



# Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners

## Volunteers in Public Service (VIPS) Volunteers in Public Service Manual

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### Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	2
VOLUNTEER POLICIES.....	3
VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT.....	4
SAFETY AND LOSS CONTROL PROGRAMS/PROCEDURES .....	5
VOLUNTEERS' RIGHTS .....	7
SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY .....	7
ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY.....	8
INTERNET USAGE POLICY AND GUIDLEINES.....	9
SPECIFIC VOLUNTEER BENEFITS .....	9
YOUTH VOLUNTEERS .....	9
GROUP VOLUNTEERS.....	10

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Charlotte County Volunteer Service Program, which will be known as “Volunteers in Public Service” (VIPS) is to encourage and support volunteerism to assist County government in providing services and programs and to help facilitate community wellbeing through employee volunteer support.

### **PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL**

This manual is intended for the use of Charlotte County staff and volunteers as a guideline and a reference source for legal and administrative issues. It does not provide technical guidance or direction related to a department’s administration of the program.

### **HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL**

The Volunteer Services Manual is a work in progress. Revisions will be forwarded to assigned department volunteer coordinators as they occur and will be posted to the public and internal websites. Volunteer coordinators and department representatives will be notified by e-mail of revisions. Questions regarding current policy or practice are to be referred to the Human Resources Department.

### **CHARLOTTE COUNTY VOLUNTEER SERVICES**

The purpose of the Charlotte County VIPS program is to promote, recruit and place citizen volunteers in county government and encourage the involvement of Charlotte County government employees in community volunteerism.

### **POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

Volunteer Services policies are reviewed and approved by the County Administrator, County Attorney, Human Resources and Risk Management. This includes changes and updates.

### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

The Charlotte County Volunteers in Public Service program is under the jurisdiction of the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners. Overall, the program is under the direction of the County Administrator with day-to-day management under the responsibility of individual departments.

Department directors and managers are responsible for appointment of staff members to serve as departmental volunteer coordinators. Direction of actual volunteer activities is the responsibility of the designated volunteer coordinators. Volunteer coordinators are to become very familiar with the information contained in this manual.

### **VOLUNTEER CATEGORIES**

County VIPS are administratively classified according to volunteer categories chart. Specific service titles and volunteer position descriptions are developed within the departments and approved by Human Resources and Risk Management. All volunteer assignment descriptions must be approved by the department director prior to being submitted.

## VOLUNTEER POLICIES

The following are basic policies that apply to all categories of volunteers.

Volunteers:

- Must perform duties within the rules set by the responsible department director.
- Must perform tasks assigned by their supervisor and approved by the department director.
- Must maintain strict confidentiality concerning any information to which they may have access within their volunteer duties. If asked for records or information under the Public Records Act, will refer such to supervisor.
- May not use information generally unavailable to the public and obtained by reason of their volunteer positions for the personal benefit of themselves or others.
- Those who participate in the same physical labor that requires a health screening for regular employees will need a health screening performed as determined by the county.
- Must be 18 years of age or older, except youth volunteers who must have adult supervision by a long-term volunteer or a Charlotte County employee.
- Shall sign in and out, either electronically or utilizing a log sheet, as provided by the department. This record is maintained by all departments to record volunteer names, dates, hours of service and tasks assigned.
- Regular-service volunteers must pass a background check, attend a county volunteer orientation, and receive a County ID card, which is to be visibly worn at all times during volunteer work.
- Individuals who are public officers/employees may not volunteer to perform services in their own department.
- Must read and agree to abide by the county's Substance Abuse Prevention Program.

### VOLUNTEER SELECTION AND PLACEMENT

All county volunteers must be assigned to a defined "position." This position is documented on the Volunteer Position form. This form contains administrative details about the position. The three essential items of information are:

- Position Description
- Safety Requirements
- Position Requirements

### PLACEMENT INTERVIEWS AND ORIENTATION SCHEDULING

All long-term volunteer candidates **must** have a placement interview with a department representative prior to assignment. If it is determined that the candidate is acceptable as a county volunteer, the department volunteer coordinator will prepare a placement form and arrange an orientation date for the volunteer.

### ORIENTATION

All potential long-term volunteers must attend a county orientation. These orientations are open **only** to candidates that have been interviewed by a site coordinator.

The orientation will consist of a review of county legal, safety and administrative policies and procedures that impact volunteers. Information on county organization and activities will also be provided. An ID photo will be taken.

