



Hand of Mercy Everywhere, Inc.
A Christian Home for Teen and/or
Teen Mothers and Their Babies

Residential Handbook

Welcome to Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc. We want to make sure that your stay here at our H.O.M.E. is a positive experience for you. Please take the time to read carefully through this handbook and sign the back page. The rights, rules, and regulations are both for your comfort and safety, as well as the other clients, staff, and volunteers. Group living is not always an easy situation. However, it can be made fun and enjoyable when everyone assumes responsibilities and abides by simple rules. The following rules will enable you to know exactly what is expected of you during your stay at Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc. If you have any questions about anything in this book, please do not hesitate to ask. We look forward to living and working with you in order to help you build a promising future.

Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc

HOUSE RULES

ACTIVITIES/OUTINGS

- We encourage everyone to participate in H.O.M.E. activities/outings. You are to stay with the group under the supervision of the House staff or a volunteer during activities/outings.
- Residents may not be left home alone.
- We carefully plan weekend and time off outings for all residents. Some outings have babysitting for your baby if you would like.
- Park Rules are strictly enforced by Belleview Police Dept. Sunrise to Sunset. During summer hours the Splash area is open. (No Bikini's)

ADOPTION POLICY

H.O.M.E. will not assume responsibility for placement of children in adoptive homes. Licensed adoption agencies or private lawyers will be used as a resource for birth mothers interested in placing their child up for adoption. As a part of our program, each resident is provided with information regarding adoption and parenting upon arrival.

If a resident chooses to place her baby up for adoption, she will be provided a list of adoption agencies and lawyers. The "Women's Pregnancy Center" in Ocala is also used as a referral for adoption placement counseling for the teen mother. Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc. neither initiates nor facilitates independent adoptions. If adoption profiles are sent to our office, they are returned to the sender.

ALLOWANCE

A monetary allowance is given to each resident on the first Saturday of the month. This allowance must be signed for by the resident. The housemother will check off the daily money earned or deducted each night around 7pm. Each resident can earn up to \$100.00 per month.

APPOINTMENTS

Residents are responsible to view kitchen calendar or their Google calendar everyday for upcoming appointments.

- Request Forms must be filled out if transportation is needed to any out of town appointments or visits.
- Please be on time and dress appropriately for appointments. Pack a diaper bag if the appointment includes the baby.

BATHROOM COURTESY

- Each resident has a 20 minute time limit in the bathroom.
- Everyone must be finished in the bathroom (showers, hair,) by 9:00 PM.
- ***Residents must shower daily. Babies must be bathed at least once a day.***
- All personal items must be carried back to bedroom when finished in the bathroom.
- Refill toilet paper roll as needed, wipe out hair in sink, and throw garbage in can.
- Do not leave any dirty towels in bathroom.

BEDTIME

Lights out by 10:00 PM on school nights. Lights out at 11:00 PM on the weekend. Evening bed checks are done at random times. Please make sure you have put your baby in the crib and that the baby is not in your bed during sleeping hours.

CAR SEATS and SEATBELTS

- Residents must use a car seat for their baby at all times. If your baby is getting close to age or weight requirements for the next size car seat it is the mother's responsibility to speak with staff about finding a used one somewhere or saving allowance to buy a new one.
- All teens must wear seatbelts at all times.
- No one under the age of 18 may drive with an older resident without permission from the director.

CELL PHONES

Each resident must complete the Internet Safety Class and cell phone etiquette class before being allowed access to a cell phone or receive allowance.

Cell phones are not permitted downstairs. NO cell phones are permitted at meals, in tutoring, at church or at Bible Study.

No cell phone or computer use while your baby is awake. _____

CHECK IN & CHECK OUT (INVENTORY LIST)

When you arrive at H.O.M.E, all of your belongings will be checked and recorded by the House Mother for your protection. Jewelry (Real Gold/Silver) must be photographed. Each resident is allowed one suitcase. When leaving the program, you will be checked out by the House Mother to ensure that you have all your belongings. Your parent or guardian must pick you up and sign the discharge papers if you are under 18 years old. You will be asked to fill out an exit interview form so we can further assist you if needed. Please leave a forwarding address so we can make sure your mail is delivered properly.

