

# LOUISIANA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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LCES PS-23  
Version: 1

## VOLUNTEERS

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### **Purpose & Scope**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework and direction to staff and volunteers engaged in volunteerism within the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service (LCES). The procedures in this document are intended to apply to staff and volunteers in the 4-H program. Volunteers in other program areas should follow similar principles and guidelines. In addition, these guidelines apply to local, parish, region, and state level volunteer committees and boards, which are working on behalf of the LCES. The policy is designed to reduce volunteer risk and protect the interests of the LCES and the LSU Agricultural Center (LSU AgCenter), its volunteers and the communities it serves.

### **Definitions**

A volunteer is an individual who contributes time of their own free will, without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond possible reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses and performs tasks at the direction of and on behalf of the LSU AgCenter. A volunteer shall be officially enrolled by LSU AgCenter or have been documented through written correspondence or phone records prior to the performance of the task. Volunteers are not employees of the LSU AgCenter. Volunteers may be counted in several categories.

*Long-term Volunteer* – any person engaged in specific volunteer activities on a continuing or on-going basis

*Episodic Volunteer* – any person who provides a one-time or infrequent assistance

*Collaborator* – any person, who as part of their normal compensated employment by a third party, assists the LSU AgCenter in the accomplishment of a shared goal

*Master Volunteer* – any person who has completed advanced training according to criteria determined by a specific educational program area and has demonstrated expertise and agreed to a voluntary long-term commitment to LSU AgCenter.

*Overnight Chaperone* – any person who provides guidance and support to youth in an overnight situation who has received training and passed a screening process.

*Middle Management Volunteer* – a person who works with and through others in coordinating or otherwise providing leadership for programming, events or activities in which volunteers participate

### **General Policy**

The LSU AgCenter values the contribution that volunteers make and recognizes the impact they have on members and service recipients.

## **Volunteer Recruitment**

Volunteers will be actively recruited by the LSU AgCenter personnel and when appropriate by LSU AgCenter volunteer staff. Volunteers shall be recruited in accordance with Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. .

Volunteers may be recruited through an interest in a specific role or may be recruited on a general interest and then matched to a specific role.

Persons interested in volunteering will complete a brief enrollment form, application and/or interview as determined by their specific program area. Applicants' abilities and interests will be reviewed as well as skills and qualifications for the position. When appropriate, background and references may be checked and personal interview(s) may be conducted.

In cases of collaboration, a letter of agreement or memorandum of understanding will be obtained. In cases of episodic volunteer opportunities, the volunteer should be documented through such means as a sign-in sheet, letter of invitation, volunteer work schedule, etc.

LSU AgCenter volunteers will be reviewed and may be continued on a periodic basis or as needed. If the service of the volunteer is no longer needed or desired, Extension may elect not to continue the volunteer's appointment.

Volunteers other than episodic ones should have a volunteer service description that includes the term of the volunteer commitment, is reviewed by the volunteer and is updated as needed.

## **Volunteer Placement**

Volunteers will be placed in positions, based on their qualifications and the needs of the LSU AgCenter, without regard to sex, age, disability, religion, and other protected categories under Louisiana and Federal Law, LSU System PM-55, and AgCenter PS-23.

Major volunteer duties will be determined and training needs assessed.

## **Orientation**

Volunteers, except episodic volunteers, will receive a general orientation to the LSU AgCenter, mission, volunteer guidelines, risk management guidelines, code of ethics and EEO/AA/CR, ADA, and AgCenter PS-23, PS-19, and PS-16. All volunteers will receive a general orientation as appropriate for the volunteer task/position and the purposes and requirements of their volunteer service.

## **Code of Conduct**

Volunteers are expected to uphold high standards that ensure the safety and well-being of the LSU AgCenter, its staff, volunteers and clients. Volunteers will uphold all individuals' rights to dignity, self-development and self-direction. Volunteers will accept supervision and support from Extension professionals while involved in the program. Volunteers will accept the responsibility to positively represent the LSU AgCenter during the tenure and duration of their volunteer engagement. Volunteers will conduct themselves in a courteous, caring, responsible manner with focus on respect, trustworthiness, fairness, and good citizenship. Volunteers are expected to respect, adhere to and enforce the rules, policies and guidelines set forth by the LSU AgCenter and any programs that they are specifically assigned to. Volunteers should not commit unlawful acts and are expected to comply with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws. Volunteers will operate machinery, vehicles and other equipment, when applicable, in a responsible and safe manner. Volunteers are charged with performing their duties in a responsible and timely manner.

## **Supervision & Training**

Each volunteer shall have an identified supervisor. The supervisor shall be responsible for on-going guidance and assistance. A volunteer may act as a supervisor of other

volunteers, provided that the supervising volunteer is under the supervision of a salaried staff member of the LSU AgCenter (or SU agent in a joint LSU/SU extension office).

Volunteers shall receive specific training to provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their volunteer assignment. The time, delivery methods and content of this training will be consistent with the demands of the volunteer position and the experience of the volunteer. A record of training received including the training title and date, should be kept on the volunteer by the LSU AgCenter through methods such as attendance lists, in an enrollment program, etc.

LSU AgCenter staff and volunteers are expected to review, recognize and assess volunteer contributions and impact to the accomplishment of the program goals. Staff should document volunteer involvement in annual reports and other documents. Volunteers may be recognized, as appropriate, for their contributions throughout their tenure with LSU AgCenter

### **Confidentiality**

Staff shall retain all volunteer records in a confidential manner. Volunteers shall be responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as an AgCenter volunteer in accordance with laws and regulations. This information may include health conditions, child/sexual abuse, and legal issues.

