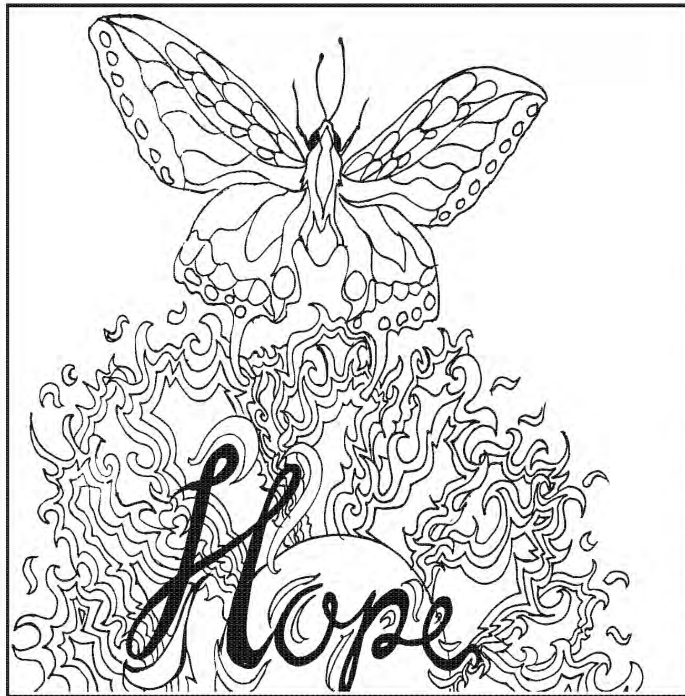




# Ventura County Family Justice Center Volunteer Manual



Artwork by Dalila Zerme, Alliance for HOPE Intern  
Ventura County Family Justice Center gratefully acknowledges Alliance for HOPE International  
for allowing us to reproduce this artwork.

*When you choose hope, anything is possible*

# Welcome HOPEgivers

Many partners and dedicated individuals have contributed to the development and opening of the Family Justice Center. We are grateful to them all and for the support from the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the County of Ventura, our County family agencies, our community partners, our local law enforcement agencies, and the Alliance for Hope International.

At the Ventura County Family Justice Center, our goal is to move beyond the justice system's traditional focus on holding offenders accountable and provide a richer, multi-faceted, and more robust emphasis on responding to the impact of violence on the innocent victims, survivors, and their families. Staff from more than 40 partner agencies and volunteers work to serve those impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, human trafficking and other violent crimes. We collaborate to help reduce trauma, eliminate repeat victimization, mitigate future risks, empower survivors as they recover, heal, and break the cycle of violence.

On behalf of the Family Justice Center staff and all our partners, I thank you for your interest in volunteering. By sharing your time and your talents, you are making a difference and helping to change the world, one family at a time.

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## Be a HOPEgiver

All too often, those facing violence or abuse suffer in silence as fear, confusion and lack of access discourage them from getting much-needed help and support. The Family Justice Center simplifies this overwhelming process by providing a caring, safe environment where victims and their families can access the comprehensive resources they need to recover, heal and break the cycle of violence.

The Family Justice Center offers many services in one location, so there are many ways to become involved as a volunteer.

The Ventura County Family Justice Center Volunteer Manual provides basic information and guidelines regarding the volunteer program and selection process. The Operations Manual provides additional information regarding policies and procedures. Please know we are committed to providing training and support to ensure your volunteer experience is a valuable one.

Please do not hesitate to discuss any questions or concerns you may have with the Development and Outreach Manager or your assigned supervisor. Please note that it is a work in progress. As our Family Justice Center grows from its initial startup operation to its full potential, we welcome your feedback.

## *Imagine*

*. . . rushing into a strange building, children in tow. You are scared, hurt, and have no place to rest or find safety.*

*Then, instead of walking into a gray, gloomy building, you open the door of the FJC and are greeted by a smile and calm, reassuring voice. You are offered a safe place to sit and rest. Someone offers you coffee and offers activities to your children while your wait.*

*Suddenly, seeking help seems a little less frightening, and there is a glimpse of something you did not believe you would find again . . .*

# **HOPE.**

## ***Family Justice Center Mission***

To support and improve the lives of those impacted by family violence and trauma.

## ***Vision***

The Ventura County Family Justice Center is a welcoming community that empowers and supports survivors of all ages and their families through comprehensive, holistic services that focus on the whole person.

## ***Values***

Our collaborative approach creates a safe space where we use strength-based practices to end abuse and exploitation, pursue justice, and create pathways to hope.

