

Transitioning from Foster Care to Adulthood:  
Our Daughters' House Family-First Guide to Operation

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## Introduction

“Not going to lie,” Alex\* said, “the last home did me no success. I spent every day for 6 months drinking and smoking marijuana. Now I’m clean and finally succeeding” (Peterson). Alex has lived her life feeling like a case number in the foster care system after being moved around from home to home, program to program, being left without stable and consistent relationships or routines. With shelters and programs being at full capacity or closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Children Without A Placement (CWAP) was able to make contact with the founders of Our Daughters’ House (ODH), a recently established transition home, to help Alex get off the streets. It was not until she was welcomed into ODH that she began meeting and even succeeding in the goals she set for herself years ago, like finishing her GED, passing her Driver’s Education course, and holding a steady job, all within the first two months of her joining the family. When asked about the difference between Our Daughters’ House and her previous placements, Alex quickly and passionately voiced one word, “family” (Peterson). Although she had a roof over her head throughout her time in the foster care system, housing was not simply enough to help reach her goals; it was the relationships within the home that have enabled, supported, and encouraged her to continue moving forward. As quite the storyteller herself, Alex said that in the past, “they only knew me by the stories in my file,” but “here, I am no longer a case number” (Peterson).

As of October 2020, more than 16,000 children are enrolled in the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) care, informally known as the foster care system (DFPS).

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\* For the safety of an ODH resident, her real name has been replaced with a pseudonym.

Nationally, "more than 250,000 children are placed into the foster care system," and unfortunately, Alex is just one of the 25,000 children that have aged out of the foster care system at the age of 18 last year (DFPS). With young women specifically, "about half experience unplanned pregnancy by age 19, compared to 20% nationwide" and "particularly girls, are targeted by sex traffickers, and the criminalization of sex work can funnel these victims of modern-day slavery into the criminal justice system" (Juvenile Law Center). The criminal justice system receives "one quarter of foster care alumni ... within two years of leaving care," being disproportionately at-risk of being incarcerated (Juvenile Law Center). Many of these transition-age youth must traverse a difficult path as they emerge into adulthood unprepared and unequipped with the necessary life skills and support system. As a result, many young adults experience homelessness, become involved in sex trafficking, or end up with a criminal record. There is a current gap in available, safe housing and counseling for these at-risk young adults to help avoid stepping into that unrelenting reality. While organizations worldwide are attempting to create transitional housing programs to alleviate the impact of leaving the system, these young adults are all too familiar with overly sterile facilities or are used to being passed from home to home like Alex.

Therefore, I am proposing that young women need transitional housing that resembles a healthy home within its structure and programming rather than an institution. The Home will meet young women's needs by fostering healthy and consistent connections (resembling a wholesome and loving family unit) and a semi-structured program that provides stepping stones to guide them to become interdependent individuals. In addition to internal support, external support is essential to the transitional period of these young women's lives. To help achieve a family-first transitional living situation, transition homes must be built as if a *home* runs an

organization instead of a more clinical and common alternative, like Supervised Independent Living (SIL) or shelters. This proposed setting intends to enable each young woman to see “themselves active in the construction of their own lives” moving forward (Poluha et al. 15). Therefore, a written operations handbook has been created to support this unconventional organization style that Our Daughters' House has created. This handbook has been imperative to its success to clearly communicate the familial values and program structure that all current or incoming employees, volunteers, and advocates must agree upon. This operations handbook begins with establishing the vision and mission and foundational familial values that create a healthy environment for female residents. This vision serves as a compass pointing true north and is a reliable foundation that can encourage and recenter during complex or confusing times. What follows is an in-depth look at the semi-structured programs which provide achievable “stepping-stone” goals. It finishes with an overview of the internal and external support system that creates the bones of this healthy environment and its programs.

This thesis written portion begins with understanding the current state of the epidemic of foster care youth aging out of the state’s system into adulthood, unequipped and unprepared. We will review the current “aging out” options and potential but very real outcomes, followed by the preferred choice of properly run transition homes. Then, we will take a deep dive into a transition home modeled after a healthy family per their structure and programming, called Our Daughters’ House. We will look at the mode of research and the data collected from other similar programs, organizations, and individuals interviewed to begin relating the information gathered to the created thesis project, the operations handbook referred to above.

## **Extended Explanation of the Challenge/Problem**

### *What is Aging Out?*

At the young age of 18 years old, youth in the foster care system are released into the community as “adults,” unprepared and ill-equipped at this next big step. “Aging out” is the term frequently used when an individual is exiting the foster care system as a sole individual “rather than with a legal, permanent family such as through reunification with birth parents, adoption, or legal guardianship” (Fryar et al. 5). Aging out can be an intimidating time of challenging questions like where one might live, how one can support themselves financially and mentally, and what the future might hold for them. Instead, aging out can be a new beginning where they are encouraged to heal, dream, and grow individually and communally.

Research gathered from across the nation indicates that housing is the number one area that needs improvement in order to successfully support an individual's transition from the foster care system to healthy adulthood (Fryar et al. 3). Without stable housing, foster care alumni “face challenges staying in school, gaining employment, accessing physical and mental health services, and reaching self-sufficiency” (Fryar et al. 17). A recent report shows that “between 11 and 36 percent of young people who age out of the foster care system become homeless” (Fryar et al. 16). The term homelessness implies no safe place to sleep, no place to store or keep belongings for an extended period of time, and a lack of stable and supportive relationships. Those with a high number of placements while in the system are flagged as more likely to experience homelessness at least once, all the more reason why transition-aged youth seek out stability once leaving the system (Crawford et al. 29). While these youth should have been preparing and learning skills to help their future, they were seeking a forever family or a stable place to make memories. Despite the desire for stability, this vulnerable population is

disproportionately affected because of this lack of preparation and needed life skills to maintain a stable job, housing, food security, and further educational opportunities.

### *Aging Out Options*

Taking a bleak look at the foster care system's aging out outcomes, "youth formerly in foster care lag behind their non-fostered peers in many traditional measures of success" (Hokanson et al. 235). It has been found that "within four years of aging out, 70% will be on government assistance ... and less than 12% will ever earn their college degree" (iFoster). Regarding educational achievements, "only about 58% of youth formerly in foster care complete high school by age 19, compared to 87% of all U.S. youth (qtd. in Hokanson et al. 235). This is a tragic loss of potential and giftedness that is not being stewarded well in God's people. Although the issue originates within the foster care system's programs and workings, children and young adults are currently growing up under a system of "care" that has at-risk adults aging out every day. To this point, the Church and the community must begin engaging in assisting this future generation into being active and productive local citizens and world changers.

An option that is presented to soon-to-be young adults in the foster care system is to remain in care until the age of 22, a program called Extended Foster Care. First, to remain in the Extended Foster Care program, the individual must "either be attending college, working at a job at least 80 hours per month, working through some certification program, or another program that will help remove barriers to employment" (TFI). A reason some choose to stay in this program or return to this system after aging out is for the state benefits they can continue to utilize while in the system. The after-care options include: foster family-homes, foster group-homes, residential group-care facilities, emergency shelters, facilities under the authority of other

state agencies, and Supervised Independent Living (SIL) placements. All options listed, excluding SIL placements, are just an extension of their previous years spent in the state system.

On the other hand, Supervised Independent Living (SIL) means the young adult is “still under the care of a caseworker and receive[s] some basic services,” but is primarily responsible for themselves (TFI). One of the major challenges with a SIL program is that the individual must opt back into foster care and be at the state’s mercy yet again. DeeDee\*, a newly added daughter to Our Daughters’ House, speaks to the SIL program's shallowness. While this program provides a chance to live in their own space, they are required to follow a curfew with morning and night check-ins from the program staff. The type of support shown through the SIL program is typically routine checks and a weekly allowance. DeeDee states, “you just don’t get support, I mean, yeah, \$60-100’s a week, but still,” because relationally, there is simply no depth internally with staff or externally because of the curfews and requirements (Lewis). Like many other foster care alumni, this type of group home did not prepare DeeDee for her future but instead have stunted her growth towards healthy interdependence.

Meanwhile, on foster youth’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, if the young adult does not choose one of these options, they are physically removed from their current state-run location, assuming they have a place to go. Unprepared for this daunting transition, many young adults are left homeless, couch surfing, finding open space in a shelter, reuniting with unfavorable family situations, or spending their money on temporary living situations. Unfortunately, this reality leaves former foster youth over-represented in human trafficking, the prison system, and homelessness.

### *Why Are Transitional Homes Important?*

Simply put, adequate housing is a basic human right that promotes dignity, security, and peace. A safe and stable home “can function as a ‘platform’ that promotes positive life outcomes



across domains like education, employment, and physical and mental health,” breaking the deficiency cycle and allowing space for gain (Fryar et al. 17). Abul Hasnat Monjurul Kabir defines “adequate housing” as “more than just the four walls of a room and a roof over one’s head,” but the fulfillment of “deep-seated psychological needs for privacy and personal space; physical needs for security and protection from inclement weather; and social needs for basic gathering points where important relationships are forged and nurtured” (106). A stable home also provides “experiential opportunities that allow youth to practice skills” with a safety net constructed of trusted relationships that are necessary for learning and that can provide important feedback (Collins 234). As research repeatedly states, relationships and interconnectedness provide opportunities for current health and future growth.

Many foster care youth and alumni come from broken families or broken homes, so the goal is to represent wholeness by allowing mothers, or soon-to-be mothers, to live and grow together with their children. Unfortunately, many facilities do not allow the mother to stay in the program with their children, simply because they are not set up for this type of living. This family-first home is unconventional because of the liabilities, the complexities, and the relational dynamics. Since foster youth are all too familiar with broken relationships, Our Daughters’ House seeks to create an environment that keeps together family ties and strengthens them. “After all, necessity is the mother of invention” and the spark that motivated the Williams family, and many others, to provide safe housing and healthy relationships for the future generations transitioning from the state’s care (Lynch & Walls 73).

## **Overview of Fieldwork Research**

### *Fieldwork Context - Our Daughters' House*

Our Daughters' House is one of the few Homes designed to help transitional youth aging out of foster care in Texas. Their goal is to provide a loving and wholesome environment modeling a family unit that allows for "daughters" to take time to heal from their past and plan for their future. Built on these family values, the Home is designed to encourage and instill these family values into the daughters as they learn about themselves and how to interact with others and the world around them. This family environment provides a safety net for the daughters to make decisions while buffering the consequences' full impact. "Becoming aware of the consequences of our actions is only the first step" toward their individual and collective future (Clawson 157). Some of the consequences could range from poor habits to homelessness without the proper social, emotional, physical, and financial support.

Our Daughters' House, physically, is a large Dutch barn converted into an eight-bedroom home, with an oversized kitchen, dining area, living room, education center, counseling nook, and office. On the outside of the Dutch barn is a handcrafted barn quilt signifying safety, home-like, and heritage. It is situated on three and a half acres, with a 2500 sq. foot garden, compost, and barnyard, housing a milk cow, calf, horse, and a plethora of chickens. This ample outdoor space is essential to the holistic healing and growth process for the young ladies living within the home.

Kris and Jenny Williams, the founders of ODH, were involved in fostering for many years until they surpassed the biological kid's limit allowed to continue as foster parents. After they were no longer allowed to foster, they began praying for a way to continue helping this vulnerable population. It was during the Williams' family's first class in preparation to foster

children, that a statistic stuck with them; “after the age of six years old, they have less than a 15% chance of being adopted” (Williams 00:04:30). After years of prayer, together and separately, the Williams agreed that they felt called to continue pouring into foster children, but “what were the dynamics and the parameters now” that they could not continue partnering with the state foster care system? “Surely, we will find a lot of homes that do this!” they said, yet their internet searches told a different story with few to no real results (Williams 00:06:23-00:06:34). Soon after this revelation, the Lord made it clear to the Williams that they needed to start building a home right then. In late 2019, the Williams family founded Our Daughters’ House and have been working diligently in the formative stages and even welcomed their first daughters in August 2019.

