



# Carry-On Suitcases

## Community Service-Learning Activity

### INVESTIGATE

- Investigate the issue or cause this project addresses.
- Understand why carry-on suitcases are needed, and who needs them.
  - The Carry-On Suitcase Project provides suitcases filled with personal care items to women, teens, and children who come to battered women's shelters. When women and children leave their broken homes, many flee with only their life, their painful memories, and the clothes on their back. They have a difficult road in front of them to start over.
  - When the woman and children leave the battered women's shelter, they are given a suitcase to carry their clothes, belongings, and other personal care items with the hope that it will help them to "carry on" their lives. The project does more for these battered families than simply providing them with necessities; it shows them that someone cares and they are not alone.
  - In 2000, the Wal-Center 4-H Club in Cass County, Missouri introduced the Carry-On Suitcase Project. It consisted of giving suitcases, filled with items for everyday living such as towels, shampoo, deodorant, and other personal care items, to Hope Haven, a battered women's shelter. The shelter handed out a suitcase to the adults, teens, and babies as they left the shelter. Wal-Center gave 160 suitcases in all to match a grant of \$400 from the Missouri 4-H Foundation. In 2001, the Wal-Center 4-H club decided to take the project to a county level. Cass County 4-H clubs were contacted to see if they were interested. The 4-H Jr. Leaders put together a procedure manual for each club to follow, including a commitment form to be signed by the 4-H club President and 4-H leader. Six different clubs participated in the project. Together, all of the clubs delivered 160 suitcases. Of those, 60 were for adults/teens, 70 for elementary children, and 30 for babies.
  - For information on women's shelters visit:  
<https://www.womenshelters.org/> or <https://www.domesticshelters.org/>
- To go deeper, scan media, perform interviews, conduct a survey, make observations, or share a personal experience.

## PREPARE & PLAN

- Get to know 4-H group members and their interests, skills, and talents (see Adult Leader Guidesheet on Teambuilding).
- What equipment, materials, know-how, and steps are needed for your project?
- Create a plan for how you will get things done - what role each group member will play, timeline, community partners (see Adult Leader Guidesheet on Action Planning).
- Set a SMART goal for your project (see Adult Leader Guidesheet on SMART goal setting).

## ACT

Call your local women's shelter to explain the Carry On Suitcase Project and determine whether the project will help meet their needs and guidelines and, if so, how many suitcases they would like to receive. If the shelter only wants 15 suitcases at a time and your group is planning to provide 30 suitcases, you can deliver the suitcases in two sets. Always contact the shelter prior to delivery.

Shelters for battered women receive many miscellaneous items through donations. It is easier for shelters to distribute the items by having them placed in the Carry-On Suitcase Project suitcases. Confirm with the shelter the list of items you plan to include in each suitcase and ask if there are any additional items they would like added if funding allows.

### Suitcases

Individuals, 4-H clubs or community groups collect suitcases or suitcase sized duffle bags. New or used suitcases can be donated or purchased. Used suitcases should be in nice condition.

All suitcases should be clean and the latches/zippers should work properly. Keep in mind that these suitcases may be the only item the women and children have to carry their belongings when they leave the shelter.

Places to find donations could include churches or synagogues, neighbors, youth groups/4-H Clubs, relatives, thrift shops, garage sales, and auctions.

If you choose to buy suitcases, the funds available, the number of suitcases the local shelter needs and the cost of the items to fill the suitcases will determine the amount of money you spend on each suitcase.

### Suitcase Contents

The Carry-On Suitcase Project can serve three different age groups: the adult/teen, the elementary child, and the baby. The size of the adult/teen suitcases should be large to medium, the elementary child suitcases should be medium to small, and the baby suitcase should be a small suitcase or carry-on size. Suitcases are then packed specifically for these groups.

All personal care items, including the towel and washcloth, must be new. The books, toys, and stuffed animals for the children and babies may be used items if they are in excellent condition. Listed below are the items that need to be in each suitcase and items that would be nice if funds allow.

Any items that are liquid in nature must have their lids secured to avoid spilling. You may want to put liquid items in Ziploc bags. If you receive donations of sample-sized items, include more than one in each suitcase.

### **1. Adult/Teen**

#### **Basic Items for each suitcase**

- Towel and washcloth
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Toothbrush

#### **Suggested additional items**

toothpaste, hairbrush, disposable razor, soap, deodorant, and/or other items suited for this age group such as perfume samples, blow dryers, and curling irons.

