

Board of County Commissioners

Escambia County, Florida

Title: Escambia County Volunteer Program, Section I, Part A.13
Date Adopted: November 5, 2009
Effective Date: November 5, 2009
Reference:
Policy Superseded:

A. Overall Policy on Utilization of Volunteers

The achievement of the goals of Escambia County is best served by the active participation of citizens of the community. To this end, the County accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers of Escambia County within appropriate programs and activities. All County and staff are encouraged to assist in the creation of meaningful and productive roles in which volunteers might serve and to assist in recruitment of volunteers from the community.

B. Purpose of Volunteer Policies

The purpose of these policies is to provide overall guidance and direction to staff and volunteers engaged in volunteer involvement and management efforts. These policies are intended for internal management guidance only, and do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. The County reserves the exclusive right to change any of these policies at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy. Changes to or exceptions from these policies may only be granted by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), and must be obtained in advance and in writing. Areas not specifically covered by these policies shall be determined by the County Administrator.

C. Definition of 'Volunteer'

Volunteers are not County employees. A 'volunteer' is anyone who without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond reimbursement performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the County. A 'volunteer' must be officially accepted and enrolled by the County prior to performance of the task.

D. Service at the Discretion of the County

The County accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the County. Volunteers agree that the County may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the County.

The volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever the volunteer's relationship with the County. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the volunteer's supervisor.

E. Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource to this County, its staff, and its citizens. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments and the right to effective supervision.

In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the goals and procedures of the County.

F. Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a single staff, volunteer, citizen, or other person or involves overall County business. Failure to maintain confidentiality will result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with the County.

G. Position Descriptions

Volunteer staff, just as paid staff, requires a clear, complete, and current description of the duties and responsibilities of the position which they are expected to fill. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a position description must be developed for each volunteer position. This position will be given to each accepted volunteer and utilized in subsequent management and evaluation efforts. Position descriptions should be reviewed and updated at least every two years, or whenever the work involved in the position changes substantially. Position descriptions will be maintained in the Bureau/Division with a copy to Human Resources. All position descriptions shall include a description of the purpose and duties of the position, a designated supervisor and worksite, a timeframe for the performance of the job and a listing of job qualifications.

H. Requests for Volunteers

Volunteers shall be recruited by the County on a pro-active basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community. Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to gender, handicap, age, race or other condition. The sole qualification for volunteer recruitment shall be suitability to perform a task on behalf of the County. Volunteers may be recruited through either an interest in specific functions or through a general interest in volunteering which will later be matched with a specific function. No final acceptance of a volunteer shall take place without a specific written volunteer position description for that volunteer.

I. Recruitment of Minors

Volunteers may not be below the age of 12. Volunteers between the ages of 12-14 may not participate in volunteer service for the County without a parent or guardian present at all times. Volunteers between the ages of 15-17 must have the written consent of a parent or guardian prior to volunteering. The volunteer services assigned to a minor should be performed in a non-hazardous environment and should comply with all appropriate requirements of child labor laws.

J. Application

Volunteers will be required to complete an application prior to providing volunteer service. As stated in paragraph 12, applicants may be required to provide information necessary to complete a criminal background check. Initial applications will be screened by the Bureau designee to ensure that the application is complete. The application will then be reviewed by the appropriate Bureau Chief and prospective volunteers will be selected for interview.

K. Interviewing

Prior to being assigned or appointed to a position, all volunteers will be interviewed to ascertain their suitability by the requesting Bureau/Division for an interest in that position. The interview should determine the qualifications of the volunteer, their ability and commitment to fulfill the requirements of the position, and should answer any questions that the volunteer might have about the position. Interviews may be conducted either in person or by other means. As part of the interviewing process, further processing of the prospective volunteer's application may commence to include any necessary screening described in paragraph 12.

The interviews will be conducted by the appropriate Bureau/Division, signed off on by the Bureau Chief, with the final sign-off by the County Administrator.

L. Criminal Records Check/Screenings

As appropriate for the protection of all involved, volunteers will be required to submit to a criminal background check, drug testing, and other applicable checks and screenings. Volunteers who do not agree to the background checks and screenings or who do not pass the screening process will be refused assignment.

Applicants who do not pass the screening process and are refused assignment will be notified by the Human resources via certified mail.

M. Placement

In placing a volunteer in a position, attention shall be paid to the interests and capabilities of the volunteer and to the requirements of the volunteer position. No placement shall be made unless the requirements of both the volunteer and the supervising staff can be met: no volunteer should be assigned to a 'make-work' position and no position should be given to an unqualified or uninterested volunteer.

