



## 2012-2013 Volunteer Handbook

Welcome to the Amate House Handbook. The purpose of this document is to inform Volunteers and Prospective Volunteers about our program's values, charism, and policies. Our hope is that all Amate House Volunteers will enter into their year of service with a willingness to grow, share, and serve. The contents of this Handbook are meant to provide some "best practices" for the Volunteer experience. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about any of the information included in this document.

- The Amate House Program Staff

### **Who We Are**

Amate House was established in 1984 as a volunteer program for young adults by three seminarians from the Archdiocese of Chicago, along with a host of other lay and religious men and women. The founders chose the name "Amate," the Latin imperative "to love," because they envisioned a program in which lay young adults would put "love into action" by providing social services in response to the needs of the city and the Archdiocese of Chicago. In addition to exploring and living out a vocation of service, Amate House places a special emphasis upon the personal, professional, and spiritual development of its Volunteers, encouraging their growth into compassionate leaders for the church and world. The Amate House Mission Statement reads:

*Amate House, the Young Adult Volunteer program of the Archdiocese of Chicago, fosters the transformation of its Volunteers by providing experiences of full time service to people in need, community living and faith formation. Amate House develops future leaders for the church and world who are committed to building a more just and loving society.*

Amate House Volunteers are called to live out the philosophy of this mission statement throughout their year of service and beyond. To aid in this endeavor, our program highlights five tenets that we believe are central to our mission: **Service, Community, Faith, Social Justice, and Stewardship.**

#### **OUR CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

Since our program's inception, we have identified ourselves as a Catholic program. We draw on the Catholic faith's rich tradition of prayer, liturgy, theological reflection, and Catholic Social Teaching as a basis for our formation. In short, our Catholic faith is what grounds us – it informs our understanding of community, service, and justice. We also seek a variety of perspectives to enrich our conversations – we invite Volunteers of all faith traditions to be part of the Amate House family, and we celebrate that diversity. Our expectation is that all Volunteers be open to sharing their spirituality, regardless of their religious affiliation, and that they be respectful of Amate's Catholic tradition and the views of others. It should also be noted that Amate House is an agency of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Our Volunteers are considered to be representatives of the Archdiocese of Chicago both in their residence and in the public sphere, regardless of their religious affiliation.

### **Personal Transformation**

*"Personal transformation can and does have global effects. As we go, so goes the world, for the world is us. The revolution that will save the world is ultimately a personal one." - Marianne Williamson*

One of the primary strengths of our program is the consistent attention given to the personal formation and leadership development of our Volunteers. We believe that the greatest impact of our program is the growth that takes place in and through our young adult participants during their time with Amate House. Though the direct service work our Volunteers perform is meaningful and significant, our intention is to form women and men who are dedicated to making service and the pursuit of a more just and loving world a lifelong commitment.

We acknowledge that "transformation" cannot be forced on anyone – it's ultimately up to the individual's maturity, openness, self-awareness, and God's grace. In response, the Amate House experience is saturated with opportunities for formation – community nights, personal and communal prayer, retreats, in-services, speakers and presentations. Our aim is to prepare the ground that grace might enter and enable the seeds that are planted to grow and bear lasting fruit.

## FORMATION

Personal formation is an integral component of the Amate House experience. Our Volunteers engage in reflection, discussion, and activity on a weekly basis throughout the year in a variety of ways:

- **Orientation** provides the framework for the Volunteer year. We spend the first two weeks of the year getting familiar with the new communities, and having several discussions about expectations, hopes, concerns, and goals.
- **Community Nights** occur every Wednesday night – each house gathers for a business meeting, followed by a meal and activity. The Program Staff prepares a variety of community nights, covering diverse topics like community dynamics, poverty, discernment, and racial justice. Throughout the year, we bring in engaging speakers from around the city to dialogue with our Volunteers. About half of the community nights are conducted within the individual houses, and the other half are with all three Volunteer houses.
- **Retreats** provide a welcome respite from the Volunteers' busy schedule. We take two weekend retreats (fall and winter) and one week-long closing retreat at the end of the year. Past retreat themes have included "Discovering our Strengths", "Love in Action", "Called by God (Discernment)", and "The Vocation to Love".
- **In-Service days** are special days in the fall, winter, and spring in which our Volunteers take a day away from work to do service, reflect, or build community as a group.
- **Prayer Nights** are organized and led weekly by the Volunteers themselves. Because faith is one of our tenets, we encourage our Volunteers to integrate their spirituality with the everyday happenings of their lives. Volunteers take turns with their housemates in preparing a reflection, discussion, or faith sharing activity for the evening.

