Project Executive Director at panhandlepromiseproject@gmail.com.

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Congratulations & Welcome

Dear Volunteer/Mentor,

Thank you for your interest and commitment to the *Panhandle Promise Project*; together we can enrich the lives of at-risk youth. We appreciate your involvement, time, and energy as you are an essential member of our vision in changing the lives of this population. This manual could assist you to becoming familiar with *Promise Project*. Know we are always open to communication; we encourage you to have suggestions. If you have a comment or concern, the staff will always be there to listen.

Here at the *Panhandle Promise Project*, we are dedicated to being involved with each youth on an individual basis. We want to develop a mutually beneficial relationship in which you, an important team member, use your experiences, enthusiasm, and energy to not only benefits the *Panhandle Promise Project*, but also to enhance your own life.

Mentoring or volunteering at the *Panhandle Promise Project* shows that you understand the worth of our vision and mission. Thank you for your support and we look forward to working with you.

Kimberli S. Phillips, LMSW
Executive Director



PROMISE PROJECT HISTORY

The Panhandle Promise Project started as Happy Camp, a one week summer camp that was run for several years by the Episcopal Diocese of Northwest Texas, for children with incarcerated parents. That experience was important for the children involved, but it was clearly insufficient in providing them a positive mentor relationship. Because of the need to have stable mentoring relationships for the children, the Panhandle Promise Project was revamped and a year round, one on one, mentoring program was added. The organization then received its 501(c) (3) tax exempt status in 2012. In 2016, after ongoing research and training, a change in the structure of the program was implemented to include group and school-based mentoring. Panhandle Promise Project is currently working with 30-35 children and their families, with plans to increase this number over the next 5 years.

Mission

Empowering children in the Texas Panhandle to overcome the challenges of parental incarceration.

Vision

A community where children of incarcerated parents have the tools and resources to achieve their dreams and become contributing members of society.



Panhandle Promise Project Ethical Guidelines

The Panhandle Promise Project:

- Understands that labels can be both stigmatizing and beneficial, and so we value and celebrate the strengths each child brings to our culture and community
- Believes that youth have the right to discover and experience healthy and positive role models
- Recognizes each child goes through their own life journey of self-discovery with unique interests and beliefs
- Proactively works toward fostering environments and opportunities that empower youth to develop pride and self-esteem
- Works with youth to encourage interests and strengths in developing a bonding relationship with a mentor; therefore, fostering socially acceptable behavior
- Works to educate the community to understand and support the needs of the youth
- Values the participation, suggestions, and innovations of each member, and the practice of candid communication

We are committed to effective conflict resolutions which will promote organizational development

We will operate ethically, earnestly, and be accountable in every aspect of the Panhandle Promise Project

The Board of Directors of the Promise Project

Jim Chen- President

Todd Baxley-Vice President

Mary Emeny- Secretary

Andrea Morehead-Treasurer

Andy Cash

Ed Drain

John Phillips

Margaret Jenkins

Mariah Strong-Woods

Seth Lujan

Kimberli Phillips- Executive director



Description of Services Provided by Panhandle Promise Project

Services and referrals for youth a family member who has been or is incarcerated

- School-Based Mentoring
- Monthly activities
- Supportive relationships and emotional support for clients and their loved ones
- Life skill advocacy
- Client centered referrals and coordination of mental health, alternative therapies, substance abuse counseling, domestic violence support, and other social services.
- Transportation assistance for activities sponsored by the Promise Project
- Youth advocacy at the local and state level
- Education on Life Skills

Benefits of Mentoring

- Provides positive adult role models which help the social development of children.
- Fostering relationships that help children break the cycle of generational incarceration and become successful in society.
- Reinforces positive attitudes towards life situations and problem-solving.
- Help build a youth's self-esteem and promotes growth and development through identification with positive adults.
- Positive adult role models influencing the social development of youth.

