



Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of the Dismas family. Dismas House of Nashville is a 501(c)(3) transitional re-entry program for men recently released from incarceration. Per your request, enclosed is an admissions packet for student residency at Dismas.

There are five sections to the admissions packet; sections 1, 2, & 4 are for your reference:

- 1) Eligibility and Admissions
- 2) About Dismas House
- 3) Application
- 4) Student Resident Agreement
- 5) Consent for Release of Information Form

Student Residents make Dismas a unique re-entry program and community, positively influencing the lives of former offenders. Dismas programming creates a family-like atmosphere, hence, the slogan, “Dismas is Family”. This slogan reflects a value system that each resident is a member of a “family” that works together to achieve positive results. As a family, students and returning citizens live, learn, work, and play together – supported by community volunteers and professional staff.

Sincerely,

Scott Pieper, Executive Director

Dismas, Inc. – Nashville House

1513 16th Avenue South

Nashville, TN 37212

[o]: (615) 297-9287

[e]: spieper@dismas.org

Section One: Eligibility & Admissions

Eligibility Guidelines: Please review the following before submitting an application – anyone who does not meet our eligibility guidelines will not be accepted.

- Male, 18 years of age or older
- Priority is given to “traditional” students enrolled in a Middle-Tennessee university, college, or other form of higher education
- “Non-traditional” students and “traditional” students outside of the Middle-Tennessee area will be considered on a case-by-case basis
- Applicants convicted of felony charges will be considered on a case-by-case basis
- Applicants cannot be under supervision of any corrections agency and must be free from supervision or incarceration for at least one year
- Applicants registered for a sex offense by any national, state, territorial, or tribal government are ineligible for acceptance
- Simultaneous residency will not be granted to charge partners or family members
- Applicants **WILL NOT** be approved without providing **ALL** requested information
- Applicants must participate in at least two interviews with Dismas staff before they can be accepted

Admissions Process: Your admissions process will begin when we receive a complete application and consent form. The application will be reviewed and a decision made to deny acceptance or schedule a first interview – all applicants will be notified of the decision. After the first interview, information collected will again be reviewed and a decision will be made to deny acceptance or schedule a second interview. After the second interview, a final acceptance decision will be made.

Applicants who provide false or misleading information, or those who withhold pertinent information, will immediately be denied when such information is discovered. If such information is discovered after an applicant becomes a resident of Dismas, they will be asked to leave the house and program immediately.

Submitting an Application:

1. Keep sections one and two for your reference
2. Complete and submit section three – failure to provide all information requested will delay your admissions process
3. Along with a completed application, please submit evidence of student enrollment
4. Keep section four for your reference - the Student Resident Agreement is to be signed only by a successful candidate
5. Complete and submit section five
6. Documents provided during admissions are not returned and become property of Dismas, Inc.
7. Submit **ALL** requested information to . . .

**Dismas House of Nashville
Attn: Student Admissions
1513 16th Avenue South
Nashville, TN 37212
-or-
Fax: (615) 297-6326**

Section Two: “About Dismas House”

Mission Statement: The mission of Dismas House of Nashville is to facilitate the reconciliation of former offenders to society, and society to former offenders through development of a supportive community. A supportive community is characterized by students and former offenders living together in a family setting, the active involvement of volunteers from the broader community, and a spirit of open and participative decision making and sharing across the Dismas network, with an emphasis on the common good.

Organizational Summary: Dismas House of Nashville is a 501(c)(3) transitional re-entry program for individuals recently released from incarceration. In 1974, the late Father Jack Hickey, O.P., along with The Vanderbilt Prison Project (a student organization), recognized the vulnerability of and lack of services available to those re-entering society after incarceration. Dismas was founded on the idea that by living together, returning citizens and college students would mutually benefit each other as they assimilate into mainstream society. The Dismas program takes its name from the repentant thief at Calvary (Luke 23:39-43), in the spirit of welcoming forgiveness.

Programming creates a family-like atmosphere; hence the slogan, “Dismas is Family.” This slogan personifies a value system that recognizes the dignity and worth of all people. While at Dismas, residents often reconnect and rebuild relationships with their own family members as well. Through community involvement, residents learn how to positively interact in social settings without the fear of having to maintain “institutionalized” survival mechanisms. Along with staff, members of the broader community welcome returning citizens back into society, offer support, and strive to empower residents so they depart Dismas as an active and positive member of society.

Services provide for immediate security of basic human needs, such as shelter, food, and clothing, of which, many new residents may be without. Participants of the Dismas program commit to staying a minimum of 90 days, participate in the development and execution of a client-specific re-entry plan, participate in programming, uphold positive standards of living, and are an active member of the household and community. At Dismas House, a holistic programming model empowers residents to be self-sufficient by helping them address and overcome barriers such as weak family and social support, educational and literacy deficiencies, legal matters, mental and physical health issues, addictive behaviors, lack of wealth, and permanent housing. In addition to tangible gains, successful program participants are likely to depart Dismas with a greater sense of self-worth and an optimistic outlook.

