Volunteers

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Contact: Office of Risk Management (ORM)

For information about the Volunteers process, contact the Office of Risk Management at 515-294-7711

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Introduction

Iowa State University (ISU) is pleased to have the assistance of the many individuals who volunteer their services to help the university accomplish its mission. This policy and related procedures are designed to establish the relationship of volunteers to the university for the purpose of minimizing risk and providing protection for the interests of the volunteer, the university, the State of Iowa and the community.

Policy Statement

Departments/units are responsible for oversight of all volunteer services and activities and for assessing risk associated with volunteer services. All departments/units must comply with the requirements and approval process for volunteer services, regardless of whether those services are provided on-campus or at an off-campus location, as outlined in this policy and in the related procedures (see Resources section below).

Definition of an ISU volunteer

A volunteer is an individual who performs services in furtherance of the humanitarian, educational, or service mission of the university. A volunteer performs services without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation, benefits or consideration for the services provided. Although compensation for volunteer services is not allowed, ISU volunteers who have received prior department/unit approval may be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses following university reimbursement guidelines (see Resources section below).

An ISU volunteer may be a member of the public, ISU employee, or student who is enrolled at ISU and wishes to volunteer to an ISU department, unit or program. When providing volunteer services, a volunteer is not acting as an ISU employee, is not covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and is not eligible for university benefits or workers’ compensation.

Limitations on who may volunteer

- An ISU employee may not volunteer to perform services for the university that are identical or similar to his/her duties as an employee.
- A person is not considered a volunteer when the decision to volunteer such services was not made freely, without pressure or coercion.
- A person may not volunteer if the person would displace or replace an employee position.
- An individual who has been convicted of an offense for which he/she appears on the National Sex Offender Public Website or for which he/she must register with the Iowa Sex Offender Registry as required by Iowa Code Chapter 692A may not serve in a volunteer capacity for Iowa State University or affiliated organizations. (See Resources section for links to sex offender registries and relevant policies.)
- ISU does not allow a volunteer younger than fifteen years of age without the supervision of his/her parent or guardian. (See below: “Special considerations when volunteers are minors”)
- Foreign nationals who do not possess the proper visa or other legal authorization permitting them to work or volunteer at the university may not volunteer.
Persons not covered by this policy

The following individuals are not considered ISU volunteers as referenced in this policy when providing services in the capacities listed below:

- **Unpaid academic appointment.** Individuals who have unpaid academic appointments to the university, (such as visiting scientist, collaborator status, etc.) are not considered ISU volunteers when acting in that capacity. They are eligible to become ISU volunteers for purposes that are not related to the academic appointment.

- **Performing services for another entity.** An individual is not an ISU volunteer while performing volunteer services for any other entity that is not a university department or program (such as non-profit or government agency; contracted third parties such as SMG Management Company; or affiliated organizations such as ISU Daily, ISU Foundation, Iowa Public Radio, etc.).

- **Performing services as a member of a group contracted by the university.** Individuals are not ISU volunteers if they are members of a group or organization which contracts with ISU and receives payment to provide a service (such as a non-profit service organization that provides a post-game clean-up service for Athletics as a fundraiser).

- **Guest lecturer.** An individual who is invited to speak at an ISU class or program.

- **Public member of a committee.** An individual serving on an institutional committee, advisory board, or visiting committee.

- **Participant in human subjects research.** A person who agrees to serve as an experimental subject in a research project or clinical trial. (Approval to enroll participants requires prior review by the Office of Responsible Research. Participants may be required to sign a detailed Informed Consent document before the research is initiated. See Resources section below for link to the Human Subjects Guidance and Forms.)

Assessing risk factors for ISU volunteer services

Prior to approving volunteer services, the university department/unit must evaluate the services that a volunteer is expected to provide. The following lists of services should not be considered comprehensive or exhaustive; they are intended to provide examples and guidelines for assessing the risk level of the services to be provided by a volunteer. The Office of Risk Management is available to assist with the risk assessment process.