## JOURNALING

Amate House Volunteers are presented with various journal questions and reflections throughout the year. These are designed to help the Volunteers seek for deeper meanings in their experiences. Our experience has been that taking time for reflection or processing facilitates better learning, integration, and growth. Journaling time is built into our orientation, retreats, and the community night business meetings each week.

## SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS

Each Volunteer is offered the opportunity to be partnered with a spiritual companion for the year. The spiritual companion and Volunteer meet once a month, processing and reflecting on the Volunteer's experiences, struggles, and any important decisions or life choices the Volunteer may be discerning. The spiritual companion helps provide support, encouragement and accountability for the Volunteer's spiritual journey. The Volunteer is responsible for initiating contact with their companion. Past Volunteers who have regularly utilized this support have found it immensely helpful to them.

## COUNSELING

We are fully supportive of our Volunteers seeking out counseling or therapy services, if they consider it appropriate or necessary. Our belief is that counseling is a valuable tool. The Amate House Staff is committed to helping Volunteers gain access to the support they need, whether through health insurance, or through resources provided by the program.

## **Intentionality and Simplicity**

"We do not think ourselves into new ways of living, we live ourselves into new ways of thinking." - Richard Rohr, OFM

Participating in the Amate House program requires openness to change, receptiveness to inner growth, and a willingness to serve others and make sacrifices as an individual and as a community. This commitment to "living intentionally" means cultivating a deeper consciousness about everyday decisions and habits, and at times may call us away from the prevailing habits of our culture.

In solidarity with the people of Chicago whom we serve, and out of respect for the people who provide financial support for our program, Amate House Volunteers live a simple lifestyle, one in which they live as "good stewards" of what they have been given. Each year the Volunteer communities will set guidelines and goals for themselves as to how this can best be achieved. We challenge Volunteers to live within the means of their monthly \$100 allowance, including those Volunteers with access to outside financial support. Use of credit cards during the year is discouraged, and we ask that Volunteers be very cautious about any debt obligations they enter into.

Many of our Volunteers require a flight home to see family and friends, and we are aware that travel can be costly. If a Volunteer's family offers money in the form of a flight, we ask that the Volunteer be conscious that other members in their community may not have such luxuries available, so these expenses should be viewed and treated as a gift. In the same way, we ask Volunteers to be mindful of care packages that may come from family and friends. This deeper level of awareness is needed when encouraging a community of solidarity and equality.

Our experience has taught us that there are some particular areas that warrant some additional consideration:

### *ALCOHOL and other SUBSTANCES*

The habitual use of alcohol is discouraged, and Volunteer communities are encouraged to find a positive alternative when socializing with each other. Frequent use of alcohol compromises a Volunteer's ability to form authentic, close bonds with others in community. Many of our Volunteers work at sites whose clients struggle with alcohol and other substances. In addition, there may be community members that are struggling with alcohol dependency or have family members who have struggled with it. Amate House urges all Volunteers to use mature judgment and social responsibility when making decisions about using alcohol or other substances.

The inability to perform work-related activities, failure to participate in community living, or inappropriate behavior resulting from alcohol abuse are grounds for dismissal from Amate House. Alcohol shall in no instance be given to any underage minor on Amate House property, nor shall any abuse of alcohol by an outside party be permitted at Amate House. Violating this rule may be cause for dismissal. Purchasing and the use of kegs on Amate House property is prohibited. Alcohol may NOT be purchased with Amate House petty cash money.

There is a no alcohol policy for orientation and our three retreats (fall, winter and closing). Additionally, we challenge our Volunteers to refrain from using alcohol during their first month in community together.

The use of illegal drugs by Amate House Volunteers or on the grounds of any Amate House property is strictly prohibited. Violation of this expectation will result in dismissal from the program and possible action by legal authorities.

### *CELL PHONES*

Our culture's addiction to technology may be no more apparent than with cell phone usage. There is an inferred expectation that everyone be available at all times, instantly able to respond to calls, text messages, social media outlets, and so on. Because Amate House is designed to be an immersion into intentionality and simplicity, we ask our Volunteers to reconsider the role their cell phones play in their daily lives. First, having a cell phone is a privilege and should be used as such. Volunteers should be mindful of the usage of their phone (including texting and data) in the evenings and on the weekends during free time, as time on the phone takes away from time in community. Each house is equipped with a house telephone that we encourage our Volunteers to use when possible as an alternative to their cell phone. Cell phones should be **TURNED OFF** (not in silent mode) during community nights, community meals, retreats and other Amate House events.

Volunteers are challenged to pay their cell phone bills from their monthly stipend and not accept outside payments. If they are part of a family plan, they are encouraged to take ownership of their portion of the bill.

