



# **Lydia's House Resident Handbook**

**June 2021 Revision**

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## **Introduction**

### **Lydia's House Affirmation**

This is my community. It is composed of people just like me. It will be kind if I am kind. It will be forgiving if I forgive. It will patiently endure wrongs if I endure them. It will be a community of loyalty, love, faith and service if I who make it what it is am filled with these. Therefore, with God's love, I dedicate myself to the task of being all these things I want for Lydia's House.

Dear Guests,

We welcome you to the Lydia's House community today. We know your journey here has been a long one and we hope the time you spend with this community will restore you and strengthen you for all the journeys ahead.

Life together will have delights as well as struggles. We will disappoint and hurt one another. We will also get to work through our differences and experience reconciliation.

We promise to work alongside you to help make the most of your time here, and we welcome you and your family to the community. We are glad you are here.

-- The Lydia's House Community

### **Our Mission**

The mission of Lydia's House is to provide safe, stable and supportive housing to women and children in transition and crisis.

### **Our Vision**

The vision of Lydia's House is to be a demonstration of God's beloved community, a home where women from all walks of life can help one another grow toward wholeness.

### **Our Guiding Principles**

In our life together three core principles guide our words and actions toward one another:

**TRUTH:** Lydia's House promotes honest communication and encourages members to "speak the truth in love."

**RESPECT:** Every member of the Lydia's House community is a child of God and should be treated as such.

**KINDNESS:** Lydia's House encourages tempering each interaction and conflict with kindness, believing that a community functions best with kindness at its core.

### **What is Lydia's House?**

Lydia's House is a home for women and children who are in transition or crisis. Guests have experienced "traditional" homelessness or other housing crisis.

We all share much of life with one another, including space and many meals. By having our lives overlap in this way we can support one another and learn new ways of being.

### **Our Physical Address:**

2024 Mills Ave

Norwood, OH 45212

### **Our Mailing Address (if you need additional privacy):**

P.O. Box 128808

Norwood, OH 45212

## **Mail, Phones and Building Guidelines**

**Incoming Mail:** Your mail will be put in your box, unopened. Please allow a volunteer to sort the mail when it arrives.

**Phones:** The Lydia's House office can be reached at 513-549-7752.

**Getting in and out of the building:** You will receive a key code upon entering the community. Please keep this key code private. Your code will be deleted when you leave the community.

**Emergencies or urgent needs:** During the week, there will often be a person on house duty physically at the house. Check the board when you enter the house for that person's name.

If that person is not around or cannot be located, please call the on call pager at 513-595-6600. *You must leave a message or your own number after the tone or we will not know who called.*

## **Who's Who at Lydia's House**

The **Guests** of Lydia's House join the community for different amounts of time, typically about three months. We may have as many as six adult guests and six child guests at any time.

One or two **Resident Fellows** live across the street. They are in charge of dealing with emergencies and caring for the community. They also provide accountability for monitoring curfew hours and making sure dinner gets on the table Tuesday through Thursday.

**Core Community Volunteers** live in the neighborhood. These volunteers regularly join the house at dinner and they help with the running of the house.

Many **Outside Volunteers** will come through the house every week. They help with house maintenance, meal preparation, yard work, and other areas.

## **A Typical Weekday at Lydia's House**

6 AM: The house begins to wake up and quiet hours end. Individuals and families prepare their own breakfasts and bag lunches.

9 AM: Guests are generally expected to be away from the house at school, job training, errands, etc by 45 days into their stay unless they are physically ill. Volunteers may or may not be in the house during this time.

Noon: Visiting hours begin.

6 PM: Dinner time. All guests and resident volunteers are expected to attend unless other arrangements have been made prior to dinner. (Tuesday through Thursday dinners are mandatory unless you are working). Young children can be seated at 5:30 and begin to eat, if desired.

8 PM: Up by Eight! Bedtime for young children. Kids should be upstairs at this time.

9 PM: Visiting hours end. Evening curfew.

## **a. Your Lydia's House Stay**

Your first week at Lydia's House will give you time to settle in. You will get your room set up, meet with different people, and start planning how you will use your time at the house.

