



## RESIDENT HANDBOOK

### **Guidelines and Boundaries**

Merci's Refuge staff has designed this set of guidelines and boundaries for your comfort, care, growth, and protection; as well as for the smooth operation of the home. The goal of this handbook is to clearly communicate those to you. Repeated non-compliance or participation in behaviors that put you or others at risk will be grounds for discharge from Merci's Refuge.

#### **Programs/Classes**

Everyone is expected to participate in ALL programs unless given special permission to be excused by the staff member on duty or in Phase 4.

Mandatory Programming includes but is not limited to:

- Chapel Nights (W, Th, F evenings 7-8pm)
- Ditch the Baggage (Process Group)
- Freedom Group (Process Group)
- H.O.P.E. Program (Prenatal and Parenting Group for expecting or new mothers)
- Faith and Finances Class
- Planned Group Outings and Activities
- Weekly Individual Planning Meeting
- Weekly House Meeting
- Weekly Meal Planning Meeting
- Sunday Church Service
- Approx. 20 hrs each week spent working on goals / internship plan
- Weekly Chore Assignments

Failure to actively participate and engage fully (by being on time, having assignments completed and well thought out, and being consistent) into the program will result in consequences measured by the [green-yellow-red strike system].

#### **Medical/Dental Appointments**

Please notify staff of all appointments as soon as possible. This will give us time to help you find transportation or if you have a plan to get there inform us in your weekly schedule log.

## **Bathroom/Shower Area**

Residents will share a bathroom and shower with other residents. Residents will need to discuss a schedule for showering and cleaning and then inform staff of their plan. Staff are available to help create showering and cleaning schedules, if needed. Showers should not exceed 15 minutes and take place once daily before lights out. Bathroom cleanliness will be checked daily after 9pm alongside bedrooms, failure to maintain cleanliness and shower schedules with roommates will be subject to green-yellow-red strike consequences. Each resident will be given a basket of necessities upon entering the program. Please only use the ones you are given. If you are getting ready to run out of something, just let a staff member know.

## **Bedrooms**

The daily chore list hanging above the sink area in the bedroom is to be completed daily. The weekly chore list is to be completed daily or as needed by 9pm. Chores are to be completed without regular reminding from staff or volunteers. If you have any questions or concerns about any of the chores please let us know. The Program Coordinator or other staff members will do daily walk-throughs, failure to maintain room cleanliness will result in a green consequence (added chore).

No food or beverages are to be taken into bedrooms (with the exception of water) unless special permission is given by a staff member on duty.

## **Room Time/Lights Out**

You are expected to begin transitioning to your room at 10:00pm. By 10:30pm everyone should be in their rooms for the evening and heading to sleep (no late night showers, cleaning of room, completing tasks). When sharing a room, lights need to be turned off by 10:30pm unless roommates agree to using reading lights. Conversations must not be loud enough to be heard outside of the room. No one should be on their phones past 10:30pm. Staff and volunteers will perform a quick check before lights out to make sure everyone is in their room. Residents need to be up and ready for the day by 9am unless additional sleep is needed (illness, taking care of an infant, etc).

## **Intake**

When you arrive, all clothing and belongings that could house bedbugs will be treated in a high temperature device immediately upon your arrival. This is a precaution we take with every resident and should not be taken personally. Before your things are treated, you will have an opportunity to choose an outfit from our *"Blessings Closet"*, as a gift from Merci's Refuge to wear while your clothes are being treated.

Residents are responsible for the safety and security of their own belongings in their possession. If there is anything that you would like staff to lock away, please let a staff

member know and we will get it recorded and put away. This will be known as your “inventory” of belongings. We want to make sure you leave with everything that belongs to you.

### **Check-Out**

Upon your scheduled departure, you will be checked out by the staff member on duty to insure you have all of your belongings. Prior to your departure we ask that you complete an exit interview and a room checklist. If you choose to abruptly leave Merci’s Refuge without notifying staff per your agreement this may not be possible, though you may return to pick-up your belongings. Any items that have been left behind will be put into the trash 30 days after leaving the program. Staff will attempt to remind you prior so you can make arrangements for picking up your belonging.

