

Association Volunteer Policy

Purpose

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Associations engage thousands of volunteers annually in a variety of settings carrying out the mission and purposes of the organization. This Volunteer Policy sets forth the terms under which the Cornell Cooperative Extension Association volunteer relationship is established, and outlines those guidelines most critical for a volunteer experience that is productive for the individual and for the organization. This Volunteer Policy is complimented by Volunteer Implementation Procedures that will assist CCE staff in assuring that the organization's interaction with volunteers is consistent, fair, and effective in carrying out the mission of CCE.

Defining an Association Volunteer

CCE Association Volunteers are individuals who neither receive nor expect to receive any monetary compensation for performance of services directly related to the business of CCE, to support its activities, or to gain experience in specific endeavors. Individuals who receive payment beyond expenses incurred during performance of service (whether such payment be in the form of cash, goods, lodging, food, etc.) are not considered volunteers.

Members of Boards of Directors are governed by the rules set forth in N.Y. County Law 224 (8)(b), the Association Constitution, and Cornell University.

To be permitted to serve as CCE Association Volunteers all individuals other than Board Members (including both Enrolled and Casual Volunteers, see "Categories of CCE Association Volunteers") must be willing to provide services according to this Volunteer Policy. Volunteers who participate in multiple roles in the organization (as an example: a Board Member who is also a 4-H club leader) will adhere to the standards prescribed in the Volunteer Policy under the category of *Enrolled Volunteer*, if appropriate.

Individuals who volunteer at the University level are subject to the Cornell University Policy on University Volunteers. http://www.policy.cornell.edu/vol6_5.cfm

Who May Volunteer

Any member of the general public, students, former program participants, current or retired employees of CCE may serve as CCE Association Volunteers with the following restrictions:

- Youth under the age of eighteen may serve in only those volunteer roles that do not require a signed volunteer agreement and may do so only with signed parental consent. Youth engaged in service learning or community service activities are considered to be program participants and are not considered to be CCE Association Volunteers for the purposes of this Volunteer Policy.
- An employee of CCE may not volunteer in a capacity that is the same or essentially similar to that individual's paid work assignment.

Status of Association Volunteers

All association volunteers serve at the discretion of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Association. A volunteer's supervisor may release the volunteer from service at any time. A volunteer may discontinue his or her service at any time. An individual occupying an elected position serves a term under the provisions of N.Y. County Law 224 (8)(b), the Association Constitution, and Cornell University, but may be released from other volunteer assignments within the association.

The CCE Association may, within its discretion, choose to discontinue the service of a volunteer. Reasons for discontinuing service of a volunteer include, but are not limited to, a finding by the CCE Association that a volunteer intends to or has:

- Compromised the health or safety of program participants, employees, or members of the general public
- Mismanaged public funds
- Evidenced a conflict of interest or commitment
- Engaged in behavior that compromises the effectiveness of other volunteers or staff

Volunteers in all categories are expected to follow the CCE Association Volunteer Code of Conduct. Supervisors may release volunteers who do not follow this code of conduct.

Categories of CCE Association Volunteers

- ❖ **Casual Volunteer:** An individual who sporadically assists enrolled volunteers with one or a series of unrelated activities or who accepts a limited volunteer assignment which will be defined as such at the outset of the assignment (such as teaching a mini-course, creating a marketing piece, assisting with a fund development effort, or serving in an appointed position). Casual Volunteers are not required to sign a volunteer agreement. As Casual Volunteers are not subject to CCE procedures for screening and selection of volunteers, they must not have on-going, unsupervised contact with minors, individuals over 65, or individuals with disabilities.
- ❖ **Elected Volunteer:** An individual who was nominated and elected to serve as a part of the officially established governance of the CCE Association accordance with the rules set forth in N.Y. County Law 224 (8)(b) and the Association Constitution.
- ❖ **Enrolled Volunteer:** An individual who accepts a role defined by a written volunteer position description for a period of at least one year (academic, program, or calendar). Enrolled Volunteers with the potential for on-going unsupervised contact with minors, individuals over 65, or individuals with disabilities will have to pass a criminal background check¹ prior to being allowed to act as Enrolled Volunteers. Enrolled Volunteers will be required to sign a written CCE Association Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct.
- ❖ **Supervising Volunteer:** An individual who has completed additional training required to promote health and safety and supervise other volunteers in the implementation of educational activities and events. Supervising Volunteers will be considered Enrolled Volunteers for the purposes of the Screening and Selection Procedure and will be required to sign a written CCE Association Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct. This category may be added when an association has the resources to provide additional training and supervision.

¹ Criminal background checks are **required only** of those Enrolled Volunteers whose positions require them to work in ongoing unsupervised settings with minors, individuals over 65, or individuals with disabilities.

Volunteer Agreement

The volunteer agreement defines the relationship between the volunteer and the local Cornell Cooperative Extension Association, confirms an understanding of each party's responsibility to the other, and declares the right of either party to terminate the relationship. A **signed volunteer agreement is required** for an *enrolled volunteer* if it is determined by CCE that this volunteer's decisions or activities raise the risk of personal injury or the potential for a liability claim against CCE. Enrolled Volunteer activities, which will require a signed agreement include but are not limited to:

- Work with minors, individuals over 65, and individuals with disabilities
- Work with confidential information
- Laboratory work
- Professional services
- Travel of any kind
- Work with animals

Note: All CCE Association volunteers are **prohibited from** engaging in any activity considered detrimental to the interests of Cornell Cooperative Extension and, except for Board Officers specified in the CCE Association Constitution, are **prohibited** from entering into any written or verbal contract on behalf of Cornell Cooperative Extension.

A volunteer agreement is **not required** for Board Members, Casual Volunteers, or those volunteers whose activities are generally considered by the CCE Association to present low risk to CCE; such as those engaging in clerical work or appointed participation on an advisory committee.

Procedure for Screening and Selection of Enrolled Volunteers

All *enrolled volunteers* who are placed in positions after September 1, 2005 will be screened and selected through the following procedure:

- A written description will be developed for the position,
- Volunteer applicants will submit a written application, giving at least two references,
- Applicants will be interviewed, references will be checked,
- Certain applicants will be enrolled pending a criminal background check,
- Applicants for positions, which require driving as a part of scheduled program activity, will undergo a DMV check,
- Applicants will be notified of the status of their application.