### **2. Child (Elementary Age)**

#### **Basic Items for each suitcase**

- Towel and washcloth
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Toothbrush

#### **Suggested additional items**

toothpaste, reading book, coloring book, crayons, stuffed animal, and/or other items suited for this age group.

### **3. Baby**

#### **Basic Items for each suitcase**

- Towel and washcloth
- Baby bath soap
- Baby lotion
- Receiving blanket

#### **Suggested additional items**

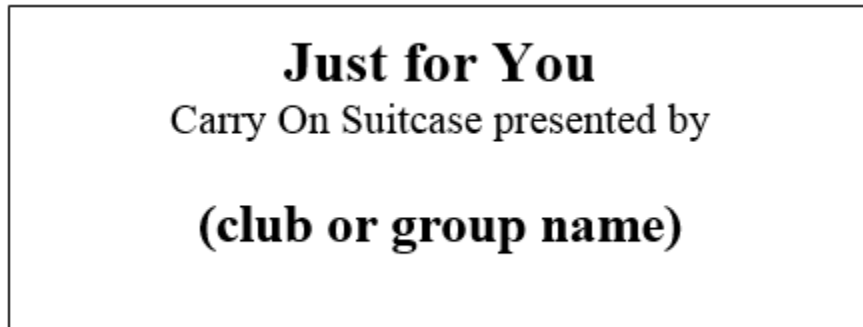
baby wipes, baby toys, stuffed animal, and/or other items suited for this age group.

## **Packing and Labeling the Suitcases**

Packing the suitcases can be a fun club/group activity.

Before packing the suitcases with the personal care items, make sure the suitcases are clean. Use a damp rag to wipe the inside clean, doing your best to remove all stains. The suitcases don't have to be spotless, just presentable. Be sure to allow time for the suitcases to dry before packing them.

After you have cleaned the suitcases and they are dry, you should place a label approximately 3"x 3" **inside** each suitcase using clear packing tape (cover the entire label). The label helps explain the project to the recipients of the suitcase and promotes your club/group. Have someone from your club/group create the labels similar to the example below.



The last step is to identify each suitcase for teen/adult, child, or baby. One way to do this is to mark the outsides of the suitcases with labels taped on the outside of each suitcase using letters: A/T for an adult or teen, C for an elementary age child, and B for a baby. This allows the shelter to easily distribute the suitcases without having to open each one of them to know what they contain.

### **Project Follow-Up**

When the project is completed, be sure to send thank you notes to anyone who contributed to your project both financially and with volunteer time.

### **Applying for a Grant**

The original group who created the Carry On Suitcase Project applied for grants in order to receive funding to purchase suitcases and supplies. You may want to investigate grant possibilities for your Carry On Suitcase Project. Contact your local Extension office who may be able to get you started.

### **Reporting Required by Groups**

After the club/group made a scheduled suitcase delivery(s), they were required to send a written report to their local Extension office or youth specialist with the following information.

1. How many suitcases your club/group delivered for each of the following groups:
  - Adult/Teen
  - Elementary
  - Baby
  
2. Date(s) suitcases delivered

3. A paragraph detailing the fun experiences your club/group had doing this project, where did you get the suitcases, any donations made to the project, number of club/group members participating, and anything else you would like to share.
4. A paragraph detailing any difficulties your club/group experienced during this project.
5. Include suggestions for the future. Would your club/group be interested in doing this project again? Include changes or suggestions to procedures as well.
6. Pictures of your club/group members working on the project.  
**Note: DO NOT** take pictures outside the shelter as they must keep their location private and secure

Item Description	Cost	Match*
<b>Total Cost of Project (Mini-grant + Match)</b>		

### Financial Accounting Required by Groups

- Grant money received
- Match (including club/group money spent as well as donated items/time. Record all donors, including volunteers using the current rate for volunteer time.)
- Total money spent on the project itemized by cost and match expenditures

## REFLECT

- Explore your group's thoughts and feelings about the project.
- What did you learn about yourself, your club, the issue, and the people you served?
- What do you plan to do next?
- How might you use some of the skills you learned in other areas of your life?
- What skills did you learn from this experience which can you can also use in college and/or your career?
- (see Adult Leader Guidesheets on Reflection and Continuing Support).

## COMMUNICATE & CELEBRATE

- How can you share what you did and learned with others?
- In what way would your group like to celebrate finishing your project?