### *INTERNET AND EMAIL*

Each of our houses is equipped with a DSL line for internet access. Amate House provides internet access to help Volunteers to communicate with friends and loved ones – but all in good measure. We do not provide wireless access in the houses, and we do not support the use of WiFi networks in our communities. Volunteers are challenged to share the computer that is provided in the house. Those who elect to bring a personal computer or laptop are asked to be mindful about how they use this resource. Like cell phones, computers can keep Volunteers from being fully present in community.

## **Community Living**

“So it is that we come to put down roots in community, not because it is perfect and wonderful, but because we believe that Jesus has called us together. It is where we belong and are called to grow and serve.” - Jean Vanier

Almost without fail, when all is said and done, Amate House Volunteers point to their shared life together in community as one of the most influential and important aspects of their year. We believe that communal living not only provides an important means of support for our young adult Volunteers during their challenging experiences of service, but that it also is an essential part of their ongoing formation as people of faith and their continued development as leaders. Thus, it is expected that Amate House Volunteers make a sincere effort to develop and work at their relationships with other community members and staff, to relate with honesty and sensitivity with others, and to do what is necessary for the household and the program to function efficiently, effectively and lovingly during the course of the year.

### *RESPECT*

The basic ground rule for community living and for involvement in the Amate House program is respect for others. Our Catholic-Christian heritage firmly upholds the dignity and sacredness of the human person. This means that all interactions with fellow Volunteers, Staff, and all others should be rooted in respect.

## MEALS

Meals are meant to be daily celebrations in which the community gathers to be nourished with good food, laughter, stories, and sharing. Amate communities eat dinner together Monday through Thursday, with the responsibilities of cooking and dishwashing shared amongst all the members. Because mealtime is designed to be a great community-building time, Volunteers are expected to not miss a community dinner unless it is absolutely necessary. After their year is done, many of our Alumni share that many of their happiest memories of the year occurred around the dinner table! Weekend meals are generally left up to individual Volunteers, although sharing meals and cooking during that time is highly encouraged.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Volunteers attend and participate in regular community nights, weekend liturgies, retreats, in-service days, theological reflection sessions, meetings, community prayer, spiritual companionship sessions, benefit events, and other special events.

**Wednesday Community Nights are SACRED. Volunteers are expected to be present at each community night and to be on time.** All Volunteer Service Sites are aware of this commitment and should allow our Volunteers ample time to return home in order to be present and relaxed for community nights. Volunteers are expected to keep in balance their commitment to service at their site and the formation that Amate House provides. Good communication and time management go a long way in keeping this balance.

Generally, weekends remain free from Amate House commitments. However, there ARE some events planned during the year that take place on weekends. If a Volunteer plans to leave community for a weekend, they are expected to consult their house's calendar before making plans to be away. Volunteers should make an effort to plan their travel around their Amate House and service site commitments. Amate House makes a conscious effort to alert Volunteers of commitments that take place on weekends – the program will provide a list of required events during orientation, and these commitments will also be listed on the house calendar. If a scheduling conflict comes up, we ask that the Volunteer contact their House Coordinator before making plans to miss an Amate House commitment.

## WEEKENDS and FREE TIME

Each Volunteer's presence (or absence) on weekends has a significant impact on communal life. In order for relationships to develop, time and space is necessary. **Amate House asks its Volunteers to not leave Chicago or their community on a weekend during the month of August.** This encourages communities to intentionally spend weekend time together at the beginning of the year so that they can focus on individual relationships within the community. Throughout the year, we encourage our Volunteers to show an ongoing commitment to community by limiting their time away.

Outside projects such as graduate school exams, applications, and interviews can compromise a Volunteer's full presence in community. If a Volunteer is applying to graduate school, we ask him/her to schedule any tests and complete applications before they begin their Amate House commitment. If this is not possible, we ask the Volunteer to be aware of how much time these projects will take from community, and to effectively communicate this with his/her housemates.

When our Volunteers leave for the weekend, the general expectation is that they leave after our Wednesday community night together. **This includes Christmas and Easter vacation time.** Upon leaving for the weekend or going out with other friends, Volunteers should always let their community know where they are going, when they expect to return and how they can be reached, both for their own safety and out of respect for those they are living with.

## CHORES

Tasks for maintaining the house in clean and good working order will be determined for each Volunteer community during orientation. We find it helpful to discuss this early, as working out house chores and jobs in a large community can be quite difficult! Participation by each person in the ongoing cleaning and maintenance of our "homes" is an essential dimension of a commitment to intentional community living. It is a way to actively practice hospitality and it helps us to maintain our residences for future Amate House Volunteers!

Amate House residences are expected to be cleaned and picked up on a weekly basis, especially if a house is hosting a community night, house Mass, college immersion group or any other Amate House event. Communities are encouraged to discuss methods of accountability when determining who will be responsible for what chores. The program helps communities with chore accountability by providing a monthly check-in that each Volunteer signs in order to receive their monthly personal allowance check.

