



Frequently Asked Questions

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In addition to the information provided below, we strongly encourage prospective Volunteers to read our fellow Handbook, which can be downloaded from our website.

About Applying to Amate House

Who is eligible to be an Amate House fellow?

Our program is open to young adults, aged 21-29, who are self-aware, mature, and motivated. Applicants are required to have a college degree or equivalent life experience. Applicants should have an interest in growing in the Amate House tenets of service, community, faith, social justice, and stewardship. Fellows serve full-time in under resourced neighborhoods and live in co-ed, faith-based, intentional communities, so good communication skills, patience, a non-judgmental attitude, and a sense of humor are essential! Amate House does not accept married couples into the program.

Amate House is an agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, and many aspects of our program are drawn from Catholic spirituality and tradition. Persons from all spiritual traditions are welcome to apply. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic status, gender, physical disability, or sexual orientation.

How do I get an application?

Our Application for the 2019-2020 program year is now live on the Amate House website. If you have any questions, feel free to email us at volunteer@amatehouse.org, or call us at 773.376.2445.

When is the application deadline?

We accept applications on a rolling basis, and will continue taking applications until all spots are filled. However, the earlier you apply the more options you will have for site placements, as those also are filled on a rolling basis. If you have any questions about this process, please send an email to volunteer@amatehouse.org.

What is the application and site placement process?

We invite each person who is considering a year with Amate House to enter into a process of discernment with our staff. Throughout the process, applicants will have the opportunity to learn about the Amate House tenets of service, community, faith, social justice, and stewardship, as well engage with Amate House staff, fellows, and alumni with any questions that they might have. Likewise, the staff will engage the applicant through an interview process that will help determine if Amate House is the right fit for the applicant.

Here is an estimated recruitment timeline for the coming year:

September through November – This is a great time to learn about options for post-grad service! Catholic Volunteer Network is a great place to research both domestic and international programs. Amate House will be visiting college campuses throughout the country.

October 1 – The application goes live. It consists of two parts, and is designed to be simple to complete and give both you and Amate House a chance to get to know each other. Here is what the process looks like:

Stage One – Submit:

- Basic Background Information
- Personal Statement

After you submit the Basic Background Information + Personal Statement, a recruiter will contact you to set up a 30-45 minute Q & A phone or skype call.

Stage Two – Submit:

- Short Answer Responses
- Resume (emailed as separate attachment to volunteer@amatehouse.org)
- Character References (contact information listed online - references will submit their feedback directly to volunteer@amatehouse.org)

After you submit the Short Answer Responses + Resume + Character References, we will set up a formal interview with you. An in-person interview in Chicago is strongly preferred.

December and January – We tend to start receiving applications around this time. The Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday breaks are great opportunities to work on your application and speak with your family and friends about serving with Amate House. Staff will begin scheduling interviews with Applicants in December.

January-May – Interviewing continues, and the site placement process starts. We send each applicant a list of job descriptions based on their career interests. We work with you to set up interview at your top three sites. From there we communicate with you and the sites to determine which is the best fit. Our staff work very hard to ensure both you and the service site are a good match.

Keep in mind that although we continue this process into the spring, some of the high demands sites, including medical and legal placements, will fill quickly.

Do I need to come to Chicago to interview?

We strongly encourage prospective Volunteers to come to Chicago for interviews, simply because it offers the possibility of meeting us, seeing the living space, and possibly even a few sites, first-hand. However, we understand that travel is not always financially feasible, and so Skype interviews are also possible.

How are Volunteers chosen?

Once the application and interview process is completed and we have received all references, a decision about acceptance will be made by the Amate House Program Staff.

In order to make these selections, several factors are considered, such as:

- Readiness for community living
- Commitment to a personal faith journey, and willingness to engage in dialogue about faith
- Openness to personal growth
- Past experience with volunteer service
- Willingness to work with others of different cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds
- Commitment to social justice and an openness to living simply

As the communities are filled each year, we also consider the balance of personalities in the group of accepted fellows.

About serving with Amate House

What types of service is available for Amate House fellows?

Amate House fellows work in a wide variety of fields throughout Chicagoland. Each year, we have Volunteers serving in social service agencies, grade schools, legal aid clinics, parishes, high schools, health clinics, and other nonprofits. We serve in over 20 neighborhoods in the City of Chicago, and our work touches over 6,000 lives each year! Learn more about our service sites by visiting our website at amatehoue.org.

Do I get any vacation?

Each Amate House fellow receives 10 days away from community between August and June. Vacation may be taken at any point in the year, provided arrangements are worked out with the fellow site and Amate House staff. Typically, those working on school calendars take their two weeks during the Christmas/New Year's break. Other fellows have chosen to stay over the holidays and haven't taken their vacation at other points during the year. Fellows are asked to schedule their vacation around Amate House commitments, such as community nights, retreats, etc.

How will I get to and from my service site?

Amate House covers the transportation of fellows to and from their service sites. Amate House owns and maintains a fleet of vehicles for fellow transportation, and also provides Ventra passes to those volunteers who use public transportation to travel to work.

About living as an Amate House fellow

Where will I be living?

House placement is determined by a variety of factors - where your service site is located plays a big role, but we also consider the gender balance of the communities, as well as the variety of personalities and life experiences. We currently have two houses in Chicago - each house is located in a different neighborhood, and each house has a unique character:

Little Village House is located in the primarily-Mexican immigrant community of Little Village, or "La Villita," which is just southwest of downtown Chicago. This community houses 8-9 people. The building is a former 2-flat building that was converted for communal living in 2011.

