



GRACE HOUSE  
ministries, inc.

*giving hope to girls in foster care*

# Volunteer Manual

*“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10*



## *About Grace House Ministries*

The mission of Grace House Ministries is to provide stable, Christian homes to Alabama girls in foster care with the commitment to developing mature, Godly women. Our 8 property residential campus in Fairfield, AL provides a safe refuge for 40 girls and includes 3 group homes, 2 Transitional Living Program homes, a Campus School, a Community Garden, and the future home of the Lois G. Coleman Outreach Center.

All of the girls who call Grace House Ministries home have been removed from the custody of their families due to physical/sexual abuse, abandonment, and/or neglect, and are placed at Grace House through our partnership with the Alabama Department of Human Resources.

With over 2,500 girls in the Alabama foster care system and the number of children placed into the State's custody rising every year since 2012, Grace House exists as a necessary safe haven. A refuge like Grace House is needed because the girls we serve are our future community members, leaders, workforce, and mothers. By equipping our girls with the educational, emotional, and spiritual tools they need to break generational cycles of abuse and poverty, we empower them to create transformational changes in their own lives, families, and communities.

## *Our Founder*

Grace House's founder, "Mama" Lois Coleman, devoted her life to improving the lives of girls in foster care. In 1989 at age 66 years old, Mama Lois partnered with area churches and concerned community leaders to raise the funds to purchase and renovate a house in the Fairfield; the first home on our campus opened in 1992 when 8 girls moved in. Mama Lois passed away on March 31, 2019 at the age of 95, but Grace House continues to work towards realizing her vision of having a village of homes for girls in foster care.

## *Our Programs*

### ***YOUTH PROGRAM***

Provides 24/7 family care for up to 30 girls ages 6-18 in our 3 group homes. Grace House's live-in House Parent staff paired with Case Managers who have a background in Social Work provide care, transportation, and teach basic living skills. Grace House provides on-going counseling to each girl through our therapy partners; each girl is also matched with a volunteer mentor.

### ***TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM (TLP)***

Serves girls ages 16-21 both on and off the Grace House Campus by providing a continuum of care and further guidance before they assume complete independence. Grace House has 2 TLP homes on our campus housing 10 girls total. An additional 10 girls are served off-campus through quarterly life skills workshops and stipends.

### ***EDUCATION PROGRAM***

Ensures a life-changing education for all girls, either in the Grace House Campus School or one of our private school partners (Restoration Academy and Holy Family Cristo Rey), which also emphasizes character development and service-learning opportunities. Of note is that the Grace House Campus School is one of the only programs of its kind devoted entirely to meeting the unique educational needs of girls in foster care.

## *What volunteer opportunities does Grace House offer?*

Youth 18 and under: Due to the nature of our population, we recommend that youth volunteers consider an off-campus service project such as

- Organizing a supply drive (toiletries, household goods, school supplies, etc.)
- Organizing a gently used clothing drive
- Making goody bags or small gifts for the girls
- Organizing a Penny Drive fundraiser

### Hands on Service:

- **Green Team:** Grace House's Green Team helps keep the 8 properties on our campus safe, well-maintained, and beautiful. A great opportunity for larger service groups. Groups will need to bring some supplies, but can also use Grace House's 3 mowers and 2 weed-eaters. Volunteer orientation is not required.
- **Serve Days:** Serve days consist of helping with and hosting various projects on our campus. These include maintenance, cleaning/organization, cookouts, campus/alleyway cleanup etc.. Perfect for larger groups. Volunteer orientation is not required.

### CARE Team (Consistent, Authentic, Responsive, and Effective):

- **Tutoring:** Tutors are needed for all subjects at all grade levels. Tutors will be paired with a specific girl to tutor in one or more subjects. Tutoring sessions are typically held between 3-5 pm, Monday/Tuesday/Thursday. *Requirements: A one semester commitment, volunteer orientation, volunteer forms, background check (\$11.95), age 18 and up*
- **Mentoring:** A mentor provides one-on-one guidance and support to a girl through a consistent, long-term commitment. Mentors are also able to become visiting resources who are able to take a girl off-campus for activities. *Requirements: Volunteer orientation, volunteer forms, background check (\$11.95), fingerprints, age 21 and up, individual and couples.*
- **Fellowship:** Groups of volunteers lead a variety of fellowship and activities with our girls on a consistent basis. These include: bible studies, weekly/monthly dinners, craft activities, barbecues, holiday parties, karaoke nights, skate nights, movie outings and park/field days, etc. *Requirements: 3 month minimum commitment, background check (\$11.95), volunteer forms*