## BUDGET

A budget will be provided at the beginning of the year as a guideline for food and household expenses for each house, also for transportation (gas and CTA passes), and other regular expenses. The first few weeks typically run a bit higher in terms of

food and other expenses, but each house will likely settle into a budgetary rhythm by the end of September. How to split the money up between groceries and house items is up to each community. If the community plans to spend money on things other than groceries and house items, they must first clear it with their House Coordinator. Because the budget will be set in accordance with the desire to focus on a simple lifestyle, Amate House money may not be spent on alcohol. The budget is subject to review and may be adjusted during the course of the year by Amate House Staff. Volunteers are encouraged to challenge themselves on budgetary issues and make informed decisions about their spending. A regular budget check-in will be a part of weekly business meetings at community nights.

Petty cash checks will be issued on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. If that day falls on a weekend the checks will be issued the first business day after the weekend. All receipts must be turned into the Administrative Director by the 12<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of each month. If that day falls on a weekend the receipts must be turned in the first business day after the weekend. A community member will be in charge of the house budget and balancing petty cash. A more detailed job description will be reviewed at orientation.

### *SHOPPING*

Shopping should be completed in accordance with a commitment to GOOD STEWARDSHIP of resources, the health of the Volunteer communities, and within budget! Volunteers are encouraged to shop for their food thoughtfully, cost-effectively, and with consideration to their housemates' dietary needs (i.e. vegetarian, vegan, allergies, etc.). Each house will be given a budget that you will work from in order to decide how, when and where to spend your money. Everyone in the community has a say in this issue, so we encourage the house to have a fair and inclusive conversation. It is a wonderful exercise in simple living, group decision making and conscientious purchasing!

Amate House purchases are exempt from sales tax. Each community will receive a copy of our Tax Exempt Letter for use when purchasing groceries and other items with petty cash money. Volunteers will be instructed on proper use of this letter; misuse of the letter could jeopardize the tax exempt status of the WHOLE Archdiocese of Chicago, so Volunteers are expected to use the tax letter prudently and take care not to lose it.

### *ENVIRONMENT*

The environment that we help to create within our Amate House homes can have a great impact on mental and physical well-being. Volunteers are encouraged to find ways to make their homes (both inside and outside) warm, inspiring and welcoming, to create spaces which promote and encourage prayer and reflection, and to help keep a clean environment which promotes healthy, happy living. Communities are responsible for the upkeep of the outside of their residence, including raking, shoveling, weeding, and picking up trash.

Amate House buildings are smoke free. Courtyards provide an area for smoking. Volunteers and guests who smoke are asked to clean up all cigarette butts and garbage.

### *CONSERVATION*

Amate House is financially responsible for the utility bills of our residences. We ask that our Volunteer communities conserve energy (i.e. turn off radios, TV, lights and fans when leaving a room). As part of our commitment to the principles of stewardship, we take seriously our responsibility to care for creation. Therefore, we encourage our Communities to recycle cans, glass, plastic and newspapers as well as plastic grocery bags. Information on neighborhood recycling procedures are posted in each Volunteer residence.

### *HOSPITALITY*

One of the challenges of community living – and one of the surest signs of a vibrant community – is the capacity to provide hospitality to guests, and make others feel welcome in their home. Because hospitality is something we value at Amate House, our communities frequently host small groups or activities such as spring break trips, applicants interested in our program, donors and supporters, and Amate House Board Meetings. It can be challenging for Volunteers to balance their own need for space with the desire to be available and hospitable to others. This is, we think, a wonderfully important tension from which to learn. We encourage our communities to fully enter into the opportunities to practice hospitality.

### *GUESTS*

Volunteers are welcome to invite friends and family for dinner or as an overnight guest. Guests should use guest rooms during their stay. Volunteers should give their housemates advance notice if they are planning to have someone as an overnight guest. While hosting overnight guests is a wonderful way to practice hospitality, it is also important to recognize that frequently hosting guests does impact the dynamics of community. Volunteers should discuss what an appropriate length of stay would be for guests. In addition, community events are sacred, and it may not always be appropriate for guests to

participate in small group sharing opportunities that are meant to be confidential. Volunteers should always ask their House Coordinator if it would be appropriate to have a guest join in a community night.

### *NEIGHBORS*

All of our residences are located within neighborhoods – some residences are within close proximity of other people. We ask our communities to be considerate at all times of the neighbors; be it priest, parishioner or the general community. As representatives of Amate House and the Archdiocese of Chicago, courteous and responsible behavior is expected of our Volunteers whether at home or away, and especially with neighbors.

