



Volunteer Handbook

Showa Friendship Circle, Spring 2024
Showa Boston Institute

Introduction

Thank you for volunteering with the Showa Friendship Circle! Whether you are a new or returning volunteer, we are thrilled to have you in the program. Please review this handbook closely, as it includes important program policy changes and logistical details.

About the Program

The Showa Friendship Circle (SFC) matches pairs or triads of Showa students with community volunteers (Circle Volunteers) for intercultural exchange, conversational exchange, and recreational activities. Circle Volunteers and students spend time doing fun, interesting activities together. In addition, some Circle Volunteers open their homes to Showa students for meals or just relaxing.

Showa Students spend their semester in Boston building their English skills, learning about Boston and the greater New England Region, and independently exploring their new home. SFC serves as a vital supplement to student's experiential learning, as each volunteer offers a unique window into their lives in the US.

Important Policy Changes at Showa

Beginning Spring 2023, there are several changes to Showa Boston's campus policies that may impact SFC activities.

- Students' campus curfew has changed from 10:00 PM to 12:00 AM. Any SFC activities extending past 12:00 AM will require a special permission form approved by Showa Staff.
- Students are now able to travel independently with more limited restrictions. This may impact student availability during the semester.
- Students over the age of 21 are now permitted to consume alcohol off-campus. The consumption of marijuana or other federally controlled substances is still strictly prohibited.
 - **Important:** Because SFC is an SBI administered program, students are **not permitted** to consume alcohol during SFC activities.

SFC Student Learning Objectives

Articulate impact of experiences to cultivate global citizenship. Objective measured through pre, mid, and post-program reports by students.

Identify community through reflection on identity and affinity. Objective measured via reflection sessions at beginning and end of program.

Demonstrate expanded intercultural competency and communication. Objective measured through assessment by students and volunteers.

Volunteer Expectations

SFC volunteers make up an essential core of the program.

Boundaries and Safety:

- Volunteers are encouraged to build long-lasting platonic relationships with students. Fraternization and other forms of romantic relationships are strictly prohibited and will result in the termination of the volunteer's participation in the program.
- Volunteers must respect student's boundaries regarding communications on all platforms; volunteers should refrain from sending excessive texts, emails, calls, and other digital communications. If a student is not responsive to communications, volunteers should reach out to the SFC coordinator for mediation and or troubleshooting.
- Showa students are not permitted to consume alcohol or drugs during SFC activities. SFC volunteers found to be providing students with alcohol or drugs may face removal from SFC and other Showa programs. (see incident response/concern protocol below)

Meeting with Students:

Volunteers are asked to meet with their assigned students 1-3 times per month. Students normally take 9 courses during their semester, so their free time is limited.

There are no specific or required activities for SFC volunteers and students to complete together. Rather, volunteers and students work together to plan activities that would be mutually enjoyable. Past SFC groups have enjoyed activities like:

- Attending local cultural events and festivals
- Attending sporting events
- Pumpkin carving, tree decoration, and other seasonal activities.
- Museum touring
- Cooking and sharing meals

Tips for Planning Activities

- **Budget:** Students are expected to pay their own expenses during SFC activities. Please inform students ahead of time if planned activities require spending money. It is best practice to check in with students to make sure that projected costs fit within their budget.
- **Transportation:** Volunteers are permitted (but not expected) to drive students to and from SFC activities. Students can also use rideshare apps and public transportation. Volunteers and students must communicate their plans about transportation needs.

Incident/Concern Response Protocol

Although an unusual occurrence, students or volunteers occasionally report concerns surrounding the conduct of their SFC counterparts. Concerns may regard boundaries and safety, communication, or compatibility of interests. The coordinator's priority is to maintain clear channels for communication with students and volunteers, with the hope that concerns can be quickly and efficiently addressed without requiring dramatic or disruptive intervention. If concerns arise, please contact the SFC coordinator as soon as possible.

The program coordinator’s response varies on a case-by-case basis but will utilize the following general protocol.

1. **Gather information:** When an incident or concern is reported, the coordinator will speak with all involved parties to develop a complete narrative of the incident or concerns. This process may include interviews and digital correspondence.
2. **Determine remediation plan:** In collaboration with the student services leadership team, the SFC Coordinator will develop a plan to properly address all party’s concerns. Remediation plans may include:
 - a. A mediated conversation between volunteers and students to address concerns.
 - b. A conversation between the coordinator and the students or volunteers to discuss conduct concerns.
 - c. Students and or volunteers may be reassigned for better alignment of interests and expectations.
 - d. In cases where student, volunteer, or campus safety is of concern, the coordinator may move to remove the volunteer and or student from the program.
3. **Follow up:** As needed and when appropriate, the coordinator will conduct outreach with involved parties to follow up on remediation plans and assess outcomes.

Program Timeline

Subject to change

3/1		<u>SFC Volunteer Application Opens</u>
3/17 - 3/23		<u>SFC Orientation</u>
3/24 - 3/30		<u>Students Arrive</u>
3/31 - 4/6		<u>Student Application Week</u>
4/7 - 4/13		<u>Match Week</u> Matching is completed on a rolling basis. Volunteers will be informed of their matches as they become available.
4/14 - 4/20		<u>Individual Meetings/Rollout</u>
4/21 - 4/27	1	
4/28 - 5/4	2	
5/5 - 5/11	3	
5/12 - 5/18	4	
5/19 - 5/25	5	
5/26 - 6/1	6	
6/2 - 6/8	7	<u>Halfway point</u> Check-ins
6/9 - 6/15	8	
6/16 - 6/22	9	
6/23 - 6/29	10	
6/30 - 7/6	11	
7/7 - 7/13	12	

7/14 - 7/20	13	
7/21 - 7/27	14	Thursday (7/25) - Focus Group
7/28 - 8/3		8/1 - 8/2 GB Students leave