



**HIGHER GROUND**

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ADVENTURE. SUPPORT. BELONGING.

Volunteer Manual

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## **PART I. Higher Ground Organization Overview**

### **MISSION**

Higher Ground enhances quality of life through inclusive therapeutic recreation and education for people of all abilities.

### **OUR VALUES**

Service • Passion • Teamwork • Innovation • Integrity

### **OUR HISTORY**

Since our establishment as a 501(c)3 in 1999, our programming has increased each year while remaining steadfast in our goal to enrich the lives of people with disabilities through adaptive sports and therapeutic recreation. Whether serving our local children or providing unique camps for our nation's injured service members, HG participants are able to experience the thrills of adaptive sports and outdoor recreation.

### **WHO WE SERVE**

HG offers "need-based" programs and services for children, teens, adults, and veterans who embody a wide-range of disabilities, including physical and cognitive impairments. Programs are offered year-round with an effort to minimize costs for participants.

### **WHY HG NEEDS VOLUNTEERS**

HG have more than 200 active volunteers who donated over thousands of hours every year to serve individual participants, adaptive programs and veteran programs. HG cannot succeed in our mission without enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers involved in every aspect of HG operations.

## **PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES THAT DEPEND ON VOLUNTEERS**

Higher Ground cannot exist without our volunteers. Specific programs that need significant volunteer support include our Veteran Programs, HG Teams, special school groups including the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind, and our winter and summer daily Adaptive Programs. Within these programs we need volunteers to help participants in a wide range of activities including aquatics, indoor climbing, cycling, equestrian sports, paddle-sports, water sports, sled hockey, Nordic skiing, and adaptive Snowsports. Throughout the year, we also rely on volunteers to assist with special events and administrative support.

## **Part II. Higher Ground Organizational Policies and Procedures**

### **CODE OF ETHICS**

HG has an outstanding group of volunteers serving in every capacity of HG operations. On the rare and isolated occasions when volunteers do not adhere to the standards required of HG volunteers, the Executive Director and/or Volunteer Coordinator reserves the right to dismiss the volunteer without recourse. HG volunteers must adhere to the following:

1. As a representative of Higher Ground, it is expected that you act in a professional manner.
2. Be on time for all volunteer activities and training. Notify the appropriate supervisor or scheduler as soon as possible if you will be absent or late for your scheduled activity.
3. Adhere to all written policies, procedures, and guidelines.
4. Attend orientations and trainings in order to provide the best possible service to our participants.
5. Treat each individual with whom you come into contact with courtesy and respect.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

HG is committed to keeping the confidentiality of our participants, volunteers and staff. As such, employees of HG (volunteers and staff), will not disclose confidential information to anyone who is not employed by HG or to other persons employed by HG who do not need to know such information to assist in rendering services. The disclosure, distribution, electronic transmission or copying of HG's confidential information is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

**HG staff and volunteers are not authorized to administer medications to participants.**

In case of an accident:

1. Do not move the participant if an injury is suspected.
2. Do not render first aid unless the participant is in a life-threatening situation.
3. Contact Emergency Medical Services (EMS) or SV Ski Patrol; (208) 622-6262.
4. Do not leave the injured person alone at any time. Use cell phone or send another instructor/volunteer to contact EMS or Ski Patrol.
5. If another person is involved in the accident, gather their personal information. All parties involved must remain at the scene until cleared by EMS.
6. Inform EMS or ski patrol in detail of what has occurred and of any special considerations your participant might have (medications, seizures, allergies, previous injuries, etc.)
7. Once arrived at medical center, remain with the patient until you are relieved by the patient's parents, legal guardian, next of kin, or HG staff.
8. Following any accident or incident, regardless of severity, a [Move United Incident Report](#) must be completed within 48 hours.
9. Additionally, call and inform the program lead, Volunteer Coordinator, or HG front desk staff if none are present at the time of the incident.

## **SEIZURES**

In the event of a seizure, DO the following:

1. Ask someone to call emergency services (911 or SV Ski Patrol: (208) 622-6262) if you are unable to do so.
2. Protect the person from injury (remove nearby harmful objects).

3. Cushion their head.
4. Aid breathing by gently placing them in the recovery position once the seizure has finished.
5. Stay calm and reassure the person.