For the month, you will be expected to meet with Meridith weekly. You will have the opportunity to receive funds for basic needs like clothing, phone bills, transportation, etc. at these meetings. Details on these meetings are included in the "First 30 Days" form you will complete when you move in.

Within the first month you will start applying for different housing opportunities. Applications for different income-based housing projects will be completed during the first month. We will also start pursuing education and/or employment opportunities.

After 45 days we will have a celebration to mark your halfway milestone. At this celebration you'll received your engraved napkin ring. It is also expected that you would be in an education program or working by this time, unless you are expecting a baby soon or have had one recently.

## **b. Room Deposit and Rent**

You will have the following commitments regarding money while at Lydia's House:

**Room Deposit:** Within the first 30 days, you will be required to pay \$150 for a room deposit. If you leave your room in good shape you can receive this money back when you leave.

**Rent:** You will not pay rent during your first 90 days at Lydia's House. Following, you will pay \$200 per month, due on the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. This rent is similar to what you may pay in a subsidized apartment and will allow us to offer a landlord reference to wherever you may apply to live. Rent at Lydia's House goes toward the cost of your room, utilities, food, and any activities organized by the house for you and your children. *Note: If you owe back debt to Duke Energy or a past landlord you may be required to start making payments the second month of your Lydia's House stay.*

**Savings:** If you would like to save money for a future goal, such as deposit and first month's rent for an apartment or furniture, Lydia's House is happy to help you find a low or no-cost banking option.

### **c. Incentive Program**

By working on your goals and meeting house expectations you will be able to earn tokens that are entered into monthly drawings. You can earn tokens in the following ways:

- Passing room inspection
- Doing the chore assigned to your room
- Other specific tasks, as they arise and are announced

You must have passed every room inspection to qualify for the monthly drawings.

#### **d. Curfew and Overnights**

Curfew is at 9 pm every night. If you are not home by curfew, you will not be admitted into the house unless your late arrival has been approved by the staff member on the duty pager ahead of time (ex. In the case of an emergency room visit where you have been in ongoing communication with the duty person. You would be required to present your after visit summary if this was the case).

You are expected to sleep at the house every night, with the exception of Fridays and Saturdays. You can take as many overnights as you want on those two nights, but we will not be able to do late night pickups/drop offs if your overnight plans change.

Some exceptions may be made around holidays or special occasions. If you have a question about an opportunity that would keep you out past curfew or overnight, please speak to staff first.

## **e. Sobriety Policy**

Guests at Lydia's House are encouraged to make healthy choices. The following is expected of all who live at Lydia's House:

- No Alcohol Use or Possession while at the house. If you are working on sobriety, we require you to maintain that outside the house as well. If you are at least 21 years of age and choose to drink alcohol while away from Lydia's House, you must come home sober.
- No Drug Use or Possession while at the house or away from the house
- No Smoking cigarettes on the grounds of Lydia's House. If you are a smoker you will need to leave the Lydia's House yard completely to smoke.

Screens will be performed randomly or if there is suspicion of drug or alcohol use by the resident volunteers. If you take an overnight away from the house, you will be screened. If you test positive for drug use there will be serious consequences. See the "Safety of the Community" section for more details.

If you have a history of substance abuse, you will be expected to attend NA/AA meetings each week. You will be expected to keep a meeting sheet and get it signed at each meeting to track your attendance.

## **f. Care of Children**

We are glad you've chosen Lydia's House as a home for your children. While we know there are many different ways to be a parent, we ask each Lydia's House guest the following:

- Do not yell at or hit your children to correct them.
- Be on the same level of the house as your kids. For example, if they are on the first floor, you should be on the first floor as well.
- Keep your children with you if you leave the house, even if you just go down the street.
- Make sure your children's immunizations are up-to-date, for the health of all of the kids.
- Lydia's House has an "Up by 8" policy for the children of the house. This means your kids should be in their rooms by 8 PM, even if they're not asleep.
- If you want another guest or volunteer to babysit your child, please fill out a care of children form and get a signature before leaving the house.

