



## GO Teams Guides: Winter Service Projects

Winter is the most difficult season to plan a service event. Volunteer groups can find themselves at the mercy of frigid temperatures, treacherous roads, and snowstorms. Even in warmer climates, people might be settling down for the holidays and time with family. However, with careful planning, a volunteer group can stage a successful service project in winter.

### Tips to Get Started

- **Stay inside.** In winter, hosting an outdoor service event can be problematic. Planning an indoor or virtual service event during this season will probably meet with a greater volunteer turnout. You could **volunteer at a local food bank**, **collect winter coats/boots** during a group meeting and donate to a local shelter, or **host a raffle** and donate the proceeds to a local organization.
- **Pay attention!** Assign a volunteer or volunteers to watch weather reports for your area. A day before the event, contact them and discuss whether it's okay to host the event. If a serious meteorological event (sub-zero temperatures, heavy snowfall, etc.) is expected, be prepared to cancel and/or postpone the event. Have a prearranged emergency contact method with group members.
- **Warm up.** If your volunteer group is set on an outdoor service event, plan accordingly. Make sure all volunteers are dressed warmly. Bring hot drinks in thermoses. Have designated warming spots (ex. a member's car or available building) where members can warm up and recuperate. If weather conditions are such that frostbite could set in within a matter of

minutes, take extra precautions. One potential outdoor event is shoveling the driveway/sidewalks of senior residents.

## Potential Service Events

- **Address food insecurity.** During the coldest months of the year, many food insecure people face the difficult decision of paying for heat or food. Snow days also create issues for families that rely on school breakfasts and lunches. You can do an [in-kind collection](#) or fundraiser for your local food bank to help them address the increased need in colder months. Don't forget to check with the food bank before you start your collection to make sure you know what they are currently receiving and asking for.
- **Address housing insecurity.** During winter months, most shelters adjust their operations to allow for longer hours, more beds, and relaxed restrictions for use so they may serve more people during dangerously cold periods. This means that shelters need more supplies and more volunteers than they do during warmer months. Your team can organize [fundraisers](#), [in-kind collections](#), or volunteer with them to help increase your local shelter's impact.

Additionally, though many shelters open for longer hours, add extra beds, and relax their restrictions of who may use their services, often these adjustments do not adequately meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness. Sometimes the temperature that triggers these adjustments is a low temperature, which is not the only factor for issues like hypothermia and frostbite. Furthermore, many shelters remain reluctant to allow inebriated and LGBT+ people to use their facilities even during life threatening cold weather. Consider how your community could advocate for more and wider services or create alternative options.

- **Support LGBT+ youth.** Home for the holiday's isn't a happy experience for many LGBT+ youth whose family is not accepting of their orientation or gender identity. Get in touch with local LGBT+ organizations in your community and find out if they have any programs or events you can support this winter.
- **Organize a toy drive.** Many family shelters request donations of gifts for the giving season. Organize your team to help fill this request. Remember to check with the shelter to learn what

their restrictions are. And don't forget teens when making your shopping and donations lists gifts.

If your team is looking for fresh ideas or looking to escape your service routine, check out our [resources page](#). While not all of the ideas listed are winter-friendly, you can make adjustments or use the season to organize a big service event for spring.

### Questions or Concerns?

If you need help with planning your event or have additional questions, the best way to contact GO Humanity is to use the [contact webform](#), which enables us to track the resolution of your question.