In the event of a seizure, DON'T do the following:

1. Restrain the person
2. Put anything in the person's mouth
3. Try to move the person, unless they are in harm's way
4. Attempt to "bring them around"

## **BACKGROUND CHECKS & FORMS**

1. All HG volunteers and staff must submit a background check prior to interacting with HG participants. Notice of criminal background check findings from a third party vendor will be provided to the designated staff contact at HG that administers applications.

HG's criminal background check report will return a "Passed" or "Flagged" score. A Passed score means that the background check vendor located no records that would disqualify the applicant. A Passed score, however, is not a certification of safety or permission to bypass/ignore other screening efforts. Other disqualifying factors may exist, and can be revealed through an interview, reference checks and a completed application. A Flagged finding means the criminal background check revealed criminal records that indicate the applicant may not meet the criteria suitable for organization employment, volunteer assignment, or other participation with HG. Please reference the [Sport Protection Handbook](#) for further information on background checks.

2. All HG volunteers, staff, and participants must have a signed Move United waiver, Confidentiality Form, and Drug & Alcohol form submitted annually to HG staff before commencing in any HG program activity.



## **DRUG, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO**

Use of any tobacco product is prohibited in front of HG participants. Use of tobacco products are only allowed in designated outdoor locations and not allowed in HG offices, buildings or vehicles.

Consumption, possession, or distribution of any alcoholic beverage or controlled substance are not permitted during HG programs or while working for HG; nor can beverages containing alcohol be given to any program participant. No volunteer may report to or remain at a HG program while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If a volunteer sees HG staff, employee or volunteer using alcohol or drugs it must be immediately reported to the Volunteer Coordinator or Executive Director. There will be times when volunteers will be invited to dinner parties or evening entertainment events where alcohol is being served. In these cases, volunteers are expected to drink responsibly and in moderation. Do not consume alcohol or use tobacco products while wearing HG uniform.

## **MEDICATIONS**

HG staff and volunteers are not authorized to administer medications to participants.

## **SPORT PROTECTION HANDBOOK**

Higher Ground USA (HG) has adopted the following Sport Protection policies as they relate specifically to HG-controlled activities and events, and facilities under HG's jurisdiction as laid out in the Sport Protection Handbook.

HG is committed to creating a safe and positive environment for athletes' physical, emotional and social development and to ensuring that it promotes an environment free of misconduct. All forms of misconduct are intolerable and in direct conflict with the ideals of HG. The handbook sets forth expectations for policy, monitoring, and reporting guidelines related to emotional,

physical, and sexual misconduct in sport, including bullying, hazing, and harassment in addition to electronic communication and social media.

HG volunteers who HG authorizes to have regular one-to-one contact with athletes and/or minors must complete awareness training concerning misconduct in sport before performing services for HG via The Center on SafeSport.

The Higher Ground Sun Valley Inc, Sport Protection Handbook can be found on Higher Ground's website or through this link:

<https://highergroundusa.org/wp-content/uploads/HigherGroundMoveUnitedSportProtectionHandbook-1.pdf>

## **UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT**

HG is committed to providing a work environment for everyone that is free from sexual harassment and other types of discriminatory harassment. Volunteers will conduct themselves in a professional manner and show respect for their coworkers and the individuals we serve. Prohibited unlawful harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:

1. Verbal conduct, such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs, or unwanted sexual advances, invitations, or comments.
2. Visual conduct such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures.
3. Physical conduct, such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movement, or interfering with work because of sex, race or any other protected basis.
4. Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of volunteer status, or to avoid some other loss, and offers of benefits in return for sexual favors.

Retaliation for having reported or threatening to report harassment is not condoned. If you believe you have been unlawfully harassed or have witnessed unlawful harassment, contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Executive Director, or a member of the HG Board of Directors. Reference the [Sport Protection Handbook](#) on HG's policy, monitoring, and reporting guidelines on unlawful harassment.

### **PARTICIPANT ABUSE**

Participant abuse of any type is not tolerated. Please reference the [Sport Protection Handbook](#) for HG's policy, monitoring, and reporting guidelines on participant abuse.

