



# Volunteer Handbook

Tioga Opportunities, Inc.  
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[www.tiogaopp.org](http://www.tiogaopp.org)



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## **1. History**

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. (TOI) is a private, not-for-profit, multi-purpose Community Action Agency that emerged from the Kennedy-Johnson era “War on Poverty” programs of the 1960s. Its initial funding and operational structure was regulated at the Federal level under the Economic Opportunities Act of 1964.

Today, TOI receives a Federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) allocation through the New York State Department of State. These funds are used to carry out its mission consistent with the following national goals:

- Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.
- Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.
- People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

## **2. Mission Statement**

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. creates partnerships that strengthen communities while empowering individuals and families to achieve independence and enrich their quality of life.

## **3. Vision Statement**

An innovative, evolving organization that promotes strong, inclusive communities and successful, thriving people.

## **4. Values Statement**

We value:

- Equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- The strengths and potential of all people to become actively engaged in improving their quality of life.
- Economic security as a means to the well-being of individuals and families.
- Effective services delivered by caring staff who treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Innovation in response to changing community needs.
- Partnerships that expand our impact.
- Excellence in data-driven planning and goal-setting.

## **5. Responsibilities of a Volunteer**

When accepting a volunteer assignment, you are expected to:

- a. Attend orientations and trainings.
- b. Arrive on time.

- c. "Sign in" so that hours can be accurately recorded.
- d. Call the TOI office if you are unable to volunteer on a certain day or if expected to be away for an extended period of time. Please give as much notice as possible so that a substitute can be called.
- e. Ask questions of your volunteer supervisor if you don't understand any particular aspect of your volunteer assignment.
- f. Practice confidentiality. All information on clients, patients, and agency business is private and must not be discussed.
- g. Call TOI if you have any problem regarding your volunteer assignment that cannot be resolved with your volunteer supervisor or if you would like to change or add to your assignment.
- h. Call if you have a change of address.
- i. Report all accidents to your volunteer supervisor.

## **6. Volunteer Opportunities**

At Tioga Opportunities, Inc., there are many volunteer opportunities, including transporting older adults and adults with disabilities to medical and non-medical appointments, providing meals for homebound individuals, providing telephone reassurance, art/craft activities, computer work, exercise activities, health insurance counseling, food programs/pantries, musical entertainment, Group Workcamp, meal/snack preparation, and assisting with health screenings.

Security checks will be conducted to ensure the everyone's safety.

Volunteers will be screened as follows:

- Sex offender registry for all volunteers
- Background checks for identified specific volunteer positions

Volunteer Drivers (Home Delivered Meals, Transporters, Health Insurance Counselors) will be screened and selected as follows:

- Interviewing new volunteer drivers
- License registry for all new and current volunteer drivers

As with all TOI's activities and services, SAFETY FIRST is a priority. Volunteers driving any vehicle on TOI time must know and obey traffic laws, practice defensive driving, stay alert, avoid distractions, wear seatbelts, refrain from using cellular telephones, etc.

TOI volunteers who operate their private vehicles for volunteer-related duties must attend a TOI approved driver safety training session. TOI volunteers who use their private vehicles for related

duties must maintain a valid driver's license, and the registration, inspection, and New York State minimum insurance for that vehicle.

If a volunteer is arrested or charged with committing a crime, it is to be reported to the volunteer supervisor. The Agency shall consider the seriousness of the pending charge or conviction in relation to the volunteer's assignment and future participation.

## **7. Code of Conduct for Volunteers**

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. is committed to maintaining the highest level of integrity and standards of ethical conduct in all its activities. The performance and professionalism of all employees and volunteers shall be characterized by sincerity, enthusiasm, initiative, and competence.

Employees and volunteers will respect the unique identity of each individual and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of sex, gender, color, race, sexual preference, national origin, ethnicity, culture, religion, marital status, age, disability, income, etc.

- a. Volunteers will conduct themselves with dignity, courtesy, and consideration.
- b. A volunteer does not receive payment for their time and cannot accept tips.
- c. Volunteers will not impose religious or political beliefs on others.
- d. TOI is committed to providing an environment that is safe from harassment. Any type of harassment is a violation of federal law under the Equity Act of 2010 and this policy and is illegal.

### Confidentiality of Information

It is essential that everyone affiliated with Tioga Opportunities, Inc. (Board members, employees, volunteers, interns, etc.) have a commitment to confidentiality. All volunteers are to respect and hold all information obtained from TOI in the strictest confidence. Volunteers are to protect confidential information and refrain from discussing such with business/professional associates, relatives, and friends.