### *RELATIONSHIPS*

Amate House is open to unmarried couples participating in our program. Because romantic relationships can complicate or conflict with the growth of intentional community, we place the individuals in separate houses for the program year. The same applies for close friends who join the program together.

It is not unheard of for romantic relationships to form while Volunteers are at Amate House, either with another Volunteer or with a person outside of the program. It is unhealthy and detrimental for Volunteers to keep these relationships a secret from their community or the Staff. It is our hope that Volunteers continually build a solid foundation of love and respect in their Amate House community and that their relationships are respected and celebrated by their peers. Volunteers should keep in mind that during their time at Amate House, their primary commitments are to community and work. If a situation arises where a romantic relationship is beginning to form with another Volunteer within the community, we encourage the Volunteers involved to seek out their House Coordinator for support in how to move forward in determining what to communicate with the community and the best approach to take with it.

Cohabitation is not permitted in Amate House residences. When the significant others of Amate Volunteers come to visit, they should stay in a guest bedroom out of respect for the program and the Volunteers.

## **Service**

“I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.” - Albert Schweitzer

The focus on service at Amate House is our recognition of a call to action: the call of the Gospel to be instruments of God’s love, care and justice in the world. We are called as Christ’s followers to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, visit the sick and imprisoned, and to serve the poor and most vulnerable members of our human family. We seek to make service a way of life and to support and encourage young adults as they respond to their personal call to participate in God’s love through service to those in need and the transformation of society. Indeed, thousands of people in need are touched annually through the direct service of Amate House Volunteers.

### *EMPLOYMENT*

Amate House Volunteer site placements are considered full time jobs. Sites range from corporate-style office buildings, to elementary schools, to converted offices for small nonprofits. Regardless of the site or job, Volunteers are expected to treat their work as they would any other full time employment: respect for time of arrival/departure, consistent presence, properly communicated absences to employer, etc. If a Volunteer has a conflict in the workplace, he/she should to speak with their Site Supervisor to try to resolve the problem before coming to Amate House Staff for assistance. If a Volunteer is unsure how to address an issue, their House Coordinator can assist in finding appropriate language and methods.

Failure to adhere to the expectations, policies and procedures of the Volunteer Site Placement can result in dismissal from the program.

### *SITE MEDIATION and TERMINATION*

In the event that there is a serious conflict with the Service Site, the Volunteer must communicate with the House Coordinator/Program Director and work through a mediation process with the Site and Site Supervisor. The Volunteer agrees, by signing the Letter of Service Agreement, to take all possible steps that may be deemed necessary in order to negotiate a solution. A mediation process and timeline will be worked out on an individual basis with the Volunteer, the Program Coordinator/Program Director and the Site Supervisor in the event of a conflict.

Each Amate Volunteer makes a commitment to voluntarily serve for the year; therefore, simply not liking the job is not an adequate reason to leave a Service Site. When a Volunteer leaves a Service Site, it results in a budget deficit for both Amate House and the site. Termination from a site is taken very seriously. Reasons to begin a mediation process would include:

- A lack of direct service at the site. Amate House asks that each site provide a job description that includes 80% direct service to clients or students. A few sites may state up front (on their site listing), that 80% direct service is not provided. If this is stated in advance, it is not an acceptable reason for a Volunteer to terminate their commitment to the site.
- The Job Description provided to the Volunteer during their interview is not accurate and has changed drastically from what they committed to.
- A lack of supervision or inadequate supervision from the Site Supervisor.
- Personal health or safety concerns on behalf of the Volunteer.

The Amate House Volunteer will select another site and interview from a limited list of available placements.

#### *OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT*

Because volunteer service, community life, and other Amate House commitments take up a good portion of the day/week, **we prohibit any outside employment.** We also prohibit the Volunteers from taking classes, unless cleared with the Program Staff in advance. Our Volunteers commit to practicing simplicity for the year, and earning and saving money can make that challenge more difficult. Volunteers who are offered opportunities to work extra hours for pay (i.e. after school tutoring, coaching) are encouraged to work for free or donate any money received to the program or their community.

### **Grievance Policies**

Any and all grievances or complaints, large or small, related to a Volunteer's participation in the Amate House program, related to any other participant in the Amate House program, or against a Staff or Board Member, should be handled in the following manner:

- 1.) If any issue or complaint is related directly to an individual person, that person should be approached respectfully, communicated to directly, and allowed the opportunity to respond directly to the issue.
- 2.) If the issue or complaint is not sufficiently resolved through direct communication with the individual, or such communication is deemed to be inappropriate, the Volunteer should report/discuss the matter with the designated House Coordinator and/or Site Supervisor.
- 3.) If the issue/complaint is still not sufficiently resolved, the matter should then be communicated with the Executive Director.
- 4.) After the Executive Director, if the matter has not been resolved in the previous 3 steps, the President of the Board of Directors should be approached.
- 5.) The Board of Directors will make final decisions related to any matters not resolved previously.