Comprehensive individual and community education on at-risk youth

- Offers educational material on at-risk youth
- Research based discussion on children of incarcerated parents
- Information on statistical data and other support services
- Cultural competency training

Community Programs and Events

- School-Based Mentoring
- Yearly Summer Camp
- Monthly Activities
- Educational Forums

Fundraising Events

- Mariposa Festival of Music



Volunteer Opportunities

Office Administration:

- Aid with large mailings – stamp, seal and deliver letters/invitations
- Provide general office assistance
- Assist with filing
- Assist with various fundraising projects

Event Coordination:

- Assist with event ‘day of’ duties such as set up, registration, and clean-up
- Support marketing and advertising plans
- Solicit auction items and sponsorships

Client Services:

- Provide client transportation to and from events
- Assist with weekly mentoring
- Support our referral program

Media Assistance:

- Photograph or video events for promotion
- Provide assistance with social media outlets
- Help with newsletters

Outreach and Education:

- Assist with youth programs such as Promise Project Summer Camp and other sponsored events.
- Chaperone events (youth gatherings, movie nights, and fundraisers)
- Refill and distribute outreach and awareness materials



Volunteering Policies & Procedures

Attendance

We will respect your time and dedication, we ask that you respect our agency; if you are running late or need to cancel, please inform someone at the office or another mentor.

Confidentiality

Please read and sign the *Confidentiality Policy* attached to this manual.

Drugs & Alcohol

Promise Project is a substance-free environment; please respect this policy at all times and be a positive role model for the youth. We ask that you refrain from consuming alcohol or using other substances at Promise Project events, including fundraisers, summer camps, mentoring, and outreach programs. You may be asked to leave the event/agency should this policy be broken.

Equal Volunteering Opportunity

Promise Project provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of sex, ethnicity, race, creed, national origin, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All issues which relate to mentoring or volunteering are based upon his/her ability to perform the job, as well as one's dedication to Promise Projects mission and vision.

Feedback

If at any time you would like to share your thoughts, regarding your experience, do not hesitate to schedule an appointment with Promise Project staff.

Gifts, Tips, Soliciting

Do not accept any tips or gifts from clients, their families, or friends. We will not create an atmosphere where our clients feel obligated to reward Promise Project staff, mentors, or volunteers for fulfilling job/volunteer obligations. In addition, you may not solicit any other business enterprise, political agenda, or religious beliefs while volunteering/mentoring with the Promise Project.

Smoking

Promise Project is located on a non-smoking facility. If you smoke, you must leave the campus and find an appropriate place.



Volunteer Policy and Procedures for Working with Youth

1. These policies represent socially acceptable standards of care for youth. Deviations from the listed policies require documented justification and approval from the program coordinators or the Executive Director. Deviations from the required policies will not be generally accepted.
2. Individuals who perform functions or duties that regularly require interactions with minors in a private setting or without direct supervision on-site must receive a criminal history check bi-annually. If the status of your criminal background changes, you must notify the Executive Director within five business days.
3. Youth should be within visual and/or hearing supervision of volunteers or staff at all times. Exceptions to visual supervision include bathroom or changing room use. Under these circumstances, staff and volunteers should respect the youth's privacy, but remain within hearing supervision by waiting nearby.
4. Staff and volunteers charged with supervising a group of youth will remain in sight or sound supervision of that group until relieved by another staff or volunteer.
5. Youth should not be in situations where they are alone with another unrelated youth for more than a few minutes. For example, avoiding prolonged periods in bathrooms or changing rooms reduces the risk of youth-on-youth abuse.
6. Staff or volunteers who do not follow these stated policies are not allowed to work with youth.
7. First violations will consist of a verbal warning followed by counseling of the Promise Projects policies and procedures. Mentors will receive a written warning upon a violation of policies and procedures as well as counseling regarding the violation. Upon receiving three written warnings, the mentor will be prohibited from volunteering for Promise Project. Exceptions to the three warnings are listed in the policies and procedures.
8. Fraternalization with clients, clients' caregivers, and clients' parents is strictly prohibited. Mentors will be asked to cease mentorship with the Promise Project, immediately.



