

February 21, 2025

**GENERAL LETTER NO. 1-F-5**

ISSUED BY: Bureau of Operations  
Community Access and Eligibility

SUBJECT: Employees' Manual, Title 1, Chapter F, **Volunteer Services**, Title Page,  
Contents 1, 1-12, revised; 13 and 14, new.

**Summary**

This chapter is revised to

- Adjust general procedures to reflect the realignment of agencies, clarifying roles across the agency and emphasizing the connection to the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator.
- Check and updated all Iowa Code references to be current.
- Update references to best practices and important definitions.
- Align background check section and references with The Safer Practices Screening & Selecting Volunteers to Serve Vulnerable Persons in Iowa and the current HHS Background Check Policy.
- Update branding, style, and formatting throughout.

**Effective Date**

Upon receipt.

**Material Superseded**

Remove the following pages from Employees' Manual, Title 1, Chapter F, and destroy them:

<u>Page</u>	<u>Date</u>
Title Page	July 2, 2021
Contents 1	July 2, 2021
1-12	July 2, 2021

**Additional Information**

Refer questions about this general letter to your area Community Access administrator.

Employees' Manual  
Title 1, Chapter F

Revised February 21, 2025

# **Volunteer Services**

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## **Overview**

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services Volunteer Services Program exists to enhance the delivery of services to Iowans in need. Volunteers, under the supervision of paid staff, assist in providing compassionate and caring service far beyond the services which could be provided by staff alone. In all cases, Agency volunteers supplement paid staff rather than replacing staff. This staff and volunteer team approach results in extended services to clients and is an essential component in the broad delivery of services.

### **The Value of Volunteers**

Volunteers bring energy, enthusiasm, and willingness to help. Some of the many positive ways volunteers bring value to state agencies include:

1. Enhancing services by supplementing and broadening existing work.
2. Developing a group of strong supporters.
3. Bringing community connections and personal networks to agencies/departments.
4. Offering specialized skills.
5. Encouraging increased diversity by providing opportunities to involve:
  - a. People of varied abilities
  - b. people of varied socio-economic status,
  - c. people of varied age groups and
  - d. other under-represented populations.
6. Bringing new energy and ideas.
7. Giving more of their time than often originally planned, due to their genuine interest in an agency/department.
8. Contributing tangible economic value, not in the form of financial donations, but in time and service.

### **Legal Basis**

The legal basis for implementation of the Agency's volunteer services program is [Iowa Code Chapter 234](#), which gives the Agency the responsibility to provide services to children and families. At times these services are provided or supplemented by volunteers.

[Iowa Code Section 217.13](#) further delineates the Agency's responsibility to establish volunteer programs, including, but not limited to, parent aides, friendly visitors, clerical assistants, medical transporters, conservators, and guardians.

[Iowa Code Section 217.44](#) covers record checks requirements for volunteers with direct access to Agency clients.

Chapter 8, Section E defines performance and accountable government spending and [11—IAC-118](#) also defines contracting requirements.

[Iowa Code chapter 669.24](#) personal liability for state volunteers.

[Rule 441 IAC 153\(234\)](#) specifies Department policy for contracts used for the purchase of volunteer coordination.

Federal laws governance includes the [Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973\(42 U.S.C. 4950 et seq\)](#) and [42 U.S. Code, Chapter 66](#)

### **Definitions**

**“Client”** means an Iowan served by or receiving services provided under the programs administered by the Agency.

**“Contractor”** means the person or agency with whom the agency has a contract for coordination of volunteer services. The contract language identifies the specific services to be provided by the contractor.

**“HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator”** is the staff person who administers the Agency’s volunteer services statewide and is responsible for the provision of advice and support to Volunteer Engagement Leads among any HHS divisions, subdivisions, bureaus, and/or teams.

**“Volunteer”** means a person or group serving at the direction of paid staff to perform services for the Agency without primary or immediate expectation of financial gain. This includes persons who may receive a nominal allowance which is less than market value for the services performed, and persons or organizations who provide in-kind goods or services. Also included are students who may be fulfilling a practicum, unpaid internship, or community service curriculum requirement.

**“Volunteer Engagement Leads”** is the working title of a person with whom the Agency has a contract for coordination of volunteer services or any person appointed at the division, subdivision, bureau or team level to coordinate services. This may be a responsibility assigned in addition to normal job duties. These leads function with the advice and support of the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator as needed.