The home’s structure and program are designed with “the ability to create a setting of independent living where “Our Daughters” are able to mimic a lifestyle that will be easily replicated and maintained” (*OurDaughtersHouse*). “Our Daughters” would be described as “young women between the ages of 18-25 who have aged out of foster care” and who are “looking for an alternative to homelessness or unpredictability in their living situation” (*OurDaughtersHouse*). ODH views these young women as “more than clients or residents” but as “our heritage,” and “expect to see these young women build successful lives by completing school [and] maintaining jobs to become independent, productive adults in our society” (*OurDaughtersHouse*).

In addition to housing, ODH is looking for ways to advocate for and bring awareness to young adult outcomes after leaving the foster care system. Through the use of young ladies’ testimonies, community events, and family nights, ODH hopes to be part of the change in “aging out” outcomes and be a voice to raise future change-makers. Foster care youth and alumni are

typically spoken about using numbers and statistics, but “one of the most powerful ways to reframe a problem is to humanize it” (Kelley and Kelley 100). By using the daughters’ stories, storytelling is one method ODH intends to advocate for foster care youth and alumni with granted permission and respect. Stories communicate the who, why, and how to outsiders while reinforcing the insiders and carry the potential to express the mission and vision better than the statements themselves (Vogl 76). Furthermore, the hope is shared stories and strong advocates “reframe and expand a community’s understanding of its role in young people’s healthy development” in critical ways (Benson 61).

I have had the privilege of being involved at ODH and engaging in conversations with local and out-of-state organizations with program, structural, and visional similarities. My time spent at ODH provided an opportunity to “step in” for an “insider stance” while meeting with other organizations that gave me the ability to “step out” and “adopt the outsider stance” needed for a holistic understanding of the subculture being studied (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2). The research and relationships have shaped me personally and professionally, creating a bias for this work because it is “my embodied experiences [that] led me to recognize the impossibility of separating research from human relationships” (Holmes 37). Therefore, due to the relationships I have built during my time spent engaging in activities and interviews on site, it would be ill of me not to acknowledge this personal bias upfront.

### *Why Qualitative Research Was Necessary*

Partnerships and support networks are vital to supporting this vulnerable population of foster care youth and alumni, as well as supporting the organizations and families as they continue to be a resource and helping hand. As a leading organization confronting the social issue of vulnerable transitional youth in Texas, Our Daughters’ House aspires to network

horizontally to gain understanding and work hand in hand with other similar organizations like Saving Grace (Arkansas), Legacy House (Florida), and Bluebonnet Haven (Texas). For a social issue this size, ODH desires to create a web that covers the United States in an effort to catch those before they fall, protect them from harm, all while providing them opportunities to soar. In addition, these connections are also an example of copowerment, willingly sharing the good, bad and ugly with one another to help each organization succeed where they are located. This type of Network-Based Research brings visibility to the organization doing the research and begins the groundwork for future relationships and networking opportunities.

For example, from Arizona, Northwest Arkansas, and Florida, the foster care system is different but also how the system prepares the aging-out youth differs from state to state. The process of contextualization, which is a key International Community Development value, was generated via the field research through conversations and interactions with similar organizations across the nation for the transition home in Texas. Some noted differences include the services provided during and after state care, the living and housing options after transitioning out of the state's care, and the relationships that continue when the young adult is no longer in the state's care. These three factors play a vital role in how a Transitional Living Program operates and responds to young adults' needs.

While I originally questioned whether or not other organizations would consider sharing their success and failure stories, Williams reminded me that they are overly willing to share the failure stories for the sake of preventing younger organizations from making their same mistakes, and wasting time, energy, resources, with the hopes of continuing strong. They also loved to share their success stories but saved them for times of needed encouragement. A shared urgency that is felt and extremely noticeable among leaders challenging the social issue of foster care and

transitional youth. The passion the leaders in this social cause share is evident by how they constantly advocate for their organization and young adults aging out of foster care at large.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of my research is to study and identify the type of transitional program needed to support girls during an unthinkable and scary transition from structured care to interdependent living. This thought led me to my main research question driving my curiosity:

*What do girls in Texas need when they age out of foster care?*

During the summer of 2020, I sought wisdom from other similar organizations, programs, and individuals helping homeless youth and girls aging out of the foster care system by asking the following:

- What are the best practices used by other similar organizations?
- What are the non-negotiables for other similar nonprofits?
- How did the other organizations discover and refine their best practices?
- How do the other similar organizations contextualize their practices?
- Who built the program structure within the organizations?
- How do organizations build trust with the girls aging out of foster care?

The primary organizations and individuals contacted included Saving Grace NWA in Arkansas, Legacy House in Texas and Florida, Bluebonnet Haven in Texas, and Hope's Path in Texas, Asociación Jóvenes para Honduras, Charles Batiste with DFPS, and Sheri Shears with Legacy Center. I sought to gain understanding from their experiences by notetaking, voice recording, and transcribing, finding that the most important data collected were their words (Merriam & Tisdell 6).

As the conversations and interviews progressed, some questions were added to the list, including:

- How did your program get to where you are now?
- Who wrote your programs?
- What is the heart behind them?
- Can you share some key success and/or failure stories? What to do or not to do.

The questions above contributed to the creation of the Operations Handbook by providing vision, insight into necessary groundwork, and further explanation into the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of their perspective programs. The proposed project seemed to be nearly impossible at the beginning of my research but “became manageable in small steps” because of the guidance of “someone knowledgeable in the field,” which challenged me to transcend my own fear of failure (Kelley & Kelley 43). Through frequent conversations with ODH’s founders, they too seek out guidance and advice frequently from their network of organizations and individuals who are beyond the initial groundwork and are operating on the front line. Those conversations are an example of horizontal relationships that provide copowerment, from the experienced organizations providing hindsight to the newly established organization and the newly established organization bringing new ideas and fresh questions to the experienced organizations.

It is absolutely necessary to listen to and include the “voices of youth-serving practitioners, parents, and early and late adolescents” to see the program and the young women in the program thrive (Lerner13). In the creation of this project, there were three different levels of copowerment seen and utilized, horizontally with similar but different organizations across the country, as well as horizontally from individual to individual actively involved in this field, and vertically with daughters and board members within the same organization, Our Daughters’

House. Organizations, similar to ODH, freely shared failure stories and potential pitfalls to provide opportunities to mitigate the risk of experiencing the same issues. As most of these organizations might admit, “failure sucks, but instructs” and can provide a new organization the fast track to success by avoiding repeated errors in the future (Kelley & Kelley 43, 51). This shared contribution has been and will continue to be integrated into the design and modification of the program and organization as a whole.

### **Influential Interview: Charles Batiste**

When brainstorming with foster care alumnus Charles Batiste, he addressed two key points regarding the establishment of these transitional programs: lack of green spaces and lack of choice in decisions. If he could provide insight into any future transition home for foster youth, he wanted to make sure these were on the list of essentials. First, green spaces are rare, and the time spent in them is limited for foster care youth, especially when located in urban areas (Batiste). Urban areas are more popular for state programs because of their proximity to health care, transportation services, educational services, and state services. Unfortunately, research shows “that growing up with limited access to greenery is associated with a 15 to 55 percent higher risk of developing mental health conditions” (Katz). Due to unstable living situations and inconsistent relationships, foster care youth are already at a disadvantage during a critical developmental stage.

Second on the list of essentials is the lack of personal autonomy. The “core values of the ethic of autonomy are freedom, choice, safety, and rights,” which everyone, including foster care youth and alumni, should be allowed to maintain (Beck 53). Researchers discovered directly from youth formerly in care “that youth believed decisions were made for them and little emphasis was put on helping them ramp up their own decision-making abilities” (Hokanson



142). During their study, Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, and Painter noted that “33 youth currently and formerly in care, reported that youth felt uninvolved in decisions about their own lives while in care, noting instances of case planning with minimal youth input,” as an example (Hokanson 142). Under the state's supervision, the choice of where to live, who to live with, and length of stay are entirely out of the youth's control. When making decisions for the youth's future, foster parents, caseworkers, and state-allocated workers decide on behalf of the youth without allowing the youth to participate in the conversation. While this may be in the "youth's best interest," it leaves the youth uneducated and unprepared to make significant and small decisions as they are forced out of state care and into adulthood. Without proper preparation in decision-making, many foster care alumni are unaware of potential consequences that can affect themselves or the world around them.

Therefore, Our Daughters' House's program is designed to allow daughters to have options. As similarly encouraged by Brittany Burinek, a CASA advocate, allowing the residents to make their own choice gives them back the power that the state system has tried to take from them. In her experiences, she has seen and heard about the lack of options that hinders decision-making skills and self-confidence as they grow into adulthood. In addition, when providing the daughters with a choice, accountability follows. For example, cooking dinner for the family is required weekly, but the daughter has the option of choosing which day they will cook. Once on the calendar, the House Parents hold them accountable to adding the ingredients to the shopping list and again hold them accountable to being home on time to cook for the family. Options partnered with accountability encourages decision-making and responsibility within the daughter, two important components when considering jobs, families, and future independent living situations. When the ODH Operations Handbook was created, these two essential

components and many others were prioritized to ensure the holistic well-being of the daughters, staff, and volunteers.

## **Full Development of Operations Handbook**

### *House Values and Principles: Family*

The Operations Handbook is intended to encourage the establishment of safe and purposeful transitional housing for young adults leaving the foster care system. The vision is “that the Bible is the word of God and all through His word it circulates an understanding that it is our calling to car[e] for the orphans, widows, and strangers” (*OurDaughtersHouse*). As an act of obedience to that call, ODH hopes to create opportunity for young women aging out of the foster care system to experience God’s unsurpassable love, gain a renewed sense of family, achieve independent thought, and develop healthy financial mindsets. Those invested in foster care youth understand and have seen the things that the Lord can do through youth who are poured into, prayed over, and given a chance. At ODH, they are committed to walking hand-in-hand with these young women as they transition into adulthood. Therefore, this proposed handbook lays the framework for a family-first transition home.

Families, by definition, “comprise persons who have a shared history and a shared future” and “go through transitions as they move along the life cycle” where “boundaries and roles may shift and connections” may constantly be redefined (qtd. in Collins 56). In a healthy family unit, “new members may join a family by birth, adoption, or marriage, but one leaves only by death.” This sense of security and belonging is a state that many foster care youths have never witnessed or experienced themselves. So heavily focused on modeling a family, ODH agrees that one of the most important “values in a family is the lifelong relationships” (Collins

56). Relationship is the key component to witnessing these young women thrive outside of the foster care system. Relationships can either be risky or restorative; ODH hopes for the latter.

Our Daughters' House holds explicitly high regard for relationships, communication, respect, and honesty to those living in, working at, or visiting the home. These principles are described clearly in an example of the House Rules:

1. We will communicate politely with one another, and if a situation arises where things escalate beyond polite discussion, we will end the conversation and resume when we can apologize and start again.
2. We are respectful and honest with one another all the time.
3. We respect one another's spaces and ask permission before entering.
4. If someone wrongs us, we do not assume the worst; we speak to them directly about it.
5. We participate equally in the chores around the house to keep things nice for everyone.
6. We clean up after ourselves so that nobody else has to.

