

# ***The Furniture Co-op***



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Turning Empty Houses Into Homes

## ***Membership Handbook***

## **Vision Statement**

The Furniture Co-op (TFC) collects furniture, housewares, clothing and many other items and distributes them to families and individuals who have been homeless or are at risk of homelessness. In doing so, TFC solves two serious problems at once by offering a meaningful alternative through recycling and reuse of furniture and providing families who are working to rebuild their lives and establish secure and permanent homes a greater chance of success in that transition. The Co-op is a membership driven program and it provides furniture and many other items to the clients of area non-profit organizations which serve low income families and individuals. The goals are to help families achieve self-sufficiency, increase self esteem and achieve long term stability.

## Membership Summary

The Furniture Co-op serves clients affiliated with our 20+ member agencies. The Furniture Co-op receives donations from the community, to be stored in our warehouse as merchandise for clients. Working with member agencies ensures that we are helping individuals and families who truly need our help. Our warehouse is run by our warehouse manager, and volunteers from NHHR and the surrounding community.

The Furniture Co-op's business hours are *Tuesday: 9-2, Thursday 9-2 and Saturday: 9-1.*

Below is a chart indicating the membership levels and the number of referrals allotted to that level:

Annual Membership Fee	Total Number of Referrals
\$250	12
\$375	24
\$500	Unlimited

The referrals allocated to your membership will have a \$40 administration fee. If, however, you exceed your total number of referrals, the administration fee will increase to \$60 for each additional referral. We remind you that the administrative fee may be paid by the member agency or by the client and ask you to consider this when selecting your membership level.

Each family/household is entitled to a maximum of **4** major items and **2** minor items. Major items include beds, dressers, kitchen tables and chairs and sofas. Minor items range from coffee tables to cribs to nightstands.

All member agencies must attend a one hour TFC member training upon enrollment into TFC to ensure understanding of TFC policies and procedures. Please contact TFC Warehouse Manager to schedule a date and time for the training.

Membership meetings will be held quarterly to discuss TFC policies and procedures, struggles, successes, suggestions and challenges.

*Agencies should promote donors to donate gently used furniture and housewares that are in good condition to TFC on an on-going basis. Your clients are counting on a warehouse that is full of quality furniture and housewares; let's make sure we can give it to them together!*

Member agency staff is responsible for the following:

### **Referrals:**

- Clients are referred to TFC from case managers within our member agencies.
- Client referral forms are found on our website, <http://www.nhr.org/what-we-do/furniture-Co-op-members.html>. You must complete the client referral form and the CT TANF intake Application before choosing furniture.
- The password to access the referral form is **morris**.
- All information provided on the referral form must be filled in correctly and legible.
- Clients will not be able to add additional items at selection time unless approved by case manager. Each family/household is entitled to a maximum of 4 major items and 2 minor items. Please refer to TFC Referral Form for the items that are considered major and minor.
- If the referral form is not completed fully, the client may not be able to complete furniture selection. Referral forms can be submitted at the time of furniture selection, or they can be faxed to the Co-op.

### **Forms**

- Before furniture selection, clients must fill out a statistic form and a TANF form ***completely***.
- They must also have their completed referral with them.
- The TANF form and the statistic form are both available on the thrift store side, and are available in both English and Spanish.

### **Selection of Furniture:**

- Clients enter through the thrift store, and sign in on a signup sheet at the door.
- Clients **MUST** have their referral form with them, and cannot go on to furniture selection without completing a statistic form and TANF form.
- Clients will be called to the Co-op side and can browse the thrift store while they wait their turn for furniture selection.
- Each piece of furniture has a tag attached to it.
  - A full tag indicates that that piece of furniture has not been sold, a ripped off tag indicates that the furniture is sold and no longer available.
- The bottom half of the tag is included in the zip-lock of files for the client.
- The top half stays on the furniture until delivery or pickup.
- *Furniture will only be held for **14** days. Once 14 days has passed, the furniture will be released back into general inventory. In order to hold items, the client must pay the \$40 admin fee.*

### **Delivery:**

- Delivery of items purchased in the Co-op can be arranged by the warehouse manager.
- There is a delivery fee which ranges in price depending on type of delivery and the location of the delivery (see attached delivery fee sheet).
- Arrangements must be made at the time of selection and paid for at that time.
- If a client is not home when a delivery is made, there will not be a refund and client must schedule a new delivery date and pay an additional delivery fee.

### **Pick up:**

- If clients have their own transportation, they can bring home the furniture the day of selection, or it can be held for 14 days.
- Clients must have helpers to assist in the loading of the furniture and supplies for packing such as a tarp, bungee cords, rope, moving blankets, etc.

### **Payment**

- There is a \$40 fee for each furniture referral. This fee can be paid by the member agency, or the client.
- We will accept checks from organizations for referral fees.
- Clients can bring their payment to the thrift store cash register after their selection is done.
- A receipt is stapled to their forms for reference.
- Payment may be cash, debit or credit

### **Thrift Store**

#### **Payment & Tax**

- Payment may be cash, debit, or credit.
- All items are taxable

#### **Holding Items**

- If a shopper pays for an item but does not have a way to transport it home on the same day, it can be held for 14 days.
- The shopper should leave their name and phone number so they can be called if their item is about to be put back on the floor.

#### **Miscellaneous**

- No items can be taken from the thrift store into the warehouse.
- Children are not to be left unattended in the thrift store, or in the warehouse.
- Each child that is with a client can pick out a book and small toy to bring home for free.
- There are no returns.

## **TFC Client Eligibility**

Providing furniture impacts families economically, physically and emotionally. Economically families can spend their hard earned money on other things. Physically, family members will have beds and mattresses to sleep on, a table to eat off, and a sofa to sit on. Emotionally they will have the basic needs that every family needs and wants in order to feel successful. They will have achieved this through a respectful and dignified process, which allows them to select the items they not only need, but prefer. Furniture banks across the country hold this to be true: it is the mission to maintain the dignity of the client and improve their outlook while providing necessary assistance!

The program targets families and individuals who do not have furniture and are transitioning out of homelessness; families who are homeless due to domestic violence; families reuniting through the help of The State Department of Children and Families; other very low income families and individuals struggling with disabilities.