### **Volunteers Working With Youth**

Volunteers who serve in a role that work with youth must review the Child Protection Policy and will be screened and assessed in accordance with applicable laws and/or regulations. Volunteers are required to disclose and report any arrests or convictions, as well as any traffic violations. While disclosure/-reporting of such will not automatically ban the volunteer from serving as a volunteer or driving

in his/her capacity as a volunteer; it will help the AgCenter make decisions on volunteer duty assignments.

### **Access to LSU AgCenter Property and Materials**

When appropriate, LSU AgCenter volunteers may have access to LSU AgCenter property and materials necessary to fulfill their duties and shall receive training in the use of any equipment. AgCenter property and other resources may only be used for official AgCenter business.

### **Contracts**

Individual volunteers are not authorized to sign any contract and/or make any representation on behalf of the LSU AgCenter which obligates the University.

### **Fund Raising**

Fund raising programs led by LSU AgCenter volunteers or non-incorporated informal volunteer groups shall get written permission of the appropriate Cooperative Extension office. Approval of Parish Extension office is required if the fund-raising program is confined to a parish. Approval of the Regional Office is required if the fund-raising is multi-parish. Approval of LSU AgCenter Department or Unit is required if the fund-raising is multi-parish or statewide. State-incorporated volunteer organizations shall get written permission from the appropriate LSU AgCenter unit if their fundraising uses an AgCenter name or implies that the funds are being raised for an AgCenter related project.

### **Review of Volunteer Activities**

LSU AgCenter Staff members are encouraged and expected to provide formal and informal feedback regarding a volunteer's performance on a periodic basis. Evaluative comments should be focused on supporting the growth and development of the volunteer and the LSU AgCenter program.

A volunteer may need to be relieved of specific duties due to changes in volunteer staffing needs or when the volunteer's activities are not consistent with the LSU AgCenter mission, do not follow LSU AgCenter program policies or do not otherwise meet AgCenter needs.

Volunteers are permitted to serve at the sole discretion of the LSU AgCenter. The LSU AgCenter may at any time, and/or for any reason, decide to terminate a volunteer's relationship with the organization or to make changes in the nature of their volunteer assignment.

Before discontinuing an individual's volunteer status altogether, the responsible employee shall notify and/or obtain approval from his/her supervisor, and in most cases, verbally notify the volunteer. The decision regarding the volunteer's participation will be final.

In cases of allegations of illegal or criminal acts related to their volunteer service, the volunteer's supervisor should notify the AgCenter HRM Office or, in the case of a volunteer in the 4H area, the 4H department head or assistant department head. These offices will help in determining the next step which may include internal investigation or notification of appropriate legal authorities. (An exception is when there is an immediate threat where a delay in notification of authorities might cause further threat to health, welfare or property.) If this occurs, upper administration will be informed and involved regarding the situation. The HRM Office and/or appropriate department, in consultation with the vice chancellor and any other appropriate offices, shall determine whether the volunteer's service should be temporarily suspended until the allegations have been proved or disproved.

### **Liability issues**

A system of records shall be maintained on each LSU AgCenter volunteer for purposes of liability, insurance, reporting, in kind

documentation and/or volunteer management tracking. Suggested records include the application/enrollment, documentation in support of these forms such as dates of service, training and duties performed. Screening records (not including criminal background checks), Code of Conduct Forms, volunteer service descriptions, vehicle records and other program requirements will be included as appropriate. Records shall be maintained for as long as the volunteer is active with the LSU AgCenter and at least 5 years after disassociation with the LSU AgCenter.

All authorized LSU AgCenter volunteers are covered by liability insurance when in pursuance of their duties as a volunteer. Volunteers shall submit to the appropriate office (prior to the event) a summary of their planned activities. This information needs to include: A) Name of the event; B) Date of the Event; C) Club or Group Name; D) Name of Volunteers/Coordinators; E) Location of the Event and F) Estimated Number of Participants. Liability insurance is subject to the applicable policy provisions and exclusions.

Volunteers who meet the requirements of this policy are not considered employees for any purpose other than workers' compensation and general liability protection. They are not eligible for retirement and health benefits, other than workers' compensation, on a medical only basis, as a result of their volunteer status. Volunteer workers may be covered for medical expenses related to injuries that occur during approved volunteer activities. Departments or units engaging volunteers are responsible for maintaining the names of all volunteers, their dates, locations and hours worked and description of volunteer responsibility. Volunteers are required to report any work-related illness or injury to their supervisor immediately. Final determination of coverage is made by the State Office of Risk Management on a case by case basis.

A volunteer is expected to provide non-biased, research based information consistent with LSU AgCenter recommendations to the general public with no intended endorsements of specific products, companies or services.

In making diagnosis and recommendations, including those which include pesticides and fertilizers, food preparation and preservation, and health and nutrition, volunteers shall follow published LSU AgCenter recommendations and manufacturers labels. Use of other recommendations is not approved unless permission is granted by a qualified Extension faculty member. When reading a recommendation to a client, one shall read it in its entirety. No omissions are allowed under any circumstances. Handwritten recommendations are not approved. All commercial, production and business questions are to be referred to a qualified Extension faculty member.

Volunteers should not be expected to and are not permitted to answer questions outside their area of expertise or training. This normally would include not answering questions concerning medical or legal questions, determining if a questionable food or plant is edible, hazardous tree evaluation, household and structural pests, any questions not specifically covered by LSU AgCenter recommendations, and all questions initiated by any commercial concern.