

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John

Volunteer Training Manual



THE ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETY

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The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, N.B. has been in existence since 1987. It is an affiliate of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, which governs its member organizations.

The Society was named after a 19th century English Quaker, Elizabeth Fry, who was dedicated to prison reform for women in conflict with the law. With a background in religion, Elizabeth Fry believed in equality for all women. In 1813, Elizabeth Fry visited Britain's Newgate Prison. Here, she witnessed women and children crammed in filthy cells where the stench of filth and unwashed bodies was overwhelming.

It was from this personal testimony that Elizabeth Fry made the following recommendations for penal reform to the House of Commons in 1817:

- The sexes be separated.
- Women be supervised by women.
- Inmates be educated and paid for their work.

The 26 Elizabeth Fry Societies across Canada continue to fight for better education and job training programs for women in conflict with the law and those at risk of coming in conflict with the law.

A group of concerned women formed the Elizabeth Fry Society in Saint John to work with, and on behalf of women in conflict with the law, and to raise public awareness on related issues. They were interested in how the criminal justice system depicted women in this area.

The mandate and mission of the Elizabeth Fry Society is to:

- Respond to the needs of women in prison.
- Develop programs and services in the community for women who have been charged with a criminal offence, or who are at risk of coming into conflict with the law.
- Improve the quality of life of the children by improving the quality of life of the mother.
- Encourage public awareness and understanding of issues related to women in conflict with the law.
- Advocate for the improvement of conditions for women in local penal institutions.
- Advocate for changes in the criminal justice system.

The term “at risk of coming into conflict with the law” allows the society to avail their services to women in general, not only those involved with legal issues. Thus, the society provides services to women – young or old – who have the *potential* to come into conflict with the law. It also provides support to women who are experiencing physical, emotional, or financial difficulties, which may be the result of addictive behaviours and/or living in abusive situations.

The society prides itself on its ability to assist imprisoned women to make a successful transition into, and become productive members of society. It also aims to address identifies issues before they become a problem for the women involved. One important principle of the society is to examine alternatives to imprisonment. The Society examines the reasons that may cause women to become involved in crime, and focuses on preventative measures. “We look not at punishment, but at healing, and at making the whole community part of the healing, explains the Society.

The Elizabeth Fry Society is an organization dedicated to serve women from all walks of life, not only those in prison. It provides a safe, healing environment for strength and re-growth. It defends the rights of women, while working to ensure fair treatment in the criminal justice system. Above all, the society views women not only as objects to be dismissed, but as human beings who can make a positive contribution to our society.

On behalf of the women with whom we work, thank you!

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick.

Philosophy and Mission

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick is a community-based organization founded on the premise that the community has an important role to play in the criminal justice process;

Whereas the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick believes in the principles of fairness and justice for all people under the criminal justice act;

And whereas the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick in general, recognizes that the contributing factors to women being in conflict with the law can be directly attributed to social economic conditions:

And whereas the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick supports alternatives to incarceration;

And whereas the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick is committed to listening to the concerns of women in conflict with the law, and responding to their expressed needs;

The purpose of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick is to work towards achieving fairness and equality for women in conflict or at risk of becoming in conflict with the law by: assuming and advocacy role, facilitating the implementation of services, and promoting public awareness of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick.

Goals of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick:

1. To establish liaison with women who are incarcerated at the Saint John Regional Centre, Madawaska Regional Correctional Centre for Women.
2. To facilitate women's re-integration into the community.
3. To inform women in conflict with the law, or those at risk of becoming in conflict with the law, of the purpose and services of the Elizabeth Fry Society.
4. To facilitate the development and provision of services to women incarcerated at the Saint John Regional Correctional Centre, Madawaska Regional Correctional Centre for Women.
5. To provide support and assistance to women upon their release from Saint John Regional Correctional Centre, Madawaska Regional Correctional Centre for Women.
6. to act as a resource to community and government agencies that offer services and programs for women who are in conflict with the law.

7. To encourage and support alternatives to incarceration.
8. To raise the level of public awareness regarding issues related to women in conflict or at risk of becoming in conflict with the law.
9. To report constructively on policies and legislation relating to women in conflict with the law.

Volunteer Opportunities

Listed below are the volunteer opportunities available through The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick. Please check those that interest you, and include comments in the space provided. This check list includes activities currently running, as well as those that have the potential to run in the future given adequate interest. Please note that all opportunities may not be available at this time because of scheduling and need. However, do check any and all that are of particular interest to you now and in the future.