### Physical contact

It is the policy of Tioga Opportunities, Inc. that everyone is expected to use appropriate judgement in physical contact and respect the boundaries that are set by others. Should a situation arise, the offended party must confront the offender at the first sign of inappropriate behavior, identify the offensive behavior, explain that it is inappropriate, and request that the behavior be stopped. All such situations are to be reported to TOI supervisors. Repeated incidents would result in increased sanctions, up to and including termination of the offender from the program.

In the rare situations when a hug might be given, it is expected that it be given from the side or around the shoulders and not from the front. It is the effect of the words, actions, or behavior upon the “receiver” and not the “giver’s” intention which is important.

## **8. Newsletter**

When a volunteer joins TOI, he/she will automatically begin to receive the "Senior Scoop" newsletter, produced by the Family Services Department at Tioga Opportunities, Inc. You can choose to receive the newsletter through the mail or via email.

## **9. Recognition**

TOI volunteers contribute thousands of hours of service each year to the residents and not-for-profits in Tioga County. As a small display of our appreciation for their dedication and service, Tioga Opportunities, Inc. hosts an annual Volunteer Appreciation event. All active volunteers who are enrolled are invited at no cost to the volunteer event.

It is our policy to make the general public aware of TOI volunteers and its mission through an on-going promotional and marketing campaign. This includes newspaper and website articles on individual and group volunteer work, as well as incorporating other media vehicles to promote our program and its volunteers.

## **10. Volunteer Separation**

Volunteers who are consistently inactive for three months (90 days) or longer may be withdrawn from active volunteer status. These volunteers may be re-activated upon resumption of volunteer service.

TOI may separate a volunteer from the program for cause, including, but not limited to, extensive or unexpected extended absences, misconduct, inability to perform assignments, or inability to accept supervision.

## **11. Volunteer Satisfaction**

Please notify TOI staff of any problems with your assignment, volunteers, or agency personnel. Unresolved issues or problems should be reported to your assigned supervisor. We would appreciate volunteers communicating with us to resolve any possible misunderstandings instead of leaving the organization without notifying the TOI office.

## **12. Guidelines for Volunteer Drivers and Transporters**

- a. Transport passengers in a safe and lawful manner in accordance with NYS law. Seatbelts are required by NYS law for all vehicle occupants.
- b. Smoking, vaping, or alternative tobacco products will NOT be permitted throughout the duration of the trip.

- c. Volunteer Transporters should be mentally and physically rested and alert for each trip.
- d. Drinking of alcoholic beverages while driving or driving under the influence of alcohol or restricted drugs is prohibited and disciplinary action will be enforced.
- e. Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications: It is a violation of policy to intentionally misuse and/or abuse prescription medications. Appropriate action must be taken if job performance deterioration and/or accidents occur. Any volunteer taking prescribed or over-the-counter medications will be responsible for consulting the prescribing physician and/or pharmacist to ascertain whether the medication may interfere with safe performance of his/her duties. If the use of a medication could compromise the safety of the volunteer, TOI client, or the public, it is the volunteer's responsibility to use appropriate procedures (e.g., notify TOI staff member, request leave, request change of duty, etc.) to avoid unsafe volunteer service practices.
- f. Traffic laws must be obeyed. Speed shall never be faster than a rate consistent with existing speed laws and road, traffic, and weather conditions.
- g. Do NOT use a cellular phone while driving. Plan ahead and pull over if you need to call our office (607) 687-4222.
- h. Volunteer drivers must have photocopies of valid motor vehicle license and copy of the insurance declaration page on file at Tioga Opportunities, Inc. prior to receiving trip requests. The volunteer drivers must be covered by the automobile's insurance coverage to operate the vehicle. If involved in an accident while on volunteer duty, TOI does not cover the volunteer's insurance deductible, and the volunteer's automobile insurance will be considered the first for source claim resolution.
- i. Report any accidents or passenger incidents occurring while on duty for TOI to the volunteer supervisor immediately. If the accident is reported in the "after hours," leave a detailed telephone message and follow up with the report on next business day.
- j. Any volunteer driver who has a driver's license revoked or suspended shall immediately notify the volunteer supervisor and discontinue driving for TOI.

**TRANSPORTERS (additional information):**

- k. Volunteer Transporters are NOT to borrow vehicles from clients or others to provide transportation services.
- l. If the Volunteer Transporter receives information from a client/passenger, and there is a reasonable suspicion that abuse – physical, sexual, economic, or emotional – has occurred, then the driver must share that information with the Transportation Services Specialist immediately.