### **Blessings Closet**

If you have any clothing or hygienic needs, please let staff know to ensure that you get what you need.

### **Borrowing**

We strongly encourage residents not to lend their belongings to other residents. This is to reduce the potential conflicts over belongings. If you are in need of something please let staff know. If you would like to be a blessing to another resident, please involve staff as a third party witness.

### **Classroom**

Please make sure that you are respectful at all times to staff, volunteers, and residents. Always come prepared, alert and on time for class. Failure to actively participate and engage fully (by being on time, having assignments completed and well thought out, and being consistent) into the program will result in consequences measured by the [green-yellow-red strike system]. Extracurricular activities are required if you are in Phase 1, 2 & 3, in phase 4 such activities are optional (programming such as cooking classes or craft nights).

### **Counseling / Check-In**

Once set up, residents will be required to participate in individual pastoral counseling during their stay at Merci’s Refuge. Residents are also required to meet with the Program Coordinator, once a week, to check-in and discuss weekly goals, progress in the program, individual needs, etc.

### **Discipline**

Staff and residents will hold each other accountable for following the house rules by reminding them of the rules and providing positive reinforcement for keeping the rules.

When residents break rules they will receive a “strike” depending on the severity, circumstances or frequency. Residents will be dismissed from the program when they receive three strikes, or immediately if the violation is severe enough. For further understanding of the strike system see the “Green-Yellow-Red Consequence System.”

### **Dismissal**

A resident may be subject to receiving a “red strike” or dismissal from the program for the following behavior:

1. Using any drugs, alcohol, and/or having them in her possession/system
2. Being continuously uncooperative
3. Repeatedly deceptive, for stealing and dishonesty
4. Not showing a sincere desire for help
5. Belligerent and disrespectful attitude with staff/volunteers
6. Any forms of sexual harassment towards other residents or staff
7. Physically harming residents, staff, volunteers, or property
8. Repeatedly missing classes, or breaking curfew.
9. Leaving in the middle of the night
10. Bringing guests in without approval
11. Breaking the law or MR rules while away from the facility

### **Dress Code**

Clothing must be clean and modest at all times.

Short shirts (revealing the stomach area) are not to be worn at any time.

Chest area must be completely covered at all times.

Shorts must be at least fingertip length.

Sleepwear/pajamas must be modest and worn only before 9:00am and after 6:30pm

\*Staff or volunteers can ask you to change if they see that your clothing is inappropriate and violating proper dress code may be subject to a “green-yellow-red consequence”

### **House Duties/Chores**

Daily and weekly house chores must be completed within the allotted time frame by 9pm everyday. This will include preparing dinner at least once a week (must be ready to eat by 6pm day of assigned cook night). Chores will be posted on the wall above the water fountain. Failure to complete your chore or cook night properly and on time is subject to a green consequence.

### **Fire Alarm Procedures**

Proceed to the nearest exit from your location. After exiting the building, staff will call 911 immediately. Use the stairs only, NO elevators. Meet in the front of the building on the sidewalk. Staff will assist persons with disabilities as well as make sure everyone is accounted for. Everyone will re-enter Merci’s Refuge only when authorized by emergency

personnel.

Note: If no staff present, call 911 or go to the Pregnancy Resource Center and call 911.

### **Tornado/Disaster Procedures**

Shelter on the lowest level of the building, stay away from windows, and move to interior hallways. If outdoors, shelter in a ditch, and wait for the all-clear message.

### **Leaving/Returning**

Every week by Sunday at 9:00 pm, each resident will submit their proposed schedule and reflection sheet for the week for any personal appointments, meetings, or outings outside of the Merci's Refuge programming. Appointments will generally only be approved if they fall within the program schedule, though exceptions may be made. Residents will be allowed one unplanned addition to their schedule each week after it has been approved, assuming their chores and assignments have been completed.

Residents need to be at Merci's Refuge by 4pm every day unless otherwise approved. Curfew may be extended to 6:30pm if the resident is working, volunteering, taking classes, or participating in an outside program that is in agreement with their goals at Merci's Refuge. If they are going to be late they need to call by 3:45pm to inform staff. All doors to Merci's Refuge should be locked at all times. This is for your safety and protection. You must make sure someone is available to lock the door behind you before leaving.