**“Vulnerable Person”** means: 1) a person under 18 years of age; 2) a dependent adult or adult whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for his or her own care or protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation or improper sexual contact is impaired on a short term or long term basis due to a mental, emotional, physical or developmental disability or dysfunction, brain damage, or the infirmities of aging; or 3) a person who is in circumstances that place that person at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation or improper sexual contact.

## **Volunteer Services Structure**

The volunteer services structure within the Agency is comprised of an HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator housed within Volunteer Iowa and Volunteer Engagement Leads appointed at the division, subdivision, bureau or team level. A fulltime or part-time staff person may be designated to coordinate volunteer services.

Divisions, subdivisions, bureaus or teams, in conjunction with their respective management teams, may determine the locations and scope of their volunteer services to assist in the performance of their functions. The HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator is available to assist all HHS teams in identifying needs and developing a structure and systems to support goals.

## **Resources**

Funding for volunteer services is possible through federal Social Service Block Grant funds and state appropriated funds. Costs incurred in providing volunteer services in the facilities are state appropriated funds included in the facilities' budgets. Additional funding may be secured through grants.

The HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator can provide additional trainings, templates, advice and support to HHS Staff for volunteer services.

Volunteer Iowa provides resources such as online volunteer recruitment databases (Get Connected), opportunities to host AmeriCorps members, and connections to other state and national volunteer resources. Please contact the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator for more information.

## **Administration**

Following are various roles and responsibilities expected of persons involved in volunteer services. Whether these roles are assumed full-time or part-time, and whether one or more persons share responsibilities is left to the discretion of the appointing authority.

HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator: The person in this position is responsible for the administration of the Agency's volunteer services statewide. This person serves in a supportive role to all HHS Volunteer Engagement Leads.

Volunteer Engagement Lead: These positions or roles exist throughout all of HHS. The person assigned may function full time or part time and may be assisted by others. The role may be an HHS staff person or a contract-based position whose role is to provide volunteer coordination services. When applicable, the contract language defines the specific tasks to be performed.

### **Contracts for Volunteer Coordinator Services**

The HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator is available to support all divisions, subdivisions, bureaus or teams in identifying the appropriate structure for their volunteer engagement. If mutually agreed on by the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator and the appointing authority, a personal service contract for volunteer coordination may be entered with individuals or agencies to recruit, screen, orient, and refer potential volunteers to requesting staff. Contracts shall be between the contractor and the Department of Health and Human Services.

All volunteer contracts must comply with departmental, state, and federal guidelines.

It shall be the responsibility of the Volunteer Engagement Leads, in conjunction with area administrators and the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, to formally evaluate the performance of contractual volunteer engagement coordinators on an annual basis and/or as defined in the contract terms.

Evaluation of performance and compliance with contract terms must be done before the subsequent renewal or re-issuance of contract in accordance with Agency and State policy.

### **Volunteer Services**

Volunteer assignments within the Agency vary considerably from location to location. They are divided into two types: direct service and indirect service. Direct service involves situations in which volunteers interact directly with clients or residents, either one to one or in groups. Indirect service involves situations in which volunteers provide services that do not bring them into contact with clients or residents except incidentally in passing.



Example assignments are listed here to provide an overview:

**Direct Service**

- Transporting clients to medical and other appointments
- Visitor and companion service
- Guardians, conservators, and protective payees
- Monitoring of visitation with children
- Client assistance in completion of forms
- Role modeling
- Childcare
- Chore services and shopping assistance
- One-to-one resident assistance including reading aloud, writing letters, escorting to community events, taking walks, and similar activities
- Wheelchair escort within an institution
- Teaching/tutoring in a variety of activities, personal and social skills, crafts and leisure skills, occupational therapy, and life skills

**Indirect Service**

- Clerical and support activities, such as typing, filing, paper shredding, telephone answering, reception, and numerous other office and administrative tasks
- Library services, bulletin boards, scrapbooks
- Sewing, mending and similar tasks
- Special projects, such as filling holiday food baskets or collecting clothing, toys, and other items for distribution
- Serving on advisory committees and boards
- Public speaking and advocacy activities
- Providing training and professional development to staff and/or clients
- Special events and entertainment
- In-kind contributions, such as professional services, bookkeeping, journalism and graphic arts, printing, and other similar services

