Subject: Guidelines for the Use of Volunteers

1. Purpose
Departments at the university may be able to accomplish certain work as well as extend their budgets with the participation or involvement of volunteers. Because a volunteer may become an agent of the university when accepting an assignment, it is critical that they are carefully selected and supervised. The following guidelines address the involvement of volunteers by university departments. The Virginia Cooperative Extension (http://www.ext.vt.edu/) has specific guidelines and forms for Extension volunteers.

2. Guidelines

2.1 Guidelines for Supervisors
The following guidelines for the selection and supervision of volunteers are provided to departments:

1. Because the university may be liable for the actions of its volunteers, the qualifications and suitability of the individual should be considered before offering an opportunity to a volunteer.

2. If a department is considering offering an opportunity to volunteer to a person in a jail work release program, Human Resources must be contacted before an offer is made. The agency offering the release program would be responsible for all insurance coverage.

3. Departments should carefully consider the types of duties appropriate for a volunteer to perform. Generally, duties which are carried out by a university employee are appropriate for volunteers as long as they receive the same support and training any other paid employee would receive to complete the task.

4. Supervisors should ensure that volunteers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, limitations, and an agreed upon work schedule.
2.2 Definition of a Volunteer
An individual is considered to be a volunteer for an agency if the following conditions are met:

1. Services are performed for which the individual neither expects nor receives compensation, but may be paid expenses.
2. If the volunteer is a current university employee, the volunteer services are not the same type for which the university employs the individual and are freely given without pressure from the university.

3. Procedures

3.1 Criminal Conviction Check and Driving Record Check
A conviction check should be conducted if the volunteer will be performing duties considered security sensitive under the provisions of Policy 4060, Background and Driving Record Investigation. If the volunteer will be operating a vehicle as part of his or her duties, a valid driver’s license is required, and a driving record check should be conducted if driving or the transportation of clients or customers is the primary responsibility. Both of these checks can be initiated by calling the Human Resources Department. In addition to the driving record check, if a volunteer will be operating a commercial vehicle he or she is required to have a Commercial Driver’s License, and a drug test must be conducted. See Policy 4061, Drug and Alcohol Testing Guidelines for Commercial Drivers License Holders.

3.2 Job Description
It is recommended that volunteers be provided a written description of the duties they will be performing and receive training to carry out those duties including safety training as appropriate. In addition, feedback on their performance is suggested. Official university forms, however, should not be used to document any of these processes because the volunteers are not employees.

3.3 Current Virginia Tech Employees Serving as Volunteers
A current university employee cannot be considered as a volunteer if the type of work for which he/she is volunteering is the same type as the position they currently hold. Policy 4320, Guidelines for the Fair Labor Standards Act states that non-exempt employees must be compensated for all hours they are required or permitted to work. Thus, even though employees may volunteer to work beyond their normally scheduled hours, departments must compensate the employee for those extra hours worked.

3.4 Liability Coverage of Volunteers
The university's liability coverage provides protection for negligent acts or claims of negligent acts for any employee or representative of the university, as long as the individuals were acting in an official capacity and within the scope of their duties. If a negligence claim were made, the university would have to substantiate that the volunteer was acting as its agent. The liability insurance program is for claims of negligence against university representatives and does not provide for medical coverage of the volunteer, even if injury should occur during the volunteered hours. All medical concerns, including healthcare insurance, are the responsibility of the volunteer. University attorneys do not provide legal services if criminal charges are lodged against an employee or volunteer.

If there is an incident that may result in claims of negligence against the university, the circumstances must be documented. The Office of Insurance and Risk Management Employer's Accident Report should be completed and forwarded to that office, with a copy maintained at
the department. Upon receipt, the Office of Insurance and Risk Management will contact the department to advise of any necessary future action.

3.5 Non-Discrimination
The Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Statement (http://www.vt.edu/about/equal-opportunity.html) states that Virginia Tech does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of race, sex, disability, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, political affiliation, or sexual orientation. This statement applies to all members of the university community including volunteers at Virginia Tech.