### **Security/Surveillance**

For the safety of the residents and staff at Merci's Refuge, security cameras are located at each entrance and one in the main living area of the residence. The video recordings are reviewed daily by a staff member or volunteer. They can also be monitored remotely when needed. In addition, each door has an alarm sensor connected to it that chimes every time a door is opened. The alarm is set at 10:30pm and will go off if a door is opened.

### **Hygiene**

You are responsible for maintaining good hygiene that does not become a distraction to others. Poor hygiene that becomes a distraction to others will be addressed individually. The following activities are highly encouraged: Showering daily, brushing teeth after meals, and changing under and outer garments daily. Socks, shoes, or slippers should be worn at all times. Wash hands and flush commode after leaving the bathroom. Wash bed linens once a week (*see laundry schedule*). Wash clothes once a week (*see laundry schedule*). Do not share clothes, towels, food, cups or utensils, this can be a health hazard, and is not permitted.

### **Honesty**

Copyright 2018 Merci's Refuge. All Rights Reserved.

It is of utmost importance that you are 100% honest and truthful in your dealings with staff, volunteers, and fellow residents. We cannot successfully help you along your journey unless we know the truth.

### **Laundry**

Each resident will be assigned one laundry time (morning or evening). Every resident is responsible for cleaning the lint screen after every time they use the dryer. If a resident wants to change laundry times with another resident, they can ask that resident and work out a revised schedule for that week with staff's approval. If a resident fails to do laundry during their scheduled time, it will result in a "skip" and they will be required to wait until their next scheduled laundry day. Laundry room closes at 9:30pm.

Note: The laundry schedule is posted in the laundry room.

### **Library**

Before removing a book from the library, it must be recorded on the book log sheet first. Upon returning the book, it must be returned and signed back in, on the log sheet.

Note: Books are not to be taken outside of MR unless approved for specific reason.

### **Mail**

MR Staff may require residents to open packages in the presence of a staff member. No resident should use Merci's Refuges' address for mailing lists (i.e. magazine subscriptions). If a resident is expecting a mail/package they should notify staff.

### **Meals/Kitchen/Dining Room**

No food or drink will be allowed outside the kitchen or dining room area without staff approval. All staff, residents, and volunteers are expected to rinse their own dishes and load them into the dishwasher (or wash in the sink). All cooking and associated cleaning should be completed by 9:00pm. Any food retrieved from the kitchen after this time must be approved by staff. No food or drink with the exception of water will be allowed in bedrooms. Residents assigned to dinner meal prep are responsible for taking anything needed for dinner out of the freezer the morning in which it is needed. Any food left on a resident's plate following a meal should be scraped into the trash can. Any leftovers that a resident wishes to save and eat at another time, should be put into the fridge with the resident's name and date written visibly on the container.

### **Medication**

Residents are responsible for taking their own medications and for paying for all medical expenses including prescriptions that they may require. MR has some basic over the

counter medication on hand (tylenol, benadryl, etc) that residents may request if they have a medical need. If a resident has a question about whether or not they can safely take something, they must ask their Dr. or the Carle Advisory Nurse. MR staff or volunteers cannot give medical advice.

Note: If you want staff to keep your personal medications locked away please let us know.

### **Music/Movies/Books**

All music should be played through headphones. Only Christian/Gospel music is allowed to be played out loud and even then we ask that you be respectful of others in the home. This does not mean that we believe that all secular music is wrong, we are simply attempting to create a spiritual atmosphere that is conducive with the resident's purpose for coming to Merci's Refuge. In addition, it is common for residents, staff and volunteers to have experienced violence and trauma in the past. In order to prevent unnecessary triggering, Residents may only watch movies or TV programs that are G or PG rated. Movies that are rated PG-13 or R, or TV shows rated TV14 or higher, or are noted for V-Violence, S-Sexual Situations, or L-Course Language, may not be viewed without prior specific permission from a staff member. Television is only allowed on Tuesday from 7-10 pm and Weekends on Friday night (8-10p), Saturday (3-10 pm), Sunday (3 -10 pm). Residents are not allowed to watch Television (specifically shows or movies) on their own personal devices (tablets, phones, etc) during TV off hours.