If you become sick or otherwise unable to take care of your children, we will call your emergency childcare contact. See Care of Children form to choose your contact. If your contact cannot be reached your children must go with you or 241-KIDS will be called to care for the children.

As your children play and explore the house and yard, please be respectful to other guests by being mindful of where your children are, of any messes that need cleaning up, and by respecting quiet hours.

Lydia's House promises if a volunteer is trusted with your children, they will be thoroughly screened and trained prior to babysitting.

Please dispose of diapers in designated diaper pails or outside garbage only.

## **g. Health Care Guidelines**

Each Lydia's House guest is working to become healthier. While living at Lydia's House you agree to do the following:

- Attend doctors' appointments as scheduled.
- Take prescription medications only and exactly as prescribed and keep your medication list updated in case of emergency.
- Share ongoing health challenges with the resident volunteer.
- Provide care for children when ill, including doctors' visits and medications.

Lydia's House can help with transportation, although we will always request you try Medicaid transportation first. If you have medication related expenses you are struggling with Lydia's House may be able to offset some expenses.

## **a. Visitor Policy**

You are welcome to have your friends and family members visit you during your stay at Lydia's House. Please plan your visits with these guidelines in mind:

- Visitors are welcome from 12:00 PM to 9:00 PM. If you'd like your visitor to stay for dinner, check with the house duty volunteer for the evening to see if there is room and enough food.
- Visitors can be on the second floor with you as long as the bedroom door is at least half open.
- Stay with your visitor during their visit. If they are in a room, you should be too.
- Visitors are required to follow all of the same rules as guests. If your visitor is breaking rules, they will be asked to leave.
- All visitors should be introduced to the house duty volunteer.

## **b. House Meetings**

There is a mandatory house meeting once a month after dinner. This is the place to take problems or ideas that affect the entire house.

Some Sundays there will be a Worship service scheduled for the evening. The Worship service is a Christian service with prayer and singing. A potluck meal is generally available afterward. Attendance at worship is not required but may make your stay at Lydia's House more meaningful.

### **c. Community Celebrations and Family Camp**

Lydia's House celebrates with the entire community between five and six times every year. These celebrations are usually at 2024 Mills and include former guests and volunteers. Often these celebrations are the following:

Christmas/Epiphany (typically in January)

Mardi Gras

Easter Monday

Mother's Day

Back to School (August)

All Saint's Day (early November)

Other celebrations may be scheduled, as well as trips to places like King's Island. These gatherings are not required, but are a good way to make your time as a resident more festive.

Once or twice a year the entire house will go to Family Camp. The dates of camp will be shared in advance. The house may be closed during this event for cleaning and maintenance.

#### **d. Transportation**

Each Lydia's House resident can receive a one-month Zone 1 bus pass free of charge at the beginning of her time at Lydia's House, plus a pass for any children requiring one. Additional bus passes may be possible in the months following.

If you have an appointment and need someone to come with you, Lydia's House may be able to drive. Fill out a transportation request and give it/text it to Meridith as early as possible to get this on the schedule. Please request Medicaid transportation for medical appointments.

If you have a car, you must have a valid driver's license to operate the car. Otherwise, Lydia's House will require you to park the car until a valid license can be obtained.

## e. Meals and Food

At the heart of Lydia's House is the dining room table. Evening meals are shared Tuesday through Thursday. All other nights are YOYO (you're on your own).

Here are some details about the food at Lydia's House:

- Dinners Tuesday through Thursday are required, unless you are working or have special permission.
- If you would like to be on the cooking rotation talk to a staff member.
- You can use the food in the refrigerator or pantry to cook dinner. If you wish to cook something we don't have you can put requests on the grocery list.
- Every dinner will have a salad or other vegetable option.
- Space limitations mean you cannot keep your own food in the upstairs fridge. You can place personal food on your pantry shelf or in the downstairs refrigerator on your shelf. Food that is in the upstairs refrigerator or freezer can be eaten by anyone.
- Dessert will be served for birthdays and other celebrations.
- You can add requests for breakfast and lunch food to the grocery lists.
- Deep frying (that is, frying that requires anything more than a few spoonfuls of oil) should be done on the frying stovetop near the window. Please get rid of your oil once it is cooled by placing it in a jar and taking it to the outside trash can. If you want to reuse the oil, please put it in a jar and put it on your pantry shelf.