### **DRESS, HYGIENE, AND IDENTIFICATION STANDARDS**

1. HG supports a casual workplace, but volunteers must wear appropriate attire while interacting with participants or while in volunteer trainings. Volunteers will not wear clothing which may be offensive to others while participating in any HG activity.
2. Volunteers are expected to maintain a high level of personal hygiene and must not smell of alcohol, smoke or body odor while participating in any HG activity.
3. Winter Snowsports Attire
  - a. Snow Sports volunteers and instructors are required to wear black pants with their BLUE HG instructor jacket. All zippers must be zipped for a professional appearance. All volunteers will wear an HG name tag while working with participants. PLEASE RETURN JACKETS AFTER EACH LESSON unless you purchased a personal jacket.
  - b. All HG participants, volunteers, and instructors must wear an industry approved Snowsports helmet and have it buckled while on lessons and in HG trainings/clinics. This includes instances when you

are teaching on snow in your boots without your skis or board on.

- c. All HG snowboard instructors, volunteers, and participants are required to wear wrist guards until able to independently ride on blue terrain.

#### 4. Swimming Attire

- a. Females wear one-piece suits. Please no bikinis

### **PROPERTY OWNERSHIP**

Volunteers may not take or use HG program equipment (skis, bikes, etc.) from storage or office without permission from the appropriate HG staff.

### **GRATUITIES**

On occasion a volunteer may be presented with a gift or gratuity for their service. It is the decision of each volunteer whether or not to accept or decline such gesture. Gratuities can be donated to HG. At no time should a volunteer solicit for gratuities. Volunteers are allowed to solicit for contributions to Higher Ground. All potential donations or contributions should be directed to HG staff.

### **VOLUNTEER COMPENSATION IN CASE OF INJURY OR LOST/DAMAGED EQUIPMENT DURING AN HG ACTIVITY**

HG volunteers are not covered by Workers Compensation Insurance. HG will not accept any responsibility or accrue any cost for injuries and/or medical conditions that arise while volunteering or training to become a volunteer for HG.

HG is not responsible for any personal equipment/gear lost and/or damaged while volunteering or training to become a volunteer for HG.

## **VEHICLES**

Volunteers will not transport participants in any motorized vehicle without written permission from the Program Lead, Volunteer Coordinator, or Executive Director. Email will suffice for written permission.

Volunteers are encouraged to utilize Higher Ground vehicles if there is a need to transport participants. HG's auto insurance will cover all parties if in HG vehicle. If the volunteer chooses to use their personal vehicle, the responsibility of liability will be put on the volunteer and their personal vehicle insurance.

## **BATHROOM ASSISTANCE AND PERSONAL CARE**

HG participants are encouraged to take care of their bathroom needs without the assistance of our staff or volunteers, instead taking care of their needs individually or with the aid of their parents, guardian, or care givers. Situations do arise periodically that may necessitate the assistance of HG staff or volunteers who have had a background check for a participant to perform certain bathroom or personal care functions. If such a situation arises, the following protocols should be followed:

1. If a participant requires bathroom assistance, at least two individuals who have completed the HG background check and are of the same sex as the participant may assist the participant.
2. If two HG approved individuals are not available, an appropriate Sun Valley Company employee of the same sex as the participant may be asked to be present.
3. Both persons involved with assisting a participant are required to stay present in the facility as long as the guest is being assisted.
4. One on one assistance is highly discouraged and should only be a last resort.

Please reference the [Sport Protection Handbook](#) for further policy on bathroom assistance and personal care.

### **PART III: Higher Ground Participants & Etiquette/Considerations**

#### **VETERAN PROGRAM**

Higher Ground serves active duty and veterans along with first responders with “invisible injuries”-specifically Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injuries, and Military Sexual Trauma. Veterans from all over the country take part in week-long programs in Sun Valley and more HG locations. Additionally, fly fishing and snow sport programs are available for veterans local to Idaho. For resources to learn more about working with Veterans, go to [www.psycharmour.com](http://www.psycharmour.com)

#### **ADAPTIVE PROGRAM**

Higher Ground serves people of all ages with cognitive, developmental, and physical disabilities.

#### **PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE**

Person-first language aims to avoid perceived and subconscious dehumanization when discussing people with disabilities thereby forming an aspect of disability etiquette.

The basic idea is to impose a sentence structure that names the person first and the condition second. For example, “people with disabilities” rather than “disabled people” in order to emphasize that “they are people first”. Because English syntax normally places adjectives before nouns it becomes necessary to insert relative clauses, replacing, e.g., “asthmatic person” with “a person who has asthma”.