## ***Objectives***

Reducing violence and abuse is a responsibility we all share as a community, and the more we understand about these topics, the more we can do to protect ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

All too often, those facing violence or abuse suffer in silence as fear, confusion, and lack of access discourage them from getting much-needed help and support. The FJC simplifies this overwhelming process by providing a caring, safe environment where victims and their families can access the comprehensive resources they need to recover, heal, and break the cycle of violence. All FJC services are offered free of charge.

## **Goals of the Volunteer Program**

Volunteers are vital to the operation of the Family Justice Center and several volunteer positions are utilized in our day-to-day operations. Applications are accepted year-round.

The goal of our Volunteer Program is to match volunteers with a fulfilling area of service and provide the training and support needed to allow community volunteers to assist those affected by family violence and trauma. Under the direction of the Development and Outreach Manager, FJC volunteers are recruited to serve and fulfill these objectives:

- Assist with development, general administrative, and office support.
- Offer training on family violence issues and trauma-informed care.
- Provide a safe and comfortable atmosphere for FJC guests.
- Assist on-site partners with legal, counseling, and support services.

- Support the mission of the Ventura County Family Justice Center and Foundation.

The FJC does not discriminate against any volunteer because of race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.

## **Types of Volunteer Opportunities and Requirements**

We strive to match each volunteer with an assignment of their interest when possible. After screening, each volunteer applicant will meet with the Executive Director and the FJC managers or designees to determine which position will be best suited to their interest. Each volunteer will then be assigned a specific volunteer duty.

Volunteers will work under the supervision of an FJC manager or supervisor during normal business hours. Each volunteer will be trained and assigned to a least one position and may have a combination of positions.

These positions and their duties are described as follows. The successful completion of a background investigation is required for all volunteer positions.

### ***Administrative and General Office Support Volunteers***

Working under the supervision of the FJC staff, General Office Support Volunteers will provide administrative support to the FJC. Tasks may include answering the FJC business needs; assisting with the distribution of mail; filing; shredding; data entry; labeling; assistance with mailings and other projects; and other general office tasks as needed.

#### **Requirements:**

- Complete standard FJC Volunteer Application
- Complete volunteer interview
- Show demonstrated experience or ability to work with people in crisis and ability to show sensitivity to the issue of family violence.
- Applicants must possess basic computer skills
- Applicants must possess good writing skills
- Pass background screening
- Volunteer orientation and training

**Time Commitment:** FJC requests a minimum of one 4-hour shift per week for at least one year. Volunteers are welcome to schedule additional hours as well.

### ***Navigation Assistant Volunteers***

Working closely with FJC staff, a Family Justice Navigation Assistant Volunteer will work directly with clients and may assist with the following duties: answering phones, greeting incoming clients and helping meet their needs; interpreting for clients who do not speak English; assisting Intake staff; managing the reception and hospitality areas; and escorting clients through the facility. Bilingual skills are helpful, but not required.

#### **Requirements:**

- Complete standard FJC Volunteer Application
- Complete volunteer interview
- Show demonstrated experience or ability to work with people in crisis and ability to show sensitivity to the issue of family violence.
- Pass background screening
- Volunteer orientation and training

**Time Commitment:** FJC requests a minimum of one 4-hour shift per week for at least one year. Volunteers are welcome to schedule additional hours as well.

### ***Victim Advocate Volunteers***

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office provides services to thousands of victims every year and seeks qualified volunteers to make an important contribution to public safety and crime victims in Ventura County. Volunteer staff assist victims with certain services, including obtaining and enforcing restraining orders, emergency shelter placement, and court accompaniment. Bilingual skills are helpful, but not required.

#### **Requirements:**

- Complete standard FJC Volunteer Application
- Complete volunteer interview
- Show demonstrated experience or ability to work with people in crisis and ability to show sensitivity to the issue of family violence
- Applicants must possess basic computer skills
- Applicants must possess good writing skills
- Pass background screening
- Volunteer orientation and 48-hour training

**Time Commitment:** FJC requests a minimum of two 4-hour shift per week for at least one year. Volunteers are welcome to schedule additional hours as well.

## ***Camp HOPE Counselors and Pathways Volunteers***

There are many programs for adults who are affected by domestic violence, but few for children. Yet, we can make the most profound impact with children by helping them set a new course for their lives. Children who have been exposed to domestic violence inevitably have trouble learning or in school, are subject to chronic disease, and have a shortened life expectancy. Their risks of suffering abuse or becoming an abuser are significantly increased. They often end up in the juvenile justice system and later in prison. The Camp HOPE program is an effort to break the generational cycle of domestic violence and help children to find their own pathway to a brighter future. It is also a crime prevention strategy that benefits the entire community. Studies show that mentoring is a valuable tool that can change the outcome for children who have experienced trauma. Camp HOPE is a program that gives kids their childhood back.

