



IOWA COUNTY VOLUNTEER SERVICES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

NOVEMBER 9, 2010

OVERVIEW

Iowa County recognizes that people in the community can make great contributions as volunteers. Iowa County also recognizes the potential liability exposure to the volunteer and to the county that is commensurate with engaging the services of volunteers.

POLICY STATEMENT

It is important that Iowa County employees and Elected Officials who are responsible for volunteers familiarize themselves with the concepts of liability, responsibility, and risk management as they apply to volunteers.

DEFINITION

A volunteer is a person recognized and authorized by Iowa County or one of its authorized officials, employees, or agents to perform services for Iowa County without receipt of compensation other than reimbursement for approved expenses. The County does not require employees to perform duties as volunteers that they may otherwise be compensated for by contract or policy, nor will compensation be offered for volunteered service.

Persons serving on County Boards and Commissions are not covered by terms of this Policy. They are requested to complete an application specifically created for the Board/ Commission position.

GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

The County's general liability insurance policy provides that expressly authorized volunteers of the County are covered, subject to its terms, conditions, and exclusions provided that the volunteer is properly on record.

If a volunteer's authorized actions cause physical injury or property damage to another and the injured party files a claim against or sues the volunteer, the County or its insurer will defend the volunteer and the County and be responsible for any financial judgment incurred up to the applicable limit of insurance, provided that the volunteer was acting within the scope of his or her responsibilities, gives notice of claim to the County, and cooperates in the defense or litigation. If the injured party sues a County employee, in addition to the volunteer, the County will defend its employee and be responsible for any financial judgment incurred. This coverage does not protect an individual from being sued as a result of intentional, malicious, or personal actions not authorized by the County.

AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY INSURANCE

The County's automobile liability insurance policy provides that anyone is an insured, subject to policy terms, conditions, and exclusions, while using a County-owned vehicle with the County's permission and operating within policies outlined by the County. For automobiles owned by a volunteer, the County's automobile liability policy provides that any volunteer expressly authorized by the County is an insured under the policy provisions with respect to the use of an automobile owned by a volunteer to conduct County business. However, such insurance protection is secondary, or excess, over any other insurance available to the volunteer and all policies of the County must be observed, regardless of whether it is a personal vehicle or County owned. Volunteers are expected to carry state-mandated minimum levels of insurance coverage.

The County does not provide protection to volunteers for damage to their own automobile. The volunteer's personal automobile insurer should respond to such a loss to the vehicle or the vehicle's contents if the volunteer has purchased automobile physical damage insurance on their automobile.

MEDICAL EXPENSES INCURRED BY VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are not covered by workers compensation. Similarly, the County does not provide any coverage for medical expenses incurred as a result of an injury sustained by a volunteer.

RISK MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

The main principles of risk management for volunteer programs are volunteer selection, volunteer instruction, performance monitoring, and recognition of volunteer service. The Selection and Volunteer Instructions sections below are not applicable to those volunteers described in each of the following set of circumstances:

1) volunteers working under the direct supervision of a County employee for a once-a-year event of limited duration, 2) volunteers who were not actively recruited by County officials that provide support to projects initiated by state, federal, or other outside agencies, and 3) volunteers who are sponsored or coordinated by an outside agency, and it is understood by the County representative who has oversight of the volunteer setting that the outside agency is accountable for and insured to cover the actions of their volunteers. At all times the County must be aware of the names of volunteers authorized to work on County property. Individuals who qualify to volunteer must be accountable to their respective sponsor or organization.

SELECTION

The proper selection of volunteers serves a dual purpose. It ensures that the volunteer has the necessary skills to carry out the responsibilities of the position and that the responsibilities are a good fit with the interests of the volunteer. Proper selection decreases the possibility of injury to the volunteer, decreases potential claims against the volunteer due to negligent performance and reduces claims against the County by others served by the volunteer. Selection must include but may not be limited to:

Completion of Volunteer Application. Volunteer application forms can be obtained from the Personnel Department or County web site under the Employee Resources section and should be completed prior to beginning performance of volunteer duties. Volunteers who use an automobile to perform volunteer duties must supply a copy of their driver's license and a copy of certificate of insurance or insurance identification card. The application and supporting information must be retained by the Department Head, or designee.

