

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM INFORMATION FOR STAFF

Federal Way Police Department

HOW DO I GET A VOLUNTEER?

The VOLUNTEER REQUEST

The request for a volunteer is initiated by the paid staff that will work with the volunteer. They are the best ones to define the work that needs to be done. Once the need is demonstrated, the Community Resource Manager can work with staff to write the position description (or perhaps incorporate the request under an existing volunteer position description already written) and help recruit to fill that need.

WHAT CAN VOLUNTEERS DO?

The VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

Volunteers, with the proper training and supervision, can do almost anything. The key factor is designing the assignment to accommodate for the pros and cons of staffing it with a volunteer. A volunteer position description is essential.

A position description spells out the duties, skills, commitment and hours of work that are needed. With this information, it is easier to find the best person to do the assignment. A volunteer knows, going in, the limits of responsibility and what is required in that assignment. The volunteer can be comfortable in the assignment and so can the staff. It will also be a measure against which the volunteer's performance is evaluated.

Examples of volunteer position descriptions are in the back of this manual.

WHO IS THE VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBLE TO?

The SUPERVISOR

Volunteers need an accessible supervisor, someone who will take responsibility for day-to-day direction of the volunteer. Volunteers, like paid staff, need to have indications of how they're performing and to have someone to bounce ideas off of when confronted with a problem. All volunteers will be assigned an immediate supervisor at their work site.

WHERE DO VOLUNTEERS COME FROM?

RECRUITMENT

Once a volunteer position description is developed, the person to perform the assignment is recruited. Recruitment is done in many ways. Formally, the position may be sent out to various community groups or to the newspaper. Informally, everyone begins to look for the right person to do the assignment - even to friends and family. There is a centralized procedure for recruitment, but paid staff can always be on the lookout for a good volunteer. Refer all prospects to the Community Resource Manager.

DO WE ACCEPT JUST ANYBODY?

SCREENING

The volunteer is always screened. The purpose of the initial screening is to get basic information from the potential volunteer and give basic information about the volunteer program. Screening is done on the telephone and in person. The Community Resource Manager screens each potential volunteer at first contact. The decision point here is whether or not the volunteer is interested in pursuing the process further, given the basic information. If so, the volunteer fills out an application and a personal history statement.

HOW DO WE KNOW THEIR QUALIFICATIONS?

The BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

An application is the first step in the process. It formalizes the process and is the first hint to the volunteer that certain procedures need to be followed according to the assignment desired. The application is the first place that the volunteer's skills, talents, and qualifications are indicated. It provides information to start the process of matching the right person to the right assignment.

The personal history statement gathers some basic information so a background investigation can be performed. This protects the volunteers, paid staff and citizens served by the program.

A polygraph examination is the last stage of the background investigation.

DO I HAVE TO ACCEPT EVERYONE?

The INTERVIEW

A face-to-face interview is done by the Community Resource Manager. Paid staff who will be working with the volunteer may also participate in an interview. An interview is essential. After all, if you wouldn't hire someone for a salary without an interview, why should you automatically accept all volunteers. If the interview goes well, the placement occurs and orientation can take place.

WHAT DO THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT US?

The ORIENTATION

The first orientation is to the Department by the Community Resource Manager. The Volunteer Handbook is reviewed with the volunteer, and they are encouraged to enroll in the Citizen's Academy. The text of the Volunteer Handbook is included in this manual.

On-site orientation is the responsibility of the site supervisor. On-site orientation should include introduction to staff, location of break areas, telephones, restrooms, parking, and places to secure personal items.

WHAT DO I NEED TO TELL THEM ABOUT THE WORK?

TRAINING

Even if a volunteer arrives at the workplace with all of the skills necessary to do an assignment, there is specific training needed for "how we do things here". A volunteer is very much the same as a new employee and needs the same basic training.

Training is both assignment specific and generic. Some volunteers will only need to participate in general training covering the policies and procedures under which the assignment falls. Some training will be more specific, such as how to use our computer system. The training needed is defined by the assignment description and the needs of the assignment.

Many volunteer positions may call for the volunteer to be working where there is exposure to information that is considered confidential. Some positions may require that the volunteer work with the ACCESS system. In these positions, a volunteer will need training as to their responsibilities according to confidentiality laws.

HOW WELL ARE THEY PERFORMING THE WORK?

The REVIEW OF PROGRESS

Everyone needs to know how they are doing. At any time, the volunteer can be evaluated by the site supervisor or the Community Resources Manager. If the volunteer is performing well, the placement will continue. It might be that the volunteer is not performing the assignment as needed. It could be that the volunteer and paid staff do not work together well as a team, even though the volunteer is quite capable. In order for the Department to best use volunteer resources a transfer, additional training or even termination may be necessary.

WHO IN THE DEPARTMENT NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT OUR VOLUNTEERS?

REPORTING

A volunteer is a member of our community who chooses to give time, skills and talent to the Department. The Department uses the number of volunteers and hours they contribute as measures of community input and involvement in Department programs. Some volunteers may deliver services necessary to meet the performance indicators of Department programs or grants.

At a minimum, volunteer-related reports include reporting of time on monthly time sheets. There also may be program specific statistics for services that volunteers provide as part of their duties.

The volunteer is typically responsible for signing in and signing out at the job site. These sign in sheets are used by the Community Resource Manager to fill out monthly time reports. These reports are necessary for State Department of Labor & Industries coverage and other legal considerations.

RECOGNITION

Recognition is the volunteer's "paycheck". A volunteer's hours of service are used as a basis for periodic formal recognition by the Department. Both the City and the Department host separate annual volunteer recognition events for city volunteers.

All members of the Department are encouraged to participate in informal recognition. This can be as simple as saying “thank you”, remembering a birthday, or sending a note of appreciation for a particular job well done.