Adequate housing allows the daughters to move from a maintenance mindset and engage in meaningful participation and relational engagement. The boundaries set within the house rules acknowledge personal space to encourage the respect of another's space and belongings while still engaging closely with one another.

### *Language*

Our Daughters' House places heavy emphasis on the language used throughout the home, both in the organizational structure and how they speak about the foster care system, youth, and alumni. Using Appreciative Inquiry fundamentals, ODH seeks to speak and see this housing opportunity from a "positive, asset-based approach as opposed to a deficit, problem-focused approach" ("Child Well-Being Reference Guide" 6). Specifically, ODH believes the language

used in and about the household shapes the reality they will live in and how they approach the future (Hammond 19). What is said - and how it is said - can deeply affect the culture all the way down to the individual because the words chosen do more than just reflect thought patterns - they shape them (Kelley & Kelley 198). The language at ODH is intentionally chosen to influence attitudes, behavior, and awareness internally and externally. In subsequent paragraphs, specific phrases will be explained in greater depth as to why they were chosen and how they intend to positively reshape the culture surrounding the foster care system, youth, alumni.

### *The Term "Interdependent"*

While one goal in adulthood is to live successfully as an independent, how to do so requires understanding how to maintain interdependent relationships that support and enhance one's well-being. Despite the language and the messages that "achieving self-sufficiency is indicative of success, [vulnerable] youth who do so via independent living, employment, bill paying, and more may report feeling lonely and disconnected" and consider asking for help to be a step towards failure (Hokanson et al. 143). Instead, "interdependence honors a need for, and supports engagement with, trusted adults" and should be a goal to embrace "because it emphasizes connection" (Hokanson et al. 143). To normalize this language is "both normative and integral as 'no one is truly independent or self-sufficient'" but heavily rely on others to advance through adulthood (qtd. in Hokanson et al. 144). Interdependence was a theme I identified while interviewing others because it was seen in our horizontal interactions, from one organization to another, as well as with the individuals in the household. The intentional verbiage replacement from "independent" to "interdependence" requires affirmation through action.

Life at Our Daughters' House is a "home and family, where daughters, their children, staff, and volunteers are all guided by a set of core values and principles" that inspire real

relationships (Parker). The core set of values and principles help explain what it means to live life together. Practically at Our Daughters' House, this “includes:

1. Each person is connected to every other person
2. What happens at Our Daughters' House (ODH) affects the lives of every person in the home
3. You are a part of the ODH family, and the choices you make will affect, and be affected by, every other ODH family member” (Parker).

In other words, since we are commanded in Micah 6:8 to live justly, we must understand and teach that "justice," as Clawson puts it, "deals with relationships - our relationships to God, to each other and the world" (20). Meaning, the connections created and maintained in the home are a catalyst to the interconnectedness needed in the world. The first vital step in educating the female residents that choices matter and their effect has a "moral impact" beyond the individual is to be aware of our "interconnectedness" (Moe-Lobeda 120). This interconnectedness within the home involves the staff, the residents, and the volunteers. The lessons include respecting authority within the organization, befriending and living with other residents, and interacting with strangers that come and go around the property. Where there is actionable effort to sustain healthy interdependent relationships, there must also be an acute awareness of the impact that naturally springs from the interconnectedness at hand.

### *Breakdown of Handbook*

The Operations Handbook is broken down into sections describing Our Daughters' House, the Residents Policies and Procedures, the daughters' Program, the Level of Involvement and Job Descriptions, and Mentors/Volunteers. The provided information below is the detailed

programmatic framework required to conduct a family-first home's operations from the standpoint of a Board or staff member.

### *Program Phases*

Founder and houseparent Jenny Williams played a vital role in creating ODH's program phases, which again begins with emphasizing the structural language. Instead of using the term 'level,' the Daughters' Program is divided into three 'phases' because of the idea that "'level' speaks to value, but 'phase' speaks experience" (Williams). The program is designed to take our daughters through three phases. These phases are loosely based on the ISTSS (International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies) trauma recovery model and focus first on stabilizing the young women when they come into the home.

Upon acceptance and move-in, the daughter enters phase one called "Establish." This 30 - 60 day time frame allows the new resident to unpack their belongings in a flex room, interact, get to know the current resident and staff members, and establish a stable grounding before looking outside the house for support. Within this phase, they are provided with space to rest without working, giving the daughter time to reassess their own identity, needs, and future goals. In this phase, the first goal is to provide a sense of belonging, know what it means to be welcomed somewhere, and connect with others" that are of the same mindset (Vogl 105). As ODH hopes to offer space for healing and growth, deep connections are required but only happen when a solid foundation is constructed.

Phase One is also designed to provide the daughter time to gather essential documents that every person must successfully navigate adulthood. These documents include but are not limited to a Social Security card, Birth Certificate, and a Driver's License/State ID card. Services provided to the daughter but may not be active include healthcare, bank accounts, and child care

assistance. Having these basic needs met will go a long way toward providing a solid foundation for our new daughter as she enters adulthood. Both the Program Director and House Parents are equipped to help identify the need, help set up appointments, and monitor the daughters' motivation and receptivity.

At the end of Phase One, the daughter transitions to Phase Two, called "Abide," where the daughter will spend most of her time. The house residents and hospitality team celebrate this transition by moving the daughter into her own room. The hospitality team meets with the daughter to design and decorate their room, reassuring the sense of autonomy and permanency. Once settled in, the daughter begins preparing and planning for her future with the help of the Program Director and other staff members and being provided guidance and support as she walks through past traumas and experiences. This learning and planning phase is designed to focus on building a healthy, long-term support system that will remain beyond her time at Our Daughters' House. Our Daughters' House will also provide therapeutic and counseling services for the young women so that they can begin to work through the inherent traumas that they have experienced as part of the foster care system.

The third and final phase of the program will focus on the future of our daughters. Solidifying options for housing, transportation, finances, career/education, and support systems will be critical during this time. The key to this phase is setting the daughter up for the greatest possible success moving out into the world as a healthy and productive citizen. While in the completion stages of the program, ODH will provide support setting up our daughter's new living space, as well as establishing connections in her new area. ODH will assist her in her financial planning and help her find a car that she can afford, if needed as well. Benefits of completing the program include:

1. First month's rent and utilities in a new apartment/home up to \$1,000. Payments will go directly to the apartment complex (or landlord) and utility companies, not the daughter herself.
2. Furnishings for home, up to \$500 value per daughter. Some assistance may include donated furniture and/or slightly used items, but ODH will ensure that things are in good condition. \*ODH will also provide up to a \$300 value of furnishings for each child of a Daughter.

### *Flex Rooms*

Flex rooms are essential to the foundation of this home created to resemble a healthy family unit. A flex room by definition is a room that allows for flexibility in stay, person, and design. At Our Daughters' House, flex rooms are the first room a daughter will live in while they are transitioning into the home, a routine, and the environment. Before moving into her own personalized room, the daughter must complete her foundational tasks like applying and receiving her essential documents like her birth certificate, identification card, and more. The time spent in a flex room will be 30-60 days and allows the staff and resident to evaluate if this home is the best fit.

Secondly, the flex rooms are designed for transitional periods, as well as a safe place to return home to during college breaks, holidays, or whenever they want to return "home." To encourage stable and consistent relationships, the daughter's ability to return for a short or extended period of time affirms the family-like relationships established in the home. It keeps the door open to celebrate and spend time together, to know that returning does not denote failure but continued steps to flourishing.



### *Green Spaces*

Green space is used as a training ground where Our Daughters' House can positively influence transitional youth's education, decision-making, gratitude, and discipline towards a more conscious way of living. Positive impacts that green spaces can have, especially on youth, include "psychological restoration, encouraging exercise, improving social coherence, decreasing noise and air pollution affecting cognition and brain development, and improving immune functioning" (Endres). This space allows residents to "cultivate both the land beneath [their] feet and the habits that make for healthy existence" including listening, welcoming strangers, planting gardens, raising children, and keeping house (Katongole & Rice 59). Also, research shows that "greenery" enhances "psychological restoration," which has the potential to "mitigate negative effects from the socially dense and noisy city environment that heighten[s] stress" (Katz). There is a noticeable excitement when transition-age youth has been able to walk the property, already dreaming of potential games, growth, and gathering can take place in this new space.

One of the key elements within the green space provided by Our Daughters' House is the composting corner. Gittemary Johansen, a little to zero-waste YouTube influencer, mentions that "Composting is essentially a circular loop and system" (00:55), and as the circle of life "is a living thing, a living thing that you have to take care of" (10:26). Therefore, composting is not just about choosing where to toss your waste, but a discipline of love for self, earth, and others. It requires time, attention, and acknowledgment, but with that produces life and fruit. Fortunately, Our Daughters' House has a designated area to allow the staff and residents to participate in the circle of life, honoring and loving creation. Composting requires attention and discipline, which inspires routine and care inside and outside the ODH walls.

*Decision-Making*

Our Daughters' House uses its green space to grow vegetables, produce fresh farm eggs, and receive fresh milk. This provides everyone in the home an opportunity to physically witness creation at work, see the fruits of their labor, and gain appreciation. In the effort to reduce waste, Our Daughters' House only allows reusable plates, silverware, napkins, and cups to prevent creating or encouraging the habit of using disposable items for convenience. The idea of caring about the small decisions, like reusable or disposable kitchen utensils, is about discovering alternative options and creating healthy habits to give residents the ability to see that their decisions impact the world.

By becoming aware of the consequences of their choices, Our Daughters' House also encourages the staff, volunteers, and residents to get creative and reuse or repurpose items found in the house or barn. Instead of getting excited over impulse purchases, they join together to figure out ways to reuse or repurpose items they already have available. The intention behind the brainstorming sessions is to open doors to learning new skills, including homemaking skills like sewing, woodworking, and crafting. Instead of focusing on the product, there is a shift to appreciating the skill required to produce the desired outcome. Practically, learning skills requires teachers and time. Volunteers, or neighbors as Our Daughters' House calls them, bring materials and lessons once a week to engage with the residents, teaching them interconnectedness and life skills. Since these life skill classes began, there has already been a shift from greed to gratitude because of the fellowship, space to create, and the skills acquired.

Similarly, copowerment is also seen within the relationships with the daughters and how they help one another. For example, Our Daughters' House has recently witnessed the sharing of cooking ideas and recipes, fashion tips, and even job skills like writing a resume, applying for a

job, and preparing for an interview. Each daughter has proven that she desires her “sister” to succeed by learning how to listen to one another and share their own personal experiences. Having similar backgrounds from being in and out of the foster care system and experiencing failed adoptions, the daughters are supporters of their healing process while encouraging one another to continue to share their stories as advocates for their future sisters.

### *Breakdown of Levels of Involvement*

Much emphasis is placed on the verbiage of the organization and program, as well as the words spoken and written in the household. The levels of involvement are designed to resemble a family and friend structure for those involved internally and externally with the organization. For example, the house parents are considered “parents,” although this is used to the extent that each daughter is comfortable. Likewise, the houseparents' kids are like “step-siblings.” The hospitality team are the “grandmas,” which is signified by their nicknames on the name tags and used as a badge of trust for incoming and recently accepted daughters. Mentors are “aunts and uncles,” the extended family that accounts for the extra holiday celebrations, fun vacation locations, and backup parents when advice and encouragement are needed. Volunteers are called “neighbors” due to the volunteer label's tendency to imply inconsistent or seasonal involvement with the organization. The daughters might see them at events, volunteer workdays, or occasionally when dropping off or picking up items. However, the relationship level remains on the surface compared to the mentors and hospitality team members who intentionally interact at a deeper level. Finally, the additional residents are considered “sisters” because of the stage of life, current experiences within the programs, and similarity of background in the foster care system.

