



Meals from the Heart Program Handbook



The Ronald McDonald House of Charlottesville provides a temporary home-away-from-home for families whose children are receiving treatment for a serious illness or injury at a health facility in Charlottesville. In an effort to lessen the burden, reduce stress, keep the family intact, and enhance the quality of life for these families, RMHC Charlottesville provides affordable housing in a caring home-like atmosphere. Fresh, hot meals, provided through the generosity of our community, and the opportunity to share these meals with families facing similar issues are among the most valuable benefits offered to guest families. The safety, health and well-being of House guests are our highest priority. *We welcome your participation.*

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Meals from the Heart Program

Thank you for your generous donation of time and provisions. This is your opportunity to support the families staying with us by preparing a meal at the House, or supplying catered, take-out, or other commercially obtained food. Please review this booklet carefully – it tells you what you need to know to ensure that the food you offer is nutritious and tasty, and prepared in a safe manner. Please do not hesitate to call with any questions or concerns you may have. Then, have fun. We're glad you are here!

Things to Consider

- Plan to provide enough food for 20-25 people.
- Individuals, organizations, families and formal or informal groups are welcome to serve as chef, but we cannot accommodate more than 10 people in the kitchen.
- All food must be prepared on-site, scheduled for delivery from a commercial kitchen, or purchased from a grocery, retail operation, restaurant, fast food facility, or other food service site.
- This is generally an adult opportunity. Children and teens may participate but must be accompanied and supervised by adults at all times.
- You will be responsible for supplying the food for your meal. RMHC Charlottesville has some basic condiments. We have the utensils and dishes needed to prepare, cook, and serve the meal.
- Ensure that you can get the food to the House in a safe manner, keeping in mind the need to keep hot food hot and cold food cold, no matter the traffic, weather, or other potential problems.
- Be aware that your group may be sharing the kitchen space with family members, and please stay in the prep area assigned to you.
- If you need to fundraise money for the cost of the meal, you must contact our Executive Director, Rita Ralston at rralston@rmhcharlottesville.org or call 434.295.1885 for approval before proceeding.

Scheduling a Meal

- Check out the [Meals from the Heart Calendar](#) to view dates that are available for your Guest Chef appearance.
- Once you've chosen a date, contact the Meal Volunteer Coordinator, Stewart R Weaver, at sweaver@rmhcharlottesville.org or by phone (434.295.1885). She can answer your questions, provide more information, and schedule a site visit for you or your group leader.
- If you must cancel or postpone your appearance last minute, please consider scheduling pizza or other fast food to be delivered as a backup. Our families rely on these meals, and your cancellation can leave families without an option. Please notify staff as far in advance as possible if you cannot meet your scheduled date.

Planning a Menu

- Plan to provide enough food to feed 20-25 people
- At a minimum, a meal should include the following items: Main dish (it is not necessary to provide both a meat and vegetarian entrée), 1-2 sides (such as pasta, potatoes, rice, vegetables, etc.)
- Additional items that are greatly appreciated but not required: bread/rolls, dessert, beverages
- There are no menu limitations based on allergies, dietary restrictions, etc.
- Spaghetti and ziti are frequent meal donations. Variations from this menu item are encouraged.
- Salad is a side dish item that tends to be under consumed. If you are planning to provide a salad, please only prepare enough for 8-10 people.
- If you are preparing a meal on-site, please plan a meal that is within the cooking experience of those in your group, and that can be completed by the number of volunteers in the time allowed.
- If you are bringing a prepared meal from a commercial kitchen/restaurant/grocery store, please ensure that you can get the food to the House in a safe manner by food safety standards (keep hot food hot and cold food cold).

Arriving at the House

- Volunteers are required to check in with the House Manager upon arrival. All volunteers will be asked to sign in.
- The House Manager will provide all volunteers with a short intro to the kitchen. All cabinets in the kitchen are labeled to assist with locating pots, cutting boards, utensil, etc.
- Food supplies that need to be refrigerated upon arrival can be placed in the staff use fridge in the kitchen
- Volunteers will have access to the following:
 - plates, silverware, drinking glasses, ice
 - pots, pans, glass baking dishes, baking pans
 - mixing bowls, cutting boards, measuring cups, strainers
 - serving utensils, spatulas, whisks, oven mitts
 - serving equipment (warming pans), crock pots
 - Steramine kitchen cleaning spray, gloves, paper towels, food thermometers