### **Volunteer Position Descriptions**

Detailed position descriptions allow potential volunteers to determine whether an opportunity fits their interests, skills, and schedule. For each desired volunteer role, detailed descriptions of volunteer responsibilities are necessary to determine appropriate risk and screening levels, and to ensure that they are applied fairly. A Volunteer Position Description template is available through the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator. For each position or volunteer role a detailed description will include:

- Title
- Purpose of the position
- Location (if known)
- Key responsibilities
- Who the volunteer reports to
- Length of appointment or time commitment, if known or applicable. (It is important to make any volunteer appointment terminable at any time at the will of the program).
- Required qualifications
- Support provided (what the volunteer can expect from the Agency)
- Screening required

### **Staff Requests for Volunteers**

Department staff requests for the services of a volunteer may be directed to supervisors, or to the Volunteer Engagement Lead as appropriate.

The process of onboarding volunteers should follow these steps.

1. Volunteer need identified
2. Discuss role with supervisor
3. Position Description created
4. Recruitment
5. Application
6. Initial Interview
7. Volunteer Screening (as applicable)

8. Acceptance
9. Orientation/Handbook policy review and signoff
10. Role specific Training

Following application and initial interview, prospective volunteers are referred to requesting staff persons for final selection and placement decisions.

Volunteer Engagement Leads may refer one or more prospective volunteers to the staff person who has requested volunteer services. The staff person will conduct the final interview and determine the suitability of the volunteer for placement in the volunteer assignment. Staff will then notify the Volunteer Engagement Lead that the potential volunteer should proceed with screening or be referred to alternative opportunities.

The HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator is available to provide guidance and templates for use throughout the process.

### **Refusal of Volunteer Requests**

Each Volunteer Engagement Lead shall, in consultation with the appointing authority and the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, have the latitude to refuse a staff request for volunteer assistance.

### **Employees as Volunteers**

Employees who wish to volunteer their services in HHS activities on personal time may do so when:

- a. The services are offered freely and without pressure or coercion from the Agency, either direct or implied.
- b. The person is not employed by the Agency to perform the same type of services as those for which the person proposes to volunteer.
- c. A conflict of interest is not created.

Additional limitations may apply by program and volunteer role. Speak to your supervisor if you have any questions or concern.

## **Application and Placement**

Prospective volunteers shall follow a consistent procedure which is the same for all persons. This procedure shall consist of the following:

### **Volunteer Applications**

Individuals and groups who wish to volunteer with the Agency shall complete a Volunteer Application. Prospective volunteers must agree to have the references they list on the application checked by the Agency if required by the volunteer role.

- Individual Volunteer Application: Individuals shall complete a Volunteer Application. The form is designed to provide basic information regarding the individual's interests, skills, and experience. An HHS Volunteer Application is available through the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator for divisions, subdivisions, bureaus or teams without a program specific volunteer application.
- Additional forms may be required based on the volunteer role as outlined in the volunteer position description, such as a Transportation Volunteer Questionnaire. All volunteer drivers must have a valid driver's license and proof of a safe driving record.

### **Volunteer Interviews**

Once a prospective volunteer has completed a Volunteer Application, they shall be given an initial screening interview to determine their suitability for available volunteer assignments. This initial interview together with the information given on the Volunteer Application should enable the Volunteer Engagement Lead to make an appropriate referral to staff who have requested volunteer services.

### **Volunteer Screening**

Screening of volunteers shall vary based on the volunteer role as outlined in the volunteer position description and may include a virtual or face-to-face interview, checking of references provided by the prospective volunteer, and/or registry and record checks.

Registry and record checks are performed as a part of the screening process for interns and volunteers as determined by the Agency. The volunteer's supervisor, in coordination with the Volunteer Engagement Lead, is responsible for ensuring registry and record checks are completed as required. Background checks will be conducted in a consistent and thorough manner in alignment with each candidate's proposed job duties. Checks may include a review of the Child Abuse Registry, the Dependent Adult Abuse Registry, Credit Checks, the Dependent Adult Abuse Registry, the Sexual Offender Registry, the State or local Criminal History Registries and the National FBI Criminal Record Check (fingerprint based).

Registry and record checks are performed pursuant to established policies, rules, administrative code, regulations, or laws for individuals who have direct contact with the Agency’s clients and/or access to sensitive information.

Information received from a background check will not necessarily preclude an applicant from being selected. An evaluation and analysis of the background check results compared to the job duties will be conducted by the Agency.

