	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(1) Administration	**Effective Date:**	January 2020
	Policy Title:	Volunteer Services		
	Policy Number:	1.8	**Previous Policy #:**	N/A

CODES/REFERENCES

N/A

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall:

1. Recruit interested individuals, groups and organizations to participate in volunteer service activities for the benefit of the children and families served.
2. Recruit volunteers for a specific identified need or a general interest that can be later matched to a specific function or need.
3. Ensure that prospective volunteers complete the application process and are appropriately screened prior to selection.
4. Maintain all volunteer application documents in secure storage, including background checks and criminal records checks.
5. Ensure that individuals selected as agency volunteers are provided the necessary information and supports to perform their job functions or assigned tasks. This includes training, supervision and evaluation.
6. Ensure that volunteers are provided with information on:
   a. Confidentiality and protected health information (see policy 2.5 Information Management: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and 2.6 Information Management: Confidentiality/Safeguarding Information);
   b. Discrimination in child welfare services (see policy 1.4 Administration: Non-Discriminatory Child Welfare Practices).

PROCEDURES

Volunteer Recruitment, Selection and Assignment

The DFCS designee will:

1. Identify potential volunteers through various means of recruitment including the following:
   a. Local advertisement through media coverage;
   b. Brochures and mailings (including email);
   c. Presentations to local civic, religious organizations, and groups
2. Ensure the prospective volunteer completes all required application procedures:
   a. The Individual Volunteer Application;
   b. A criminal record check;
      i. A criminal record check through the GCIC is used for volunteers who will not have contact with children or families;

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ii. A full background check through the NCIC is used for volunteers who will have contact with children or families.

NOTE: If criminal history is present, the county department must carefully assess the suitability of the prospective volunteer based on history and type of services needed. If the county is unable to make a clear determination, they should seek guidance and approval from the Regional Director.

c. An in-person, face to face interview with the County Director/Designee to discuss their specific interests, whether they can meet the specific agency needs, and to understand the guidelines and goals of the volunteer services program.

d. A driving record check **only** for prospective volunteers expected to provide transportation services.

i. Refer to the Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of Facilities and Support Services (OFSS) policy 1D Risk Management: Liability Insurance Coverage for Volunteers, which outlines specific driving record requirements for volunteers to be utilized as transporters.

ii. Obtain a valid copy of the prospective volunteer's driver's license and automobile insurance card;

e. A TB (Tuberculosis) test, only if the position requires ongoing, direct contact with children and families, i.e. volunteer mentors.

f. Provides a minimum of three (3) written references.

3. Ensure appropriate storage and maintenance of volunteer application documents, including criminal history information (see policy 19.8 Case Management: Criminal Records Check)

4. Upon selection of a prospective volunteer:

a. Ensure the prospective volunteer signs the Volunteer Registration and Liability Insurance Coverage Application (Form 5298), and the volunteer confidentiality agreement.

b. Ensure the volunteer receives information on:

i. HIPAA privacy laws and Confidentiality (see policy 2.5 Information Management: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and policy 2.6: Confidentiality/Safeguarding Information);

ii. Discrimination in child welfare services (see policy 1.4 Administration: Non-Discriminatory Child Welfare Practices).

c. Maintain the signed forms in a personnel file with other volunteer documents.

i. The file shall contain the volunteer application, confidentiality agreement, and training and performance evaluation(s).

ii. The volunteer's personnel file shall be maintained in a similar manner as those for employees.

d. Complete additional volunteer enrollment/agreement forms based on county/regional protocols.

e. Ensure the volunteer is appropriately matched with specific identified needs.

f. Provide orientation/training in order to prepare the volunteer for an assignment and to familiarize them with the agency. Training topics shall include:

i. Philosophy of DFCS

ii. DFCS programs and services

iii. Policies and Procedures of the office

iv. Confidentiality and HIPAA

v. Expectations and responsibilities of the volunteer

vi. Training for the specific task assigned

NOTE: Additional training shall vary with the type of assignment, knowledge and previous experience of the volunteer. Training shall provide the volunteer with the knowledge of how to perform the duty and how it contributes to the agency's programs.

g. Assign the volunteer to a supervisor in the appropriate program area.
   i. Arrange for a meeting of the volunteer with the supervisor to discuss volunteer activities, hours, requirements, etc.
   ii. Coordinate with case management staff when volunteer services are client related.