- m. The Transportation Services Specialist must be notified prior to a scheduled trip if any additional passengers will accompany the driver and passenger.
- n. Call the Transportation Services Specialist at least 24 hours before scheduled ride if unable to complete a trip.
- o. Trip Assignments: All transportation trips must be pre-approved and assigned by the Transportation Services Specialist or other TOI designated staff. Volunteer Transporters will not be reimbursed for any ride(s) not assigned by the Transportation Services Specialist. Additional trips or returning home during layovers will not be permitted unless pre-authorized by the Transportation Services Specialist.
- p. No-Show: If a passenger fails to keep an appointment as assigned to the Volunteer Transporter, the office is to be notified immediately. Volunteer Transporters should make a reasonable effort to be sure that the passenger is aware that the Volunteer Transporter is ready and waiting to take the passenger. Volunteer Transporters must wait for fifteen minutes past the appointed pick up time before leaving and reporting a no-show.
- q. Inclement Weather Conditions: In the case of inclement weather, the Volunteer Transporter has the right to cancel the ride, even with short notice. The Volunteer Transporter **MUST** call the office and the passenger when a decision is made to cancel. TOI finds that nothing is more important than the safety of the Volunteer Transporter and passenger. Please, only travel when you are confident that you can ensure a safe trip. It is advised to closely monitor and plan ahead for inclement weather during the winter months.
- r. Incidents: Report any incident involving the Volunteer Transporter and/or passengers to the Transportation Services Specialist or other TOI designated staff as soon as possible. TOI staff will advise the Volunteer Transporter and the passenger if additional information is needed.
- s. Passenger complaints about Volunteer Transporters will be documented on the “Title VI Compliance Investigations, Complaints & Lawsuits” form, in accordance with New York State Department of Transportation. Clients will be provided this form at the initial assessment and upon request.

### **13. What to Do in Case of a Vehicle Accident**

Every accident must be reported, investigated, and reviewed to find out the cause and prevent a recurrence. Any volunteer who is involved in **any** accident **must**:

- a. **Do not declare fault; do not engage in discussion** with other people at the scene about who is to blame for the accident.
- b. Move to a safe location. If possible, secure your vehicle out of traffic.
- c. Call the police/sheriff and (if needed) seek medical assistance.



- d. **Do NOT** move passengers who appear to be seriously injured.
- e. Contact your volunteer supervisor.
- f. Remain calm, courteous, and consistent in your version of the accident.
- g. Obtain **complete** identifying information from those involved—people and vehicles.
- h. Obtain the names of the witnesses including addresses and phone numbers.
- i. If a camera or camera phone is available, please make sure to take pictures which would include damage to vehicles, license plate numbers, scene of the accident, etc.

#### **14. Passenger Assistance (3P's – No Pick, No Push, No Pull)**

- a. For the safety of the passenger and the Volunteer Transporter, the Volunteer Transporter is not expected to provide any more assistance than lending an arm for balance. A driver may lend a hand to steady a passenger while entering or exiting the vehicle. Volunteers are not expected to carry packages or personal items for passengers.
- b. Passengers able to transfer from a wheelchair may be transported but must transfer into the car without assistance from the Volunteer Transporter. The Volunteer Transporter can place the wheelchair in the trunk or backseat. If a passenger becomes weakened during their appointment (such as kidney dialysis) or trip and is unable to walk, the Volunteer Transporter should ask medical staff at the pickup point for assistance. At NO time is a volunteer to physically pick up a passenger. Volunteer Transporters do not transport passengers who need physical assistance beyond holding an arm for balance.
- c. Door-through-door transportation services at TOI provides a trained Volunteer Transporter who will pick up customers at their door, transport them to their destination, often going through the door of their destination and staying with the customer throughout the trip.
- d. Exceptions to this rule must be expressly requested. A Volunteer Transporter has the right to accept or refuse any trip for any reason.
- e. Animals are not to be transported.

#### **15. Mileage Reimbursement**

Volunteer Transporters and Home Delivered Meals drivers are eligible to receive reimbursement for travel in the course of their volunteer duties. Mileage reimbursement forms are to be submitted to the TOI office by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month following your volunteer service. To obtain additional mileage reimbursement sheets, please contact the TOI office.