### **Offices**

Residents will not be allowed in staff offices at any time without a staff member. Doing so is a serious violation.

### **Relationships**

As a resident in the program, you are not to associate exclusively, or be in cliques, with other residents. We encourage you to get to know everyone in the program. We want everyone to feel as though they belong and not excluded.

You are not allowed to pursue romances or date other residents/staff/volunteers during your stay here at Merci's Refuge.

### **Respect**

Respect the rights and belongings of others. Please take care of the property and facilities of Merci's Refuge. The home belongs to God, and we are thankful for what He has given us.

Note: Vandalism will be grounds for termination from the program.

***Respect the staff and volunteers always.*** Being rude or disrespectful to staff or volunteers

may be considered as grounds for dismissal from the program.

### Compliance with instructions communication

Residents will be encouraged to follow the Matthew 18 principle regarding conflict resolution and interpersonal relationships in the same way staff and volunteers are asked to.

*“And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every act may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to him, tell it to the church...” Matthew 18:15-17*

### **Sick Days**

If you feel sick, please notify a staff member on duty. If deemed necessary, a doctor's appointment will be made. You must get permission from the staff on duty in order to miss any required programming. In case of an extreme need, you will be taken to the emergency room. You are required to make up any classes you miss because of sickness.

### **Phones/Electronics**

Residents will not have access to their phones during phase 1 & 2, in phase 1 residents will be given a 30-minute time slot to make phones calls, during phase 2 residents will be give a 1-hour time slot to make phones calls, in Phase 3 & 4 residents will be given their phones back for the main purpose of working on their goals or scheduling needed appointments. if a resident does not have a phone during phase 3 & 4 they are allowed increased landline time. Phones are not to be used during classes and meetings unless there is an approved reason for them to have them with them. Residents are expected to hold themselves and each other accountable for what they watch and/or listen to on their phones/tablets/computers. No sexually explicit, violent, profane, or offensive material should be viewed/listened to.

### **Vacations**

Residents may be allowed to visit family around the holidays for an extended period of time with prior approval from staff.

### **Visitors/Visits**

Residents will be allowed to have on campus visits with their children after their first week. After the first 30 days, on campus visits with other family or friends may take place up to once a week. Visits must be scheduled and approved at least one week in advance (*see Visit Request Form*). Visits with family and friends are a privilege that may be denied as a consequence for breaking house rules.

Copyright 2018 Merci's Refuge. All Rights Reserved.



If visitors come to pick up a resident for an off-campus visit they must come to the front door. Visitors not approved for on campus visits must stay in the reception area.

After a Visit Request Form has been submitted and approved, a staff member will contact the visitors prior to the visit to confirm the details of the visit and explain the rules and procedures. When visitors arrive, they must sign a form stating they are aware of our rules and confidentiality policy and agree to adhere to them. Visitors will be asked to leave if they break the house rules or are disrespectful to staff or residents, and may be refused from subsequent visits. Staff may choose not to approve on or off campus visits if they become harmful to the residents progress and goals.

### **Infants (0-12 months)**

Residents who have infants are expected to find daycare for them while they are at work, volunteering, and/or in school. Staff and other residents will not be responsible for watching any children for more than a 5 minutes at a time.

### **Drug Testing and Breathalyzer**

We reserve the right to require residents to submit to an initial intake drug test and/or random testing thereafter to ensure that Merci's Refuge, as well as the residents, remain drug free. We may also use a breathalyzer as needed.

### **Quitting Smoking**

Smoking is a habit or coping mechanism for many people. For financial and health reasons, we require residents to stop smoking or begin the process of quitting *only during phase 4*, while introducing healthier coping mechanisms. In order to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, the smell of smoke in the building from clothes, or undermine the efforts of those who are trying to quit, no smoking is allowed on the Merci's Refuge or Pregnancy Resource Center property. For residents in phases 1-3, residents must cross the street or walk down to the end of the block to smoke on their free-time alone with no other residents or visitors.