



Volunteer Policy

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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and consistent guidance related to the use of volunteers in Buncombe County (County). Expectations outlined in this policy define specific roles and responsibilities, ensure equitable opportunities, and safeguard the security and liability of the County while preparing all parties for success.

2.0 Applicability

This policy applies to individuals volunteering for Buncombe County, excluding County employees, appointed board members, commissions, and advisory committees. Where there is conflict with any department-specific policy, this document will supersede.

3.0 Policy

3.1 Definition of a Volunteer

3.1.1 A Volunteer is defined as:

- 3.1.1.1 Individuals who perform hours of voluntary service in a County department for civic, charitable, humanitarian, recreational, health, public safety or general welfare reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation or other benefits for service rendered.
- 3.1.1.2 Individuals shall be considered volunteers only when their services are offered freely, on a recurring or one-time event basis. Examples may include:
- Individuals who help with one day special events, such as clean-ups.
 - Individuals interested in gaining experience in an area they are interested in studying, not inclusive of a formal internship or apprenticeship.
 - Individuals who provide volunteer hours as part of justice involvement.
 - Individuals who may need more experience in order to gain employment.
 - Students who may need to fill a community service requirement mandated by a class.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities for Recurring Volunteers

- 3.2.1 The Director of Human Resources (or their designee) responsibilities:
 - 3.2.1.1 Provides oversight for the development of Countywide volunteer program while coordinating departmental variations in size, scope, services, complexity, and practice.
 - 3.2.1.2 Consult with departments on special projects and new volunteer initiatives.
 - 3.2.1.3 Develop recruitment and promotional campaigns for the strengthening, maintenance, and expansion of County volunteer programs.
 - 3.2.1.4 Process background checks for potential volunteers.
 - 3.2.1.5 Develop and recommend County policies and procedures relating to Countywide volunteer programs.
- 3.2.2 The Legal and Risk Department responsibilities:
 - 3.2.2.1 Advise on liability and risk concerning the use of volunteers in County operations.
 - 3.2.2.2 Determine and manage the need for risk mitigation strategies, such as insurance.
- 3.2.3 The Department Director (or their designee) responsibilities:
 - 3.2.3.1 Determine the type of work that needs to be completed and the length of time a volunteer is needed.
 - 3.2.3.2 In partnership with Human Resources, create and update role descriptions for volunteer opportunities for sharing with volunteers.
 - 3.2.3.3 Recruit volunteers by posting volunteer openings such as on the County's website.
 - 3.2.3.4 Screen, select, orient, and evaluate volunteers, as necessary.
 - 3.2.3.5 Provide orientation, training, and effective supervision for the tasks accepted.
 - 3.2.3.6 Ensure that no County employee shall serve in a position that results in a family member directly supervising the other or in one family member occupying a position that has influence over the other's volunteer management considerations.
 - 3.2.3.7 Make every effort to be hospitable and appreciative of the volunteer's goodwill, generosity, and work. This care and concern for the volunteer should be present in all the working relationships with the volunteer.
 - 3.2.3.8 Ensure that volunteers comply with all State, Federal, and County rules and regulations.
 - 3.2.3.9 Evaluate the Department's existing volunteer program.
 - 3.2.3.10 Maintain attendance records.
- 3.2.4 Volunteer responsibilities and expectations:
 - 3.2.4.1 Adhere to the same rules, regulations, and standards as regular County employees, as applicable.
 - 3.2.4.2 Demonstrate the County's core values through their performance and conduct.

- 3.2.4.3 Be prompt and reliable in reporting for duty; attendance is expected to be dependable.
- 3.2.4.4 Be provided with meaningful and appropriate assignments according to skill, interests, availability, and training.
- 3.2.4.5 Consult with the supervisor before assuming any new assignments.
- 3.2.4.6 Not have time wasted by lack of planning and coordination on the County's part.
- 3.2.4.7 Keep an accurate record of the hours served.
- 3.2.4.8 Always treat the public and fellow colleagues professionally and expect the same in return.
- 3.2.4.9 Present in a manner that enhances the public's respect, confidence, and trust for County Government and its operations.
- 3.2.4.10 Protect confidential information.
- 3.2.4.11 Exercise good judgment, remembering that volunteers are representatives of the County.
- 3.2.4.12 Perform every task safely and to the best of their ability.
- 3.2.4.13 Provide advance notice if unable to perform as a volunteer.
- 3.2.4.14 Receive feedback on performance.
- 3.2.4.15 Receive recognition for accomplishments and service to the County.

3.3 Special Types of Volunteers

3.3.1 Minors as Volunteers

- 3.3.1.1 The County encourages minors to volunteer to learn about future job opportunities and the skills needed for these positions. It is at the Department Head's discretion whether to allow minors 16 years of age or older. County Departments must follow the State of North Carolina Department of Labor Youth Employment Rules with volunteer minors. The Department of Labor outlines the hour and job limitations.
- 3.3.1.2 Minor volunteers must complete a Volunteer Minor Authorization Form including the parent/guardian signature. Minors do not need a work permit to volunteer for the County.