## **16. Meals**

Volunteers (aged 55 or older) who provide medical transportation or Home Delivered Meals are eligible to request reimbursement toward the cost of a meal taken during the course of their volunteer assignment. TOI will reimburse volunteers for up to \$6.00 per meal. Reimbursement is not available for meals provided by the Congregate Dining program at Tioga Opportunities, Inc.

Meal reimbursement forms are to be submitted to the TOI office by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month following your volunteer service. Itemized receipts must be submitted for reimbursement.

## **17. Volunteer Insurance**

All insurance provided by TOI for Volunteer Transporters, Health Insurance Counselors, and Home Delivered Meals drivers is secondary to your current provider. Contact TOI for details.

## **18. Calling the TOI Office**

Reasons you would want or need to contact the TOI office:

- a. You have a transportation problem.
- b. You need additional forms to track your mileage or hours.
- c. You want to change or add additional volunteer assignments.
- d. You had an accident while on your volunteer assignment.
- e. You have a question regarding your hours, mileage, reimbursement, etc.
- f. You have a good idea for a news story in the “Senior Scoop” or other local newspapers regarding TOI.
- g. You are aware of an illness or hospitalization of another volunteer.
- h. You have received special recognition or training.
- i. You have suggestions to improve our program.

## **19. Additional Information**

- a. Volunteers cannot perform the duties of an employed worker or an activity that will result in the displacement of an employee, or receive a fee from service recipients, their family, or guardians.
- b. Grant funds are not to be used to finance labor or anti-labor organizations or labor activity.

- c. Volunteers' accumulation of hours will exclude any political organizing, voter registration, poll watching, driving people to the voting polls, or any other electoral activities. In other words, these activities cannot be performed while volunteering under TOI.
- d. TOI cannot discriminate in its policies and procedures.

## **20. Program Evaluation**

An important part of any good program is an on-going evaluation process to allow the participant direct input into the future of the program. Evaluations are conducted to determine whether or not the agency has achieved its goals and objectives for a particular time period and, more importantly, to determine the effectiveness of its services. Annually, TOI staff will send out an evaluation form so that we can determine if we are meeting the needs of our volunteers. When you receive this evaluation, please take a few moments to complete the form and return it to the TOI office. We appreciate and value your input.

Thank you for joining Tioga Opportunities, Inc. in helping people achieve independence and enrich their quality of life. We will do our best to make your volunteer experience positive and rewarding. If you have any questions about your volunteer experience, please contact us. We are always glad to hear from you.

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. does not discriminate and serves all people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, disability, or any other protected class.

49 CFR 21.1, provides that, "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Transportation."

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. operates its programs and services without regard to color, race, or national origin in all in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any person who believes she or he has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with Tioga Opportunities, Inc.



## **CUSTOMER BILL OF RIGHTS**

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. welcomes you.  
Its staff and management value all who walk through its doors.  
Customer safety and satisfaction is our top priority.

To ensure quality and impactful services, customers can expect:

- ✓ A welcoming, empathetic, and caring environment
- ✓ Customer driven services
- ✓ Maximum privacy and confidentiality
- ✓ Non-discriminatory practices
- ✓ Fair and respectful treatment without bias
- ✓ Resourceful, knowledgeable, and compassionate staff
- ✓ Working together toward common goals
- ✓ Timely and prompt response to questions or concerns
- ✓ Assured access to personal files or records
- ✓ Customer grievance and complaint policy

Tioga Opportunities, Inc.  
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Owego, New York 13827  
607-687-4222

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Receipt of Policies

I have received Tioga Opportunities, Inc. **Volunteer Handbook**, effective June 1, 2019, and acknowledge that it is my responsibility to read, understand, and abide by the information and policies in the Handbook. I understand that if there is any policy or provision in the Handbook that I do not understand, I must ask my TOI Supervisor for clarification.

At Tioga Opportunities, Inc., there are many volunteer opportunities, including transporting older adults and adults with disabilities to medical and non-medical appointments, providing meals for homebound individuals, providing telephone reassurance, art/craft activities, computer work, exercise activities, health insurance counseling, food programs/pantries, musical entertainment, Group Workcamp, meal/snack preparation, and assisting with health screenings.

I understand that TOI may separate a volunteer from the program for cause, including, but not limited to, extensive or unexpected extended absences, misconduct, inability to perform assignments, or inability to accept supervision.

I understand that TOI reserves the right to modify, revoke, suspend, terminate, or change any or all plans, policies, procedures, or other information in the Handbook, in whole or in part at any time, and with or without notice. This Handbook is not intended to create, and it does not constitute, a contract between TOI and me.

Volunteer's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Department Director's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