To make this family-styled transition home a reality, there must be much emphasis on the houseparents' role. While the young women have entered adulthood, the houseparents stand to be

role models for a healthy marriage, healthy parenting, and healthy intergenerational relationships. Grounded in sacrificial and unconditional love, the houseparents are in the home to provide comfort and nurturing, guidance and Godly wisdom, and accountability and discipline. They teach with routine, help establish and reinforce healthy boundaries, and most of all, cultivate lifelong memories.

### *Mentorship*

Mentorship, “by definition, involve[s] relationships, and early evidence suggests that although mentoring relationships with youths of at least one year's duration can yield modest benefits for youths, there is some evidence that greater benefits may be realized through relationships that extend over several years” (Spencer 231). As mentioned above, mentors are considered the daughter's aunts and uncles at ODH, which implies the permanency expected of the commitment and future relationship. The nature and characteristics of the desired mentors include encouraging, inspiring, present, consistent, and persistent. Studies show that these youth desire a stable and constant presence, a provided place to stay at critical times, and ongoing encouragement, cultivating a closeness and feeling of longevity the young woman can rely on (Collins et al. 134). Although relationships take time to develop, the development process should reflect a wholesome pursuit complimented with sacrificial love, an abundance of grace, and a desire to call forth the potential inside the young woman.

Our Daughters’ House has created an application process that requires the interested mentor to be screened, interviewed, and matched before moving forward to avoid potential pitfalls with mentorships, like short-term or broken relationships. After the mentor and mentee are matched, the mentor is provided with ongoing training and consistent support from staff members to aid in their expected longevity. Support given by staff also helps to provide new and

creative ways to connect with the young women, especially on occasion when they are unable to meet face-to-face (Spencer 229). ODH only allows mentors to apply if they have been referred by Board members, staff members, and local churches as an additional safety measure. Overall, relationships are one of the highest valued elements in a family-model transition home, and the integrity must remain consistent regardless of an individual's title or role.

### **Awareness and Advocacy**

One of the most prominent needs of the foster care system and transitional youth as a social issue is advocacy and awareness. A moving realization that Our Daughters' House hopes to bring into the light is the reality that foster care alumni are still carrying the status of an orphan into adulthood. The term "orphan" typically is associated with young children, overlooking the transition-age youth that still remains without a proper and healthy support system.

Research suggests that "[society has] tended to see work with children as outside the mainstream of church life and worship," but we "need to recognize the biblical call to refocus our corporate agenda" (Miles & Wright 198). Meaning "we need to redefine the core and margins of the church ... and the core is clearly identified in the Scriptures: widows, orphans, strangers, and the 'little ones'" (Miles & Wright 199). We see this repeatedly in James 1:27, Psalm 68:5, Psalm 146:9, and Matthew 6:1-4. Therefore, as Christians, we "should be involved personally and corporately in action and policy, with individuals and institutions, with ideologies and structures" (Miles & Wright 199). It is time to recognize, redefine, and reorient our focus for young women transitioning into adulthood.

There are many variables to take into account when bringing attention to such a vulnerable population of youth and young adults. However, two elements can certainly not be

overlooked, risk and resilience. “Risk” refers to variables that increase an individual’s susceptibility to negative development outcomes or becoming overwhelmed by adverse circumstances” (Boyden et al. 27). This can be internal through a unique combination of characteristics, “such as temperament or neurological structure.” Others can be external resulting from environmental factors, like poverty, isolation, abuse, “which inhibit an individual’s healthy development” (Boyden et al. 27). On the other hand, the term ““resilient” refers to an individual’s capacity to adapt and remain strong in the face of adversity. Resilience depends on both individual and group strengths and is highly influenced by supportive elements in the wider environment” (Boyden et al. 27). This resilience can be established when among their peers that are enduring similar experiences in the foster care system.

The first significant step in advocacy is the awareness that many foster care youths have been adversely affected by risks given their environment and inconsistent relationships but are survivors of the system with disregarded resilience. By being aware of the hindered childhood development necessary and focusing on enhancing resilience, there is great potential to “decrease the probability of poor outcomes” as transition-age youth enter adulthood (Collins et al. 126). We run with this future potential by establishing more “family-focused and prevention-based” alternative living situations that promote normalcy and hearty webs of support (Collins 238).

Specifically, at Our Daughters’ House, the future of advocacy focuses on using more of a participatory approach to “enlist ownership of the programme by the community” (Miles & Wright 305). The foundation is already built into the program and structure that utilize familial verbiage to inspire a sense of belonging for both the residents and external relationships. Advocacy truly begins with an experience, or a catalytic event, that opens their eyes to an issue that requires action (Salter McNeil 49). Opportunities to volunteer draw in people who first

believe change is possible, then leave them with an experience that encourages them to learn how to advance change themselves (Borstein & Davis 43).

Through their future advocacy program, ODH will identify, build, and strengthen “existing assets as well as [address] gaps help to sustain community efforts towards the well-being of their children” through community events, classes, and additional marketing efforts (“Child Well-Being Reference Guide 6). The state, the community, and the Church “need to work with our heart, head and hands to understand the issues” and make impactful changes to the support system, or lack thereof, surrounding this vulnerable population (“Child Well-Being Reference Guide 6). Together, the Church, if not also the community and state, must fight for the rights of the orphan and be a voice when they are voiceless. Instead of standing in for their voice altogether, ODH’s goal of advocacy aims to additionally create platform opportunities for the marginalized and oppressed to be heard. Everyone has a story to tell, a voice to be heard.

### **The Operations Handbook Today**

Our Daughters’ House is currently using this Operations Handbook as the framework to express the home’s vision to incoming daughters, staff, mentors, and volunteers. It is constantly being revised and expanded as the Program Director continues to reference the handbook as a new employee and advocate. Shortly after the first draft was provided in August of 2020, two daughters and a toddler joined the home after going through the necessary in-take and approval processes. As the first draft was coming along and research was under way, an experienced practitioner in the field graciously warned and humbly encouraged me to keep the Operations Handbook editable because “there is always going to be a girl that will you give you a reason to write a new policy” (Shears).

As the Operations Handbook is expanded upon for further clarification and specification, the purpose is to have it written in such a way that the Founders could leave abruptly and the staff members could continue wholly in the vision in which it was started. Suppose another individual in a different state is stirred to start a transition home for young women. In that case, the operations handbook is also written with the intent to be easily adaptable and contextualized to their setting without having to distort the values within the programs.

### **Conclusion**

The foster care system with unprepared transitional youth has become an epidemic that needs our attention and action. Adequate housing is the key to unlocking capability and choice, cooperation and copowerment with others, access to basic necessities and amenities, and motivation for the future. Unfortunately, the alternative options for transition-age youth are providing the bare minimum to help them survive instead of thrive. Our Daughters' House family-first housing model is a first step to helping these youth adults transition successfully into adulthood. Stories and statistics have proven that “the way we operated in the past will not be sufficient to take us into the future” (Salter McNeil 87). Therefore, the goal is to provide a Christ-centered, healthy home modeling a family unit that allows for young ladies and young mothers to take time to heal from their past and plan for their future. For the Home to be a successful stepping stone, a three-phase program is created to establish, teach, and prepare these ladies for their desired future. While in the program, the daughters are surrounded by a consistent and reliable community of "family," which is a culmination of staff members, mentors, and local churches. DeeDee said frustratingly, “While I would like to live independently, I would still choose Our Daughters’ House [verses a Supervised Independent Living] because of the family support. I am able to cry on someone’s shoulder without immediately being diagnosed with a



mental illness. Every placement they get a packet [about me], but in this place (Our Daughters' House) I got a family" (Lewis). This Home is not merely a means to an end, but the beginning of healed pasts, healthy relationships, exciting futures, and productive society members.

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Appendix A: Our Daughters' House Handbook



**OUR DAUGHTERS' HOUSE**

Our Daughters' House

Chappell Hill, Texas

Operations Handbook

Version 3.0 – March 2021

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## What is Our Daughters' House?

At the age of 18, young men and women are forced out of the foster care system and into adulthood, typically without the preparation needed to be successful. As a result, many young adults experience homelessness, get involved in trafficking, or end up with a criminal record. There is a current gap in available safe housing and counseling for these at-risk young adults. While organizations around the globe are attempting to create transitional housing programs, these young adults are all too familiar with overly strict facilities or are used to being passed from home to home.

Therefore, young adults need transitional housing that resembles a healthy home, rather than a facility, by its structure and programming. Within the transition home, young women need healthy and consistent connections (resembling a wholesome and loving family unit), and a semi-structured program that provides stepping stones to guide these women to become interdependent individuals. In addition to internal support, external support is essential to the transitional period of these young women's lives. To help achieve a family-like transitional living situation, it is to be built as if a home is running an organization, as opposed to the more clinical and common alternative. For this unconventional organization to clearly communicate the familial values and program structure to all current or incoming employees, volunteers, and advocates, a written operation handbook is imperative to its success. This operations handbook begins with establishing the vision and mission and familial foundational values that create a healthy environment for female residents. This vision serves as a compass pointing true north, and is a reliable foundation that can encourage and recenter during difficult or confusing times. What follows is an in-depth look at the semi-structured programs which provide achievable

“stepping-stone” goals. It finishes with an overview of the internal and external support system that creates the bones of this healthy environment and its programs.

Our Daughters’ House’s top “priority is each young woman’s overall well-being mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally. What makes our Daughters’ House different is our ability to create a setting of independent living where “Our Daughters” are able to mimic a lifestyle that will be easily replicated and maintained” (*OurDaughtersHouse*).

Through a referral process, women are introduced to the household and interviewed by our intake committee. After a young lady is accepted, our Directors will begin establishing a team per her immediate and vocalized future needs. Her team, or support system, will include a licensed counselor, one to two mentors, and a vocational/educational leader. The household is designed to provide a family-like atmosphere with volunteers, called Neighbors, a Hospitality Team, called Grandmothers, and Mentors, called Aunts. The goal is to provide opportunities for individuals to step into roles that have been missing from the lives of these young women, to support, encourage, and guide them into becoming healthy, interdependent adults.

A large desire for this house is to provide each young woman with the “gift of time; time to heal and make educated choices for her future” (*OurDaughtersHouse*). These ladies are “more than clients or residents - they are our heritage (*OurDaughtersHouse*).

**Vision**

At Our Daughters' House, this vision is "that the Bible is the word of God and all through His word it circulates an understanding that it is our calling to car[e] for the orphans, widows, and strangers" (*OurDaughtersHouse*).

**Mission**

Our Daughters' House hopes to create opportunity for young women aging out of the foster care system to experience God's unsurpassable love, gain a renewed sense of family, achieve independent thought, and develop healthy financial mindsets. Those invested in foster care youth understand and have seen the things that the Lord can do through youth who are poured into, prayed over, and given a chance. At Our Daughters' House, they are committed to walk hand-in-hand with these young women as they transition into adulthood.

The mission born of this overarching vision is that family is first.

**Physical Description**

Our Daughters' House is a large Dutch barn converted into an eight-bedroom home, with an oversized kitchen, dining area, living room, education center, counseling nook, and office. It is situated on three and a half acres, with a sizable garden and barnyard, housing a milk cow, calf, horse, and a plethora of chickens. This spacious outdoor area is essential to the healing and growth process for the young ladies living within the home, due to the majority growing up in cities with minimal greenery or time spent outdoors.

