



Youth Protection Standards – Qualifications of Volunteers

A training overview for Texas
Extension Volunteers

History



- Volunteer Qualification Task Force in Texas organized May, 1997
- Myron D. Johnsrud, Administrator of Extension Service of USDA memo, 1990
- Other screening policies and procedures reviewed
- Recommendations made to administration, 1998

History



- 2000-2001 Self Disclosure (4-H Only)
- Sept. 2002 screening of all direct volunteers D-1 – D-4.
- Sept. 2003 ... Districts 5-8
- Sept. 2004 ... Districts 9-12
- September 1, 2005 continue to screen all new direct volunteers state wide.

Youth Protection Standards – Purposes

- Provide a safe and secure environment for youth and adults;
- Education regarding and prevention of child abuse;
- Implement best practices related to the management of volunteer service risk.
- Protect the image and integrity of Texas Extension and its associated groups.

Definitions to Determine Procedures

- **Volunteer:** Anyone who performs a task without salary/wages and on behalf of Texas Extension.
- **Direct Volunteer:** Any enrolled volunteer who meets the following criteria:
 - Provides unpaid support for Texas Extension through face to face contact;
 - Provides a direct education for adults or youth;
 - Has an individual application on file with the appropriate program area;
 - Has a position description on file;
 - Examples: WAT team leader, club manager, project leader, chaperone, teacher, coach, master volunteer....

Definitions...continued

- **Indirect Volunteer:** Any volunteer who meets the following criteria:
 - Provides unpaid support for Texas Extension which does NOT include face to face contact with youth or adults;
 - Does NOT provide direct education for youth or adults;
 - Has an individual application form on file with the appropriate program area;
 - Has a position description on file;
 - Examples: youth and adult board members, committee members, result demonstrator and donors.
- **Episodic/Random Volunteer:** An individual who volunteers for a single or limited activity, event or program conducted as part of the Texas Extension.
 - Examples include: fair judges, workshop members, presenters serving on special committees, and assistants or helpers at events.

Definitions...continued

- **Youth Volunteer:** A youth volunteer is any young person under the age of 18 who is assuming the responsibilities of the afore-mentioned volunteer categories. Youth are strongly encouraged to volunteer. Adults work closely with young people to place them in volunteer roles that are appropriate to their skills and maturity. (no criminal background check)
- **Master Volunteers:** Any enrolled volunteer who meets the following criteria:
 - Undergoes specialized training in a subject matter area for 20 or more hours as appropriate to the subject matter.
 - Is able to make significant contributions to leadership in the subject matter area;
 - Makes a commitment to return 50 or more hours of service in that area (or a combined total of 80 hours with training)
 - Has a position description on file.

Screening

- Who is screened?
- What kind of search is conducted?
- Where is the search done?



Required Information

- Name
- Address
- Date of Birth
- Race/Ethnicity
- Social Security Number (or first 5 digits)



Screening

- How much does it cost?
- How often are volunteers screened?



Prior Screening

- Minimum criminal background check
- Best Practice/preference that the screening is every three years
- Approved List: School districts, churches, youth groups/associations, law enforcement, Texas Youth Commission, Department of Defense – Child and Youth Services and DOD – Family Program, Concealed Handgun License, Day Care Workers

Screening Process

- County submits forms with transmittal cover and \$10 to Volunteer Specialist
- Batches are processed weekly to bi-weekly
- County CEA in charge of program area is contacted by phone/e-mail regarding restrictions/dismissals
- If disposition of charge is not available or more information is needed, Volunteer Specialist requests directly from the volunteer

Screening Process

- County is informed of all applicants who pass screening. County sends a letter of acceptance to volunteer. (sample provided)
- Volunteer Specialist sends letters directly to “red flag” volunteers regarding restrictions or dismissal.

Processing Applications

- Office of Volunteer Development (2 employees) oversee program and data entry.
- Employees trained and screened for security sensitive purposes.
- No offense details are shared with county faculty or other volunteers
- A volunteer may not fulfill their position duties until they have been screened.

Guiding Principles for Dismissal or Restrictions

- Evidentiary Law 609 – 10 years
- Murder, Sexual Assault *, Indecency with a child *, Injury to a Child, Felony Drug Conviction--- automatic dismissal.
- Each volunteer is handled on a case by case situation
- Categories – cleared, restricted, pending, and dismissed.

*Registered Sex Offender List

Letters Regarding Status

- Cleared – County Extension Office notifies volunteers directly.
- Restricted, Pending or Dismissed – Office of Volunteer Development for Texas Extension notifies volunteer directly

Causes for Re-screening or Status Review

- Questionable situation
- Written complaint against a volunteer
- Knowledge of a volunteer being charged or arrested
- Knowledge of improper advancement toward youth



Grievance Procedure

- TCE – written dispute by volunteer concerning status.
 - Submitted to Volunteer Specialist, DEA, and CEA.
 - Reviewed and written decision returned.
- DPS – applicant disputes the criminal history record transcript. Volunteer follows the DPS procedure through the Error Resolution Department.

Child Abuse: What is it?

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect



Recognizing Signs of Child Abuse

- Physical
- Emotional
- Neglect



Sexual Abuse

- Child sexual abuse is defined as - forced, tricked, or coerced sexual behavior between a young person and an older person.

What you need to do

- Make a report
- 48th Hour Rule
- Applies without exception
- Identity of individual is confidential





Questions?

Other Resources:
texasvolunteer.tamu.edu