Interviews and Orientation. The interview provides the County an opportunity to clarify information provided on the volunteer application. The interview allows the volunteer an opportunity to offer additional information about their interests and skills that may be difficult to reduce to writing. The interview also gives an opportunity to evaluate the appropriateness of the fit of the position to the applicant.

Reference and Criminal Background Checks. Reference and criminal background checks are required for volunteers who:

- Work with children
- Work independently with adults with vulnerable conditions
- Provide independent services to elderly in their homes
- Transport others as part of their volunteer responsibilities
- Other cases deemed necessary by department served by volunteer

Each department will be responsible for conducting background check checks for volunteers deployed in their departments using means that are appropriate for the volunteer position and its respective responsibilities. Background check resources may include CCAP, IBIS, National Sex Offender Registry, EWISACWIS, Department of Justice, and local law enforcement resources. Department heads should designate staff to complete the investigation on line. Findings in reference checks are subject to data practices regulations.

- A criminal background check is part of a selection process, not selection criteria.
- Selection criteria must be based upon outstanding convictions, not arrest information; however, departments may consider arrests for which *the final disposition is pending* in its decision process.
- Convictions/pending arrests should not be used to automatically bar persons from becoming volunteers but should be considered with respect to time, circumstance, seriousness and relationship to volunteer responsibilities. However, the utilization of volunteers in some areas may be regulated, and legal criteria may bar persons with specific criminal convictions from volunteering in those areas.
- Departments with questions regarding the identification or relevancy of offenses discovered as part of the criminal background check should contact the Personnel Department for assistance.
- Volunteers are required to report any criminal convictions to the County .

Motor Vehicle Driving Record Check. Volunteers who will be transporting other persons as part of their volunteer responsibilities must have a valid drivers license and must have an acceptable driving record, based upon a motor vehicle driving record check completed by the department in which they work.

Authorization Letter. Issuing an authorization letter welcomes the volunteer into your program area and provides a written record of the individual as a person authorized to provide services on behalf of the County.

VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTION

Instruction of volunteers ensure that they have the necessary skills and confidence to carry out their responsibilities, will help minimize problems involving the volunteer or persons served by the volunteer, and will deter claims against the volunteer and the County. Written documentation of all instructions given should be kept on file.

Volunteer Responsibilities Description. Because the County will only assume liability for volunteers acting within the scope of their responsibilities, it is very important to identify, in writing, what the volunteer's responsibilities actually are.

Volunteer Instruction. Volunteers should receive instruction on how to carry out their responsibilities, which will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the volunteer's responsibilities. Instruction methods may include informal orientation, hands-on instruction, job site performance coaching and skills training, or a formalized training program-

Safety Policies and Procedures. Volunteers should be instructed in pertinent safety policies and procedures including emergency evacuation, safety rules, and proper use of equipment.

Incident/Accident Reporting. Volunteer should be instructed to report to their supervisor as soon as possible all incidents or accidents they are involved with during the course of their volunteer responsibilities. Prompt accident investigation is critical to determine possible causal factors and corrective actions to prevent such accidents from occurring in the future.

Confidentiality Statement

If volunteers handle or are exposed to confidential data they must sign a confidentiality statement.

VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION

Department heads determine whether volunteers under their direction will be required to wear an official County picture identification during hours in which they are performing volunteer services. Factors to be considered in making that determination include but are not limited to: the safety and security of other volunteers, County employees and members of the public; the security of the site at which the volunteer service is being provided; and general practicality. The Information Technology Department is responsible for the production of the picture ID's, and expense is born by the Department.

PERFORMANCE AND RECOGNITION

Throughout the volunteer's service to the County, managers need to evaluate the performance of the volunteer. If performance does not match expectations, if appropriate, managers should try to assist the volunteer to improve performance in order to better carry out their responsibilities. Likewise, recognition for a great contribution is always appropriate. If performance does not improve, the volunteer should be notified in writing that they are no longer authorized to perform services on behalf of the County.

RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE

A brief thank you letter is recommended, where appropriate, upon completion of the volunteer's service to the County. It provides a written document confirming that the volunteer's services on behalf of the County has ended and the individual is no longer authorized to act on behalf of the County. For the volunteer's benefit, this letter may serve as a reference for other opportunities.