## *Guidelines for Volunteers*

- **Consistency:** The girls who come to live at Grace House have been removed from their homes many times due to abuse and/or neglect. When they arrive at Grace House, they are given food, shelter, love, a family, and stability. Because of that, we ask that our volunteers maintain consistency.
  - Tutors are asked to make a one semester commitment. The fall semester runs September-December and the spring semester is from January-May.
  - Mentors are asked to meet with their mentee a minimum of two times per month.
  - Fellowship – individuals/groups are asked to make a 3 month commitment of doing activities with the girls.
- **Confidentiality:** Upon arrival, our girls learn that at Grace House they are safe. The Grace House staff ensures that they are able to live a normal life, despite the events that brought them to Grace House. Staff and volunteers are required to help ensure their safety by upholding the strictest rules of confidentiality as outlined by DHR.
  - **Conversations:** Please do not ask or probe a Grace House resident for their history or background. They may choose to share their story with you, which is acceptable and a sign of trust, but please do not ask them for any information about themselves that is not voluntarily given. We also ask that you do not over-share details of your girls' story when sharing your volunteer experiences with friends and family.
  - **Photos:** We would love for you to post photos of the Grace House campus, the garden, or staff on your social media pages, but please do not post any photos with our girls' faces in them. Follow us on Facebook or Instagram: @gracehouseorg
- **Boundaries:** At Grace House, we feel it is our responsibility as staff and volunteers to help demonstrate and lead our girls in appropriate behavior.
  - **Money:** Each girl is given a monthly allowance and clothing stipend to ensure that they are not lacking in any necessities. Additionally, we administer money to girls for school items, field trips, and extra-curricular activities. If one of our girls asks you for money, please politely refer them to our staff. Mentors - You are welcome to treat your mentee to lunch/dinner/activities during visits, but please do not feel obligated to do so. There are so many free/low cost activities you can enjoy together! Likewise, please don't purchase toiletries, clothing, hair, etc for your mentee; these items are provided by Grace House.
  - **Off Campus Activities:** Volunteers are welcome to meet house parents and girls off campus for a movie, a ballgame, or a meal, but volunteers must not leave with any of our girls unless you have been approved to do so by DHR. Grace House girls are also not allowed to enter any volunteer's home unless a home study has been performed and approved by DHR.
  - **Information:** Please report any alarming information such as a girl's plans to run away, plans to harm herself or someone else, or plans to be destructive to the staff right away. While we want you to be someone our girls can rely on and trust, we know that you may hear some complaints about roommates or housemates, school, etc. Please be sure to inform the staff of any complaints that may be alarming or concerning.

- Phones or Electronics: Please do not let a Grace House girl use your phone or electronics. If they need to make a phone call, please refer them to the house parent. If they need to make contact with their house parents while you're off campus, please make the call for them. Mentors may use their discretion when deciding whether or not to share their phone number/personal social media accounts with their girl. If you do decide to text/call your mentee, remember that all scheduling must be done through the administrative office.
- Smoking: Smoking is prohibited in every area of the Grace House campus.
- Medical Attention/Emergencies: If you have an accident of any sort, do not attempt to correct the situation yourself. Instead, please notify your departmental contact, or the house parents immediately. Also notify someone if you witness an accident or unusual incident at Grace House or if you observe any safety or health hazard.
  - Please do not administer any medicines to our girls. All medicine must be properly logged by house parents and clinical staff, even Advil. If a resident needs this medical or behavioral attention, inform the staff of the department at once. If an emergency occurs and you need urgent help, please call 911. All emergencies should be reported to the departmental contact.
- Scheduling:
  - Typically, tutoring is scheduled between 3-5 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Volunteers wishing to tutor will be put in contact with our Education Director to finalize their schedule.
  - Most mentors schedule visits on either Friday evenings, Saturday mornings/afternoons/evenings, or Sunday afternoons. All weekend mentor visits need to be scheduled by the preceding Wednesday at 5 pm. Scheduling is done using an online calendar tool called Doodle, followed by an email confirmation from the Ministry & Volunteer Coordinator.

## *Contact List*

- Katherine Connell – Development Director, [katherine@grace-house.org](mailto:katherine@grace-house.org), 205-999-1407
- Hannah Barnes – Ministry & Volunteer Coordinator, [hannah@grace-house.org](mailto:hannah@grace-house.org), 205-203-2498
- Devin Lewis – Education & Outreach Director, [dlewis@grace-house.org](mailto:dlewis@grace-house.org), 205-563-5094
- Andril Bishop (Andy) – Residential Program Director, [andy@grace-house.org](mailto:andy@grace-house.org), 205 434-8895

## *Next Steps*

### Fellowship:

- Volunteer Release Form & Confidentiality Agreement
- Online Background Check (\$11.95 fee)

### Tutoring:

- Volunteer Release Form & Confidentiality Agreement
- Online Background Check (\$11.95 fee)
- Child Abuse/Neglect (CA/N) Form

### Mentoring

- Volunteer Release Form & Confidentiality Agreement
- Online Background Check (\$11.95 fee)
- Child Abuse/Neglect (CA/N) Form
- Fingerprints
- “Matching” Interview