School & Youth Engagement

Resource Packet
Introduction to Family Gateway

Our mission is to provide stability and life-changing supportive services to children and families affected by homelessness. Founded by Mayor Annette Strauss in 1986, we operate the only emergency shelter in Dallas that will serve a family of any kind – single parents with children, families with older male children, families with same gender parents, multi-generational families – all are welcome. Services offered include assessment and diversion, emergency shelter, supportive housing, case management, and education programming.

As an agency, we act as the service access point for families with children experiencing or near homelessness in Dallas County. This means we field Homeless Crisis Helpline calls, assess and prioritize families for care according to urgency, divert those we can from shelter, and triage families into shelter when no other options are available.

We believe in providing housing first and then use a two-generation approach to wrap trauma-informed services around both the parent and the child. In our own emergency shelter, we are housing focused for adults and education focused for children, offering an after-school program and the coordination of education, preschool, daycare, etc. The interventions we provide give young children who have experienced homelessness the chance to build the resiliency they need to break the detrimental cycle of homelessness.

Volunteer Opportunities at Family Gateway

The success of our children and families depends on support from community volunteers. Volunteers of all ages are needed, but children under the age of 14 must be supervised by an adult. Opportunities include:

- Helping kids with homework
- Planning activities for children
- Organizing an in-kind donation drive
- Preparing and/or serving a meal
- Providing kitchen support
- Providing administrative assistance
- Cleaning/facilities maintenance
- Hosting a 3rd party fundraising event (i.e. bake sale, jeans day)
- Answering Helpline calls (18+)
  - Interview and training required
How to Volunteer at Family Gateway

Volunteers 18 and older need to complete an online background check through Sterling Volunteers. The background check costs approximately $9.

Online background check: https://app.verifiedvolunteers.com/promoorder/90634401-3584-446a-adbf-eb98bedde0ef

If you are between the ages of 14 and 17, please contact Kendall Brown (kbrown@familygateway.org) to receive a link to the online volunteer calendar.

Children 13 and younger must have adult supervision when volunteering. The adult supervisor is required to complete a background check.

Ideas for School & Youth Engagement

We are thrilled that you are interested in getting your school, Girl/Boy Scout Troop, or youth group engaged in our mission. Here are a few ideas to help you get started:

- Invite a Family Gateway staff member to speak to your students/youth group.
  - The staff member will share more about our work using age appropriate language and analogies, then discuss ways kids can give back. At the end of the presentation, there will be a 10-minute Q&A session.
  - If desired, a Family Gateway 101 PowerPoint presentation can be shared as well as a short video about the agency.
  - This presentation typically takes 30 minutes, including the Q&A session, but can be adjusted to accommodate your schedule.

- Organize a donation drive for in-kind items.
  - When a new family moves into emergency shelter, they are provided with new bedding, toiletries, towels, and other basic essentials. All these items are donated by the community and stored onsite in our Donation Closet.
  - Students/youth can organize a donation drive for items from our Wish List (see page 6), come organize the collected items in our Donation Closet, and take a tour of the shelter.
  - We also have an Amazon Wish List for easy online shopping with delivery directly to the shelter.
  - For Schools: You can encourage the whole school to get involved by having each grade level collect a different item (i.e. 1st graders bring shampoo, 2nd graders bring soap, etc.).
  - To find out our most current/urgent needs, please contact Kendall Brown at kbrown@familygateway.org.
Ideas for School & Youth Engagement (continued)

• Organize a donation drive for special/seasonal items.
  o Year-round – snacks, cereal, and tennis shoes
  o April/May – flip flops, goggles, beach towels, sunscreen
  o Summer/August – school supplies, backpacks, uniforms
  o October – Halloween costumes (can be gently used if in great condition)
  o November/December – toys, gift wrapping supplies, batteries

• Assemble snack bags, lunch bags, hygiene kits, or emergency move-in kits for our families.
  o Collect the needed items and have the group assemble the kits together.
  o The youth are more than welcome to write notes of encouragement to include in the bags or kits.
  o Suggested Items:
    ▪ For Snack Bags: juice box or small water bottle, Goldfish, box of raisins, granola bar, fruit snacks (in a brown bag)
    ▪ For Lunch Bags: turkey or ham sandwich, box of raisins or fruit snacks, Goldfish (in a brown bag)
    ▪ For Hygiene Kits: travel-size shampoo/conditioner, bar of soap, toothbrush, travel-size toothpaste, travel-size deodorant (in a Ziploc bag)
    ▪ For Emergency Move-In Kits: one hygiene kit (see above), throw blanket, pillow, body towel, wash cloth (in a large trash bag)

• Plan activities for children at the emergency shelter.
  o Ideas include board games, Bingo, arts and crafts, minute-to-win-it games, ice cream social, etc.
  o The best time to plan an activity is during the after-school program W-F from 4 to 5:30pm. Saturday mornings or Sunday afternoons are options as well, pending availability.
  o Volunteer groups need to provide all activity supplies.
  o Prepare for 20-30 kids unless otherwise noted.

• Serve a meal at the emergency shelter.
  o Must be 14+
  o Lunch is served from 12 to 12:30pm and dinner is from 5:30 to 7pm.
  o No more than 6 to 8 volunteers needed.

• Host a 3rd party fundraiser for Family Gateway.
  o Organize and promote a jeans day or bake sale and donate the funds raised to our mission.
Ideas for School & Youth Engagement (continued)

- Donate used items to Casa View Thrift Store.
  - 2303 Gus Thomasson Rd, Dallas, TX 75228
  - Family Gateway receives “credit” for used items donated on our behalf, and you receive a donation receipt for your contribution.
  - We transport our families to shop at the thrift store on a regular basis using the credit accumulated from your generosity.
  - Have furniture or other large items you would like to donate? Schedule a pickup with Casa View Thrift Store by calling (214) 328-6043.

- Help with a special event during the year.
  - March – volunteer or plan an activity during our Spring Break Camp*
  - April – volunteer at our family-friendly outdoor fundraiser, DAY to PLAY**
  - Summer – volunteer or plan an activity during our Summer Camp*
  - November – volunteer or plan an activity during our Thanksgiving Camp*
  - December/January – volunteer or plan an activity during our Winter Camp*
  - Holiday Program – volunteer in our Holiday Store on a Saturday in December
  - Plan a holiday party or themed activity for Valentine’s Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, or Christmas.

*All camps take place M-F from 10am to 3pm.
**Saturday, April 25, 2020 from 1 to 4pm

Questions?

If you have questions or would like to schedule a speaking engagement or special volunteer event, please contact Kendall Brown at kbrown@familygateway.org or 214-823-4500 x213.

For more information about Family Gateway, visit https://www.familygateway.org.
Wish List

For Emergency Shelter:

- Twin-size sheet sets
- Twin-size comforters
- Throw blankets
- Pillows
- Shaving cream and razors
- Mouthwash
- Body wash
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Laundry detergent pods
- Deodorant
- Towels (body, hand, and wash cloth)

For Supportive Housing:

- Full-size sheet sets
- Full-size comforters
- Toiletry items as listed above
- Pots and pans
- Dishes
- Silverware
- Cups
- Cooking utensils
- Cleaning supplies
- Dish soap
- Laundry detergent
- Shower curtains, rods, and hooks
- Trashcans
- Brooms and dustpans

For Emergency Move-In Kits:

- Throw blanket
- Pillow
- Body towel
- Wash cloth
- Travel-size shampoo
- Travel-size conditioner
- Bar of soap
- Toothbrush
- Travel-size toothpaste
- Travel-size deodorant
- 13-gallon, tall kitchen trash bags