Section Three: The Student Resident Application

General Information:

Name: _____ Are you 18 years of age or older? Yes No

Current Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

School: _____ GPA: _____ N/A

Current Education Level: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate

Other: _____

Major: _____ Minor: _____

References:

Name: _____ Association: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Association: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Association: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Current Activities & Commitments: *(list activities and number of hours per week)*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Personal Role:

Do you have previous experience working with formerly incarcerated individuals? If yes, explain:

Why do you want to live at Dismas House?

What do you feel you will contribute to the Dismas household?

What do you hope to gain from living at Dismas House?

Have you ever had an association with Dismas House in the past? Yes No

If "Yes", explain: _____

Are you willing to recruit others to volunteer or live at Dismas House? Yes No Maybe

Do you have a skill or talent you wish to share with the household? Yes No Maybe

If "Yes", describe: _____

Section Four: Student Resident Agreement

Standards of Living: Student Residents are expected to stay at Dismas for a minimum of 90 days, be a positive member of the household and community, pay room & board fees, and adhere to the following common-sense standards of living and expectations:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>No Acts of Violence</i> | 5. <i>Fulfill Household Responsibilities</i> |
| 2. <i>No Use of Alcohol, Illegal Substances, or Substance Abuse of Any Kind</i> | 6. <i>Attend Dinners and House Meetings</i> |
| 3. <i>No Disturbing the Peace</i> | 7. <i>Participate in Activities, Events, and Programming</i> |
| 4. <i>No Sex in the House</i> | 8. <i>No Smoking in the House</i> |

These standards are in place to provide behavioral boundaries essential to establishing a respectful, healthy, and peaceful community.

- 1. *No Acts of Violence:*** This includes the use or threats of violence, intimidation, or harassment of ANY kind. Violators will be asked to leave the house and program immediately without an opportunity to appeal.
- 2. *No Use of Alcohol, Illegal Substances, or Substance Abuse of Any Kind:*** Dismas provides a safe and clean environment for residents to go through their re-entry. No alcohol or illegal substances may be brought onto Dismas property. Violators may be asked to participate in further chemical dependency or substance abuse programming, increased screenings, or asked to leave the house and program. Residents are responsible for making staff aware of all medications, prescribed or over-the-counter, they are using legitimately. Dismas staff reserves the right to conduct random and unannounced drug and alcohol screenings.
- 3. *No Disturbing the Peace:*** This includes rowdy behavior, spreading rumors, gossiping, being rude, stealing, lying, being vulgar, making racist or sexist remarks, demonstrating disrespect of others or property, irrational behavior, or excessive noise. Violators may be asked to leave the house and program for displaying disruptive or anti-social behavior.
- 4. *No Sex in the House:*** Healthy relationships are vital to successful re-entry. Intimate relationships between residents, or residents and staff are strictly prohibited; intimate relationships between residents and volunteers should be entered into with extreme caution. Sexual harassment is prohibited and should be reported immediately. No pornographic material of any kind is permitted. Violators may be asked to leave the house and program.
- 5. *Fulfill Household Responsibilities:*** Every Dismas resident contributes to keeping their home clean by fulfilling assigned household responsibilities. Each resident also has an assigned night in which they are responsible for setting up for dinner, assisting volunteers, and cleaning up after dinner.
- 6. *Attend Dinners and House Meetings:*** Every Monday through Thursday, community volunteers join Dismas residents and staff for dinner at 6:30pm – appropriate clothing is worn and mobile devices are turned off. Student residents are expected to be regular participants at nightly meals. Regular participation does not require attendance at every dinner, but students should be present more often than not and other residents and volunteers should be accustomed to seeing them. House meetings are held every other Monday and also as needed. House meetings should be thought of as “family meetings” and are an opportunity to discuss, among other things, questions about policy, management, conflicts, potential confrontations, resolutions, and personal reflections. Prior permission must be given to be excused from dinners and house meetings. Dinners and house meetings are used to build community and make important decisions as a household. All decisions are made by consensus so participation is vital.

7. ***Participate in Activities, Events, and Programming:*** Being an active member of community is a fundamental aspect of our program – this includes broader community as well as household. Our residents participate in extracurricular activities and events such as volunteering efforts, agency fundraising events, local sporting events, visiting local cultural centers, and hosting holiday and other gatherings. As with dinners, student residents are not required to participate in all programming, but should be present more often than not.
8. ***No Smoking in the House:*** Smoking is only permitted outside. Butts are discarded of properly – not thrown on the porch, deck, ground, etc.

What to Expect from Dismas: Dismas is not a faith-based program; it is not a recovery, rehabilitation, or treatment center, and does not provide professional counselling services. Dismas is a community of people (residents, students, volunteers, staff, etc.) coming together to provide a safe home and caring support. As such, it is part of every resident’s commitment to be responsible not only for their selves, but also for the household and entire Dismas family.

What does “being a resident” mean for students? Student residents are expected to be active and involved members of the Dismas household and program. A student resident is not held to a curfew, as a former inmate resident is, nor is he required to attend all programming. However, student residents should be present the majority of evenings and overnight hours, always demonstrate positive behaviors, and are strongly encouraged to participate in programming when able. Student Residents are to maintain good rapport and camaraderie with other residents and volunteers, treating everyone with dignity and respect.

