



## Volunteers in Public Service (VIPS)

### Volunteer Policy

The Board of County Commissioners recognizes and strongly supports volunteer service to assist County government in providing services and programs. Charlotte County citizens are encouraged to volunteer their time and talents in the provision of County services. Volunteer participation opportunities are available for short and long-term service, single special events, in times of local emergencies, for student internships, and community service, among others. All categories of volunteerism are listed on the Volunteer web page and available at every department.

Interested persons may access volunteer information and sign up for volunteer service through the "Volunteers Welcome" link on the County's website. Through the County's link there is access to department listings and department contacts. This link also provides access to the United Way's VolunteerWay site for additional volunteer opportunities.

Members of advisory boards and committees, whose services and efforts are recognized and highly-valued by the County, are not covered by this policy, but the list of available board or committee vacancies may be accessed using the same link.

This administrative volunteer policy will establish standards of volunteer service for a formal volunteer program. Persons between the ages of 12 and 17 years are eligible to participate in County programs as youth volunteers, with written parental or guardian consent. A list of County departments with current volunteer programs is attached to this policy. All County departments will regularly review its need for volunteers and post such availability on County's "Volunteer" link.

#### SCOPE

In order to maximize the effectiveness of volunteers, yet limit risk exposure to both volunteers and the County, this policy will apply to all County departments and volunteers. Exceptions to County-wide uniform conditions of the policy may be brought to the Human Resources Director, who will review such variations on a case-by-case basis.

#### DEFINITION

Volunteer is defined as an individual who performs hours of voluntary service to the County for civic, charitable, humanitarian, recreational, health, public safety or general welfare reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered.

Individuals are considered volunteers only when their services are offered freely and without pressure of coercion, direct or implied, from the County.

A Volunteer Administrative Manual and a list of volunteer categories and designations will be maintained by the Human Resources Department and will be available at each County department.

#### PROCEDURES

Each department is directed to develop and maintain written procedures to encourage and facilitate the use of volunteers. Department heads will designate an employee to coordinate the department's volunteer program and who will serve as contact person. Each department will also provide updated volunteer services and contact information regularly to the Human Resources Department in order to keep the County's link current.

**Recruitment.** Departments shall use recruiting procedures appropriate to the specific program area. Procedures shall be consistently followed. To assist in this initial process, potential volunteers may be required to complete a Volunteer Application. Initial information to collect may be: name, address, telephone number, driver's license (if driving required), work or volunteer experience, education or training, interests, availability, preferred assignments, references, etc., as proper for the program area.

**Selection.** A selection process will be established where potential volunteers are interviewed, references verified, and in sensitive placements, agree to a criminal and/or background check in order to proceed with recruitment effort. If the volunteer position requires driving, the volunteer's driver license shall be viewed to determine validity and/or driver's license record. If a volunteer will be driving their personal vehicle, proof of liability insurance will be required to be submitted to the County. If the selection process discloses information that indicates the tentative volunteer would not fulfill department expectations, the County is under no obligation to assign or retain that volunteer.

**Training.** Volunteers will receive an overview of their volunteer assignment and, as appropriate, a written list of duties and expectations, hours of service, supervision, necessary forms, approved financial expenditures and reimbursement procedures, accident reporting procedures, confidentiality, call-in, dress code, performance reviews, etc. Volunteers shall be directed to serve within their assigned duty assignment.

**Supervision.** Volunteers will be supervised as to assignments, work performance, activity, use of equipment, etc. Performance problems will be corrected or the volunteer service terminated.

### **RISKS OF INJURY TO VOLUNTEERS**

It is important volunteers know what coverage the County will or will not provide.

**Personal injury.** Volunteers are not bona fide employees pursuant to Florida Statutes, Chapter 440, Workers' Compensation Law. However, workers' compensation medical-only coverage will be provided. If a volunteer is injured while serving in an authorized volunteer status and medical care is necessary, volunteers may be reimbursed for resulting medical costs as determined by the County.

**Damage to volunteer property.** When volunteer's personal property is damaged while the volunteer is serving in an authorized volunteer status, the County will not be responsible to reimburse for the damage.

**Driving.** All operators of a motor vehicle while on County business must be qualified to drive and drive safely. Operators must **be at least 25 years of age and** have sufficient knowledge about vehicle handling, demonstrated by a safe driving record, so as to protect employees, volunteers, the County, clients and the public from an unsafe driver. This provision applies to both County-owned and volunteer-owned vehicles. Volunteers operating County equipment will receive instruction from the supervisor or safety officer regarding County vehicles before being authorized to operate them.

**Damage to private property.** When private property is damaged by a volunteer serving in an authorized volunteer status, provisions of the County's insurance policies will prevail.