CHURCH/SPIRITUAL FULFILLMENT

- Residents will have the opportunity to attend the Church of their choice. Parents may pick up residents for Church if approved by FCM.
- Most Hands of Mercy Everywhere resident attend a non-denominational church with basic Bible studies. All girls, staff and babies go together as an outing. Residents are not permitted to be left behind while others attend church.
- If the resident would like to attend another church they will need to let the housemother know by giving a 2 week notice so that transportation may be arranged. We cannot guarantee that transportation is available every week.
- Cell phones and other electronics must be left at the HOME
- Residents must pack a diaper bag and be courteous to church daycare staff. Necessary paperwork must be filled out

COMPUTER/ELECTRONICS/MUSIC PRIVILEGES

- The computer may be used for homework assignments, research, and other important information. Inappropriate e-mails, photographs, or inappropriate site visits will result in loss of computer privileges for the rest of your stay at H.O.M.E.
- Each resident is required to take the internet safety class for all computers, tablets, etc.
- Each resident is to have a professional/your name: Gmail account registered with the office. A google calendar will be used for all appointments.
- Residents must listen to age appropriate music approved by housemother.
- Each resident must work with staff to get Jump Vault password and download photographs and other documents

COUNSELING/LIFE COACHING/PARENTING

- Every resident is required to participate in counseling, life coaching, and Healthy Start or similar parenting evidence based program.

DAYCARE/WIC

- All babies who stay at Hands of Mercy Everywhere are required to attend the same daycare.
- Teen mother's must fill out an application for Early Learning Coalition so they can receive financial assistance for your baby's daycare and can return to school ASAP.
- Your baby's birth certificate, physical and shot record must be up to picked up and up to date.
- Baby screening may be done at daycare for developmental progress
- We provide transportation before and after school to the daycare. Please be sure to feed your baby and have them properly dressed before 7:30am. All residents must be ready to transport on time! Be sure to pack your diaper bag properly and clean it out every day.
- H.O.M.E. staff must be listed on your emergency contact sheet at the daycare.
- All residents must be signed up for WIC

DISCIPLINE

Violation of house rules will result in some disciplinary action, which may include loss of privileges, loss of cell phone, extra chores, writing assignments, monetary reimbursement for expenses incurred as result of the conduct if you break or destroy something, or other action which is considered appropriate by the staff.

H.O.M.E. reserves the right to require a resident to leave the program immediately if, in the opinion of the program staff and executive director, the violation is severe enough to warrant that action.

- Residents are not permitted to spank or hit their babies for any reason

DISMISSAL

A resident may be subject to dismissal from the program for the following behavior. This list may include other things.

1. Using or possessing drugs or alcohol or smoking on property.
2. Breaking the rule of confidentiality.(Including Facebook posts)
3. Lying to case workers, counselors, House Mother or residents.
4. Leaving the property without permission for more than 3 hours.
5. Being uncooperative in behavior, attitude and/or schoolwork.
6. Excessive back talk, yelling, cussing, or violent threats.
7. Not attending/participating in life skill classes/parenting program/activities
8. Must practice internet safety at all times and not be contacting strangers through web-sites, apps, or other means that jeopardize your safety or the safety of your baby or the safety of others in the house.
9. Going into another resident's room without leaving the door open.
10. Not attending to the baby's basic needs
11. Becoming pregnant again.
12. Three write-ups.
13. Not caring properly for baby (i.e. regular baths, feeding, setting medical appointments, neglect).
14. Refusing to complete review with House Mother or Resident Coordinator/Counselor.
15. Failure to abide by the house rules.

16. Withholding requested information from staff.
17. Stealing or possession of another's property without permission
18. Refusing to attend school/ repeated suspensions/ expelled
19. Refusing to take medication as prescribed.
20. Allowing a male over age five in any bedroom unaccompanied by a staff member. Males may visit only in the common area according to visiting hours and background checks.
21. Verbal or physical abuse of staff, other residents, or child.
22. Baker Act or Arrested at the discretion of the resident director

DRIVERS LICENSE/PERMIT...KEYS TO INDEPENDENCE

- All residents 15 or old will be encouraged to register with Keys to Independence in order to work toward a permit and/or driver's license.

