



## **Food Assistance Volunteer Program**

### **About Montgomery Housing Partnership**

Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) Inc. creates quality affordable homes. It accomplishes its mission by housing people, empowering families, and strengthening neighborhoods.

Formed in 1989 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to meet Montgomery County's growing need for affordable housing, MHP builds, acquires, and rehabilitates apartments, condos, and homes for low- and moderate-income families. Through its affiliates, MHP has developed more than 1,700 units of affordable housing around the county, including in transit-oriented neighborhoods in Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Rockville, and Wheaton.

MHP's holistic approach to housing includes providing affordable rents, developing educational programs for residents to develop skills that expand their opportunities, and implementing neighborhood revitalization efforts in communities facing economic challenges.

MHP is a charter member of NeighborWorks America. To learn more about our activities, visit [www.mhpartners.org](http://www.mhpartners.org). Follow us on Facebook and Twitter @MHPartners and on Instagram @mh\_partners.

### **Mission of the Food Assistance Volunteer Program**

The mission of the Food Assistance Volunteer Program is to improve the health and well-being of residents living in Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) rental properties by ensuring that they have access to healthy, affordable food. The program will strive to achieve this mission through the following goals:

- Maximizing participation in federal nutrition programs by walking residents through the process of applying for Food Supplement Program (FSP; federally known as SNAP, or Food Stamps) and referring residents to other federal nutrition programs, as necessary;
- Raising awareness among MHP residents of local food assistance programs, such as farmers' markets and food pantries; and
- Connecting residents to other resources, as necessary

## **Why Have the Food Assistance Volunteer Program?**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods or uncertain ability to acquire these foods in socially acceptable ways.” As of 2016, 5.9% of the population in Montgomery County were considered food insecure.

This pilot program is a response to the findings dictated in the County’s Five-Year Food Security Strategic Plan. The strategic plan was released in January 2017 and was the culmination of efforts made by over 300 local food assistance providers, government agencies and anti-hunger nonprofit organizations. The vision of the Food Security Plan (“FSP”) is to create “a community in which all people at all times have access to safe, sufficient, nutritious food, with dignity.” To learn more about the FSP, please go to <https://mocofoodcouncil.org/food-security/>

Montgomery Housing Partnership acknowledges that food insecurity affects some of our residents and see an opportunity to provide programming that would help residents connect to resources that will ease the burden that food insecurity places on families.

Food Assistance Volunteers will have a direct role in impacting the lives of those suffering from food insecurity. By working with people, one on one, Food Assistance Volunteers can provide the support necessary to navigate the food assistance system.

## **Our Partners**

This program is made possible in part by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Food Council, the Community Action Agency and Maryland Hunger Solutions.

## **How the Program Works**

Volunteers are expected to commit to a minimum of three hours per week for six months. After receiving all necessary training (see Volunteer Requirements for more information), volunteers will work with a team of 2-4 people. The team will be working at the following MHP properties during their service, unless informed otherwise:

- The Bonifant; 929 Bonifant Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910
- Parkview Towers; 7667 Maple Ave, Takoma Park, MD 20912
- Edinburgh House; 7513 Maple Ave, Takoma Park, MD 20912
- Dring’s Reach Apartments, 3407 Robey Terrace, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Your service will begin with an application event at the designated site, where team members will start the application process for SNAP and/or counsel residents on food assistance programs in the area. Residents who are not able to be reached during the application event, can schedule a meeting with one of the team members for a date and time agreed upon by the volunteer and the resident.

Volunteers will also be asked to do at least one general information session where volunteers do not sign-up residents for SNAP but share information on different food assistance programs in

Montgomery County and show residents how to use FoodStat and Montgomery County Food Council's online Food Assistance Resource Map. FoodStat is an online application that allows you to search on a map different statistics and places related to food insecurity within Montgomery County. The online Food Assistance Resource Map is a tool to allow people to search for different food assistance providers within Montgomery County. More application events or general information sessions at your designated site may be set-up based on the demonstrated need and the availability of the volunteers.

During the next six months, volunteers will work closely with those they have originally helped apply for SNAP. This includes ensuring that residents have submitted the correct paperwork, that they are aware of the entire FSP application process, etc. More information will be detailed during the trainings.

Throughout this process you will work closely with Montgomery Housing Partnership's Health and Housing Coordinator and the Food Assistance Volunteer Advisor. Teams will meet once a month with the Food Assistance Volunteer Advisor (on the phone or in-person) to discuss progress and any concerns that are brought up during service. Volunteers will also be required to attend one all-volunteer meeting, in addition to the trainings held at the beginning of service.

### **Volunteer Duties**

- Learn about the SNAP program eligibility requirements and benefits, and other food and basic needs assistance programs within Montgomery County (information provided during the training)
- Work within your team at your designated site to do outreach before application events and information sessions
- Work within your team at your designated site to do application events
  - Assist with pre-screening residents for SNAP eligibility and provide SNAP application assistance
  - Assist with pre-screening for other federal and state food assistance programs and refer residents to entities that can enroll them in those programs
  - Provide any other information and/or resources to residents on how to access healthy food
- Work within your team at your designated site to do general information sessions
  - Raise awareness of SNAP and help residents understand the SNAP application process
  - Raise awareness of other federal and state food assistance programs and provide materials on these other programs
  - Familiarize yourself with FoodStat and the Food Assistance Resource Map with the intent of teaching residents how to use it
  - Provide any other information and/or resources to residents on how to access healthy food
- Fill out and submit report sheet

- Participate in all the trainings held at the beginning of service
- Participate in once a month meetings with Food Assistance Volunteer Advisor (phone or in-person, depending on availability)
- Participate in one mandatory all-volunteer meeting

### **Volunteer Requirements**

- Attend training sessions
- A minimum of 3 hours a week for six months and availability to start working the week after the training
- Ability to use computers, conduct website research and use MS Windows environment
- Own transportation or ability to travel to different locations in the county
- Complete HIPPA training
- Those with language skills in Spanish and/or Amharic are encouraged to apply
- Those who anticipate being out of the area for three (3) or more consecutive weeks during the six (6) month service term should reconsider applying
- Those who anticipate being out of the area for 6 or more weeks during the six (6) month service term should reconsider applying

### **How to Apply**

Go the following link to apply: <https://bit.ly/2X0H338>

### **Contact Information**

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