NOTE: AmeriCorps members are bound by the AmeriCorps Education Award Program contract and member handbook.

### **Mediation and Termination**

It is a rare occurrence that a Volunteer decides to leave Amate House prior to completing the year. Our program is very proud of our high retention rate from year to year – we attribute this success to a responsive, supportive Staff and community environment. Therefore, when a Volunteer does choose to terminate their commitment, our Staff, Board of Directors, and Service Sites take it very seriously. We ask that any Volunteer discerning their commitment to Amate House weigh this decision WITH their House Coordinator, the Program Director or the Executive Director. All discernment will be kept confidential at the request of the Volunteer.

Our Volunteers' commitment to Amate House begins when they sign the Letter of Service Agreement upon acceptance to the program. **Any decision to terminate from the program has a major financial impact on Amate House and your Service Site.** Departing Volunteers affect our Staff, our budget, the Volunteer's site, their clients, and their community.

In the event that an Amate House Volunteer decides to terminate from the program and the decision is **NOT** mutually agreed upon by the Program Director, the following steps will be followed:

- 1.) The Volunteer must give an explanation to their community. This would entail a discussion and reflection led by an Amate House Staff Member. Time must be allowed for the community's reflections and questions regarding the situation. The Volunteer is asked to be open and honest with their community. The community is required to keep any information that is discussed in this setting confidential.
- 2.) The Volunteer must make personal (face to face) contact with each staff member that they have been involved with in order to end the Amate House experience properly. This includes the Executive Director and Program Staff.

- 3.) In the presence of the House Coordinator, the Volunteer is responsible for arranging a meeting to inform their Site Supervisor of their decision. This should include both an explanation and an apology for not fulfilling the commitment that they have made to the organization or school. The Site Supervisor should set the requirements for termination with the staff members at the site. The Program Director will contact the site regarding the broken contract.
- 4.) The Volunteer will be immediately terminated from Amate House's health insurance policy.
- 5.) The Volunteer must reimburse Amate House for any education and training that was provided for them in order to perform their work (i.e. Teacher training seminars or language training). Amate House views these educational experiences as investments in our Volunteers. If a Volunteer chooses to leave the program, this investment is lost and should be repaid.
- 6.) The Volunteer, in choosing to leave the Amate House program, will be released from their term of service in the AmeriCorps Education Award Program. This termination means the member will receive no portion of the education award and may be ineligible to apply for future grants. If the Volunteer is leaving Amate House due to a compelling circumstance (see the AmeriCorps member handbook), they may be eligible to receive a prorated portion of their award.
- 7.) The Volunteer is responsible for his or her own transportation home, and will not receive the end-of-year bonus.
- 8.) The Volunteer must complete an Exit Interview with the Executive Director or the Board President.

These steps must be completed within a 5 day period or as deemed appropriate by the Program Director.

**If reasons for leaving are mutually agreed upon and/or out of the control of the Volunteer, the Volunteer will work with the Program Director in order to end well with their Site Placement and Community.**

**In the event that Amate House decides to terminate the relationship with a Volunteer, the Letter of Service Agreement may be terminated within 14 days after notice is given to the Volunteer, and staff will continue following Mediation (which may involve the above steps).**

*NON-DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT POLICY (adapted from CVN manual)*

Discrimination of any kind on the part of Amate House Volunteers will not be tolerated. Anyone found to be engaging in any type of unlawful or harassing discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Amate House program.

Amate House will not tolerate harassment of any kind. Harassment includes threatening or insinuating that the refusal to submit to sexual advances will adversely affect workplace or community relationships. Harassment may also include conduct such as unwanted sexual flirtation or touches; abusive or degrading language; graphic or suggestive comments; or displaying inappropriate objects or pictures. Any member who believes that he or she has been subject to harassment of any kind, or who has knowledge about harassment of others, should report their harassment to an immediate supervisor, and/or Program Director in accordance with the Grievance Policy. Any member who is found to have engaged in harassment will be subject to appropriate discipline, up to and including dismissal from the Amate House program and AEAP program.

## **Volunteer Benefits**

### *ALLOWANCE*

Volunteers receive their monthly personal living allowance checks (\$100) on the first Friday of each month, beginning in September. They receive half of the allowance (\$50) for the months of August and June as they will only work for half of those months. Volunteers are expected to personally commit to the challenge of sticking to their monthly allowance. This means thinking about how they will pay for cell phone bills, public transportation and bus/plane/train tickets home.