- Bingo at The Saint John Regional Correctional Centre.
(Third Monday of each month.)
- Education/Crafts at The Saint John Regional Correctional Centre.
(Monday/Wednesday)
- One-on-One Volunteer Support Program in prisons and the community.
- Displays –creating and/or staffing during special events.
- Newsletter- Those with computer skills especially needed. Also need submission of articles, poetry, artwork, etc..
- Organizing supplementary volunteer sessions.
- Workshop Program- Assisting the Program Coordinator as Co -Facilitator with programming.
- Literacy, finding literacy resources, tutoring.
- Research.
- Fundraising Committee.
- Human Rights in Action Committee.
- Social Action Committee.
- Pet Therapy.
(Wednesdays)
- Mother/Child Read Aloud Program at The Saint John Regional Correctional Centre. (Thursday mornings, 9-11)
- Mother/Child Read Aloud Program at Nova Institution.
(Six times per year on Saturdays & Sundays)
- Christmas Gifts for Children Project.
- Court Work. (Daily)
- Advocacy.
- School Program.
- Other –Suggestions welcome!

Volunteer Job Description

As a volunteer with The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick, you will be required:

1. To interact on volunteer nights, held on a regular basis, with women at The Saint John Regional Correctional Centre, in an informal, social setting.
2. To serve as a positive role model for the women with whom you are working on a one-on-one basis.
3. To assist in raising the public profile of The Elizabeth Fry Society and in promoting a greater awareness of the issues the Society is trying to address.

For One-on-One Volunteers only:

1. To encourage women to develop confidence in their own abilities, but to be available when required to advocate on their behalf (i.e.- making phone calls for them, setting up appointments, acting as a liaison between these women and government agencies, making referrals, etc.).
2. TO work in a one-to-one helping relationship with an assigned woman. Responsibilities include listening, discussing, and helping to set goals and sort out problems, providing moral support, and encouraging the individual to develop greater self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-reliance.

Knowledge required by volunteers:

- Issues relating to women in conflict with the law.
- Philosophy of The Elizabeth Fry Society.
- Information about the criminal justice system.
- Institutional regulations regarding visits to The Saint John Regional Correctional Centre.
- Legal terminology and prison slang.
- Knowledge of the services and programs available to women who have a variety of personal and practical problems.

Skills and Abilities Required

- Good listening skills.
- Relate well to professionals and to the target group.
- Able to maintain confidentiality.

- Able to speak on behalf of women in a competent manner.
- Able to separate your private life from the professional role you play in a supportive relationship.
- Able to handle stress and to remain calm in a crisis situation.
- Able to set realistic limitations in a one-to-one helping relationship.

Personality Traits of Volunteer:

- Self-confident.
- Non-judgmental.
- Sensitive to the needs of the client.
- Empathetic.
- Tactful.
- Mature.
- Dependable.
- Tolerant of behavior, attitudes, and values that are different from your own.
- Sense of humor.
- Committed.

Volunteers Must be Prepared to:

- Attend and complete volunteer training program.
- Attend volunteer nights, as agreed upon, at The Saint John Regional Correctional Centre.
- Maintain regular contact with a woman assigned on a one-on-one basis.
- Attend volunteer meetings and periodic workshops.
- Accept supervision from Elizabeth Fry staff.
- Respect institutional regulations.
- Be on time for scheduled visits at The Saint John Regional Correctional Centre, or visits within the community.
- Let The Elizabeth Fry Society office know if a scheduled appointment will be missed.
- For one-on-one volunteers: Document contacts and report monthly to the Program Coordinator.

Saint John Regional Correctional Centre Volunteer Guidelines

Do's

- Bring identification (i.e.- driver's license)
- Sign up through The Elizabeth Fry Society office for volunteer shifts at S.J.R.C.C.
- Keep in touch with other volunteers who will be accompanying you to S.J.R.C.C. Discuss travel arrangements and the activity being held during your shift.
- If you cannot make it to a shift, it is your responsibility to find another volunteer to replace you. An up-to-date list of current volunteers will be provided. Call the office with the name of the volunteer who will take your place. The office needs to know who volunteers at the facility for all shifts.
- Be on time for your volunteer shifts. Shifts usually commence around 7 p.m.
- You are required to have all items that are being brought in cleared by the guards. We would like to avoid any confusion around what volunteers are bringing into the facility.
- Introduce yourself to the women.
- Talk to more than one individual. Try to encourage group communication and group activity.
- Be attentive when speaking with women. You are at the facility on behalf of The Elizabeth Fry Society.
- Ask the women for their suggestions for Bingo prizes, snacks and other activities.
- For each shift you are required to complete a report. This report will detail what went on throughout your shift, and it is an opportunity for you as a volunteer to express any concerns, questions or suggestions.
- Anything you purchase for the shift (i.e.- tape, snacks), bring the receipt to The Elizabeth Fry Society for reimbursement.
- And most importantly, HAVE FUN!

