

# Peer Volunteer Guidelines and Rules

## About Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation

**WILR Mission Statement:** Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation (WILR) educates and empowers Wyoming Citizens with disabilities by providing the necessary tools to live with independence and dignity.

**Four Core Services:** Information and referral, independent living skills training, advocacy, peer support

**Programs:** WILR offers programs ranging from Independent Living, Visually Impaired Services for persons who are 55 years of age and older, Consumer Directed Care, Project Out – nursing home diversion and transition, Transportation Check Program, WyTap Low Interest Loan and AgrAbility.

**Services:** All services are provided on a "consumer-driven " basis. You decide what you need to live independently.

**Funding:** Authority for the operation of WILR for the provision of independent living services is provided by Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act.

**Non-Discrimination:** Eligibility and the provision of the Peer Volunteer program is determined without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sex, age, disability or veteran's status.

**Timely Provision Of Services:** Referrals and application, determinations of eligibility and the provision of Peer Volunteer services shall be processed in a timely and equitable manner. Not all consumers can be matched for one- on-one or group services based on the staff and consumer referral. Every effort will be made to match an interested consumer, but some consumers will have wishes that our volunteers cannot provide.

## **WILR Board and Volunteer Participation<sup>1</sup>**

Volunteers may, individually or through recognized representatives, provide comments and suggestions to the WILR Board that are relevant to agency concerns, provided all communication is channeled through the Executive Director and he/she is informed prior to the Board meeting.

Volunteers wishing to make anonymous suggestions about the operation of WILR may submit those suggestions to a Board Member or Peer Volunteer Program Manager who will forward the suggestions to the Executive Director.

The WILR Board welcomes volunteer suggestions and comments, provided all supervisory personnel have been informed prior to a Board meeting.

## **WILR Board Hearing Policy<sup>2</sup>**

The WILR Board will conduct hearings on those agency matters concerning discrimination based on a category i.e., race, age, disability- recognized by federal and local civil rights laws, that are unable to be resolved at the administrative level of the organization. For all WILR volunteers, this is the final level of resolution.

No volunteer will be discriminated against, harassed, intimidated, or suffer any reprisal as a result of filing for a Board hearing or participating in the investigation of a complaint. If a volunteer feels that he/she is being subjected to any type of harassment, that volunteer has the right to appeal directly to the Executive Director or Board President.

Volunteers should attempt to resolve the problem informally with the Volunteer Program Manager as soon as possible. If a solution cannot be reached, the volunteer may present a formal complaint, in writing, to the Executive Director.

Requests for hearing may be submitted to the Board only by the Executive Director. While the hearings are informal and there are no specific rules of evidence, the Board expects all parties to observe the standard rules of professional conduct.

After hearing all the evidence, the WILR Board will render a decision in a timely manner. As a goal, the Board attempts to resolve a complaint within twenty (20) working days from the time of the Board hearing. If an extension of the time limit becomes necessary all involved parties will be notified.

## **Volunteer Travel Reimbursement<sup>3</sup>**

The WILR Board will establish a rate for reimbursement of volunteer travel expenses, pre-approved by the Peer Volunteer Program Manager, and in accordance with the annual budget for WILR, subject to the availability of funds. Reimbursement expenses

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<sup>1</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 10.90

<sup>2</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 10.91

<sup>3</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 30.90

are paid once a month. To receive reimbursement, expenses must be submitted to the Program Manager by the 20th of each month.

**Automobile:** WILR will reimburse mileage up to the maximum IRS allowable rate with an odometer reading as documentation. Reimbursement will not be provided for travel expenses between home and office. This reimbursement rate shall be reviewed annually by the Board.

**Parking and toll fees** shall be reimbursed with the provision of receipts. Reimbursement will not be made for any violations of parking or traffic regulations, including parking tickets and traffic fines.

**Plane:** Airfares shall be reimbursed at coach rates. Costs for alternative ground transportation shall be reimbursed at rates not to exceed the coach fare. Additional travel expenses incurred by indirect route or for layovers for non-WILR related reasons are the responsibility of the volunteer. Frequent flyer miles may be credited to a volunteer's personal account.

**Per Diem** is defined as the cost for housing and meals while the volunteer is away from home overnight on WILR business. Per Diem expenses shall be reimbursed at the rate determined by the board at the annual meeting, and shall be reviewed by the WILR Board on an annual basis.

**Reimbursement** shall be based on the time a volunteer leaves his/her home office, with midnight designated as the beginning of a 24-hour day. If a volunteer incurs travel expenses in excess of designated per diem rates for reasonable cause, these expenses shall be reimbursed with appropriate receipts.

### **Volunteer Supply Expense Reimbursement**<sup>4</sup>

WILR volunteers will be reimbursed for approved expenses incurred for telephone calls, supplies, postage, copying and any other items approved by the Peer Volunteer Program Manager, Office Manager, or the Executive Director. Receipts are required for any and all reimbursement for these expenses, with description/justification of expenses. Reimbursement expenses are paid once a month. To receive reimbursement, expenses must be submitted to the Program Manager by the 20th of each month.

