

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County Association Volunteer Policy

Adopted August 22, 2005

Board of Directors of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County *

*Amended to read that “*All enrolled* volunteers shall be required to have a criminal background check.”

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 check^{1,2} 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.

² Amended 8/22/2005 to read that “**All enrolled volunteers shall be required to have a criminal background check.**”

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.

Implementation

The **Volunteer Implementation Procedures**, found at <http://staff.cce.cornell.edu/vip> provides a complete set of tools for implementing this policy.

Implementation of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Association Volunteer Involvement Policy

The procedures and tools in support of implementation of the CCE Association Volunteer Involvement Policy (VIP) are derived from the theory of volunteer development: **I**dentification, **S**election, **O**rientation, **T**raining, **U**tilization, **R**ecognition, and **E**valuation (ISOTURE). ISOTURE was originally presented in 1969 by Dr. Robert Dolan, Professor at North Carolina State University and introduced to Extension 4-H by Dr. V. Milton Boyce in 1971.

The ISOTURE model stands for:

- **Identification:** The need for a volunteer and the skills required are identified. A volunteer position description is developed.
- **Selection:** Volunteers are recruited, screened and matched with specific positions. A volunteer agreement and code of conduct are signed.
- **Orientation:** New volunteers learn about the organization, including mission, history and staffing. They also learn about their specific position responsibilities and working with adults and children.
- **Training:** Volunteers participate in training that allows them to perform at a high level of quality.
- **Utilization:** On-going communication, support and training are provided to ensure the volunteer's success.
- **Recognition:** The volunteer's achievements and contributions are acknowledged both informally and formally throughout their term of service.
- **Evaluation:** Performance standards are established and agreed upon and the volunteer is provided ongoing feedback as well as an annual review.

The National 4-H Youth Development Program expanded this work in 1994 with the development and publication of **TAXI** (**T**aking **A**nybody **I**nto **E**xpanded **I**nvolvement). The **TAXI** materials includes six sets of workbooks and training guides identified by color covering such topics as volunteer program design, self-assessment of management competencies, expanding diversity, and volunteer selection. It was piloted in New York State and the blue box with a red title should be in every association office.

CCE staff has the responsibility of designing and/or utilizing a volunteer management system that is consistent with this policy. The volunteer management system should include planning for volunteer involvement through the development of volunteer roles that are complementary to the activities of paid staff; assignment of staff time (paid or volunteer) to each of the volunteer involvement functions (ISOTURE); and the establishment of reporting procedures for volunteer accomplishments.

The following resource list using **TAXI** by the ISOTURE topics has been taken from materials presented by Colorado State University Cooperative Extension at a Nationals Volunteer Conference in 2000.

ISOTURE Topic or Concept Sources

I	Planning for volunteer involvement	Blue TAXI , whole volume; RED TAXI , pages 2 -3
I, S	Volunteer position descriptions	Red TAXI , pages 4 - 9
I	Identifying and recruiting the most qualified people	Red TAXI , pages 10 -16; Green TAXI , pgs 9 – 12
I	Expanding the diversity of the volunteer force	Yellow TAXI , whole volume
S	Selecting management volunteers	Green TAXI pages 9 - 16
S	Interviewing volunteers	Red TAXI , pages 25 - 29
O	Orienting management volunteers	Green TAXI , page 17
O	Orientation of new volunteers	Red TAXI , pages 30 - 34
T	Training management volunteers – content and methods	Green TAXI pages 18 - 19; Green TAXI Trainers' Guide pages 36 - 53
T	Training management volunteers – communication skills	Red TAXI , pages 49 - 53
T	Training management volunteers – conflict management and problem solving	Red TAXI , page 53
T	Support volunteer growth	Red TAXI , pages 76 - 82
U	Effective delegation	Red TAXI , pages 54 - 57; Green TAXI pages 20 - 22
U	Supporting volunteers through their volunteer life-cycle	Green TAXI pages 23 - 24
U	Using volunteer talent effectively	Red TAXI , pages 39 - 48; Green TAXI page 26
R	Recognizing management volunteers	Green TAXI page 27
R	Planning appropriate recognition	Red TAXI , pages 66 - 68
E	Evaluating the volunteer system	Red TAXI , pages 73 - 75; Green TAXI page 31
E	Evaluating volunteer performance	Red TAXI , pages 69 - 71
E	Management volunteer progress report	Green TAXI page 28 - 30
E	Self-assessment for a volunteer manager	Purple TAXI , pages 2 -6