Volunteers whose positions will involve working with children may not volunteer until the background check results, including results of fingerprints, have been received. Volunteers in other positions may begin duties as short-term volunteers, at the discretion of the department director.

## **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

All long-term Charlotte County volunteers are required to complete a background check that may include fingerprinting prior to assignment.

## **VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT**

### **ASSIGNMENT AND TRAINING**

Once a volunteer completes orientation, he or she will be assigned to a specific position within a department. The volunteer coordinator or supervisor will provide appropriate training for the position, expected work schedule, safety procedures to be followed and county administrative guidelines that apply. Note that it is possible for a volunteer to volunteer at more than one site or department.

### **SIGN-IN AND SIGN-OUT DOCUMENTATION**

All long-term volunteers are required to sign in and sign out when performing duties for the county. This may be done either electronically or utilizing a log sheet and turning it in to the volunteer site coordinator.

### **PERFORMANCE AND DISCIPLINE**

As representatives of the county, volunteers are expected to maintain a suitable level of behavior and appearance. Volunteers are expected to comply with all county policies and procedures. Additional standards may be established by the departments as long as they do not conflict with county directives. Departments are encouraged to provide volunteers with explicit expectations of required performance and to review levels of performance to ensure that quality work is recognized and rewarded and that inferior work is corrected and improved.

### **TRANSFERS AND RESIGNATIONS**

Circumstances may arise in which volunteers need to change their status. If their schedule should change and they can no longer volunteer in their current assignment, they should contact their supervisor or volunteer site coordinator. It may be that another volunteer position will fit their new circumstances.

If a problem should arise in their volunteer assignment, we encourage volunteers to work with the department staff to resolve the issue. If the problem still cannot be settled, they are encouraged to contact the Human Resources department who can serve as a liaison and provide various options to improve the situation for all involved.

### **TERMINATIONS**

The county reserves the right to dismiss a volunteer at any time.

### **RESPONSE TO UNFAVORABLE VOLUNTEER PERFORMANCE OR BEHAVIOR**

In the event of unfavorable performance or behavior of a volunteer as described in the county's employment rules, policies, practices or procedures, the county will exercise its rights to correct the performance or behavior or to sever the volunteer service relationship.

## **RECOGNITION**

One of the most important elements in effective volunteer management is recognition of achievements both of individuals and groups. From time to time, the County Administrator may approve forms and methods of volunteer service recognition.

## **SAFETY AND LOSS CONTROL PROGRAMS/PROCEDURES**

### **RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR USING VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers will attend a volunteer orientation, which will include the right-to-know, workers' compensation and safety information.

Volunteers will be trained for the jobs they will do, including the safety aspects.

When personal protection equipment is required for the position, the volunteer will be properly equipped by the department and trained in the use of the equipment prior to engaging in any such work.

### **DRIVING**

Volunteers are not permitted to operate County owned or volunteer owned vehicles for business purposes.

### **REPORTING AN INJURY OF A VOLUNTEER**

If a volunteer is injured while performing their assigned task:

- The supervisor shall be notified immediately.
- The supervisor and volunteer must complete a First Report of Injury form and submit the form to Risk Management within 24 hours.
- Even if the volunteer does not think medical attention is needed, the First Report of Injury form must be completed. If the volunteer should require medical attention at a later date, step one would be to contact the supervisor for assistance in selecting an authorized treating medical provider at that time.

REMEMBER, except in an emergency, the volunteer must receive medical care from the medical provider established by the county's Risk Management.

### **WORKERS' COMPENSATION FOR VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers may be eligible for workers' compensation medical benefits only, in accordance with Chapter 440, Florida Statutes. If an injury occurs, the department volunteer coordinator must be notified immediately. The volunteer coordinator will direct the volunteer to a facility to receive prompt medical attention. While it is important that our volunteers receive appropriate medical care, responsibility for payment of medical bills will be determined by Risk Management.

# **THE HAZARD COMMUNICATION STANDARD/RIGHT-TO-KNOW LAW (29 CFR 1910.1200)**

## **Introduction**

Volunteers have a right to know about exposure to hazardous/toxic substances in the workplace. The County will provide volunteers with information about the hazardous/toxic substances with which they work, and train volunteers in safe handling practices and emergency procedures.

An overview of the regulations concerning chemical safety is provided here. It is not intended to cover all the technical aspects involved. Additional information is available by contacting Risk Management:

## **Definitions**

**Hazardous/Toxic Substance:** Any chemical substance or mixture in a gaseous, liquid or solid state that can cause harm to humans or the environment.

**Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS):** A document containing information about the properties and hazards of a hazardous/toxic substance. The information will include the chemical identity of the substance, physical and health hazards, the means by which the chemical may gain access to the body, safe handling and use, emergency and first aid procedures, and control measures.

Under the law, manufacturers, importers and distributors of hazardous/toxic substances are required to prepare and provide MSDSs to their purchasers.

## **County Responsibilities**

It is the county's responsibility to:

- Identify and list the hazardous chemicals in the workplace.
- Obtain Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS's) and labels for all hazardous chemicals in the workplace.
- Develop and implement a written hazard communication program.
- Communicate hazard information to volunteers through labels, MSDS's, and formal training programs.

Any county department which produces, uses or stores hazardous/toxic substances in the workplace is required to:

- Post a notice, approved by Risk Management, informing workers and volunteers of their rights under the law.
- Obtain and maintain for a period of 30 years, the required MSDS for each hazardous/toxic substance present.
- Make the MSDS's available upon request to an employee or volunteer within five working days.
- Provide instruction to volunteers, within their first 30 days of employment or volunteer assignment, and at least annually thereafter, on the nature and effects of those hazardous/toxic substances with which they work.
- Advise volunteers of their right to obtain information from outside sources.
- Notify the Fire/EMS of the location and names of certain hazardous/toxic substances present in the workplace.

## **VOLUNTEERS' RIGHTS**

Volunteers have the right to:

- Know the hazardous/toxic substances present in the workplace.
- Obtain a copy of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for any hazardous/toxic substance to which they may be exposed.
- Refuse to work with a hazardous/toxic substance if not provided a copy of the MSDS for that substance within five working days after submitting a written request to the supervisor.
- Receive instruction on the hazardous/toxic substance which must include:
  - The chemical and common names of the substance (with certain disclosure limitations for trade secrets).
  - The location of the substance in the workplace.
  - Proper and safe handling practices.
  - First aid treatment and antidotes in case of overexposure.
  - The adverse effects of the substance.
  - Appropriate emergency procedures.
  - Proper procedures for clean-up of leaks or spills.
  - Potential for flammability, explosion and reactivity.
  - The rights of volunteers under all applicable laws.
  - Obtain further information on the properties and hazards of toxic substances from outside sources.
  - Protection against discharge, discipline or discrimination for having exercised any of these rights.

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY**

*It is the responsibility of volunteers to adhere to the following sections of the Charlotte County Substance Abuse Policy and Anti-Harassment Policy in the same way as required by employers.*

It is a volunteer's responsibility to become familiar with and abide by the county's substance abuse policy. We encourage employees and volunteers to seek help through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for a drug or alcohol problem before it affects job performance. If job duties require a valid commercial driver's license, the volunteer is also subject to the requirements of the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administrative Regulations. These requirements have been incorporated into the county's policy for county commercial vehicle drivers and include random drug and alcohol testing.

Prohibited acts:

- Use, possession, manufacture, distribution, dispensation or sale of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia on county property or in county-supplied vehicles.
- Use, possession, manufacture, distribution, dispensation or sale of illegal drugs off county property during working and non-working hours.
- Testing positive for alcohol or drugs under the provisions of the substance abuse testing procedures in conjunction with a reasonable suspicion,
- Use of alcohol during breaks or lunch periods.
- Use of alcohol off duty while wearing a county uniform with county insignia.
- Refusing to consent to alcohol or drug testing when requested by management.

- Interfering in any manner with specimen collection procedures.
- Refusing to sign a statement agreeing to abide by the county's Substance Abuse Prevention Program.
- Any violation of the Federal Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988.

## **ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY**

### **All Volunteers are required to read and acknowledge the Sexual Harassment Training forms.**

It is the policy of Charlotte County to provide a work environment which is free from verbal or physical conduct that unreasonably harasses, disturbs or interferes with an employee or volunteer's work performance or that creates an intimidating, offensive or hostile work environment.

All county employees and volunteers are expected to avoid any activity which harasses or disrupts the work of their co-workers, subordinates or the general public. Any verbal or physical conduct which harasses another worker, subordinate, or members of the general public with whom employees or volunteers may have contact, because of that person's race, national origin, religion, sex, disability, pregnancy, age or military status is prohibited.