3.3.2 Volunteers involved with Justice Services

- 3.3.2.1 Justice involved individuals may be offered an opportunity to participate in Diversion programming administered by Buncombe County Justice Services as an alternative to further court proceedings. Program participants are assigned volunteer hours as part of their diversion program requirements. These volunteers are referred to the County and are accepted on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the Department Head.

3.4 Excluded from the Volunteer Program

- 3.4.1 Services that would involve operating heavy equipment, driving vehicles, working with hazardous materials, accessing confidential information,

providing fiscal responsibilities, or entering into any contract on behalf of the County.

- 3.4.2 Alternate Workforce – information is included in the Alternate Workforce Policy.
- 3.4.3 Volunteers do not displace or replace County employees; they assist paid staff or provide services that augment the established and mandated services of the County.
- 3.4.4 Per Section 3(e)(4)(A)(ii) of the FLSA, County employees are not permitted to volunteer. Work performed is considered Temporary Duty Elsewhere. Please reference the Leave Policy.

3.5 Appointment of Volunteers

Volunteers shall be legally protected from being harmed or harassed by laws, practices, and policies that discriminate against them due to a shared characteristic, whether actual or perceived, including: race, natural hair or hairstyles, ethnicity, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin or ancestry, marital or familial status, pregnancy, veteran status, religious belief or non-belief, age, disability or any other legally protected class under federal or NC State law.

- 3.5.1 Additionally, the County will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified volunteers, as applicable.
- 3.5.2 Volunteers assigned must participate in the County's background check process, as required, with the exception of one-time events unless specifically required.
 - 3.5.2.1 One-time events include events such as outreach events or elections. These volunteers must be supervised by a County employee.

3.6 Expenses

Pursuant to 29 CFR § 553.106, volunteers may be paid expenses, reasonable benefits or a nominal fee or any combination upon approval by the County Manager and not lose their status as a volunteer. A nominal fee is not a substitute for compensation and must not be tied to productivity. The factors used to determine whether a fee is nominal is (1) the distance traveled and the time and effort expended by the volunteer; (2) whether the volunteer has agreed to be available around-the-clock or only during certain specified time periods; and (3) whether the volunteer provides services as needed or throughout the year. If a nominal fee/stipend is provided to a volunteer, the payment must be treated like wages and income tax and FICA contributions must be withheld (IRS 26 U.S.C. § 3402).

The Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division presumes that fees paid to volunteers are nominal as long as the fee doesn't exceed 20% of what an employer would otherwise pay to hire a full-time employee for the same services. See Wage and Hour Opinion Letters FLSA2006-28 and FLSA2005-51.

In addition, if the volunteer is paid more than \$500 a year, the volunteer becomes an independent contractor.

3.7 **Volunteer Time Tracking**

Each department must maintain a record of hours worked by each volunteer using a standard template, so that recognition of hours served can be acknowledged.

3.8 **Volunteer Concerns**

Volunteers should communicate any concerns to their designated departmental supervisor or coordinator. If further support is needed, volunteers should follow their department's chain of command (e.g., supervisor → manager → department director) to escalate the matter. Should they need assistance, they may contact the County's Employee Relations department.

Volunteers are expected to voice concerns and address conflicts in a respectful, responsible, timely, and solutions-focused manner according to the Volunteer Procedures.

Volunteers are expected to act in good faith when reporting a concern, based on the reasonable person standard. Volunteers who file a concern for malicious, retaliatory, or unlawful reasons may be released in accordance with County policy.

3.9 **Discontinuing/Resignation of Volunteer**

The County and/or the Volunteer may discontinue the volunteer's service at any time. The department director or their HR partner will process the volunteer's end of service.

4.0 **Policy Non-Compliance**

Employees or volunteers who willfully violate the terms and conditions of this policy, or any County policy may be subject to appropriate action, including release from assignment.

5.0 **References**

5.1 Alternate Workforce Policy

6.0 **Audit**

All policies for Buncombe County may be subject to audit or review as outlined in the [Internal Auditor's Statement](#).

7.0 **Definitions**

7.1 **Alternate Workforce** - just-in-time workforce engaged or under the direction of the County Manager, aside from traditional full-time or part-time regular employees.

7.2 **Role Description** - Volunteer role descriptions are essential for the recruitment and placement of volunteers, and all volunteer opportunities should have clearly written role descriptions. Role descriptions provide volunteers with a clear explanation of expectations and obligations. Written volunteer role descriptions include the essential elements about the job, the volunteer, and the department.

7.3 **Recruitment** - the process of locating volunteers who have the skills and aspirations to fill volunteer opportunities with the County.

7.4 **Volunteer** - Pursuant to 29 CFR § 553.101 under the FLSA a volunteer is defined as an individual who performs hours of service for a public agency for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered, is considered to be a volunteer during such hours.

8.0 **Approval and Revision History**

Policy Origination Date:	April 26, 2024
Requires Board Approval:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Board Approval Date:	Click for Date
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