Declining to submit to a registry or record check shall be grounds for non-selection of an applicant. Some positions may require additional reviews, such as driver or professional licensure checks.

Specific policies and procedures related to background checks include:

- Background Check POLICY #COMP24-018
- Background Check During License Renewal Requirement Memo
- IRS Background Investigation Policy & Procedures
- [Safer Practices for Screening & Selecting Volunteers to Serve Vulnerable Persons in Iowa](#)

**Risk and Screening Example for Vulnerable Populations:**

<b>Risk Level &amp; Criteria:</b>	<b>Minimum Screening:</b>
No Additional Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No additional access to vulnerable populations is provided via the volunteer opportunity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None (beyond the Agency’s standard volunteer application process)</li> </ul>
Low: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No predictable or expected regular contact with vulnerable populations</li> <li>▪ Limited access to vulnerable populations</li> <li>▪ Limited access to personal information</li> <li>▪ Activities held in facilities with public access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check government issued photo I.D. to confirm identity and date of birth.</li> <li>▪ National Sex Offender Public Registry Check (Annual)</li> </ul>

<b>Risk Level &amp; Criteria:</b>	<b>Minimum Screening:</b>
<p>Medium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Predictable non-regular access and contact to vulnerable populations and:</li> <li>▪ Parents or family actively involved</li> <li>▪ Two or more authorized individuals supervising</li> <li>▪ No regular ongoing interaction between volunteer and vulnerable persons</li> <li>▪ No changing of clothing</li> <li>▪ Volunteer has no physical contact with vulnerable persons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check government issued photo I.D. to confirm identity and date of birth.</li> <li><b>and</b></li> <li>▪ Iowa Courts Online Check of all known names or aliases (if results produce inconclusive results a follow up check through the Iowa DCI is recommended). Check all charges and the final disposition of those charges. (Every 2 years).</li> <li>▪ National Sex Offender Public Registry (Annual)</li> </ul>
<p>High Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Activities held in private homes</li> <li>▪ Activities held in an isolated setting</li> <li>▪ One-on-one contact between the volunteer and the vulnerable individual</li> <li>▪ Interaction between volunteer and specific child spanning a long period of time</li> <li>▪ Changing of clothes, bathing, toileting, or overnight stays</li> <li>▪ Volunteer has close physical contact with vulnerable persons</li> <li>▪ Volunteer is a person who by the nature of their position creates a presumption of trust and/or authority</li> <li>▪ Volunteer is in a position that would give access to personal property or could influence financial decisions of individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check government issued photo I.D. to confirm identity and date of birth.</li> <li>▪ AND</li> <li>▪ Iowa DCI Criminal History check of all known names and aliases (every 2 years)</li> <li>▪ National Sex Offender Registry Check</li> <li>▪ Iowa Child Abuse Registry</li> <li>▪ Iowa Adult Abuse Registry</li> </ul>

Risk Level & Criteria:	Minimum Screening:
Other risk factors & suggestions for all levels of risk:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In border areas or when volunteer has a known prior state of residence, consider a check in that state via the other state’s online court record database or repository, a national criminal history screening, or a check of the adjacent county court records (depending upon the overall risk level).</li> <li>▪ For volunteers that drive vulnerable clients or vulnerable populations, consider an Iowa DOT driver history, and potentially a driving history of any other known state of residence.</li> <li>▪ If volunteer has access to personal property or could influence financial decisions, consider a credit check.</li> <li>▪ Consider other screenings given specific circumstances (such as license verifications, education records, etc.).</li> </ul>	

**Youth Volunteers**

Youth are a vital part of service in Iowa. Youth volunteers may provide their voice to our work, use their skills to develop a specific resource for our programs, provide hands on assistance with different tasks, develop solutions to youth-related issues, and much more. Youth volunteers under 18, will need a guardians’ consent to volunteer.

All young people can offer insights to issues within their community or within the state. Engaging young people as volunteers ensures every individual is represented in the work we do.

**Final Volunteer Acceptance**

When a volunteer is accepted and placed in a volunteer assignment, the volunteer shall complete an overall HHS orientation and submit an acknowledgement and agreement to the HHS Volunteer Policies as found in the HHS Volunteer Handbook.

**Services and benefits**

Volunteers are entitled to the same liability protection as state employees under Iowa Code chapter 669.24 and may be entitled to some benefits provided to state employees. Eligibility for benefits, such as parking, are determined at the local level.