## I. Residents

### Qualifications -

- Must have connection with the Foster Care System
- Must be wanting to enroll in school, actively looking for a job, or have a job
- Must be clean and sober for a minimum of 60 days prior to applying
- Must be able to manage mental health issues with medication and outpatient counseling support

### *(For Mothers specifically:)*

- At intake, a child must be no older than 3 years of age, 2 children max

### Referrals -

- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)
- Preparation for Adult Living Program (PAL)
- Arrow Child & Family Ministry
- Churches

### Expectations –

- Attend Church, or a biblical event, at least 3 times a month
- Attend weekly family dinners
- Honor house rules
- Complete daily/weekly chore list
- Meet with Counselor
- Meet with Mentor (s)
- Meet with Program Director Bi-Weekly
- In-house babysitting requires an arrangement, mom pays for service, most moms should seek daycare using CCMS waiver

### Application Process –

1. Get in touch (Email or Call)
2. Get application (Email)
3. Come to a family dinner
4. Interview with Intake Team
5. Intake Team contacting references
6. Pass Drug Test
7. Pass Background Check
8. ODH contacts to accept or provide alternative resources



## **OUR DAUGHTERS' HOUSE**

As a member of the program, you must commit to comply with all aspects of the Pledge of Honor in order to remain eligible for the ODH program.

### **CHARACTER**

I pledge to act as a positive example of the ODH program and carry myself as such.

### **AUTHORITY**

I pledge to be under the authority and covering of ODH and its leaders.

### **STUDY**

I pledge to study to show myself approved and grow in my knowledge and the instruction of the program.

### **STEWARDSHIP**

I pledge to be responsible in the area of my finances and all my financial commitments.

### **FAITHFULNESS**

I pledge to be prompt and faithful in my attendance to all meetings, activities, and church services.

### **PURITY**

I pledge to avoid immoral or illegal activities or engage in any behavior that is contrary to Biblical conduct and ethics.

### **FELLOWSHIP**

I pledge to be an encouragement to my fellow residents and build solid relationships with others.

### **LEADERSHIP**

I pledge to develop my leadership gifts by taking initiative, both verbally and practically.

### **FOCUS**

I pledge to prioritize my focus and recognize the importance of my school studies and my studies in the program and to plan accordingly to reflect these values.

### **EXCELLENCE**

I pledge to communicate a spirit of excellence in my speech, conduct, appearance, and attitude.

**CODE OF CONDUCT (cont....)**

**I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and agree to the Our Daughters’ House Code of Conduct and program materials. I am fully committed to the requirements of the ODH program. I recognize that participating in the ODH program is a privilege and I should treat it as such. I also recognize that it is my own responsibility to succeed in the program. Furthermore, I understand that the ODH leadership has the right to terminate my residency at any time for any reason they deem necessary.**

**I pledge to respect the leadership and understand their role is to assist in the further maturing of my character, the strengthening of personal disciplines in my life, the sharpening of my social skills and the development of life-long friends.**

**I pledge that if admitted to reside at Our Daughters’ House, I will at all times conduct myself as a dutiful participant, faithfully and diligently adhering to the ODH program requirements, and promptly meet all obligations. I have thoroughly considered the time commitments, character expectations, and personal devotion required to succeed as a resident and I am willing to apply myself to these standards.**

**I hereby accept the entire Code of Conduct and agree that I will comply with the Code of Conduct to remain eligible for the Our Daughters’ House Program.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorization/Waiver/Indemnity Form**

*(Authorization for Criminal Background Check)*

I hereby give my permission in exchange for good and valuable consideration for Our Daughters' House to obtain information relating to my criminal history record through an agency of their choice. The criminal history record, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudications. I understand this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for an employment/volunteer position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer here, the criminal history records check may be repeated at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the criminal history and a procedure is available for clarification if I dispute the record as received.

I, the undersigned, do, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, hereby remise, release and forever discharge and agree to indemnify and defend the reporting agency and each of their officers, directors, employees, and agents harmless from and against any and all causes of actions, suits, liabilities, costs, debts, and sums of money, claims and demands whatsoever, and any and all related attorney's fees, court costs, and other expenses, resulting from the investigation of my background in connection with my application to become a volunteer/staff member.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

\*Social Security Number

Driver's License Number \_\_\_\_\_ State of Issuance: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Previous Full Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

List all addresses within the past seven years (attach additional pages, as necessary):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Present Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Former Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip Code

Ethnicity: \_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_ Non-Hispanic \_\_\_ African American \_\_\_ Caucasian  
\_\_\_ Unknown

**\*PLEASE NOTE: Your application will NOT be processed without your Social Security Number and Date of Birth.**

What would you like us to know or consider about you regarding your application to Our Daughters' House?

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**SIGNATURES**

I understand an application is not a guarantee of admission and Our Daughters' House determines applicant eligibility for admission and does not disclose rationale for denial of admission. By signing below, I acknowledge and understand this application will be used to consider my eligibility to live at Our Daughters' House. If accepted, I will sign all documents outlining the terms for living at Our Daughters' House to uphold my safety and the safety of the other residents. I understand my references will be contacted to verify the honesty of my statements. I also understand my eligibility will be based on the availability of the space in the home to assist me in my particular needs. Our Daughters' House will make a decision based on this application, my interview, and availability of space. If my statements are found to be falsely represented at any point or I have demonstrated an unwillingness to work within the expectations and terms of my admission, I may be removed from Our Daughters' House immediately. I also give permission for Our Daughters' House to request official documents, make professional inquiries, and complete background checks on me to verify the information I have given them.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

***For Office Use Only:***

Date of Application \_\_\_\_\_ Interview: Yes No (If Yes, Date: \_\_\_\_\_)

Accepted for Move-In: Yes No (If Yes, move-In Date: \_\_\_\_\_)

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



## II. Program Overview

A requirement to remain in the home includes actively seeking a vocation or level of education, or must be enrolled in school or working.

### Phase 1 – Establish

While the length of this level may vary per daughter, the goal is still the same. This time allows the daughters to ground their feed, take off the pressure, and reassess what they would like their future to look like. The goal is to provide time and space for the daughter and staff to get to know one another, define their needs, and unpack their bags. The Program Director and House Parents will monitor their motivation, receptivity, and level of connection.

By the end of this level, each Daughter will have these key things:

- Social Security card\*
- Copy of birth certificate\*
- Driver’s License/State ID card
- Healthcare enrollment (Medicaid)
- Open bank account
- Obtain transcripts\*
- GED\*
- Create resume
- Access financial aid
- Plan for college/vocational school
- Apply for child care assistance if needed and enroll child in daycare\*

### Flex Rooms:

During this phase she will stay in one of the ODH “flex” rooms as she adjusts to the routine and environment, as well as completes these foundational tasks. A flex room is designed for transitional periods, as well as a safe place to return home to during college breaks, holidays, or whenever they want to return “home” (Williams).

### Phase 2 – Abide

By the time she has completed, or has set in place, the necessary tasks from phase one and is working and/or in school, she will begin transitioning to level two. To celebrate this transition, our Hospitality Team will help her celebrate by moving her from a “flex” room into a personalized room of her own. The second phase shifts the focus to more individual goal setting, but there are still goals that ODH would like all Daughters to focus on, including but not limited to:

- Financial skills (Create and maintain a budget)
- Life skills
- Relationship skills (Parenting, family reconciliation)
- Spiritual growth
- Self-Care habits and routine
- Regular mentoring and counseling appointments

The Daughter will spend the majority of her time at ODH within this phase. This time provides space to learn about themselves as they plan and prepare for their future, while they also have the support and guidance to walk through healing from their past. Phase Two is designed to bring into focus and fruition a healthy, long-term support system that will remain even after they move out of the home.

### **Phase 3 – Grow**

At this time, she has been accomplishing her small goals that are leading her to excel towards her future goals. One of those goals is to live outside of the home, therefore, phase three is designed to provide three to six months of intentional time to layout and set up life outside of the home. This begins by our Daughter' seeking a location to live and a desired living situation within her budget. In the area she chooses, the Program Director will help gather local information to provide her with a list of resources.

Second to a location, if she does not already have a personal vehicle, the Program Director will help her decide on her mode of personal transportation. Depending on the area and need, this can be buying or loaning a vehicle, purchasing a bike, or learning the public transportation systems. A mode of transportation helps maintain and encourage the freedom to be active in community, maintain a stable job, and return home when desired.

In addition, the Program Director will help her look for and connect with a local church home that aligns with her beliefs and values (Parker). Before move-out, the resident and House Parents will attend one to two church services or events to establish a personal connect with at least one church staff member. This step is essential for creating and maintaining a steady and stable support system as the resident transitions from ODH to her own home. With a potential support system in place, the hunt for a job will begin, if the resident is not currently employed in the new area.

Before move-out, she will have:

- Located a town or designated area to live
- Found an appropriate living situation within her budget
- Identified and visited a church home
- Has secured or is currently working a job
- Has a mode of personal transportation
- Has an outlined financial budget

All mentoring relationships are encouraged and designed to be maintained after leaving the home, and the Program Director will help her navigate her new schedule to make intentional time for these meetings. She is welcome and invited to continue joining ODH for family dinners on Tuesday, return home to a flex room for visits, holidays, and extended periods of time for continued connection.

## Resident Policies &amp; Procedures

## Becoming Family Through Living Life Together

We are glad you're here! You are a treasure made in the image of God and you deserve love. We hope that in your time at Our Daughters' House you begin to heal some of the physical, relational, spiritual and emotional hurts that have been inside of you. We want to do this by demonstrating Christ's love to you through providing a healthy family atmosphere. The personal growth you demonstrate will come about as you commit yourself to the goals you set which may include counseling, vocational skills training, Christian mentorship, formalized education, and living life together.

The family-oriented support system at ODH will continue to help you live interdependently with the community, even as you transition to a new living arrangement upon completing our program. You will continue to meet with our mentors even as you are living off site, and you are welcome to return to family dinners any week you choose. You have chosen to join us at Our Daughters' House, and we pray that the tools you add to your collection while you're here will help you build the best possible future for yourself.

In order to maintain a peaceful atmosphere which fosters healthy relationships and educational success, Our Daughters' House has a strict Code of Conduct to be observed by all residents. Upon moving in, new residents have a 30 - 60 day entry period in order to determine whether the new resident will partake in our entire program or not. During the trial period, you are expected to uphold our Code of Conduct, develop goals in conjunction with our staff, participate in ODH events, and collect necessary materials to aid you in pursuing different options for your future.

Following the initial probationary period, you will meet with a staff member to determine your desire to continue living in the home as well as evaluate your future goals. If, however, you are not living up to your potential to comply with ODH house rules, you may be placed on a second probationary period or forfeit your residency at that time. House rules are listed below. Please know that more rules may be added as necessary and all residents will be informed of the additional rules at that time.

### Code of Conduct

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#### **CHARACTER**

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#### **AUTHORITY**

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#### **STUDY**

I pledge to study to show myself approved and grow knowledge and the instruction of the program.

#### **STEWARDSHIP**

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#### **FAITHFULNESS**

I pledge to be prompt and faithful in my attendance to all meetings, activities, and church services.

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I pledge to avoid immoral or illegal activities or engage in any behavior that is contrary to Biblical conduct and ethics.

**FELLOWSHIP**

I pledge to be an encouragement to my fellow residents and build solid relationships with others.

**LEADERSHIP**

I pledge to develop my leadership gifts by taking initiative, both verbally and practically.

