



RIVER HELPER JOB DESCRIPTION

Role: Volunteer Instructor/Guide for a CfR participant for a half-day of catch-and-release fly-fishing on the third day of the retreat. Guided fishing may be on either moving or still water. *All River Helpers should complete a CfR volunteer application* which is located on the state website: www.castingforrecoveryvic.org and should carefully review the job description and information provided by the River Helper Coordinator and retreat staff.

Qualifications – A CfR River Helper should:

- Be an experienced fly-fisher and be comfortable wading and assisting a beginning angler in moving water.
- Know how to safely catch and release a fish (***Barbless hooks only please.***)
- Be comfortable conversing with women who are breast cancer survivors (Orientation session provided prior to the fishing session.)

Time Commitment: The CfR River Helper Coordinator will provide meeting times and directions prior to the retreat. *Please arrive at the scheduled time and be sure to let the River Helper Coordinator know if you have an emergency or are delayed.* River Helpers are often invited to have breakfast and/or lunch with participants and retreat staff. Attendance at meals is not mandatory but the extra time together can be very beneficial.

Important Info:

- **Pets:** All CfR volunteers including River Helpers are asked to leave pets at home. Participants may be sensitive due to treatment or allergies and are themselves not allowed to bring pets.
- Please dress in full, appropriate fishing attire. River Helpers are frequently asked to pose in photographs or participate in media interviews so please take this into consideration.
- CfR provides equipment (see below) so you will not need a rod. *A landing net is highly recommended.* River Helpers *do not fish* unless they are demonstrating a cast.
- CfR volunteer policy *strictly prohibits self-promotion at retreats. **Please do not use this opportunity to do business.*** If a participant specifically asks for contact information it is appropriate to give her a business card.
- Please refrain from cigarette smoking or using a vaporizer or tobacco products while at the retreat.

Things to Bring: The following items may be helpful to bring along if you are willing to share/lend:

- Wading staff
- Assortment of flies that are specific to the area you will be fishing
- Catch-and-release net
- Spare polarized sunglasses and rain jacket
- Portable folding chair

Equipment provided at the retreat:

- Participants are equipped with a rod, reel, breathable waders, wading boots, and a lanyard or vest that contains a leader, tippet, nippers, floatant and strike indicators. Sometimes the women have received a small gift assortment of flies for use on the water.
- Some participants have learned fly tying and have a few of their own flies with them. Even if her fly doesn't look productive, *it's very important to give it a try.*

Instruction Provided to the Participants:

Most of the participants in the CfR program are beginners with very little casting/fishing experience.

Participants receive the following instruction on the second day of the retreat:

- Casting Practice – Two 20-minute sessions – basic pick-up and put-down, line control, and some have practiced shooting line.
- Roll Cast - possibly.
- Hook set and landing a fish.
- Knots - Surgeons and Clinch.
- What Fish Eat – basic stream entomology

A quick review of the previous day's instruction may be helpful before starting to fish.

Fishing Day Logistics:

- You will be paired with one participant for the fishing session. If your participant has any special needs you will be informed of those in the orientation session. In some instances there may be a CfR staff member assigned to accompany you and provide additional assistance for a participant.
- You may be asked to transport gear or participants to the fishing location. For comfort and safety, a participant should not be transported one-on-one to the fishing site with her river helper. A female CfR staff member or another participant/river helper pair should ride with you. In an effort to be environmentally conscious, please limit the number of vehicles in transport to the fishing site, and carpool as much as possible.
- The CfR Medical Facilitator will be stationed at a central location. You will be given instructions on how to reach her. ***If any injury occurs (participant falls down, bee sting, hook stick) inform the Medical Facilitator immediately.***
- Universal precautions to protect yourself from blood exposure should be employed. ***You will receive a pair of gloves to use in case of blood exposure.***
- Please get your participant off the water at the scheduled time.
- Please do not leave the area you are assigned to fish without informing someone.

Tips to Remember:

- **Don't touch without asking.**
- Give only positive feedback. Keep it light... use humor.
- Catching a fish is NOT the goal for this time on the water.
- ***Pinch down the barbs on all flies.***
- Encourage your participant to do as much as possible. Offer assistance but resist casting/fishing for her unless she has made numerous unsuccessful efforts.
- Allow your participant some "space." Peaceful, quiet moments on the water can be very restorative. Don't feel the need to always fill the silence with talking.
- **SHARE:** If you've found the "honey hole" and your participant has landed several fish while others haven't, offer to switch spots with others... and pass the word about what flies are working.
- All participants **MUST** wear sunglasses and a hat with a brim while fishing, for safety.

Please read "*Teaching Breast Cancer Survivors to Fly Fish*" for more information.