In particular, sexual harassment is strictly forbidden, including harassment of members of the same sex. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any sexually harassing or offensive conduct, whether by managers, supervisors, employees, non-employees or volunteers who enter the county's workplace, is prohibited. Such prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Unwanted physical contact or offensive conduct of a sexual nature, including flirtations, advances or propositions.
- Verbal harassment about an individual's sex, sexual interest or orientation, sexual innuendos, and offensive jokes or descriptions of personal sexual conduct.
- Demeaning, degrading or insulting comments about a person's physical appearance.
- Displaying in the workplace photos or other materials which are demeaning, insulting, intimidating or sexually suggestive.
- Demeaning, insulting, sexually suggestive or otherwise offensive written, recorded, telephonic or electronically transmitted messages.

Any of the above-listed activities or offensive behavior based upon an individual's race, national origin, religion, disability, pregnancy, age or military status is also prohibited.

### **If harassment is experienced:**

- 1) Document the incident by writing such details as date and time of incident, where it occurred, who was present, what was said and done, and witnesses to the incident.
- 2) Report the incident orally and/or in writing to your supervisor, or department head, or Human Resources Department

Violations of the county's Anti-Harassment Policy may result in discipline up to and including termination.

## **INTERNET USAGE POLICY AND GUIDLINES**

**Volunteers may have access to computers and information on the internet.** *It is the responsibility of volunteers to adhere to the policies of the Charlotte County Internet Access and End-User Compliance Agreement found in policy 8.03 Acceptable Technology Usage and policy 8.04 Internet Access and Usage.*

**All Volunteers are required to read and acknowledge Charlotte County's Internet Policy and Guideline forms.**

## **SPECIFIC VOLUNTEER BENEFITS**

Long-term volunteers are entitled to the following benefits:

- Volunteers are eligible for training opportunities through the county's Human Resources Department. These classes could help make volunteer experience more effective and enjoyable. Your supervisor and the volunteer program coordinator can provide information on classes. Volunteers can attend classes on a space-available basis.
- Volunteers will be reimbursed for mileage (at the same rate as employees) when volunteer duties require necessary and approved travel. This reimbursement will be the responsibility of the respective department in which one volunteers.

## **YOUTH VOLUNTEERS**

### **ELIGIBILITY AND GUIDELINES**

Individuals between 12 and 17 years of age are eligible to participate in county programs as youth volunteers. Activities of youth volunteers will be pursuant to legal requirements related to minors.

### **REQUIREMENTS TO VOLUNTEER**

Requirements for participation as a youth volunteer are:

- Completion of a "Permission for Minor to Participate" signed by the parent or guardian.
- Completion of Medical Information and Disclosure which must be notarized.

Youth volunteers are covered by workers' compensation.

### **CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 12 YEARS of AGE**

Children younger than 12 years of age are not eligible to participate as county volunteers. They may, however, accompany a parent or guardian performing duty as a county volunteer with the permission of the department director. The accompanying parent or guardian must sign a hold harmless agreement and a notarized parental consent form. The child is not covered by workers' compensation.

### **QUALIFICATIONS OF SUPERVISORS OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERS**

All individuals, whether staff or volunteer, who supervise youth activities must have completed a criminal background check (FDLE), FBI fingerprint check, and must be approved by the department director. Any

individual involved in supervision of youth must be given appropriate training in techniques and methods for performing this duty.

## **GROUP VOLUNTEERS**

The county supports the use of group volunteers in support of its activities. These groups may represent civic organizations, corporations, youth groups and academic institutions.

General policy for volunteer groups follows the policy for individuals. A Volunteer Position/Project Guideline must be prepared in advance for all group activities. Control of the group is the same as that of a short-term or casual volunteer. The group activity must be supervised by a county staff representative.

In some circumstances, the liability responsibility is assumed by the group and they must provide proof of insurance to the County. In certain instances where the group has entered into a long-standing arrangement to provide services for the county, a Memorandum of Understanding may be required. Generally, any agreement with a group must go through several departmental review channels depending on the type of agreement.

### **ADULT GROUP VOLUNTEERS**

These groups normally consist of volunteers from an organization such as a corporation or nonprofit institution. All of the participants are adults over 18 years of age. Normal practice is for this type of group to sign in using the group short-term volunteer form. These volunteers are covered by workers' compensation.

### **YOUTH GROUP VOLUNTEERS**

This type of group represents civic and academic organizations that perform activities for the county. A contract agreement signed by the county administrator is required from these groups. Normally it takes at least ten working days to complete the approval process for these groups. The organization is required to furnish a certificate of insurance. Non-Charlotte County scout groups and private schools are under this category of group volunteers.