The department/unit must classify the services to be provided in one of the following three categories based on the varying level of risk:

**Low Risk Services**

Volunteer service opportunities are classified as low risk if they do not meet the criteria of higher risk or generally prohibited services. Examples of Low Risk Services include:

- Commencement volunteers
- Gallery/program guide
- Phone-a-thon volunteers
- Greeting or directing individuals in a department or unit or at a university event
- Distribution of materials at fairs or special events
Higher Risk Services

Volunteer service opportunities may be classified as higher risk due to potential liability issues. These services may include criteria that require review by other departments (such as Environmental Health and Safety, Office for Responsible Research, University Counsel, etc.). Examples of Higher Risk Services include:

- Laboratory services (such as volunteer services in research laboratories or other facilities in which biological, chemical or radiological material hazards are present)
- Professional services (such as services of accountants, architects, engineers, nurses, physicians, attorneys, etc.)
- Travel of any kind (such as driver or passenger in ISU vehicle or personal vehicle on university business)
- Services that involve contact with animals
- Services that involve financial or confidential matters
- Services that involve access to minors or vulnerable populations (such as daycare; youth activities, pre-collegiate programs or camps, etc.)
- Services that involve possible contact with hazardous or potentially hazardous materials (such as biohazardous material, infectious material, human blood, etc.)
- Services that involve access to keys for any university facilities
- Repetitive and/or ongoing services for a department/unit
- Preparing or serving food (such as in our dining facilities)
- Construction activities that do not involve operating heavy equipment, but may involve power tools
- Planting trees, landscaping or grounds clean-up

Generally Prohibited Services

Services with substantial risk to the volunteer, the university or the community are generally prohibited. Departments/units may contact the Office of Risk Management to request an exception to the prohibition. After consultation with the appropriate college, department or unit, the Office of Risk Management may grant an exception for ISU volunteer services in this highest risk category. The following list of generally prohibited services should not be considered comprehensive:

- Services that involve electrical or maintenance/repair activities that would require university lockout/tagout procedures
- Service/maintenance procedures that require an individual to place any part of his or her body into an area where an associated danger zone exists
- Any activity that requires the use of fall protection or safety restraints
- Entry into identified confined spaces (see Resources section for link to Confined Spaces Policy)
- Any activity that is considered inappropriate for employees
- Entry into any contract or making a commitment or expenditure of university funds, including access to or use of P-Cards. Individuals who volunteer to ISU may not sign a contract on behalf of the university (see Resources section for link to Contracting Authority Policy).
- Services that involve export controlled materials, information, commodities, technology, and software (see Resources section for link to Export Controls Policy)
- Operation of construction-type heavy equipment (i.e. skid loader, backhoes, dump trucks, fork trucks, scissor lifts, mechanized farm equipment)
- Services that involve Select Agents (see Resources section for link to Select Agents and Toxins Policy)
Volunteer Registry

Low Risk Services

All ISU volunteers in this category must complete, at a minimum, the Approved ISU Volunteers Roster before starting volunteer service. This roster initiates communication regarding university policy and understandings related to volunteering at ISU; indicates the scope of approved volunteer services; and provides data for ISU’s comprehensive volunteer registry. If the ISU department/unit prefers, volunteers for low risk services may alternatively complete the ISU Volunteers Registration and Agreement through the ISU Volunteers management system.

Higher Risk Services

ISU Volunteer Coordinators will post all higher risk volunteer opportunities on the ISU Volunteers management system.

All ISU volunteers in this category must apply through the ISU Volunteers management system. Each volunteer opportunity identifies scope of service, indicates who will supervise the volunteer’s performance and serves as an agreement between the department/unit and the volunteer by outlining agreed conditions when volunteering at ISU.

Generally Prohibited Services

Upon written review and approval of a request for an exception to allow a service that is generally prohibited, all ISU volunteers in this category are required apply through the ISU Volunteers management system and may receive additional opportunity-specific correspondence to review and sign before beginning service.

Special considerations when volunteers are under age 18

Special considerations apply when a department/unit engages volunteers who are youth under the age of 18. Volunteers who are 15 through 17 years of age must provide a signed parental consent form prior to performing any volunteer services. Volunteers who are under the age of 15 may volunteer under the supervision of their parent or guardian and must have a parental consent agreement signed by their parent or guardian.