**FOCUS**

I pledge to prioritize my focus and recognize the importance of my school studies and my studies in the program and to plan accordingly to reflect these values.

**EXCELLENCE**

I pledge to communicate a spirit of excellence in my speech, conduct, appearance, and attitude.

**House Rules**

- Sunday–Thursday, curfew is 10:00 PM. Everyone must be showered, nightly medication taken and in rooms by 10:30 PM. All lights and electronic devices turned off at 11:00 PM, including laptops & cell phones etc. Friday and Saturday nights' curfew is midnight. You must be showered, nightly meds taken and in rooms by 12:30! Lights out including laptops & cell phones at 1:00 A.M. If your roommate/hallmate has to wake up early for work you must be mindful of their schedule and them having to go to bed earlier. Be considerate and do your best not to wake them when you enter the room and head for bed. Attempt to work this out between roommates. If a compromise cannot be reached, please let a House Parent know.
- Turn off the TV, and bedroom / common area lights, ceiling fans and other appliances when not in use.
- No internet gambling or illegal downloading.
- No pornography allowed on campus period.
- No theft on or off premises. You may be asked to supply us with a receipt of purchased items at any time.
- Laundry must be done on assigned laundry day/time.
- Residents must check in with House Parent for overnight stays away from the home or longer absences.
- Schedules must be submitted every Friday for the upcoming week to be written on the whiteboard.
- Every resident is responsible to cook one meal every week and assist in cooking when available at other opportunities.
- Medications will be locked away and monitored by House Parents. Medication locker will be open daily at: 7:30AM, Noon, 5:30PM, and 9PM.
- Morning devotions will occur at 7:45AM M-F and will last 10-15 minutes.
- All Daughters will attend weekly family dinners.
- No candles or incense in our home.
- No weapons.
- No illicit drugs or unprescribed medications will be tolerated.
- Keep your cash on you at all times.

## **Curfew**

Sunday -Thursday 10:00 P.M.

Friday and Saturday 12:00 P.M.

Weekday curfew adjustments are only considered for approval if it's a job requirement. If you are running late you must notify the House Parent.

**Weekly family dinners from 5:45PM – 8:00PM on Tuesdays. These are mandatory.**

## **Overnight Stays Elsewhere**

An overnight stay elsewhere must be requested 48 hours in advance. Overnight stays will be granted on a case-by-case basis. They are a privilege. They may be denied if house rules are not being followed. You must provide a location and the name of the person you will be with as well as a phone number.

Emergency overnight stays elsewhere may be granted at House Parents' discretion. Typically, overnight stays elsewhere are granted during weekends.

## **Chores**

We believe that home is a gift and therefore maintaining it is a blessing as well. We desire to see you fulfill your household duties with joy and gratitude. Each Daughter has daily and weekly chores. Chores will be completed thoroughly, random chore checks will be made, and skills may be retaught if excellent standards are not upheld.

Each Daughter is responsible for picking up her own belongings. Do not leave items lying around.

Bedrooms are to be kept neat and clean. Random room checks will be made to ensure the cleanliness of the room and that no banned substances or items are present.

Eating is allowed in the commons area. No eating in bedrooms. Do not leave dishes in the sink. Either wash, dry and put away or place in the dishwasher.

All of your personal laundry must be washed, dried and put away on your designated laundry day/time. You are not allowed to do your laundry at any given time. (This would create confusion and lost laundry items). Sheets and towels must be washed weekly. Each room will have a specific color for sheets and towels to help identify which item belongs to a specific Daughter.

**Hygiene-** Honor the body God gave you. Taking care of yourself is essential. You must wash hands and have good hygiene habits.

**Feminine Products-** Please roll up used tampons and pads and discard them in the lined bathroom trash can. We are on a septic system and tampons and pads cannot be flushed.

### **Guests/Visitation**

- Visitation day/times are Saturday 10:00AM to 10:00PM and Sunday 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM.
- All visitations must be pre-approved by a House Parent.
- Visitors are not allowed to eat food that is purchased for Daughters.
- Visitors are not allowed upstairs.
- Alumni are welcome at all times, including family dinners.
- No children under 18 in the house without a parent.

### **Medications**

It is important to take medication as prescribed and ensure timely refills, so you don't run out. Not taking meds correctly, i.e., consuming less or more than directed, can cause major mood swings and other side effects. Medications will be kept under lock and key and will be monitored by House Parents according to doctor's orders. If you wish to change your medications or stop taking them, you must first discuss this with your doctor, advise the House Parents of the doctor's orders and follow the steps your doctor outlined.

Any changes to your meds including type, dosage or quantity must be reported to a House Parent *before* you begin the medication and the change must be recorded on your med sheet. Over the counter meds must also be kept in the medication locker. If needed at a time other than a typical time the medication locker is available, ask a House Parent to get that for you.

### **Disruptive Behavior**

Disruptive behavior includes but is not limited to: verbal aggression, repeated infractions of house rules; "old behavior" such as stealing or lying; being in another resident's room without permission; not performing chores; making noise to the point of bothering others.

Generally, disruptive behavior is that which disrupts the harmony of the house. Ongoing disruptive behavior will result in a write up.

### **Communication**

It is very important to learn to discuss our feelings and concerns. With issues, such as a Daughter slacking on chores, or breaking the rules, you should approach that Daughter individually. These interactions should be truth spoken in love. If you do not feel comfortable speaking directly to the person, you may leave a kind note for them. If the issue cannot be resolved between the two of you, please let a House Parent know.

Do not spread gossip. If another Daughter brings an issue to you about someone else, listen to their feelings then refer them back to the member they're concerned about, or if needed suggest they bring it to the House Parent.

If you are having difficulty with a House Parent, Staff Member, or Volunteer and you have been unable to resolve the conflict directly with that individual, please seek guidance from a different Staff Member.

## Infractions

During a consecutive six-month period:

1<sup>st</sup> rule infraction = verbal warning by House Parent

2<sup>nd</sup> rule infraction = write up and appropriate consequence

3<sup>rd</sup> rule infraction = write up and appropriate consequence

4<sup>th</sup> rule infraction = dismissal from house or behavioral contract depending on rule infraction

Your consequences may differ from those of another Daughter. Each infraction is viewed on a case-by-case basis.

Certain illegal or threatening behaviors will result in an immediate call to the police or dismissal from the house.

Infractions for verbal warning/reminder, write up, behavioral contract or dismissal include but are not limited to the following:

- Bedroom not maintained
- Food or open drinks in bedrooms
- Disrespecting others or spreading gossip
- Not abiding by curfew
- Not completing individual chores
- Not contributing to house chores (this mainly applies to common areas)
- Not attending required counseling, mentorship meetings, family dinners, classes, or coaching sessions
- Screen usage during prohibited hours
- Letting your dirty laundry pile up by not washing, drying and putting away your laundry on designated laundry day/time.

Any Daughter who is dismissed or leaves voluntarily should take her belongings, or she will need to schedule an appointment with Staff to pick up her belongings during normal business hours. Personal items should be removed from the house within 3 days. Any remaining articles could be donated to a local charity. A Daughter who is asked to leave for behavioral reasons can petition for readmission after two weeks. The intake committee will determine criterion for readmission on an individual basis.

## **Policy and Procedures for Exiting a Daughter from the Program**

Unfortunately, there will be circumstances in which a young woman finds that the ODH program is not right for her, or that ODH determines that a potential daughter is not a good fit for our home. This is not a decision that will be arrived at quickly or without great care and consideration. If this situation occurs, the following steps should take place.

1. There will be a discussion between the program director, daughter, house parent(s), and CASA/PAL/DFPS worker if they are still part of the daughter's life. Plans will be made for the best option of the daughter's choosing in moving forward. Options may include:
  - a. If it is determined that both the daughter and ODH would like to work through whatever differences may be occurring, the daughter may stay at ODH in a probationary capacity which would mean starting the program over from the beginning.
  - b. If it is determined that the daughter would like to exit and is in good standing with ODH, she may have up to 15 days to enact her departure plan.
  - c. If it is determined that the daughter will exit but is not in adherence with ODH policies, she may be asked to leave immediately. Arrangements will be made with the help of DFPS partners to find suitable interim housing.
2. If the daughter chooses to move forward into a local placement or independent living situation, ODH will assist with getting her packed up and transported to her new home if she so desires.
3. If the daughter is moving to an out-of-town placement or independent living situation, ODH will assist with getting her packed up but transportation will be arranged by her (or possibly DFPS related worker).
4. There may be a time-lapse between the decision to exit and the actual exit; if this occurs ODH may choose to allow the daughter to remain in the home until it is time for her to leave, or she may stay in a motel at her own expense.

These steps may be taken either at the daughter's request, after a series of disciplinary infractions, or at the discretion of ODH leadership.



I, \_\_\_\_\_, have been given the opportunity to continue on in the ODH program and home. I have chosen to take this opportunity and in doing so dedicate myself to the behavior changes needed to grow and to fully utilize my time here at ODH.

The behaviors I see that need to change are

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Any changes others would like to see in me

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My Plan going forward is

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I promise to work my hardest to reconcile any relationships that I have hindered through my behavior. I understand that this is a home and a family and so my behavior affects everyone living here.

On probation I have agreed to start my time over here at ODH at Phase One. I am solely responsible for this set back and only hold myself and my actions accountable. I also understand that I have agreed to the “one strike” policy and in doing so I know that by doing any of the following will lead to my dismissal immediately (within 48 hours).

1. Obstruction of any of ODH’s guidelines and rules
2. Creation of a hostile living environment.

3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Our Daughters' House Child Protection Policy**

### **General Purpose Statement**

Safeguarding is the responsibility that we have to ensure that our employees and volunteers, partners, vendors, operations and programs do no harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults; that they do not expose them to the risk of discrimination, neglect, harm and abuse; and that any concerns that ODH has about the safety of children within our home are dealt with and reported to the appropriate authorities. ODH also has the responsibility for protecting its employees and volunteers when they are vulnerable, for example, when ill or at risk of harm or abuse.

Our Daughters' House (ODH) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who live in our home and participate in our program and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of ODH from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

### **Selection of Workers**

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous ODH affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at ODH.

b. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

c. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least three of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of a professional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at ODH.

e. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and volunteers who will have contact with program participants and their children.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing ODH to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by ODH leadership on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding

circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at ODH.

### **Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Employees and/or volunteers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children in our home. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at ODH becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under our care, this should be reported immediately to the Executive Director, Jenny Williams, for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at ODH or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent of the child will be notified.
2. The employee/volunteer/resident in the home alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave/removed pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. ODH will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. ODH will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries

or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of ODH should refrain from speaking to the media.

6. A counseling appointment will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

### **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while in our home, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent of the injury if they were not present at the time of injury.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent will immediately be summoned in addition to an ODH director. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

### **Training**

ODH will provide training on this child protection policy to all new employees and volunteers, and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All employees/volunteers are required to attend these training events if they have interaction with children in our care.

### **Responsibilities**

All employees, volunteers, interns, sub-contractors, partner organizations and visitors are obliged to follow this policy and maintain an environment that prevents exploitation and abuse and which encourages reporting of breaches of this policy using the appropriate procedures.