Don'ts

- Do not bring anything to the S.J.R.C.C. that has not been previously approved by The Elizabeth Fry Society office. We do not want to be blamed for bringing in contraband.
- Do not purchase prizes for bingo other than the one supplied by Elizabeth Fry. Bringing in your own prizes may foster favoritism among the volunteers coming into the facility.
- Do not bring anything out of the S.J.R.C.C. that you did not bring in with you. If women ask you to take something out with you, tell them that you are not allowed to do so. Advise them that they can speak to whoever visits on Thursday morning, when they visit that week.
- Listen and talk to the women, but try to not counsel or give advice to them. On Thursday, there will be appointed members who will be there to offer advice and mentorship.

- Do not give any woman your contact information (i.e.-telephone number, address).
- Do not make promises to the women you cannot keep.
- If the guards at the facility say or do something that you do not agree with, or if they give you a hard time, report this to The Elizabeth Fry office immediately.

**The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick
Volunteer Oath of Confidentiality**

Oath of Confidentiality:

I, _____, have read the policy on confidentiality and understand its intent and limitations.

I hereby agree to protect all confidential information acquired in the course of my involvement with The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick. I understand that a breach of this agreement could result in the termination of my association with the organization.

Signature, Volunteer

Date

Signature, Witness

Date

**The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick
Disclaimer of Liability**

I, _____, hereby release the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick from any liability with respect to any injury that I may sustain while participating in volunteer programs through the Society.

Signature, Volunteer

Date

Signature, Program Coordinator,
Executive Member

Date

Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick Volunteer Contract

1. I subscribe to the purpose of The Elizabeth Fry Society and will assist the Society in achieving its goals. I am familiar with the policies of The Elizabeth Fry Society that relates to volunteers.
2. I am familiar with the guidelines concerning confidentiality and have signed an Oath of Confidentiality.
3. I agree to a six (6) month commitment to The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick with a realization that a particular assignment could be terminated if deemed necessary by myself, the person being supported, and/or The Elizabeth Fry Society.
4. When visiting at The Saint John Regional Correctional Centre, I agree to follow the guidelines that apply to volunteers at this institution.
5. I agree that I will not consult with family members, friends or other professionals on confidential matters, except when given consent by the person associated with the matter.
6. I agree to attend scheduled volunteer meetings for the purpose of information exchange, personal support, on going skills development, and to prevent emotional and physical burnout.
7. I will notify The Elizabeth Fry Society office if I am unable to attend a volunteer meeting, and I understand that if I fail to attend three meetings in a row without sufficient justification, my contract will be terminated.
8. I am aware that my responsibilities as a support volunteer will include visits to The Saint John Regional Correctional Centre on a volunteer night. I will notify The Elizabeth Fry Society office as early as possible if I am unable to meet this commitment, and will find a replacement from the designated list of volunteers.

I agree to the contract obligations listed above and wish to volunteer for The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick.

Signature, Volunteer

Date

Signature, Staff

Date

Evaluation of The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick by Volunteers

The following are some questions you may wish to ask yourself in regards to your role as a volunteer with The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick.

1. Do I have a clear job description?
2. Do I receive adequate assistance when required?
3. Do I receive updated information about changes in the Society, in programming, and in my responsibilities?
4. Do I feel valued as a volunteer?
5. Do I feel the Society is meeting its mandate? That is, am I seeing the following things:
 - Response to the needs of women in prison.
 - Development of programs and services in the community for women who have been, or are at risk of coming into conflict with the law.
 - Encouragement of the public's awareness of the issues regarding women and the law.
 - Lobbying for improvements in conditions for women in penal institutions.
 - Lobbying for changes in the criminal justice system.
6. Do I feel comfortable in discussing with staff, issues that are of a concern me?
7. If I have discussed issues with staff, was I satisfied with their response?
8. Do I have any suggestions of ways to improve The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, New Brunswick?
9. Do I have any additional comments to make?

Reasons to Promote Alternatives to Incarceration

- Current approaches to addressing crime by increasing prohibition and developing more punitive penalties are increasing the nature and extent of imprisonment in Canada.
- The unraveling of social programs and therefore basic support services for women in Canada, combined with increases in penalties and imprisonment, are not resulting in any increased safety for Canadian women and their children. Canada has not seen a decrease in crime, but is seeing increased public insecurity, as well as corresponding fears and safety concerns.
- Canada's criminal justice system is retributive, where increasingly, our focus is on identifying someone to blame and then punish for legal transgression. Little efforts tend to be devoted to identifying, much less addressing, the needs and/or losses of the victim, the offender, or the community.
- Recidivism rates for federally sentenced women are approximately 20%; 10% reflect the commission of new offences, while the other 10% reflects administrative breaches or conditions of community release.
- Most women who are imprisoned are not high risk, and do not pose a threat to the safety of the community.
- Imprisonment, especially for long periods of time, has not proven to be successful in deterring or rehabilitating prisoners.
- There is a far greater likelihood that opportunities for responsible accounting for offences committed may occur in community-based and client-centered settings.
- On any given day in Canada 25, 000 children have a mother involved in the criminal justice system.