Responsibilities of department/units with ISU volunteers

Volunteer selection

- It is the responsibility of the department/unit to be certain the volunteer has adequate experience, qualifications, and training for the task he or she will be required to perform. The degree and type of screening for volunteer services should be based upon the risk category, type of services being performed, and the degree of supervisory control provided.
- All volunteers must be assigned to and serve under the supervision of a department or unit. The approval of volunteers to the department or unit may be authorized only by the department chair or unit director or his/her designee.
- Departments/units may not discriminate in selecting or terminating volunteers based on race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, marital status, disability, status as a U.S. veteran or other legally protected groups.
- When potential exists for volunteers to be involved with or in contact with vulnerable populations, the department/unit must verify that the individual is not on the Iowa Sex Offender Registry and complete any further background check that is appropriate.
- When volunteers will be involved with youth (under age 18), the department/unit must comply with the Youth Activities, Pre-Collegiate Programs and Camps policy and procedures (see Resources).
- During completion of the ISU Volunteers Registration and Agreement, applicants consent to the possibility of a background check. A background check may be required for proposed volunteers with responsibilities including but not limited to minors or vulnerable populations, access to keys to university facilities, or access to financial or confidential matters.
Approval of ISU volunteers

An individual becomes an approved ISU volunteer when the required ISU procedures are completed by the proposed volunteer and department/unit and approval is received from the chair or director of the university department/unit or his/her designee.

Orientation and Training

The department/unit shall provide the volunteer with an orientation prior to beginning services. The type of services will dictate the level of detail needed in the orientation. The supervisor is responsible for developing and documenting appropriate training. At a minimum, departments and units must facilitate orientation, which includes the following:

- Applicable university policies
- The services, responsibilities, risks, duration and expectations of the ISU volunteer service opportunity
- The limits of the volunteer’s approved services
- Applicable training concerning the volunteer’s approved services
- Federal or state regulations that apply to the volunteer’s service opportunity, including but not limited to those of ethical behavior, confidentiality, financial responsibility, substance abuse and use of university technologies

Supervision of ISU volunteers

- It is the responsibility of the department/unit to ensure the volunteer services being provided are for and directly related to the business of the university.
- The supervisor is responsible for exercising reasonable care in planning and implementing the volunteer experience and enforcing compliance with university policies and procedures including but not limited to safety, health and other applicable regulations.
- The supervisor is responsible for the volunteer’s training and direct day-to-day management and must be available for consultation and assistance.

Request for vehicle use

In some instances, with approval of the Office of Risk Management, ISU volunteers may drive Iowa State University vehicles. Departments/units requesting permission for ISU volunteers to drive Iowa State University vehicles must complete the approval steps outlined in the Fleet Safety Policy. A satisfactory review of the individual’s motor vehicle record must be verified through the ISU Volunteers management system. Volunteers driving large passenger vans or vehicles towing trailers must be at least 20 years of age and are required to successfully complete the related ISU Transportation Services’ training.

Retention of Documents

- ISU Volunteer documents will be saved on the ISU Volunteers management system.
- Documents for minors (under the age of 18) shall be saved until the individual is 20 years of age.

Termination

- Renewal of volunteer service opportunities must be reviewed annually and approved through the ISU Volunteers management system.
- The department/unit may end a volunteer’s service at any time and without prior notice.
Liability protection

Approved ISU volunteers are provided personal liability protection by the Iowa Tort Claims Act, Iowa Code Chapter 669, and the Federal Volunteer Protection Act, 42 United States Code Chapter 139, while acting within the scope of their volunteer services. The State will defend, indemnify, and hold ISU volunteers harmless against a tort claim caused by an act or omission of the ISU volunteer unless the act or omission of the volunteer involved intentional or criminal misconduct, a knowing violation of the law, a transaction from which the volunteer derives an improper personal benefit or the volunteer does not cooperate with an investigation of the incident or transaction that led to the claim.

Exceptions

All requests for exceptions to this policy require the review and approval of the Office of Risk Management, which may consult with other ISU departments (i.e., University Counsel, University Human Resources, EH&S, etc.) as appropriate.

Resources

Related Policies

- Children in the Workplace
- Youth Activities, Pre-Collegiate Programs and Camps
- Export Controls
- Contracting Authority (Non-employment Related)
- Fleet Safety and Vehicle Use/Rental
- Confined Spaces
- Human Subjects - Use in Research
- Select Agents and Toxins
- Records Retention

Offices

- Risk Management
- University Human Resources
- Environmental Health and Safety
- Responsible Research

Guidance, Forms, Training

- ISU VOLUNTEERS WEBSITE (management system, procedures, forms, FAQ)
- Visiting Scholars: Request, Approval, Responsibilities
- Volunteer Service Opportunity Request
- Human Subjects Guidance and Forms
- Reimbursement Guidelines
- Transportation Services – Large Passenger Van Training
- Transportation Services – Motor Vehicle Record Checks

Sex Offender Registry

- Sex Offender Registry, National
- Sex Offender Registry, Iowa
- Sex Offender Registry, Iowa Code Chapter 692A