## **Our Daughters' House COVID – 19 Protocols**

1. Staff & Volunteers, if you are experiencing any of the COVID-19 symptoms listed below please do not come to the center to work or volunteer:
  - a. Fever (100.1 degrees F or greater)
  - b. Frequent Cough
  - c. Shortness of Breath / Tightness of Chest
  - d. Contact with a COVID-19 positive individual within the previous 14 days (“Symptoms of Coronavirus”).
2. Staff, begin each day by using a thermometer to check your temperature. A temperature reading of 100.1 degrees F or greater, please notify the appropriate staff member and return home.
3. Staff, face masks are strongly recommended but not required. Volunteers, face masks are required at all times.
4. Residents, not allowed into other resident’s rooms or personal spaces. Staff, not allowed in resident’s rooms without mask and permission of resident. Volunteers, not allowed upstairs in or near resident’s rooms.
5. Staff and Volunteers, contact Jenny Williams as soon as possible if you have contracted COVID – 19 or have been in personal contact with another individual who has tested positive for COVID – 19. A negative test must be received before returning to work.
6. Please refer to the CDC’s website frequently for updated protocols and suggested regulations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

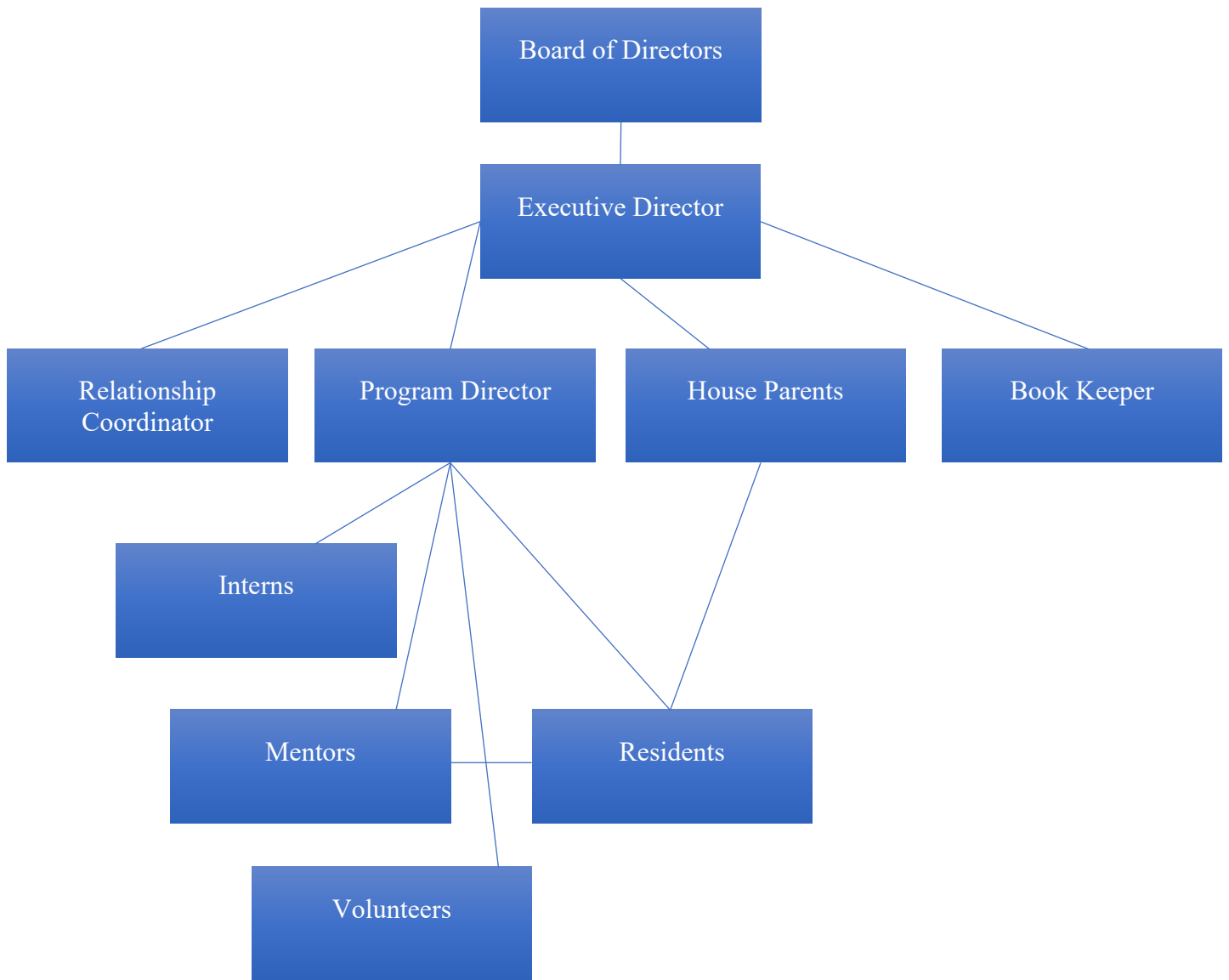
#### IV. Level of Involvement



**Roles**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Interns</b>	<b>Teams/Coaches</b>	<b>Mentors</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Board of Directors</b>
<b>Description</b>	Seasonal, Event, Little to no interaction with the residents	Virtual or In-Person, Semester Length	Structured but flexible, Bible Study, Training, Classes *Hospitality Team	Long-term, committed, Bi-weekly meetings	Long-term, committed, Part-time or Full-time	One Year Commitment, Monthly meetings
<b>Requirements</b>	Application Background Check Copy of Driver's License	Application Background Check Interview Process	Application Background Check	Application Background Check Interview Process	Application Background Check Interview Process	Resume Background Check Interview Process Voted In
<b>Training</b>		Reduced TBRI Training	Reduced TBRI Training	TBRI Training Trafficking Training Love Language Enneagram	TBRI Training Trafficking Training Love Language Enneagram	TBRI Training Trafficking Training Love Language Enneagram
<b>Jobs</b>	Cook & Drop-off meals Outside maintenance Events/Fundraisers Outside Projects	Social media Grant Writing Fundraising Research	Admin Help Grant Writing Life Lessons/Skills (Sessions) Bible Study (weekly) *Decorate, Celebrate, Event Prep, Staff Support	Life Lessons/Skills Biblical Support	Executive Director Program Director Program Developer House Parents Book keeper Counselor	Fundraising Committee Legal Committee Staff Support Biblical Support

## Organizational Structure





## Organization Role Descriptions

### **Board of Directors:**

Responsible for the strategic guidance of the organization and general oversight of the Executive Director and organization's leadership team. BOD for ODH is a working board that is actively engaged in fundraising, sub-committee engagement and, as requested by the Executive Director, supporting the goals of the organization's mission through business counseling, communicating needs of the organization to business organizations, and creating community connectivity to ODH.

### **Executive Committee:**

Sub-committee of the Board of Directors providing tactical operational oversight and representation of activities to the overall Board of Directors, including:

- Strategic planning review and approval
- Financial planning review and approval
- Fundraising planning review and approval
- Human Resources planning review and approval

### **Finance Committee:**

Sub-committee of the Board of Directors providing tactical financial oversight and representation of activities to the overall Board of Directors, including:

- Development and review of annual operating budget
- Development and review of annual fundraising funds forecast and uses
- Financial planning review and approval

### **Fundraising Committee:**

Sub-committee of the Board of Directors providing tactical fundraising oversight and representation of activities to the overall Board of Directors, including:

- Strategic fund-raising planning review and approval
- Development of annual fund-raising programs and goals
- Active leadership in fund-raising activities
- Leadership and support of fund-raising team

### **Governance and Compensation Committee:**

Sub-committee of the Board of Directors providing strategic and operation review of ODH governance and compensation of ODH staff. Tactical governance oversight and representation of activities to the overall Board of Directors, including:

- Development and review of ODH governance policies and procedures
- Development and review of ODH compensation policies
- Development and review of ODH staff development policies

### Code of Conduct

At Our Daughters' House we are firmly rooted in God's Word. This results in an overflow of God's Spirit in every role of persons who participate in the well-being and growth of the organization. In order to assure a united heart, I agree to.....

1. To take responsibility for our own conduct in accordance to God's Word.
  - *I will remain humble before the Lord and not think of myself above anyone. Recognizing everything I have or anything good I have done, comes from the Lord. (Romans 12:3)*
  - *I will discover and willingly use my spiritual gifts to help advance the Kingdom of God. (Romans 12:4-8)*
  - *I will be kind and look for opportunities to serve others. (Romans 12:10)*
  - *I will not give up in hard times. Rather, I will practice developing in patience and prayer. (Romans 12:12)*
  - *I will be hospitable and respond to the needs of others, especially the Body of Christ. (Romans 12:13)*
2. To be a fuel and not a deficiency.
  - By understanding I play a small part of a big picture.
  - By building confidence in my team and employees of this organization.
  - By only offering criticism if it coexists with constructive resolve.
  - By upholding my commitments to my role or committee.
3. Fundraising
  - To contribute to an annual gift of "Giving or Getting" \$5,000. This can be in donation form or in the form of value of a gift-in-kind.
    - "Giving"- This can be a generously given personal gift.
    - "Getting"- This can be obtained through fundraising on behalf of ODH.
4. Other considerations
  - To be active in researching, connecting, and building fruitful relationships that would benefit this organization.
  - To thoughtfully prepare for meetings.
  - To be a willing and active part of the growth by being on one of the ODH committee boards.
  - Having a firm passion for kids in foster care, aged out youth, and orphan care.

I will not, in any form, be involved in any actions that could embarrass the organization. This includes, but is not subject to, illegal activity, inappropriate relationships, or offensive actions towards other members. I agree to willingly step down if such actions arise.

I will act in confidence of those that serve this ministry and will not share information that is not personally mine to share.

I will not act on behalf of the ODH board, employees, donors, or Daughters, but understand that I solely represent myself and my individual thought.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Job Description: Executive Director**

Under the direction and guidance of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director is responsible for the planning, organizing, staffing, motivating, directing, and management of the organization committed to creating a safe environment for young women and their children aging out of the foster care system.

### **Hours:**

20+ hours/week

Access for emergencies 24/7

### **General Position Responsibilities:**

- Responsible for planning, organization, and direction of the organization's operations and programs.
- Develops and implements consistent inventory and cost accounting policies, procedures, and operational reporting/metrics.
- Oversees and reports on the organization's results for the Board of Directors.
- Provides leadership to and manages the efforts of site staff to ensure appropriate support of all of the organization's operations.
- Coordinates and leads annual budget reviews, monthly and quarterly reviews, and periodic forecast updates.
- Retains a diverse, highly qualified staff and volunteers by providing career coaching, growth, and personal development for all staff.
- Prepares accurate and timely analyses that capture and communicate fundraising results, variances, and performance trends.
- Ensures that services and funding relationships are robust enough to meet or exceed strategic goals and objectives.

### **General Position Requirements:**

- Demonstrated leadership and management skills
- Ability to multi-task
- Takes initiative
- Works independently
- Creative problem-solving skills
- Enthusiastic
- Dynamic
- Flexible
- Organized
- Collaborative

### **Position Education and Experience:**

- Bachelor's Degree in Finance, Accounting, or Management preferred
- 5 or more years management or supervisory experience
- 5 or more years of non-profit management experience in an operational environment

## **Job Description: Relationship Coordinator**

Our Relationship Coordinator is the heartbeat of Our Daughters' House. They fuel every avenue of connection and relationship, thus cultivating the ability to experience and make major changes in the lives of everyone involved. This person is often the first impression of ODH and our mission. This position requires vision and leadership skills as we work together to build a position and establish a voice in this mission field that has yet to be created.

