



# Hosting Group Informational Packet

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in Room in the Inn Shoals.

Enclosed you will find a number of suggestions on how to organize your hosting group and some tips and guidelines about volunteering with Room in the Inn Shoals. This is not a comprehensive guide. We will provide trainings before the Winter Season begins to help you get organized and prepared.

One of the unique and best things about the Room in the Inn program is that each congregation and group that partners with us gets the autonomy to determine what works best for their group. While we offer suggestions and tips, each group may host a different way based on the needs and structure of their facilities and congregation rules. Each guest that comes to your facility has previously gone through a comprehensive orientation, where they have gone over the rules of our program and signed their acknowledgment of those rules. We strive to encourage and enforce a policy of mutual respect. Respect toward each other – both to volunteers and to other guests; respect for the facilities and respect for the program itself.

We are here to help! We want your experience to be meaningful for all involved. The heart of Room in the Inn is the local volunteers who open their doors and welcome in strangers as honored guest's week after week. The volunteers give Room in the Inn its power and meaning. No matter how many congregations participate and how large the program grows, the intimate experience of eating together and sharing stories is the critical element.

Thank you for your heart to help in this crucial ministry. You never know the chain of events you put in motion with a simple act of kindness. The seeds of kindness and compassion that are planted in the heart are the building blocks of change.

Our core belief at Room in the Inn Shoals is being a place "where everyone matters".

Peace & Blessings,

Room in the Inn Shoals Leadership Team

## **How Does Room in the Inn Work?**

The Room in the Inn Shoals program is open to anyone who is homeless that needs shelter.

Any guest needing shelter for the evening comes to the intake center at 4pm each day. The intake center is open from 4-6pm each night. They sign in and are assigned a spot based on availability. It is first come, first served. The number of available beds each night will vary based on how many groups are hosting. There will be a minimum of 12 beds available each night. Because it is first come, first served, the guests that sign in first will be guaranteed a bed.

Once the guests who are staying for the evening are determined, they will then go thru an intake and orientation process where the rules and policies and procedures of the program are reviewed for them. They will then be given any needed toiletries, etc. and can hang out in the intake center until the group hosting for the night comes to pick up at 6pm.

Between 5:45-6pm, the host church or group will come to the intake center and pick up their guests for the night. Dinner will be provided and a space to clean up or take a shower will be made available after dinner (not all groups have shower facilities, it depends on the location). Then the guests will sleep there for the night, be fed breakfast in the morning and returned to the intake center between 7 and 8 am.

If a couple is married, they will be able to stay together, but men will sleep on one side of the room and women on the other, even if they are married. They will be together all evening except during sleeping time. Families will be kept together and have their own space.

Continued eligibility in this program is determined by the guest following the rules and policies and procedures of the program. A guest can stay for an evening or for the entire winter season, dependent on space available.

All of our guests go through a thorough check-in process when they come to the intake center, including a background check, bag search, a pat down and a sobriety check. This is done by a Florence Police Officer, whom the Room in the Inn pays to be there each night. Once the guests have gone through the check-in process, they do not leave the premises. This means that they have been checked and cleared until they get on the van to go to the church. They are also not allowed to "come and go" once they get to a church. Each host church has access to a trained "on-call" person for duration of the time they are hosting.

Once a church host group has determined that they are ready to begin, the Director will come to their facility and walk them through a step by step training as well as answer any questions the group may have.

## How Do We Get Started?

The first thing you must do is decide that you have a group of volunteers who are willing to give this idea a try! We suggest that you find a coordinator from your congregation or organization to be your RITI representative. Then we suggest you coordinate groups of volunteers for each night that you plan to host. Often, congregations utilize their small groups or life groups to host for a night. Other groups use Sunday school classes, college or single groups and other already organized groups to host a night. Being part of a congregation is not a requirement. You simply have to have a facility to host with a kitchen space, and enough volunteers to host for the night. These details are outlined in the packet. **Once you have a group committed, we will do the training and help get you started.**

Here is a list of items your church/group would need to provide.

- Cots, pillows and blankets for at least 12 guests. Based on our experience, the total cost of these items is between \$700-800. We recommend cots, flat and fitted sheet, a blanket and pillow. We also recommend something that can be wiped down and laundered easily.
- Space for comfortable arrangement of cots and blankets (fellowship hall, gym, etc.)
- Table and chairs for sharing the meals.
- A place to prepare and serve food, as well as enough food and drink for dinner, breakfast and perhaps a light evening snack for your 12 guests and volunteers.
- Adequate bathroom facilities – **shower facilities are not necessary**, but they are welcome. Not all of our facilities have shower options. We do suggest that you have a space where they can clean up (a bird bath) and perhaps some toiletry items like towel, soap, wash cloths, etc. We keep a supply of these items at the intake center and give them to the guests upon request.
- Sufficient heating and cooling, proper ventilation and approved safety exits with clear access.
- Designated smoking area – the limits for this are up to you. We suggest you have a designated area with designated schedule for smoking. Normally no smoking is allowed after lights out.
- First aid kit/Fire extinguisher

## How Many Volunteers Will We Need?

Your group will need volunteers to operate your program. You can organize this however works best for your organization. **For most groups, 12-14 volunteers are needed to provide a night of shelter.**

These are some of the responsibilities that your group will have:

- Transporting guests from the Room in the Inn Shoals intake center. (If you do not have your own van, you can borrow the 12 passenger Room in the Inn Van).
- Setting up the cots and bedding for your night of shelter.
- Preparing and serving the evening meal. We strongly encourage you to plan to eat with the guests.
- Spending the night (at least 2 volunteers – at least one male, prefer one male, one female)
- A team of 2-3 to prepare and serve a light breakfast
- Transporting guests back to Room in the Inn Shoals intake center by 8 am.
- Clean-up group after guests leave. Churches are responsible for washing their own bedding.