For five days and nights, the children experience overnight camping, a variety of activities, and a therapeutic curriculum specifically designed for children exposed to domestic violence. Activities include zip lining, arts and crafts, kayaking, fishing, tubing, and archery. The children choose their own level of participation based on a “Challenge by Choice” philosophy. This allows them to build self-confidence and resiliency at their own pace. They also learn about historical figures who have overcome significant adversity and receive praise in the form of “Character Trait Awards.”

### **Requirements:**

- Young men and women, ages 17 to 24, who are passionate about helping at-risk youth.
- Standard FJC Volunteer Application
- Pass background screening
- Volunteer interview
- Demonstrated experience or ability to work with people in crisis and ability to show sensitivity to the issue of family violence.
- Volunteer orientation and training

**Time Commitment:** Counselors will be required to attend pre-camp meetings to meet the campers, a 6-hour training, one entire week of camp, and post-camp reunions. Counselors should also be available to participate in ongoing events, at least quarterly, to continue the community, mentoring, and relationship-building that was started with the campers.

## ***Grounds and Facilities Volunteers***

Grounds and facilities volunteers will assist with site maintenance as needed including projects such as painting, minor repairs, landscape maintenance, special events set-up



and tear down. Volunteers should be prepared to get dirty, walk on uneven ground, bend, kneel and dig.

**Requirements:**

- Standard FJC Volunteer Application
- Pass background screening
- Volunteer interview
- Volunteer orientation and training

**Time Commitment:** Grounds and facilities volunteers are needed intermittently; hours may be determined based on the project to be completed. Volunteers are welcome to set a regular, weekly volunteer schedule as well.

***Special Projects and Event Volunteers***

These individuals will directly assist the FJC Development and Outreach Manager with special projects, community events, research, requests, and communications. They may also help with general office support and some grant research and writing in the area of family violence and trauma-informed care. These volunteers may assist the FJC staff and all partner agencies with outreach to schools, community organizations, traditional media and social media platforms. They may help maintain online presence for the Center, develop and post content designed to engage community members, and request content and graphics from Center partners as appropriate.

**Requirements:**

- Standard FJC Volunteer Application
- Pass background screening
- Volunteer interview
- Volunteer orientation and training

**Time Commitment:** For a special projects volunteer, hours may be determined based on the project to be completed. Volunteers are welcome to set a regular, weekly volunteer schedule as well.

***Chaplaincy Program***

Because spirituality plays a vital role in many people's lives, the FJC has created a Volunteer Chaplaincy Program in partnership with local law enforcement agency chaplains and others to provide spiritual support to those clients that wish this service. The role of the FJC Chaplain is not to proselytize, but to provide spiritual support to FJC guests. The level of spiritual support a Chaplain will provide is dependent on their own

experience and comfort level, as well as their status as a Chaplain, Associate Chaplain, or Honorary Chaplain.

Working closely with FJC staff, FJC Chaplains may directly assist with the following:

- Monitor and remain a soothing presence in the reception areas to assure clients are comfortable;
- Serve as a link to resources within the Ventura County faith community that support safety for victims of family violence;
- Provide connections to additional faith-based community resources when requested; offer invocations, benedictions, special presentations, etc., for official ceremonies;
- Provide care during bereavement situations and visit sick or injured FJC staff at their request;
- Provide coping assistance for FJC and partner agency staff and volunteers following stressful or overwhelming FJC experiences.

**Requirements:**

- Standard FJC Volunteer Application
- Chaplain Application
- Chaplain Interview
- Pass background screening
- Demonstrated experience or ability to work with people in crisis and ability to show sensitivity to the issue of domestic violence.
- Verification of affiliation with a religious organization within the Ventura County area. Ordination or certification when appropriate.
- Chaplain training and orientation

**Time Commitment:** FJC requests a minimum of one 4-hour shift per month for at least one year. Volunteers are welcome to set a regular, weekly volunteer schedule as well.

## **Volunteer Application Requirements and Process**

### ***Minimum Age Requirements***

Volunteer counselors for the Camp HOPE program must be between the ages of 17 and 24. Generally, all other volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.

In limited circumstances, there may be exceptions may be granted. However, for your safety, we may ask that any volunteer under the age of 18 be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or other approved adult for an interview. Any tasks assigned to a minor shall comply with all appropriate requirements of child labor laws.

### ***Time Commitments***

The FJC has many types of volunteer positions and our desire that every volunteer to have a meaningful experience. It is our goal to assist you in selecting a volunteer opportunity that meets your availability and time.