The speaker is thus expected to internalize the idea of a disability as a secondary attribute, not a characteristic of a person's identity. Critics of this rationale point out that separating the "person" from the "trait" implies that the trait is inherently bad or "less than", and thus dehumanizes people with disabilities.

[Resouce on Person-First Language](#)

Treat the person how you want to be treated, when conversing with the person, converse with the person, not the disability.

**Acceptable**

Person with a disability  
Person with CP, MS, Spina Bifida  
Person who is deaf  
Person with mental, cognitive, or emotional disability  
Person with learning disability  
Person with Cerebral Palsy  
Person who is blind  
Person who uses a wheelchair

**Outdated**

Handicapped/cripple  
Victim of CP, MS, Spina Bifida  
The Deaf/Stone deaf  
Mentally ill, crazy, mentally disturbed  
Retard/stupid/slow  
Spastic  
The blind  
Confined to a wheelchair, Wheelchair bound/user

**GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

1. When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to the person rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter.
2. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually

shake hands. Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.

3. When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
5. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others.
6. Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.
7. To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly and expressively to determine if the person can read lips. For those who do lip read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source.
8. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later" or "did you hear about that?" that seem to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.
9. Don't pet guide dogs or other service animals...they are working.

(Source: National Center for Access Unlimited, 155 North Wacker Dr. Suite 315, Chicago, IL 60606)



## **WHEELCHAIR ETIQUETTE**

1. The Chair is a part of the person.
2. Focus on the person, not on his or her disability.
3. Always ask the person who uses a wheelchair if he or she would like assistance before you jump in to help. Your help may not be needed or wanted.
4. Do not hang or lean on a person's wheelchair as this is part of his or her own body space.
5. Speak directly to the person who uses the wheelchair.
6. If your conversation lasts more than a few minutes, consider sitting down, etc. to get yourself on the same eye-level as the person who uses the wheelchair.
7. Don't demean or patronize the person who uses a wheelchair by patting him or her on the head.
8. When giving directions, think about things like travel distance, location of curb cuts, ramps, weather conditions, and weather conditions and physical obstacles that may hinder their travel.
9. Don't discourage children from asking questions of a person who uses a wheelchair; open communication helps overcome fearful or misleading attitudes.
10. When a person who uses a wheelchair "transfers" out of the wheelchair to a chair, pew, car, toilet or bed, do not move the wheelchair out of reach. If you think it would be best to move it for some reason, ask the person who uses the wheelchair about the best option for them.
11. It is OK to use expressions like "running along" or "let's go for a walk" when speaking to a person who uses a wheelchair. It is likely they express the idea of moving along in exactly the same way.
12. People who use wheelchairs have varying capabilities. Some people who use wheelchairs can walk with aid or for short distances. They use wheelchairs because they help them to conserve energy and move about with greater efficiency.

13. Don't classify or think of people who use wheelchairs as "sick". Wheelchairs are used to help people adapt to or compensate for the mobility impairments that result from many non-contagious impairments. Some of these are, for example, spinal cord injury, stroke, amputation, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, post-polio, heart disease, etc.
14. Check your assumptions! Don't assume that using a wheelchair is a tragedy. Wheelchairs, when they are well fitted and well chosen, are actually a means of freedom that allows the user to move about independently and fully engage in life.

From:

[http://www.wheelchairnet.org/wcn\\_townhall/docs/etiquette.html](http://www.wheelchairnet.org/wcn_townhall/docs/etiquette.html)

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

1. HG program staff
2. [www.psycharmor.com](http://www.psycharmor.com)

## **PART IV. How to Sign Up for Volunteer Opportunities**

Volunteer newsletters are sent regularly regarding the upcoming volunteer opportunities.

[Subscribe to HG's Volunteer Mailing List](#)

Please sign up for those opportunities through the following steps:

1. Go to [www.HigherGroundUSA.org](http://www.HigherGroundUSA.org)
2. Click on "Get Involved"
3. Click on "Volunteers"
4. Click on "Returning Volunteers". This takes you to a new window.
5. Please create an account or log into your existing account.

Any questions, comments, and concerns please talk to  
the Volunteer Coordinator, Reed Mason.  
[Volunteer@highergroundusa.org](mailto:Volunteer@highergroundusa.org) Cell: (858) 692-0142