### *HEALTH INSURANCE*

Our Volunteer health plan is covered by Christian Brothers Services ([www.cbsecurities.org](http://www.cbsecurities.org)). Health insurance coverage begins **September 1 and continues through June 30** each year, and provides limited eye coverage. During orientation, Volunteers are enrolled on the Amate House health plan. Amate House offers partial reimbursement of doctor visit co-payments and prescription costs to all of its Volunteers, including those who elect to stay on their parents' plan for the year.

New Volunteers should note that they are in the program a full month before their health insurance coverage begins. This is typical of any other type of employment. We encourage our Volunteers to insure that they remain covered throughout the volunteer year – if a Volunteer requires medical attention while uninsured, they will be responsible for any medical costs incurred.

### *DENTAL CARE*

The health plan provided by Amate House DOES NOT include dental care. Volunteers who require emergency dental services are encouraged to contact their House Coordinator, as we have been able to find pro-bono care in the past.

### *LOAN FORBEARANCE*

Through the Catholic Volunteer Network, our Volunteers are eligible to apply for the AmeriCorps Education Award. With this award, AmeriCorps members are able to put all **Federal** loans into forbearance. This allows Volunteers to put their loans "on hold" from the end of their grace period until the completion of their service year. Interest will accrue during this time, but AmeriCorps offers to pay all or part of it at the end of the service term. A thorough session on AmeriCorps is covered during orientation. Incoming Volunteers with questions about AmeriCorps are encouraged to contact the Amate House Staff.

Each private lender treats the Amate House Volunteer experience differently. Volunteers with private loans are encouraged to contact their lender prior to arriving at Amate House. Each Volunteer is responsible for learning about and executing the action steps required for their particular situation. Volunteers requiring paperwork from Amate House should contact the Program Staff.

**Note: AmeriCorps education awards are subject to federal funding. Amate House cannot guarantee that they will be available.**

### *VACATION TIME*

Each Amate House Volunteer may take up to 10 days of vacation time during the year. A vacation day is defined as any weekday spent away from community, regardless of whether it is a site holiday. This time should be worked out around site, community and other Amate House commitments. Volunteers should clearly communicate planned vacation times with fellow community members, Site Supervisors and Amate House Staff.

**It is expected that there be no additional vacation time beyond the two allotted weeks (10 work days).** This is especially important for teachers and other Volunteers working in schools to be aware of. Because schools and some other sites that work with schools, often have set breaks and may even end early according to our prescribed volunteer "year," it is important that those Volunteers only take 10 days away from their community. Volunteers at such sites are expected to find other ways to serve and volunteer their time during added breaks or in the event of early completion of their volunteer assignment. Visiting and helping out at the site of another Volunteer is one possible and suggested way to make use of this time. Finding ways to contribute to the house (cleaning, organizing, planning, etc.) may be another. Amate House Staff can often use additional assistance, and there are numerous additional volunteer options in Chicago. Volunteers with extra time are encouraged to take the initiative to use such time wisely.

Please note that any time away from work and community is vacation time, even if it is for a grad/med/law school or job interview for next year.

Amate House Volunteers are permitted three sick days during the course of the year. Sick days are only to be used when the Volunteer is SICK. They are not interchangeable with vacation days. Volunteers are also allowed 2 days away from work and community (with permission from the Site Supervisor) for recruiting purposes. Recruiting trips must be planned ahead of time with an Amate House Recruitment Coordinator.

## **Transportation**

### *AUTOMOBILES*

Amate House has several vehicles available for use by Amate House Volunteers. They will be shared and distributed among houses as needed, by the discretion of the Program Staff. We ask that Volunteers treat these vehicles with great care, as they provide the main mode of transportation for Volunteers to and from Service Sites. **All drivers of Amate House vehicles MUST HAVE A VALID DRIVERS LICENSE and be at least 21 years of age.** Almost all of the Amate House vehicles have been donated, and therefore are "well loved." Volunteer safety is a priority to us, so we work to keep all of our cars in good working order. We ask our Volunteers to help us with accomplishing this goal by helping to coordinate routine maintenance (such as oil changes), and visits to the repair shop as needed.

Cars are to be used first and foremost for transportation to and from work (this takes priority over any personal use). We ask that Amate House Volunteers utilize the public transportation systems available to them whenever possible. Volunteers from the Chicagoland area and surrounding suburbs should use Metra to visit their families. Amate House cars are not to be

taken more than one hour from the house and are not to be driven out of the city unless for Amate House purposes (recruiting or retreats) or otherwise allowed by the Program Staff. Secondly, Amate House vehicles are a valuable, shared resource for the community. Everyone is responsible for their care. Carpooling with Amate cars and using CTA (Chicago Transit Authority) are important means of transportation to and from the Volunteer's work site. Volunteer communities must work with each other to determine the most equitable and efficient use of vehicles during the year. Everyone is required to assist in transportation of one another to work or to public transportation if need be.