N. Acceptance and Appointment

Service as a volunteer with the County shall begin with an official notice of acceptance or appointment to a volunteer position. Notice may only be given by Human Resources. No volunteer shall begin performance of any position until they have been officially accepted for that position and have completed all necessary screening and paperwork. At the time of final acceptance, each volunteer shall complete all necessary enrollment paperwork and shall receive a copy of their job description and agreement of service with the County.

O. Orientation

All volunteers will receive a general orientation on the nature and purpose of the County, an orientation on the nature and operation of the program or activity for which they are recruited, and a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of the position which they are accepting in that effort.

Orientation will be given by the requesting Bureau/Division.

P. Conduct

Volunteers must be familiar with the policies and procedures outlined in this volunteer manual. Further, volunteers must be polite, courteous and helpful when dealing with citizens.

Q. Gratuities

Volunteers will be prohibited from accepting any gift or gratuity from any firm, contractor, consultant, individual or others for any service provided on behalf of the County.

R. On-the-Job Training

Volunteers will receive specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment. The timing and methods for delivery of such training should be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

Exit interviews, where possible, should be conducted with volunteers who are leaving their positions. The interview should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving the position, suggestions the volunteer may have to improving the position, and the possibility of involving the volunteer in some other capacity with the County.

Training will be conducted by the requested Bureau/Division.

S. Access to County Property and Materials/County Vehicles

As appropriate, volunteers shall have access to County property and materials necessary to fulfill their duties, and shall receive training in the operation of that equipment. Property and materials shall be utilized only when directly required for County purposes. This policy does not include access to and use of County vehicles.

T. Recognition

A quarterly volunteer recognition event will be conducted by the Bureau to highlight the contribution of volunteers of Escambia County. The volunteers will be formally recognized with a Certificate of Appreciation by the Board of County Commissioners. The Bureau will be responsible for coordination of the program for volunteers that assist that Bureau. Community service credits and recognition will be given to high school students as well as college interns.

U. Sexual Harassment/EEO Policy Plan

Sexual harassment includes unwelcomed sexual advances, request of sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Any such incidents should be reported immediately to the volunteer's supervisor or/and Human Resources. The purpose of the Equal Employment Opportunity Plan Policy (EEOP) is to implement the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement, the Unlawful Harassment Policy and the requirements of the U.S. Department of Justice. Escambia County does not tolerate sexual harassment.

V. Ethics

Ethics refers to principles that define behavior as right, good and proper. Such principles do not always dictate a single "morale" course of action, but provide a means of evaluating and deciding among competing options. Governments of all kinds are held to a very high standard of public trust. We must make every effort to insure that all activities of the County, as well as, all other staff in the County offices maintain the standards of conduct that are above reproach.

W. Drug Free Environment

Escambia County provides a drug-free, healthy, and safe environment. A volunteer may not use, possess, distribute, sell or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. The use of drugs and alcohol is an increasing problem affecting many areas of our society and ranks as one of the major health problems in our country. The pervasive presence of alcohol and substance abuse in our society, the resultant impact upon the workplace, and the County's obligation to its citizens require the establishment of a drug-free workplace policy.

X. Tobacco Free Workplace

Escambia County intends to provide a safe and healthy environment. Smoking in the workplace is prohibited except in outside locations specifically designated as smoking areas. Tobacco addiction is among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the United States. Escambia County is committed to promoting health, wellness, and disease prevention, and to providing a safe, clean, and healthy environment.

Y. Computer Usage

Escambia County's e-mail and internet systems are intended to be used for business purposes only. Escambia County owns the computer and software of the E-mail and internet systems and permits the use of them in the performance of duties. All E-mail and internet records are official County records and should be transmitted only to individuals who have a business need to receive them.

Z. Dress Code

As representatives of the County, volunteers, like staff, are responsible for presenting a good image to citizens and to the community. It is also important that volunteers be dressed in a manner that provides for his or her safety. Volunteers will abide by the County's Dress Code Policy.

AA. Safety and Liability

Escambia County aims to provide a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers. If a volunteer is injured in the course of the volunteer's service, it is important that the volunteer notify his or her supervisor immediately.

Further, to the extent permitted by law and subject to any claim of sovereign immunity provided by Section 768.28, Florida Statutes, if a volunteer suffers losses or injury while providing the services agreed upon, you may be protected from liability claims filed against you.