### **Reference Policy**<sup>5</sup>

WILR's policy in responding to outside requests for information for current or previous volunteers is to provide or confirm service dates and duties. Additional information about a volunteer's performance will be furnished only if they sign a consent agreement to the release of this information.

WILR will provide requested information for duly authorized requests from law enforcement agencies, including investigators, summonses, subpoenas, and judicial orders. The Agency need not inform a volunteer that information has been disclosed to

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<sup>4</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 30.91

<sup>5</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 30.110

law enforcement agencies if it concerns an investigation into the volunteer's conduct, especially when a volunteer's actions endanger other employees, volunteers, consumers or Agency security or property.

### **Volunteer Status at WILR**<sup>6</sup>

**Definition:** Volunteers are those individuals who participate in WILR programs because of their interest. They are not paid employees nor do they receive any employee benefits.

**Regulations:** Volunteers are subject to all of the same federal rules and regulations as any other WILR employee, including the federally mandated rules governing confidentiality and privileged information, which are included in the Statement of Confidentiality that is signed by each volunteer.

**Requirements:** The Memorandum of Agreement contains, at a minimum; The purpose of the volunteer's position, the immediate supervisor, a job description with specific duties, time frame of duties, and job expectations. A volunteer will not take the place of any paid position at WILR.

**Expense Reimbursement:** With approval from either a Program Manager or the Executive Director, volunteers are compensated for authorized expenses incurred as part of their involvement with WILR.

### **Agency Conflict of Interest Policy**<sup>7</sup>

**Volunteers:** No volunteers shall accept or solicit anything of value which is, or which may appear to be, designed to influence their official conduct.

No volunteers shall permit themselves to be placed under any kind of personal obligation which could lead any person to expect official favors. No volunteers shall enter into any financial or other relationship with a State or Federal agency, a private business, or any other organization that would constitute a conflict of interest or be incompatible with their volunteerism.

### **Agency Confidentiality Policy**<sup>8</sup>

**Purpose:** The need for collecting personal information about a consumer is an essential part of the rehabilitation process for all who are served by WILR. All information that is acquired as part of the rehabilitation process is the property of WILR and is strictly confidential. All applicants, clients, or consumer representatives shall be informed about the need to collect personal information and the policies governing its use.

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<sup>6</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 40.10

<sup>7</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 50.20

<sup>8</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 50.40

Any consumer or applicant who is unable to communicate in English or who relies on special modes of communication shall be provided reasonable accommodation for their discrete disability(s) and shall be informed of this availability at application.

**Use of Information:** WILR Volunteers shall explain to each applicant or consumer whether the provision of personal information is mandatory or voluntary and the effects of not providing the requested information to the agency. Case closure will result if needed information is denied.

The information shall be used only for purposes directly related to the administration of Independent Living services. Use and release of consumer information shall conform to applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

**Disclosure of Consumer Data:** In general, consumer information will not be shared with anyone except WILR staff, volunteers or with other agencies with whom we have a written cooperative agreement, without the informed, written consent of the consumer.

The exceptions to this clause are when:

- a) It is required by federal or state laws
- b) It is in response to investigations in connection with law enforcement fraud, or abuse, except where expressly prohibited by federal or state laws or regulations
- c) It is in response to a judicial order
- d) It is in order to protect the individual or others when the individual poses a threat to his or her safety or to the safety of others.

A WILR volunteer will neither testify in court nor in a Fair Hearing or release records for testimony without the informed, written consent or authorization of the consumer or the client's representative, unless served with an appropriate subpoena or ordered to do so by a judge or hearing officer.

The Executive Director must be notified before a volunteer takes any action in response to a court order, warrant, subpoena or a request to appear and testify in court or a Fair Hearing that pertains to an agency issue.

**Consumer Consent:** Informed, written consent means that the consumer has signed and dated a release of information form that:

- a) Designates the agency or person authorized to release the information
- b) Specifically designates the parties to whom the information may be released
- c) Specifies the purpose for which the related information may be used
- d) Designates the specific information to be released
- e) Identifies the expiration date of the informed consent, not to exceed one year.

**Consumer Access to Information:** Applicants, consumers, or, if appropriate, their designated representatives, have the right to see and obtain a copy of any information held by WILR, with the following exceptions:

- a) Medical or psychological information ascertained by the professional provider to be potentially harmful to the individual may not be released to the individual but must be

provided through his or her representative, a physician, or a licensed or certified psychologist

b) Information obtained from another organization, agency, or provider may be released only under the conditions established by the other organization, agency or provider

### **Agency Drug Free Work Place Policy**<sup>9</sup>

WILR has a vital interest in maintaining safe, healthful and productive working conditions for its volunteers and employees. A volunteer under the influence of drugs or alcohol on the job can be a serious safety risk. The possession, use, or sale of illegal drugs is unacceptable. Accordingly, WILR has established the following policy:

**Federal Compliance:** WILR adheres to the requirements of the Drug Free Work Place Act of 1988, which prohibits reporting to duty or providing service on behalf of WILR under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance, except with a physician's prescription.