McKinley Park House, located in the McKinley Park neighborhood, houses 10-13 people. The building is a former convent with a dedicated chapel and a recently-installed prayer garden space. The house is located just 1 block north of McKinley Park, one of the largest parks in the city.

Regardless of house, every fellow has a private bedroom space. Bedroom size varies somewhat by house, but each room has a closet and is furnished with a twin sized bed, dresser, and 2-3 other pieces of furniture, such as a nightstand, desk, or chair. All houses have common bathrooms, shower rooms, kitchens, dining rooms and living rooms.

Am I required to stay on weekends?

During the first month of the program, we ask that our fellows make a commitment to staying in Chicago. We find that this time is critical for acclimating to a new space and fostering community life. After the month of August, leaving for a weekend is generally not a problem for Amate House Volunteers. However, a few factors must be considered on any given weekend in discerning whether going away would be wise and acceptable. First, some sites require occasional or regular work on weekends. Second, we challenge our Volunteers to be mindful of how their presence or absence impacts community life. Third, occasional Amate House events are scheduled on weekend days. These dates are given out at the beginning of the service year. Fellows are expected to check their work and Amate House calendars, as well as to confer with their fellow community members when making plans to leave for the weekend.

What do you mean by living simply?

Amate House fellows make the commitment to live simply over the course of their volunteer year. Many different motivations and reasons might exist among the group of volunteers each year for living more simply, and many conversations will ensue as to what that commitment means. Amate House encourages the effort to live more simply primarily as a way to prompt deeper reflection on faith and lifestyle choices, as well as to encourage solidarity with those with whom we serve during the year. Committing to a more simple lifestyle during the year typically will have implications for how money and time are spent individually and communally, and what values are lived out and reflected in the communal life.

How do fellows usually feel about community living?

Fellows who complete a year at Amate House often say that their experience of living in community with other fellows was the most unexpectedly rewarding part of the year... and also the most challenging. Living together with peers that you have not chosen, and learning to love and appreciate them for who they are, can be immensely challenging and surprisingly rewarding for one who is open to the learning and gifts that community living brings. Developing deep, transparent and mutual relationships is a lot of fun AND a lot of hard work. The relationships, experiences and skills that arise out of a commitment to "live community well" last a lifetime. In addition, the community that surrounds you as a fellow at Amate House will be your sounding board, your support, and your constant dialogue partner to enable the most fruitful year possible.

What if I am a vegetarian or have specific dietary needs?

Each community works together to plan its menu and shopping choices. There are typically a number of vegetarians or those with specific food needs among the group of fellows. Arrangements are worked out with the community to attend to each individual's needs. We have many examples of communities that have been able to successfully navigate the challenges of vegetarianism, veganism, food allergies, etc.

Will I be safe living and working as a fellow?

Amate House takes safety very seriously. We make sure that our residences are safe, secure, and well-lit. We coordinate the safe travel of our fellows to and from their work sites. Our fellows work almost exclusively during daytime hours. We work closely with our sites to ensure a safe and healthy work environment for all of our fellows. Our staff is local and can respond to incidents very quickly, if they occur. As a member of intentional community, living closely with other peers also provides an added degree of safety and accountability.

Because we are committed to serving the neighborhoods, schools, and organizations that are most in need, our fellows often work in areas with histories of socioeconomic and societal problems. Rather than gloss this over, we talk about it during the application process and throughout Orientation. Fellows do need to have an ability and willingness to operate in the urban landscape, understanding that some places in the city might be outside of their comfort zone. Throughout the year, we stress the importance of being aware of oneself and one's surroundings. We have found that a mindfulness about safety and some common sense go a long way towards a successful and safe experience. Our program boasts an excellent track record in regards to safety, especially given our location in a major urban center like Chicago.

What other time commitments are there during the Amate House year?

Amate House fellows meet once a week, on Wednesday nights, for Community Night. Community Night involves dinner and an activity, such as a guest speaker, discussion and reflection on relevant issues, participation in a workshop together, or spend social time together as a group. In addition to Wednesday nights, Volunteers also meet once a week in their communities, for a spirituality night. Amate House has a number of events outside the regular calendar, such as workshops, fundraisers, and other social or holiday activities. Fellows receive a full calendar of events at the beginning of the year.

About Financial Concerns

Do I get paid?

Each Amate House fellow receives a monthly allowance of \$150, as well as a year-end, one-time allowance of \$1,500. The fellow's room, board, food, health insurance, and transportation to and from work are provided by Amate House; allowance money does not need to be used for these purposes. Allowance money is usually used by fellows to pay cell phone bills, personal use of Amate House cars, purchases which are strictly for personal use, and socializing.

I have school loans or other debts that I will need to repay - can I take a job for evenings/weekends?

We recognize that student loan debt can be a major obstacle to participating in post-grad service. Public and private loans have different policies regarding forbearance, deferment, or income-based repayment, so incoming Volunteers will need to become familiar with what kinds of loans they have in order to

determine their options. Fellows with federal loans may be eligible to apply for income-based repayment - the U.S.. Department of Education website has more information.

Because full-time service, community life, and other Amate House commitments take up a significant amount of time, we prohibit our fellows from gaining outside employment. We also prohibit fellows from taking classes, unless cleared with the Program Staff in advance. Volunteers who come into the year with outside financial obligations are expected to arrangements for how they will address these obligations prior to their arrival at Amate House.