- **Transportation:** Dismas is not responsible for and does not promise to provide transportation for our residents, it is at the discretion of a student resident whether or not to provide transportation for other residents.
- **At Arrival:** new residents who test positive for alcohol or drug use are not permitted to enter the house or program. The first 30 days are an evaluation period – if at any time it is obvious a resident is not a “good fit” for the Dismas program, he will be asked to leave the house and program.
- **Room & Board Costs:** student residents are expected to pay room & board fees of \$435 per month, due on the 15th of each month. These fees are used to help cover the cost of utilities, food, etc. A student resident may be asked to depart from the Dismas home and program if they fall one month or more behind on room & board costs.
- **Bedrooms:** single occupancy rooms are awarded based on seniority and standing within the program – therefore, new residents should expect to have roommates. Bedrooms are locked when no one is in the room and guests should not be permitted into a bedroom without permission of roommates. No open flames or other potential fire hazards are permitted in bedrooms; this includes, but is not limited to, smoking, candles, hot plates, and unapproved space heaters. Everyone is responsible for keeping their room clean and reporting maintenance issues. Dismas staff reserves the right to conduct random and unannounced bedroom searches.
- **Common Areas:** no sleeping is permitted in common areas.
- **Mobile Devices:** are permitted, but are subject to random and unannounced inspection by staff.
- **Motor Vehicles:** are allowed to be kept on Dismas property as long as the resident provides proof of having a valid driver’s license and insurance. Dismas staff reserves the right to conduct random and unannounced inspection of motor vehicles.
- **Programming:** residents are expected to participate in programming throughout the week, Monday through Thursday, from 5:30pm – 9:00pm. Employment or school does not excuse residents from these obligations. Student residents are expected to participate in programming more often than not.
- **Appeal Meetings:** students are expected to be present for all house appeal meetings that occur while they are a resident of the house. These meetings are an opportunity for a resident who has been asked to depart the house and program to return to Dismas and requires unanimous approval of other residents.
- **Curfew:** a student resident is not held to a curfew, but should be present the majority of evenings and overnight hours.

- **Guests:** guests are welcome to join for dinner and may be on Dismas property until 10:00pm Sunday through Thursday and until midnight on Friday and Saturday. Residents are responsible for the actions and behaviors of their guests. Guests are to remain on the main level without permission of staff and female guest are never allowed in bedrooms. No guests are permitted to be with a resident behind closed doors.
- **Travel & Staying Away from Dismas:** student residents are expected to inform staff when they will be traveling and/or staying otherwise away from Dismas for more than two consecutive nights.
- **Extension of Stay:** Dismas residents commit to staying a minimum of 90 days. After 90 days, residents will either be granted an extension or asked to leave the home and program. Extensions of stay are for an indefinite period, but must be re-approved every 90 days. No resident shall remain at Dismas beyond two years without special permission.
- **Departure:** unexpected departures make it difficult to coordinate new arrivals – therefore, we ask all residents to inform Dismas staff of their departure plans no less than one month in advance. When a resident does depart, their belongings may be held up to two weeks to allow time to get situated in their new residence. Mail will be held for 30 days, after which point, new mail received is marked “Return to Sender”.

Additional Responsibilities:

- **Watch closely, and be honest:** The primary role of student residents is to offer support to the formerly incarcerated residents at Dismas. However, students are asked to also act as “eyes” and “ears” of the house, and are expected to uphold the ideals and mission of the program and not tolerate those who do not. Student Residents are expected to maintain regular contact with Dismas staff and notify them of any issues, concerns, suspicious activity, or maintenance problems in the house. Students **are not** expected to enforce or institute policy
- **Lend a Helping Hand:** all residents are expected to assist Dismas staff and other residents on occasion. This may be helping to unload groceries, cleaning up accidental messes, etc.
- **Promote Dismas House:** all residents are expected to positively represent and promote Dismas House in public. This may include a newspaper interview, advocacy, sitting at an information booth, etc. Unless requested otherwise in advance, images of residents may be shared on social media or other outlets.

Equal Opportunity Organization: Dismas, Inc. provides equal opportunities to all residents and applicants for admission without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetics. Further, Dismas, Inc. expressly prohibits any form of harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. Improper interference with the ability of a resident’s or applicant’s ability to meet their expectations may result in discipline up to and including discharge.

Confidentiality: all agents of Dismas, Inc. uphold strict confidentiality and privacy standards that require, with some exceptions, agents to only share information that is deemed to be in the best interest of a resident or applicant or is deemed necessary to fulfill agency obligations. As a State-approved transitional housing program, agents of Dismas, Inc. are required to report information about all residents (including those not supervised) to Tennessee Department of Corrections. Further, everyone is required by law to report knowledge of one’s intent to harm themselves or others as well as knowledge of a child or elderly person who is in danger of harm.

Sexual Harassment: constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state and local laws and is not tolerated at Dismas. Dismas, Inc. defines sexual harassment as in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. See House Director for further information regarding sexual harassment, including examples and reporting procedures.