**WILR Application:** WILR prohibits the criminal use, manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or sale of a controlled substance; these prohibitions extend to the WILR premises and to all other sites where an volunteer or employee is engaged in WILR business.

**Searches:** WILR may conduct searches for illegal drugs or alcohol on WILR property when there is reasonable cause to suspect that illegal drugs are present. Searches may include a volunteer's personal property, including but not limited to the volunteer's automobile, clothing, purse, or similar items.

**Violation:** Any volunteer convicted of a violation related to alcohol use, controlled substance use, or pleading no contest to such a violation must notify the Executive Director in writing, within five working days of the conviction or plea.

Volunteers who violate any aspect of this policy are subject to disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may include requiring the volunteer to complete, successfully, a substance abuse or rehabilitation program as a condition of further volunteer opportunities.

Volunteers desiring information on locally available resources of substance abuse counseling should contact the Executive Director.

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<sup>9</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 50.91

### **Agency Scent Free Work Place Policy**<sup>10</sup>

WILR has a vital interest in maintaining safe, healthful and productive working conditions for its volunteers and consumers it serves. Accordingly, WILR has established the following policy:

**WILR Application:** WILR prohibits the use of strong perfumes, after shave, scented candles, incense, room deodorizers, or anything which creates an environment which may cause a volunteer, employee or consumer to have an allergic reaction, who is allergic to artificial scents. These prohibitions extend to the WILR premises and to all other sites where a volunteer and/or employee is engaged in WILR business.

**Violation:** Volunteers who violate any aspect of this policy are subject to disciplinary action including termination.

### **Agency Background Check Policy**<sup>11</sup>

WILR has a vital interest in the safety and well-being of the consumers in which it serves.

If a WILR Volunteer directly services consumers within their homes or one-on-one, it is necessary that a Wyoming Department of Family Service (DFS) background check be conducted at the agency's cost. This background check is to ensure that no prior abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children or disabled adults or crimes against the person(s) or property have been reported.

Provision:

A DFS Background Check signature/authorization form will be provided to the applicant by the Peer Volunteer Program Manager at the time a letter is forwarded to the applicant indicating the applicant has been accepted as a volunteer to work with consumers on an individual basis. The Program Manager will be responsible for oversight of the new volunteer.

DFS Background Check form must be completed, signed and returned to the WILR Casper Office at 305 West 1st Street. The Human Resource Representative in the Casper Office will forward the Background Check request to the appropriate party along with payment.

Confirmed Abuse/Neglect from the registry will be subject to termination of volunteer opportunities at WILR. WILR has the option to consider having a complete criminal history background check made available to them. Results of criminal history background check by WILR will be reviewed and based on the information received,

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<sup>10</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 50.93

<sup>11</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 50.94

volunteerism with WILR will be determined.



## **WILR Policy on Computers<sup>12</sup>**

Computer systems and equipment, including laptop computers, printers, networks, software, electronic mail, and Internet access are provided for business-related use only. It is the responsibility of all volunteers to see that these information systems are used in an efficient, ethical, and lawful manner.

Computers provided to volunteers are company property. All communications and information transmitted by, received from, or stored in agency computer systems are the property of WILR, and shall be treated as confidential. Volunteers are responsible for protecting their own passwords and sharing user identifications, passwords and access codes is discouraged. Volunteers may be held responsible for misuse which occurs through such unauthorized access.

No volunteer is permitted to use encryption devices on an agency computer without express written authorization. Any volunteers authorized to use encryption methods must provide the applicable keys and codes to the Manager of Information Systems (MIS).

Introducing or using software designed to destroy or corrupt the agency's computer system with viruses or cause other harmful effects is prohibited. Volunteers are required to use the agency provided anti-virus software.

All volunteers are encouraged to use Internet during work hours for business-related activities. Occasional personal use is acceptable. Personal use must occur outside business hours and is limited to educational or charitable activities. Any other activities are prohibited. Personal use shall in no way adversely affect WILR business. This includes, but is not limited to, the time spent surfing Internet, the types of information accessed, and the resources expended downloading or printing files. When participating in a Newsgroup or Usergroup, employees are prohibited from attributing their opinions or comments to WILR.

Fraudulent, harassing, threatening, discriminatory, sexually explicit, or obscene messages and/or materials are not to be transmitted, printed, or stored on the agency's computer system. All policies pertaining to harassment or discrimination apply to volunteers' use of agency computer equipment. Chain letters, solicitations, and other forms of mass mailings via the agency's computer system are prohibited. Many such resources are copyright-protected. Volunteers are prohibited from placing WILR in danger of violating pertinent copyright laws.

WILR may monitor the use of such equipment from time to time to ensure that use is consistent with the agency's legitimate business interests. Volunteer access may be revoked at any time as WILR sees fit. Volunteers caught misusing the agency's computer system or violating policy in any way are subject to discipline.

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<sup>12</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 51.00

### **Agency Saving Clause<sup>13</sup>**

If any provision of these rules or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid or in conflict with any other provision of application of these rules that can be given effect without the invalid provision for application, then to this end the provisions of these rules are severable.

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<sup>13</sup> WILR Employee Handbook, section 52.00