For liability reasons Amate House cars are generally not to be used for transporting persons at a Volunteer's work site. If the site wishes to use an Amate House vehicle for an event, then liability waiver forms must be used for all persons riding in the vehicle. All minors must have parental consent. If a Volunteer uses an Amate House vehicle for work purposes, the site must reimburse Amate House at the current federal mileage rate, per their agreement with our organization.

Each Amate House Community will designate a member who will be the contact person in the house regarding repairs, oil changes, etc. This is considered a household chore and will be discussed further at orientation.

#### *AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENTS and TICKETS*

If an Amate House car is involved in an accident, **a police report MUST be filed for insurance purposes.** Volunteers involved in an accident should call the police IMMEDIATELY to file a report. (Dial 311 for non-emergencies.) Immediately after that, a staff member should be notified.

Our insurance deductible for accidents and necessary repairs related to accidents is \$500 per incident. Volunteers involved in an accident with an Amate House vehicle for which they are at fault will be asked to contribute \$100 (for each accident) towards the deductible. This fee is charged in order to ensure responsible and careful driving in Amate House cars.

If a Volunteer receives an automobile ticket (for parking, speeding, running a red light or any other moving violation), they are expected to pay for that ticket. A staff member should be notified if an Amate House vehicle is ticketed. As the registered owners of the cars, Amate House receives a copy of every ticket written out to one of our vehicles in the mail. If a Volunteer intends to contest a ticket, they should inform their House Coordinator.

#### *PERSONAL CARS*

All Amate House Volunteers have committed to live a more simplified lifestyle while in Chicago. We challenge our Volunteers to live without multiple vehicles at their disposal. Therefore, we ask that Volunteers not bring personal cars unless there is a compelling medical or personal reason. If a Volunteer does bring a personal car, we challenge them to consider it a resource to be shared with the whole community.

#### *CTA PASSES*

A number of our Volunteers receive money each month to purchase CTA passes for transportation to and from work. Because these monthly passes provide unlimited access to the CTA and can also be used for personal trips, we ask these Volunteers to pay \$10 of their own money toward the purchase of these passes. If a Volunteer has to travel regularly during the workday (for work) using their CTA pass, we ask that the site reimburse Amate House for part of the cost of the CTA pass. This will be discussed further during orientation.

### **Fundraising**

Amate House is an agency of the Archdiocese of Chicago. However, we have our own separate Board of Directors and must do all of our own fundraising each year. We do not receive any funding from the Archdiocese for our operating costs.

Volunteers are not asked to raise a specific amount of money in order to participate in the program, but we do ask that Volunteers help with our fundraising efforts during the year. Volunteers write a Fall/Thanksgiving and Spring/Easter appeal letter to friends and family, and attend our annual fundraiser, Amate Magic, where they help in selling raffle tickets and greeting guests. Volunteers may also be asked to speak at parishes or other fundraisers for Amate House.

### **Safety and Security**

Doors are to be kept locked at all times. Volunteers should make a habit of regularly checking that doors are locked at night and ground floor windows are properly closed. If all Volunteers are planning to be away from the house for a period of time (i.e. retreat, Christmas) special attention should be paid to making sure the house is secured – newspapers should be stopped, windows should be locked, and a light left on. Cars should be locked at all times. No valuables should ever be left unattended in any vehicle.

Volunteers should respect fellow community members' feelings about safety. Each community should make sure that housemates and guests are walked out to their cars or picked up from the nearest CTA station if need be.

#### *EMERGENCY PROCEDURES*

For Police or Fire Emergency, call 911; for other non-emergencies dial 311.

Instructions and Staff phone numbers will be posted in each Volunteer house next to the phone.

#### **If there is an emergency situation involving a member or members of the community:**

1. Call 911.
2. Call a Staff Member.
3. The Staff Member will contact the emergency contacts of the Volunteer.

#### **If there is an emergency situation involving the house (i.e. fire or burglary):**

1. Get out! Go to the rectory of the Church or someplace out of harm's way.
2. Call 911.
3. Call a Staff Member.

If a trauma or emergency situation results, the community involved will process the experience with an Amate House Staff member and if deemed necessary, a trained professional. If an individual needs to see a trained professional as a result of trauma, Amate House will assist the Volunteer in finding treatment through our insurance plan or through personal contacts.

#### *KEYS*

Each Volunteer is given a house key. If a Volunteer loses their key during the course of the year, they are responsible for obtaining a replacement. Anyone who does not turn in their house key at the end of the year will be charged a lost key fee.

**Volunteers MAY NOT GIVE COPIES OF THE KEYS TO ANY AMATE HOUSE residence to anyone who is not a current Amate House Volunteer unless you directed by a Staff Member to do so.**