Volunteer Conduct Guidelines

The Ronald McDonald House is truly a home-away-from-home for the families of children undergoing treatment for various illnesses. Since each family and medical situation is different, we ask that you follow these guidelines while you are volunteering at the House:

- Hands should be washed with soap and water immediately upon arrival at the House and frequently while you are here. Always wear gloves while handling food.
- Avoid wearing perfume and using harsh chemicals as there may be children with chemical sensitivities.
- Anyone with symptoms of illness or infection should stay home. Anyone recently been exposed to contagious conditions cannot be in the House nor interact with residents.
- Volunteers must remain on the 1st floor of the House.
- All minors must be supervised.
- Volunteers are asked to keep noise levels to a minimum. Playing music is prohibited.
- Obtain parental permission before you physically interact with the children. The children may be undergoing treatment and their immune systems may be compromised. Please remember to be gentle in your actions and your words.
- No volunteers are permitted to be alone with a child at any time; babysitting is not permitted.
- Volunteers are expected to be respectful of the families' personal space and boundaries. Some families may be talkative and outgoing about their experiences while others will prefer their privacy.
- Please refrain from sharing your religious practices, feelings, and your personal information.
- It is important to keep good boundaries and limit your relationship to the time you are at the House. No volunteer is permitted to visit a family in their room or at the hospital, provide transportation, take a family out for a meal, or socialize outside the House.
- You are welcome to take photos of your group while at the House. However, please do not take photos of children, parents and other family members who are staying at the House.

Thank you from all of us at the Ronald McDonald Hous

Food Handling and Preparation Guidelines

Food Safety is important for everyone but it is especially important for those living at the Ronald McDonald House. Children with weakened immune systems are more prone to infections from bacteria that contaminate food. Caretakers cannot risk becoming too ill to care for their child. To avoid this, be cautious when handling, preparing, and transporting food.

1. Please stay at home if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms: sore throat, runny nose, coughing or sneezing, watery eyes, fever, chills, unexplained rashes, general aches, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, or red oozing wounds or cuts. Do not come to the House if you have recently been exposed to or have chicken pox, shingles, measles, tuberculosis, influenza, whooping cough, hepatitis or another contagious condition. We prefer that children who accompany your group be 13 years of age and older. They must have had chickenpox or been vaccinated for chickenpox.
2. Foods that cannot be used in the House : Non-pasteurized juice and milk products, raw seed sprouts (such as alfalfa sprouts), undercooked meat, fish or eggs, alcohol (no alcohol can be brought into the House, not even for use as a food ingredient)
3. Bring Food to the House promptly and at the proper temperature:
 - Arrange to transport cold food in coolers and cooked foods in insulated containers to hold the food at correct temperatures.
 - Hot food that is commercially prepared off-site and transported by the dinner group must arrive at the House within 60 minutes from time of purchase.
4. Rinse all produce under plain, running water.
5. Wash hands often and well: Clean hands are the most important food safety tool.
6. Never touch ready-to-eat food with bare hands: always wear gloves and use utensils.
7. Important Rules for Using Gloves
 - Wash hands before using gloves.
 - Change gloves between working with raw and ready-to-eat foods.
 - Change gloves that get ripped or might be contaminated.
 - Never wash or reuse gloves. Throw away after using for one purpose.
8. Always use clean surfaces and cutting boards for food prep. Use Steramine spray (provided by the House Manager) to clean all surfaces before and after food prep.
9. Keep raw meat away from other food to prevent cross contamination.
10. Cook food to proper temperature:
 - **165 degrees F:** poultry, hot dogs, stuffed foods and stuffing, casseroles, canned foods, all reheated food
 - **160 degrees F:** beef, pork, veal, lamb (steaks, roasts, chops); ground beef (includes hamburgers and any dish that contains ground beef); egg dishes
 - **145 degrees F:** fish

- 140 degrees F: vegetables that need to be held and eaten at hot temperatures
11. Hold food at the correct temperature. Once cooked to the proper temperature, as listed above, hold hot food at a temperature above 140 degrees. Cold food must remain below 40 degrees. Please use the warming trays as needed for this.
 12. Place all dirty dishes, pots/pans, and utensils into the open dishwasher. Once the dishwasher is full, please notify the House Manager so he/she can open a new one.