DRUG TESTING

- H.O.M.E reserves the right to conduct random drug tests at the discretion of the Management. Resident agrees to the fact that the result of that drug screen must be shared with the director within 24 hours of getting the results if administered off property. **A positive drug test may result in immediate dismissal.**

DRESS CODE

- Clothing must be clean and modest at all times. This means that shirts must cover entire bra, bra straps and abdomen. Short should not come more than 3 inches above fingertips.
- A bra must be worn at all times in common areas. No boxer shorts are allowed downstairs in the common area.
- Pants must be buttoned and zipped up at all times. It is important that you dress appropriate. If you are in need of maternity clothes, please let the House Mother know.
- No facial piercings unless approved by the director. No resident may pierce another resident under any circumstances.
- Bathing suits must be modest and cover up must be worn. Sunscreen is advised for all residents and babies.

EDUCATION

- Education is a priority at Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc. All residents must be in school.
- Our residents attend Belleview Middle/High School, Young Parenting Program (YPP), SRMI, MTI, or college or vocational school.
- Residents can be TABE tested to see if they have at least 10th grade reading and math levels before they can sign up for GED.
- After school activities are encouraged, provided that transportation/daycare have been arranged 2 weeks in advance.

EMPLOYMENT / CAREER TRAINING

- Must be approved by director
- Daycare must be available through ELC
- Career training is included in life skills

FIRE DRILLS and EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- All residents are required to participate in monthly fire drills and emergency procedure life skills and drills
- Emergency help numbers are available from the housemothers

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

- If a resident has a complaint she is to tell a housemother. If the complaint is not addressed with-in 24 hours she make contact the office 352-347-4663. If the complaint is still not addressed she may contact the CEO.
- Any suspicions of abuse, abandonment, or neglect should be reported immediately to the abuse hotline. 1-800-96-ABUSE

If you have an issue with another resident:

- Physical or verbal abuse of any nature is forbidden. Violations may result in immediate dismissal. This includes improper and/or threatening language. Remember there are babies in the house-set good examples.

- When difficulties arise between two people, residents are expected to resolve the difficulties by talking to each other. If the two people are unable to resolve the problem, they should involve the House Mother.

HOUSEKEEPING

All residents are responsible for completing household duties as posted. The house must be kept clean at all times! Each resident must pick up after herself and her baby on a continual basis – no exceptions! Laundry must be done weekly on your assigned day.

- Each resident will clean up after herself, in addition to her posted household chores.
- Bedrooms and bathrooms are to be kept neat and clean at all times. No personal items are to be left on the counters. There will be a daily room check by each morning. For each failed inspection, T.V., allowance, and/or park privileges will be lost for that day.
- No food is ever permitted upstairs. The kitchen is closed between 6:30-7:30p for clean-up. All trash is to be taken out and dishes put away every night. The floor is to be swept, all food put away and not dishes left in sink. All baby's bottles are to be put away after cleaning.
- Absolutely no dirty diapers are to be left in your room. Each bathroom is equipped with a diaper genie. These must be emptied every day.
- Each resident will be assigned a "laundry day" for her clothes and baby items. This includes a mandatory weekly washing of all bed sheets. Do not leave clothes in laundry room!
- Residents are not allowed in another resident's room without permission and bedroom door must remain open at all times.
- On school nights all girls must be in their own room by 8pm unless approved by house mother for movie night or special occasion. Please remember to keep quiet since babies will be sleeping.

HYGIENE/HAIR/NAILS

- All residents and babies are required to shower daily
- Basic Hygiene products are provided by HOME. Anything extra can be purchased with allowance
- Monthly allowances can be used to buy more personal things
- No resident may cut or color another residents hair without permission

INDEPENDENT LIVING

- All residents are required to take the Daniel Memorial Test to assess their IL skill level and know what classes they need to help them age out of foster care.
- H.O.M.E. will work with IL workers to do the Transition Plan
- Teens wanting to remain a resident after their 18th birthday must have 30 day prior written approval from their CBC.

LIFE SKILLS/SUMMER TRAINING

- It is mandatory for each resident to complete life skills while they are here. The Daniel Memorial Test will be used as a measuring tool.
- Summer program is mandatory for life skills and career training

MAIL AND PACKAGES

- Any mail from a state corrections facility may be opened and approved by staff before giving it to the resident if appropriate.
- No resident may touch the mailbox without permission
- Inappropriate correspondence will be denied.
- Suspicious mail may be opened to make sure appropriate (Jail Mail)
- Leave a forwarding address when you leave

MEALS

- Each resident is responsible for learning to prepare some meals
- Dinner is served at 6:00 PM Weekdays– Everyone must eat what is prepared or have peanut butter and jelly/or other sandwich. Nutrition is very important to our maternity home and balanced meals are provided.
- No food may be ordered for delivery by residents. If we are having something delivered it must be for everyone!

