

Keys to a Successful Volunteer/Resident Relationship

Volunteers are an important resource here at Prodigals Community, and the relationships you develop with our residents are a vital part of their recovery process. However, because of the nature of substance abuse recovery and the history some of our residents have with sexual and emotional abuse, the very acts of kindness you might show to another friend in need could be misconstrued, or even hinder the recovery of a chronic substance abuser. Below are some do's and don'ts which will help ensure that your friendship with a Prodigals Community resident is the beneficial one you intend it to be.

DO

- ◆ Show interest in your friend's progress.
- ◆ Ask your friend how you can pray for him or her.
- ◆ Be a good role model.
- ◆ Encourage your friend to share problems with his/her counselor or group.
- ◆ Invite your friend to church (sophomores and above can take short passes).
- ◆ Develop friendships with residents of your gender. Prodigals Community programs operate on same sex role-modeling as much as possible.
- ◆ Help your friend stay focused on the present in his/her recovery journey. By promising future support (a job or a place to live), you move your friend's focus to the future when all energy should be focused on recovery. Once your friend reaches senior level, talk to a counselor about how you might help with his or her transition back into society.
- ◆ Stay in public areas with your friend.
- ◆ Remember that a large percentage of our residents have experienced sexual or emotional abuse. As a result, humor, touches and comments that might be acceptable in another social setting can be taken in a whole different way here.

DON'T

- ◆ Give individual gifts to your friend. If you want to bring a gift, bring something the community can share, such as baked goods, or bring a small gift for each resident. Please coordinate gift-giving with a staff member.
- ◆ Give your home phone number or address to residents.
- ◆ Become too familiar. Prodigals Community approaches male/female interaction as brother-sister relationships. Treat male residents as brothers and female residents as sisters.
- ◆ Share secrets—yours or theirs. Prodigals Community is an open community. Residents are encouraged to share *everything* with their counselors and groups. By allowing them to share secrets with you, or asking them to keep one of yours, you are encouraging behavior that is counterproductive to the recovery process.
- ◆ Discuss problems concerning staff or other residents with your friend. He or she knows that these things are to be dealt with directly in group or with a counselor.