### **General Position Responsibilities:**

- Knowledge about Foster Care System and Foster youth/alumni
- Donor connections
  - Connects with new and existing donors on a consistent basis
  - Sends gifts and personal touches to make known how special they are to ODH
- Sponsoring Partnership (Churches/ Corporations/ Organizations) connection
  - Responsible for obtaining and maintaining relationships that financially fuel ODH
  - Monthly touch point
  - Sets up annual involvement with each of the organizations
- Volunteer connections
  - Recruits, trains, and coordinates ODH volunteers
- Mentor and Teacher connection
  - Responsible for planning, organization, and coordinating training for both mentors and Life Skill educators.
  - Life Skills Classes: Post needs and onboard teachers.
- Acts as a sounding board for staff, volunteers, and mentors
- Run background checks on all volunteers, mentors, and educators
- Drafts monthly newsletter for supporters
- Connect with media team to relay needs of this position
- Assists in maintaining any other funding relationships
- Assists ED with tasks, as needed

### **General Position Requirements:**

- Demonstrates leadership skills, yet seeks to collaborate
- Has vision for progress
- Ability to multi-task and remain organized; flexible, adaptable
- Takes initiative, but can work independently
- Creative problem-solving skills
- Awareness of community connections or ability to seek them out
- Awareness of ministry and non-profit logistics

### **Position Education and Experience:**

- 3 or more years of non-profit or ministry experience
- Knowledge of online programs such as Microsoft Office, Apple products, and Google Suite applications

## **Job Description: Program Director**

Under the direction and guidance of the Executive Director, the Program Director is responsible for the planning and organizing of ODH programming. The Program Director is also responsible for ensuring appropriate training for staff and volunteers to fulfil the mission of equipping young women aging out of foster care with appropriate resources to thrive.

### **General Position Responsibilities:**

- Responsible for planning, organization, and training for organization's programs.
- Recruits, trains, and coordinates ODH volunteers
- Acts as a sounding board for staff, volunteers, and mentors
- Pairs mentors with mentees
- Drafts monthly newsletter for supporters
- Coordinates and teaches trauma training
- Active part of intake committee
- Research and teach appropriate life skills classes for Daughters
- Ensures House Parents and Interns have the resources they need to enrich Daughters' life skills
- Mediates conflicts within the home when an inside solution cannot be reached
- Assists in maintaining funding relationships
- Assists ED with tasks as needed

### **General Position Requirements:**

- Demonstrated leadership skills
- Ability to multi-task
- Takes initiative
- Works independently
- Creative problem-solving skills
- Enthusiastic
- Dynamic
- Flexible
- Organized
- Collaborative

### **Position Education and Experience:**

- Bachelor's Degree in Psychology or a social science preferred
- 5 or more years of non-profit programs experience

## V. Mentors

Mentorship is a long-term commitment filled with big responsibilities. Mentors are one of the few key components that provides our Daughters with the steady and consistent support system they need to achieve their goals. We desire our mentors to be active and faithful Christ-followers that seeks to guide and encourage our Daughters with Biblical principles. Mentoring at ODH will be like extended family, an Aunt that welcomes the Daughter into the home, celebrates her accomplishments, and shows the love of God always. While she is within the home, we ask that our mentors meet bi-weekly at the minimum. As she transitions out into her own independent living situation, we ask the mentorship remains consistent. We hope our mentors are another home away from home, a welcoming family, and a consistent support to our Daughters.

### Qualifications –

- Recommended by a Board Member or Staff member
- Christ Follower
- Pass Background Check

### Expectations –

- Long-term commitment
- Bi-weekly meetings with girls

### Processes –

- Application
- Approval
- Training
  - TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention®) by “Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development”
  - Trafficking Training
- Enneagram Test
- Love Language Test

## VI. Mentor & Volunteer Application



# OUR DAUGHTERS' HOUSE

## Mentor & Volunteer Application

Thank you for your interest in serving with Our Daughters' House. We have been praying for you and we are delighted that you are wanting to serve alongside us as the hands and feet of Jesus to our Daughters.

Please thoughtfully complete the following application. Once your application is submitted, we will run the background check, contact your references, and then contact you to discuss the next steps.

You have the potential to impact our Daughters tremendously!

*“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”*

*James 1:27*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Alt. Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you interested in volunteering with Our Daughters' House?

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Please list any special skills, trainings, or abilities which you can offer:

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Please check all areas of interest:

- |                                       |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality  | <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer Partner          | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Maintenance    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising  | <input type="checkbox"/> Grant Writing           | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring    | <input type="checkbox"/> Internship              | <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching Daughters  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tech Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media Management | Other _____                                  |

I am available: (please circle)

Weekdays                  Weekends                  Nights                  Other \_\_\_\_\_

I am available to work \_\_\_\_\_ hours per volunteer session.

Please share with us any prior volunteer experience. Please include the length of time served.

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T-shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender (please circle one)    Male    Female

Marital Status please circle one)    Single Married    Divorced    Widowed

Do you have children? \_\_\_\_\_

How many children and what are their ages? \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years at employment \_\_\_\_\_

Name of High School you attended \_\_\_\_\_

High School Graduation Year \_\_\_\_\_

Name of College/University/Other you attended \_\_\_\_\_

College/University/Other Graduation Year \_\_\_\_\_

Current certification in the following ((please circle all that apply): CPR First Aid    EMT

Are you any of the following?    Nurse    Physician

Do you have previous training or experience dealing with abused, neglected or abandoned children or teenagers?    No    Yes

Please explain for above question \_\_\_\_\_

Were you a victim of abuse, neglect or abandonment as a minor (answering yes does not disqualify you from serving)?    No    Yes (will discuss in person)

**Personal Profile**

Have you made a personal decision to follow Jesus? Yes No If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_

What church do you currently attend? \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's Email \_\_\_\_\_

Mark ALL the words that accurately describe you:

- Timid Loving Deliberate Selfish Gentle Mature Congenial Secure Impatient Sarcastic
- Stubborn Considerate Modest Patient Kind Abrasive Nervous Angry Studious
- Trustworthy Motivated Verbal Organized Impulsive Intelligent Insecure Relaxed
- Tactful Compassionate

List your top 5 strengths in working with children and/or teens (be specific, but don't stress).

\_\_\_\_\_

List your top 5 weaknesses in working with children and/or teens (be specific, but don't stress).

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe why you wish to serve in the area you've chosen.

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of or plead guilty to a crime? No Yes

Have you ever been arrested for a criminal offense? No Yes

Have you ever been convicted of or plead guilty to sexual misconduct? No Yes

Have you ever been arrested for sexual misconduct? No Yes

Have you ever taken drugs other than prescription drugs? No Yes

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, please explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize you to contact my listed references and pastor (if applicable) listed on this application. *Please be advised that a criminal history check will be requested as authorized by state law.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**About Me (optional)**

**Finish the sentence . . .**

Three words that describe me are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

Some of my hobbies & interests include \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite way to relax is \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite way to spend a Saturday is \_\_\_\_\_

I am most comfortable around people when \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to visit \_\_\_\_\_

**My favorite . . .**

Song \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Food \_\_\_\_\_

Snack \_\_\_\_\_

Other. Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Drink \_\_\_\_\_

Color \_\_\_\_\_

Movie \_\_\_\_\_

Animal \_\_\_\_\_

Candy \_\_\_\_\_

**References**

**Personal Reference:**

(You may use any non-family member that you have a personal relationship with)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of your relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have known each other \_\_\_\_\_

**Church Reference:**

(You may use any member of your church who can speak to your relationship with and love for Jesus Christ)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of your relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have known each other \_\_\_\_\_

**Professional Reference:**

(You may use any current, former employer, volunteer service coordinator, teacher or school administrator)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of your relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have known each other \_\_\_\_\_

**MENTOR/VOLUNTEER – Medical Emergency Information and Consent Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Insurance Company \_\_\_\_\_ Policy # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please list any allergies to medications: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please list any other known allergies: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you have any medical conditions? No Yes If yes, please list: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you take any medications? No Yes  
 List medications, reasons and possible side effects: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you have any physical handicaps or conditions preventing you from performing any type of activity? No Yes If yes, please list: \_\_\_\_\_

**In case of Emergency, please contact:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Alt Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternate Emergency Contact:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Authorization is hereby given to the staff of Our Daughters' House to obtain medical treatment in the event of an emergency for \_\_\_\_\_.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby agree to work Our Daughters' House programs as a volunteer. I understand that I must provide my own medical/accident insurance. I understand that Our Daughters' House provides no such coverage.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Media/Publicity Consent Form**

***Please Check:***

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my consent for the release of any publicity pictures or videos by Our Daughters' House that would assist in promoting ODH.

Name (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

OR

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my consent for the release of any publicity by Our Daughters' House. I understand that although pictures and videos may be taken, they will not be used in any publications or online outlets.

Name (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Policy on Confidentiality and Privacy

The success of building relationships with our Daughters is largely dependent on trust. As such, we ask that you respect our Daughters' privacy by not sharing their past or present information without our consent and theirs.

There may be instances when a Daughter confides in you about something that she has not told ODH staff or other volunteers. If this is the case, we are thrilled she has chosen you as her confidant! You are welcome to keep this information solely to yourself unless it falls under an exception to confidentiality.

The exceptions to confidentiality are:

- if a Daughter informs you that she intends to harm herself
- if a Daughter informs you that she intends to harm someone else
- if a Daughter informs you that she has a banned substance on campus
- if a Daughter informs you that she has a weapon on campus

**If an exception to confidentiality occurs, please immediately inform a staff member.**

If a Daughter has had a conversation with you and it is heavy on your heart but is not an exception to confidentiality, please come and speak to a staff member. We are happy to share the load and pray with you over our Daughter.

I \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the above statement and agree to abide by Our Daughters' House's policy on confidentiality.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Our Daughters' House Policy on  
ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Our Daughters' House requires that any individual who is employed by or otherwise volunteers for ODH read and thoroughly understand the following information and indicates such by his/her signature:

“Abuse and neglect are against the law in the state of Texas and so is the failure to report it.” Any person who believes that an individual is being abused, neglected, or exploited is required by law to report this information to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Abuse Hotline, 1-800-252-5400 within 48 hours of the time one suspects the person has been or may be abused or neglected (Texas Health and Human Services Commission). Abuse and neglect include, but are not limited to, physical, emotional, or mental injury or failure to prevent such injury.

If an employee/volunteer witnesses what s/he considers to be abuse or neglect during an ODH sponsored activity, s/he is also required to inform the Executive Director as soon as possible. An incident report must be turned in within 48 hours of any suspected abuse or neglect. Such reports will be made available to the Board of Directors.

If an employee/volunteer is suspected/accused of abuse or neglect, s/he will be suspended from their position pending an investigation by the Program Director and until such final determination is made.

Failure to comply with this policy is automatic grounds for dismissal.

**Name (PLEASE PRINT)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_



**Authorization/Waiver/Indemnity Form**  
*(Authorization for Criminal Background Check)*

I hereby give my permission in exchange for good and valuable consideration for Our Daughters' House to obtain information relating to my criminal history record through an agency of their choice. The criminal history record, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudications. I understand this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for an employment/volunteer position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer here, the criminal history records check may be repeated at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the criminal history and a procedure is available for clarification if I dispute the record as received.

I, the undersigned, do, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, hereby remise, release and forever discharge and agree to indemnify and defend the reporting agency and each of their officers, directors, employees, and agents harmless from and against any and all causes of actions, suits, liabilities, costs, debts, and sums of money, claims and demands whatsoever, and any and all related attorney's fees, court costs, and other expenses, resulting from the investigation of my background in connection with my application to become a volunteer/staff member.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Please Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_  
 \*Social Security Number

TX Driver's License Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*\*PLEASE NOTE:* Your application will NOT be processed without your Social Security Number and Date of Birth.

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