## **f. Chores, Room Cleanliness and Maintenance**

Lydia's House depends on everyone that lives in the house to keep the place clean. The daily chore chart is located on the refrigerator and includes tasks related to dinner. Your room also has a weekly chore assigned to it.

While you live at Lydia's House, you are in charge of cleaning your room. Resident volunteers will periodically inspect guest rooms for the following:

- All food is in the sealed snack container. No food, drinks or dishes from the kitchen should be on the second floor except for water. Food is allowed only in the kitchen and dining room.
- No items other than furniture stored on the floor to minimize fire risk.
- No storage situations that could cause infestations.
- No candles, incense, or anything that requires a flame. Decorative candles that have not been burned are okay.
- No lamps other than those initially provided. If you would like to add a lamp talk to a resident volunteer.
- No space heaters in the room

Bathrooms on the second floor should be cleaned at least weekly. You can work out a schedule with the guest you share the bathroom with. Bathrooms will be inspected along with guest bedrooms.

If you find a maintenance repair issue in the house (such as a broken window, laundry machine not working, leaking toilet or tub, signs of bugs or mice, etc.) please report it to a volunteer as soon as you notice the problem.

## **g. Laundry**

Each Lydia's House resident is responsible for her own laundry. Here are some guidelines for doing laundry:

1. You can use the downstairs washer and dryer at any point during the week. Please mark the washer and dryer with your magnet so we know whose clothes are whose.
2. All guests can use the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor washer and dryer when it is available.
3. In order to not disturb others, these are the times approved for using the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor washer and dryer:
  - a. Time when washer/dryer can start running:
    - i. Monday through Friday: 9 AM
    - ii. Saturday and Sunday: 10 AM
  - b. Time when the washer/dryer must be off:
    - i. Sunday through Thursday: 9 PM
    - ii. Friday and Saturday: 10 PM
  - c. If you have to wash outside these hours you can do it in the basement
4. Bleach is not allowed. Occasionally you can ask a volunteer if there is bleach in the basement and the volunteer can add some to a load if it is available. If you feel you always need to use bleach you can take your clothes to the Laundromat.
5. If someone's clothes are in the washer or dryer, please care for them like they were your own.

## **h. Quiet Hours**

Lydia's House will be home to many people, children and adults. To make sure everyone gets enough rest we ask that Quiet Hours be followed.

- Quiet Hours are 9:30 PM to 6 AM Sunday through Thursday.
- Friday and Saturday Quiet Hours start at 10:30 PM.
- The rooms on the second floor are very close together. Please do not have loud conversations in your room during quiet hours.

## **i. Safety of the Community**

Lydia's House works to be a safe space for women and children who have been in crisis. Preserving that safe space means that decisions that endanger yourself or others will be taken seriously. Problems that would cause immediate consequences include:

- You test positive for using drugs or alcohol.
- You become violent with volunteers, residents or property.
- You disclose your location to a person who has acted violently toward you in the past.
- You bring a weapon into the house.
- You physically or verbally abuse or neglect children.
- You become unable to participate in community due to ongoing physical or mental conditions.
- You are unable or unwilling to follow the major rules of the house.

If one of these things happen, you will be asked to stay in the house (mostly in your room) until a new plan is made. This will take place within 24 hours. These are the options for a new plan:

- You will be asked to leave Lydia's House. You might be transferred to a treatment facility, another shelter, or anywhere else there is appropriate shelter available.
- You will remain at Lydia's House with an updated focus agreement with new expectations such as an earlier curfew, behavior change, reduced visitor privileges, etc.