**State Vehicles**

Volunteers may be permitted to utilize state vehicles if the role requires it and with supervisor instruction to do so. Volunteers will need to adhere to all State Vehicle processes and policies in the state handbook for employees.

## **Training and Monitoring**

The preference for the orientation and training volunteers are the HHS staff who will supervisor or work with the volunteer to assure the work is done at the Agency's level of expectation. In specialized situations, volunteer orientation and training may also be completed by the Volunteer Engagement Lead.

### **Orientation**

In additional to the general orientation to the Agency, an orientation to the specific HHS program or area shall be provided to all HHS volunteers.

### **Volunteer Job Training**

All volunteers with the Agency shall receive training consistent with their assigned duties and the skills, knowledges, and abilities of the individual volunteers.

### **Processing Confidential information**

Volunteers with access to confidential information as a part of their duties are required to take training and sign an attestation. It is the supervisor's or designee's responsibility to ensure volunteers meet these requirements.

### **Supervision of Volunteers**

Staff who request the services of a volunteer are expected to direct the activities of the assigned volunteer and to supervise the volunteer's performance.

Supervision shall include training, assignment of duties, performance monitoring, attendance monitoring, evaluation, recordkeeping, and participation in volunteer recognition.

Professional development resources on effective volunteer management are available for staff requesting the services of a volunteer through the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator and may be available through Volunteer Engagement Leads.



## **Evaluation**

### **Volunteer Program Evaluation**

It shall be the responsibility of management in each Agency organizational unit having volunteer services to evaluate that work. It shall be the responsibility of the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator to review and assist as needed in this evaluation.

As with any Agency program, the volunteer services evaluation looks to ensure the effective utilization of staff and volunteers to enhance delivery of services to clients and encompasses the appropriate expenditure of both federal and state funds.

### **Volunteer Evaluation**

It shall be the responsibility of Agency staff who supervise volunteers to formally evaluate the volunteer's performance.

For a long-term volunteer, this shall be done at least annually. In shorter-term situations, evaluations should be done quarterly or at the end of a special project.

### **Volunteer Termination**

#### **Program-Initiated Termination**

Volunteers are not employees and can be terminated by the Agency at any time and for any non-discriminatory reason. Some circumstances warrant immediate termination. The Agency is not obligated to keep a volunteer who is not performing satisfactorily or if there are unresolvable conduct issues. Whenever possible, the volunteer supervisor should work with the volunteer to correct performance and behavior before moving to terminate the volunteer. Termination of service must be noted in the volunteer file.

#### **Volunteer-Initiated Termination**

Volunteers may terminate the agreement themselves at any time. Volunteers may decide to end their services for several reasons, such as the completion of a specific project, a conflict with personal or family obligations, or the acquisition of a new job. If the volunteer intends to use their volunteer experience as a means of qualifying for a particular job, they may request a letter from the supervisor verifying the type of work performed. Termination of service must be noted on the volunteer file.

### **Termination Process**

When a volunteer's service is terminated with the Agency, either voluntarily or involuntarily, an exit survey will be provided. Date and reason for termination should be noted in the volunteer's file.

### **Volunteer Referral**

Volunteers who leave the Agency who wish may be referred to another agency or organization who might be better able to take advantage of their skills or whose mission may be more in keeping with the volunteer's interests.

### **Volunteer References**

Volunteer experience is sometimes viewed as positive work experience by volunteers who are seeking employment or by students who are completing academic requirements. Staff may complete such references upon request.

### **Recognition**

Volunteers who offer their time, talent, and commitment to the mission of the Agency shall be recognized both formally and informally for their contributions. Examples include:

- The Governor's annual volunteer awards: This is a recognition of volunteer services coordinated by Volunteer Iowa. Each year a recognition ceremony is held for volunteers who serve state agencies. The Agency has an opportunity to nominate volunteers for this award. Detailed information on making these nominations is provided to the Volunteer Engagement Leads.
- Local recognition events: County offices and facilities, as well as local communities, may conduct local recognition events. These vary in type according to local preference.
- Certificates, awards, and other small recognition are appropriate for volunteers and Agency staff but must fall within the guidelines of IAC 68B.22.

### **Reporting**

It is the responsibility of each Volunteer Engagement Lead to collect and report statistics regarding the volunteer activity in their respective location to be compiled by the HHS Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, annually at minimum. Report should include at minimum number of volunteers, number of direct hours, number of indirect hours, and any qualitative stories of impact and positive volunteer engagement.