9. Mentors will incorporate the Promise Project's training into mentoring the children. Mentors will exhibit respect, understanding, and patience with the children receiving services and mentoring.
10. Mentors will create and provide positive interactions/environments for youth. Immediate termination regarding violation of this policy will be considered based upon the consensus of the board.
11. Mentors, employees, and volunteers will always respect and consider the best interest of the youth involved with the Promise Project.



Social Controls to Protect Youth

1. Research reports that social norms established to protect youth in a community present a barrier to abuse. Support materials, trainings, and supervision should reflect these social norms.
2. Parents and other responsible adults are invited to visit programs at any time. Safety is a shared responsibility.
3. Learning occurs in open places where others may observe (through windows in doors) and feel welcome to enter easily (not behind closed or locked doors). Create an open, welcoming environment.
4. The physical and emotional state of all youth is observed each time they participate. Signs of injury or suspected child abuse must be reported.
5. Lodging assignments are made so that no single adult is housed with a single, unrelated minor. There is safety in numbers. Safety is always the guiding principle. Regarding the mentoring program, no overnight visits are allowed.
6. The need for privacy is respected at all times, and specifically when youth are changing clothes or bathing. The appropriate adult action is to turn your back, provide a visual barrier (e.g., hold up a towel) or step out of the room (but remain within hearing supervision).
7. Personal space is respected for all participants. Appropriate touching is always visible, open, and not secretive. Appropriate touching avoids contact with private body parts. Touching should be in response to the need of the child - not the needs of the adult.
8. A buddy system is implemented to protect everyone. Youth should have a buddy when they are not with a larger group; however, they should avoid prolonged periods without adult supervision.
9. Disciplinary measures never include use of physical punishment or failure to provide necessities of care, such as food, water or shelter; nor, should punishments single out an individual for group ridicule.
10. Bullying, hazing, or secret initiations are never allowed.
11. Youth are protected from inappropriate adult conversations and topics, including but not limited to adult-oriented jokes or discussion of sexual interactions



Confidentiality Agreement

I understand that it is my responsibility to keep confidential all information I gain as a Promise Project mentor/volunteer. This includes any information regarding clients, diagnoses, medical care, educational information, legal issues, administrative operations, and any other information accessed through organizational records, meetings, mentoring, or by way of any computer information (texting, emailing, etc).

By reviewing and signing the attached policy, I agree to abide by the following:

1. I will respect all individuals' right to privacy and confidentiality. I will not discuss, or in any other way, disclose any information concerning any client or their family I come into contact with at the Panhandle Promise Project.

2. I will respect the confidentiality of information regarding administrative operations. I will not discuss or in any other way disclose information concerning the Panhandle Promise Project's operations or administration outside the organization.

Any violation of the above Agreement will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

I, have read this Agreement, understand its contents, and agree to comply with all of its terms. This signed Agreement will be held on file at the Panhandle Promise Project's office.

Signature of Volunteer	Date
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Signature of the Panhandle Promise Project Representative	Date
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Acknowledgement of Receipt of Handbook

I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of the Panhandle Promise Project's Volunteer Manual. I understand that this handbook summarizes the guidelines and that it is furnished to me solely for my information.

I further understand that volunteering with the PANHANDLE PROMISE PROJECT is not for a specified term (unless otherwise indicated) and is at the mutual consent of me and the Promise Project.

Accordingly, the PANHANDLE PROMISE PROJECT or I can terminate the volunteer relationship at will, with or without cause, at any time.

I further understand that the statements contained in the Handbook are not intended to create any contractual or other legal obligations. I also understand that the PANHANDLE PROMISE PROJECT may modify or rescind any of its policies, or practices described in the handbook at any time, except for those policies required by law.

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to read and become familiar with the contents of the handbook.

Volunteer Name (Printed): _____

Volunteer Signature: _____

Executive Director Signature: _____

Date: _____