MEDICATION

- All medication must be given to the house mother and put into the Med Log notebook in the housemother's room. No medication for you

or your child, prescribed by a doctor, can be kept in your room.
Taking medication as prescribed is mandatory.

- All medications must be logged onto the med management sheet.
- If a child refused Psychotropic Meds it must be documented and signed by the staff and the teen if possible. The CEO or COO must be contacted within 24 hours.

MONEY

- Personal money is the residents responsibility. You may deposit your money in your bank account. Please see the Resident Coordinator about opening your bank account. If you are receiving money from someone outside the house we must know who is sending it, when, and how much. No resident may have more than \$50. in her room. You may ask a housemother to lock it up in the office for you at any time. HOME is not responsible for lost or stolen money unless it is locked in the office.

MOTHER'S RIGHTS

Every mother of a baby has the right, authority, responsibility and/or permission of Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc. to:

- Allow or not allow anyone to hold, pick up, feed, or to touch her baby for any reason without permission.
- Report to the Department of Children and Families any act of abuse or violence.
- Contact case worker if she is interested in placing her child up for adoption. The caseworker will then consult a licensed child placement agency. We do not provide adoptions. It is the mother's choice to place or parent. We are there to support, help, and love her along the way. Residents are encouraged to talk to an adult about these topics during their stay.

ORIENTATION

1. Reviewed Rules of the HOME and tour of property and houses
2. Reviewed Expectations for the Child & the Caregiver

3. Reviewed Services Offered
4. Reviewed Behavior Management Practices
5. Reviewed Diversity of Group Home Population
6. Received at tour of the property, laundry room,

PERSONAL PROBLEMS WITH OTHER RESIDENTS

- Report to management right away.

SICKNESS/ILLNESS

- Residents who miss or come home from school ill will be placed on total bed rest for the day and night.

SMOKING

- H.O.M.E. is a “NON-SMOKING” facility. Smoking is NOT permitted anywhere in or on the H.O.M.E. premises. This is for your health and the health of your baby. It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to possess or use tobacco products. HOME IS A SMOKE FREE WORK-PLACE!!

TELEPHONE USE

- You may call your case manager at any time. Ask staff to dial on their cell phones if office is closed.
- Do not give the H.O.M.E. phone number out to friends.
- Every teen is given a chance to earn money to purchase a cell phone

TELEVISION VIEWING AND MUSIC

Each room has cable TV. Only G, PG, PG-13 rated shows please! Television content shall not include soap operas, violence, inappropriate language, or sexual content. Any show that has BLEEPs is a NO NO. Living room TV is for everyone to gather at 7pm after all chores are completed for the evening.

- No music may be played that contains inappropriate language or sexual content.
- The volume must be kept low enough so not to disturb someone in the room next to you.
- Babies are to be taken upstairs by 7:30-8pm to get ready for bed
- The House Mother must approve all rented videos, DVD's and music CD's.

VISITS/PARK RULES

Scheduled Sunday visits (on non-holiday weekends) at Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc. are held from 10-Noon or 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM with family members. Weekend visits are subject to change at the discretion of the Director.

- Friends may visit with prior approval as per normalcy/prudent parenting
- No visitors are permitted on property without permission
- No visitors are permitted on property until they are signed in
- Visitation Log must be filled out in **admission packet** to determine who is allowed to visit Supervised or unsupervised by case management
- One week notice must be given for friends to visit. Friends must be approved by the Director and/or case manager.
- The birth father/family may visit when appropriate.

Weekend fun privileges are earned and may be denied.

- No one may leave Hands of Mercy Everywhere, Inc. without permission
- Everyone must sign in and out of H.O.M.E. There are Free Time Hours, see the housemother. The Lake Lillian Park hours are sunrise to sun-set. The park is closed at sunset and Belleview Police Dept strictly enforce the park with routine visits.
- We encourage family visit during the holidays when possible.

Overnight weekend visits to your family. The following rules apply:

- All chores must be completed before leaving.
- Resident must be picked up and dropped off by an approved person.
- Resident must be signed in and out and identification must be provided.

- If you will be delayed coming back from your weekend visit, it is imperative that you call the House Mother by 5:00 PM on Sunday and inform her that you will be late. If we do not hear from you, we are required to report you as a runaway to the Police Department.