3.6 Sexual Harassment
The university will not tolerate behavior between or among members of the university community that creates an unacceptable working or educational environment. If a volunteer is faced with sexual harassment, they have the same rights as students or employees under the Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy (http://www.policies.vt.edu/1025.pdf).

3.7 Individuals with International Visas Serving as Volunteers
Individuals in this country on certain types of visas may NOT be authorized to engage in voluntary activities under US Immigration guidelines. Departments must check with the Office for International Support Services (1-6459) in Burruss Hall before permitting a non-US citizen to serve as a volunteer.

3.8 Record Keeping
When a department wishes to involve volunteers, it is advisable that the individual's volunteer status be monitored/documented during the period of time the person is working in the department. The department head should ask the volunteer to read the letter of volunteerism (see sample attached) and sign the release form at the bottom unless the department has its own special forms. The originals of these documents should remain on file in the department.

4. Definitions
Volunteer - An individual is considered to be a volunteer for or an agent of an agency under the following circumstances:

1. Services are performed for which the individual receives no compensation but may be paid expenses.
2. If the volunteer is a current university employee, the volunteer services are not the same type for which the university currently employs the individual.

5. References
Policy 4060, Background and Driving Record Investigation
Policy 4061, Drug and Alcohol Testing Guidelines for Commercial Drivers License Holders
Policy 4320, Guidelines for the Fair Labor Standards Act
Policy 1025, Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy
Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Statement
6. **Approval and Revisions**

Approved June 11, 1996, by Associate Vice President for Personnel and Administrative Services, Ann Spencer.

October 10, 2001: Technical corrections to update policy links.

- **Revision 1**
  
  Additions to Section 3.4 Liability Coverage of Volunteers
  
  New Sections 3.5 Non-Discrimination and 3.6 Sexual Harassment
  
  Minor corrections for clarifications.
  
  Links established to websites of policies referenced.
  
  Approved March 14, 2002 by Vice President for Budget and Financial Management, M. Dwight Shelton, Jr.

- **Revision 2**
  
  Update Section 3.7 to clarify restrictions for voluntary activity for certain visa types to comply with US Immigration Guidelines.
  
  Update “Personnel Services” to “Human Resources” in Sections 2.1 and 3.1
  
  Update “Office of Risk Management” to “Office of Insurance and Risk Management” in section 3.4
  
  Update links established to websites of referenced policies
  
  Approved October 17, 2007 by Assistant Vice President for Administrative Services, Linda S. Woodard

- **Revision 3**
  
  Technical corrections to update links to the web sites.
  
  Updated the phone number and location of the Office for International Support Services.
  
  Approved February 19, 2010 by Vice President for Administrative Services, Sherwood G. Wilson.
Volunteer Sample Letter

Date

Dear (volunteer name):

I am pleased that you have volunteered your services to our department for the period of time. The following is a summary of your duties and responsibilities:

- 
- 
- 

You will receive training on the tasks and duties you will be performing and feedback will be given to you on your performance.

As a volunteer there is no compensation for your services; however, should you incur pre-approved expenses as result of the project such as travel, etc., you will be reimbursed.

Your work schedule will be: ____________________________

Your supervisor is ____________________________________ and should be contacted for any scheduling issues or questions concerning your service as a volunteer.

Special requirements of the job (such as required equipment, dress code, uniform, commercial driver's license, driver's license, etc.) are:

__________________________________________________________________________________________

The university liability coverage provides protection for volunteers while acting in an official capacity and within the scope of their duties. Worker’s Compensation Insurance does not provide medical coverage for volunteers even if the injury occurs during the volunteered hours. All medical issues, including healthcare insurance, are the total responsibility of the volunteer. Legal services are not provided if criminal charges are lodged against a volunteer.

Sincerely,

Department Official Representative

__________________________________________________________________________________________

I have read and understand the above information and I agree to the terms of the duties as a volunteer at Virginia Tech.

Signature: __________________________________ Date: ________________