For most volunteer positions, we request that you be available for at least one 4-hour shift per week, although volunteers are welcome to set additional regular hours as well. Due to the resources required for training, we request that all volunteers agree to a one year or more commitment to the FJC. This commitment will allow you to receive training and become an expert in your volunteer area.

### ***Volunteer Screening Interview***

Each volunteer for the FJC will be asked to complete a screening interview. This informal interview is a way for FJC staff to meet volunteers and help each volunteer discover which position would best fit their skills and needs. The process is designed to cover the following areas:

- Review of volunteer's application
- Discussion regarding work and volunteer experience
- Identification of volunteer position preference
- Understanding of requirements and time commitments
- Suitability for the position and ability to work independently with little supervision
- Interpersonal skills
- Explanation of the background investigation process

### ***Background Investigation***

All volunteers for the FJC must complete and successfully pass our mandatory background investigation process conducted by the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation. The background investigative process is designed to ensure the suitability of the individuals selected as volunteers and to preserve the safety of all clients, guests, staff, and other volunteers of the program.

Each volunteer applicant will be provided a separate packet explaining the background investigation policy. Depending on several factors, the background investigation process may take up to several weeks to complete. All volunteer applicants should apply at least two months **before** they wish to start volunteering.

All volunteer applicants will be required to sign a "no feedback" agreement. This agreement sets out that the background investigation will be conducted for volunteer

service only; the applicant will receive information or results of the investigation other than being notified they passed or did not pass the background investigation; and the background records are confidential and will be the property of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office and will not be made available to any other law enforcement agency or employer without a signed waiver specifically authorizing the release.

### ***Mandatory Training and Orientation***

Extensive training will be offered to the FJC staff, volunteers, and other community agencies. As a volunteer, you will receive mandatory FJC volunteer training and orientation. Participation in some training may be optional depending on the specific projects the volunteer is assigned to, but training topics may include:

- Cycle of domestic violence, domestic violence laws and victim perspectives
- How to obtain and enforce a domestic violence restraining order
- Effects of domestic violence on children
- Trauma-informed care and crisis intervention skills
- Marsy's Law - Crime Victims' Bill of Rights
- History of Family Justice Center movement and services
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and Hope Theory
- Roles of Family Justice Center partners and on-site staff introductions
- Expectation of volunteers
- Site tours

### ***Volunteer Agreement***

If selected to serve as a volunteer at the Ventura County Family Justice Center, I understand that I will serve without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond reimbursement for volunteer-related expenses. Further, I understand that my services may be terminated at any time, with or without notice by the management staff. Conversely, a volunteer may also terminate service with the Family Justice Center at any time; however, the volunteer will be asked to agree to commit to the minimum number of hours per week for one year as defined in the Volunteer Manual.

No claim of employment with the County of Ventura or any partner of the FJC arise from this volunteer service.

## **Volunteer Code of Conduct**

### ***Client Contact***

It is imperative that all guests of the FJC be treated with courtesy and respect. Volunteers and staff are responsible for ensuring that the FJC is a warm and reassuring environment. It is crucial that each FJC guest be provided with the same level of care and service.

### ***Confidentiality Agreement***

All FJC staff and volunteers acknowledge and recognize that existing laws restrict access to certain records and information. The highest level of confidentiality and security must be maintained. Consequently, all FJC staff and volunteers agree to honor the confidentiality rights of clients and community partners.

All matters at the FJC are sensitive and extremely confidential for the safety of all guests, staff, and volunteers. All volunteers must sign an agreement to keep all information learned at the FJC confidential.

### ***Drug-Free Workplace Policy***

### ***Non-Smoking Policy***

Smoking by our employees, volunteers, clients, or vendors in any interior offices or spaces of any building occupied by the FJC is not allowed. There is also no smoking permitted within 20 feet of any entryway, vent, or doorway to interior buildings.

### ***Dress Code***

As a volunteer, you are responsible for presenting a positive image to clients and to the community as a representative of the FJC. You should dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of your duties.

### ***Identification Cards***

All authorized personnel of the FJC must always wear an identification card when on duty. There should never be anyone working inside the FJC without a visible identification card.

### ***Reliability***

We ask that any volunteer who is unable to meet an FJC commitment due to illness, family emergency, or any other reason, contact the FJC as soon as possible. The number for reception is 805-652-7655.

### ***Property Policy***

As a volunteer at the FJC, you will respect the property and equipment provided, as well as the personal property of all staff and other volunteers.

### ***Safety***

Creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment for staff and volunteers as well as the clients and families served at the Family Justice Center is a priority. Volunteers will receive information on facility safety plans and safety protocols related to the assigned volunteer position.