   NOTE: The Volunteer Coordinator will be responsible for overseeing the volunteer once selected.

5. Ensure the volunteer's immediate supervisor:
   a. Provides the volunteer with on-the-job training;
   b. Provides an orientation to unit policies and procedures;
   c. Ensures the volunteer complies with confidentiality and HIPAA privacy laws;
   d. Evaluates the volunteer's work performance periodically;
      i. The periodic evaluation shall identify the volunteer's strengths and weaknesses.
      ii. Supervisors may refer to volunteer job descriptions when conducting periodic performance evaluations.
      iii. The evaluation shall also include a plan for the continuation or termination of the use of a volunteer.
      iv. Evaluation of the volunteer's performance is an important program element.

      NOTE: The performance evaluations should be maintained in the volunteer's personnel file and handled in a similar manner as those of employees.

   e. Ensures regular communication with the Volunteer Services Coordinator regarding the duties and performance of the volunteer (see Practice Guidance: Volunteer Services Coordinator for additional information).

Volunteer Services Coordinator Responsibilities

The Volunteer Services Coordinator will:

1. Be responsible for recruitment, selection, orientation and assignment of volunteers.
2. Obtain background checks[1] of all prospective volunteers prior to selection.
3. Submit the application for liability insurance coverage for selected volunteers.
4. Maintain volunteer activity records.

   NOTE: Meticulous record maintenance is important to support the submission of the monthly and annual reports, review trends, assess needs and resources, etc.
5. Submit monthly reports of volunteer activities to the County Director.
6. Other duties as designated by the County/Region Director.
7. In conjunction with program staff, develop job descriptions to include the duties, knowledge and skills required for each volunteer activity.

[1] Includes criminal history and driving record checks

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Volunteer Services

Volunteers are persons who contribute time and effort to organized programs and agencies without financial compensation. DFCS encourages the appropriate involvement of volunteers in providing direct and/or indirect services to children and families. Volunteer Services fulfills a desire of individuals and groups to share their interests, abilities and resources for the benefit of the community. Volunteer Services can be mutually rewarding to the volunteer and the agency when these services are useful for the agency and when the experience is satisfying for the volunteer. Therefore, volunteers shall be assigned meaningful tasks/activities for the benefit of the county department and the volunteers themselves. When assigned to perform a specific task, volunteers are to have access to material, equipment and information necessary to complete the performance of that task.

Types of Volunteer Services

1. **Direct volunteer services** are those services which are provided directly for clients, including those which may assist paid staff. These services are at the direction of the supervision casework staff and in accordance with the casework plan. These may include transporting clients, coordinating and conducting workshops, providing recreation, mentoring, client and community telephone outreach, visitation, etc.
2. **Indirect volunteer services** are those services which lend support to clients or enable specific needs of clients to be addressed. These may include supportive funding, food, clothing, toys, household items, books, holiday gifts, in-kind services, etc.

Volunteers are not discriminated against on the grounds of disability, race, color, sex, national origin, age, or religion (see policy 1.4 Administration: Non-Discriminatory Child Welfare Practices). Volunteers must also ensure that all service recipients or potential recipients of services are treated fairly in the application and provision of child welfare services and may not subject others to discrimination.

Volunteer Services Program

The quality of Volunteer Services depends, in part, upon the degree of administrative investment made by the agency in the planning, direction and support of the program. When recruiting and selecting a volunteer, give attention to the skills, abilities, and interests of the volunteer and how these fit the specific needs of the position. During the application process, ask prospective volunteers to provide information regarding their background, skills and abilities as well as their specific interests. Selection of the volunteer should be contingent upon the specific need of the agency and the ability of the volunteer to meet such needs.

Cooperation and communication are critical components of an effective Volunteer Services Program. Good communication will be required between all parties to ensure that the appropriate services are provided and that the volunteer is being appropriately utilized. This cooperative effort will impact positively on the volunteers, agency, clients and the community.

Volunteer Services Coordinator

The Volunteer Services Coordinator plays a critical role in the strategic recruitment of volunteers for direct and indirect services. All volunteer opportunities should be advertised within DFCS as well as in the community to obtain a larger pool of potential recruits. To support recruitment and retention of volunteers, the Volunteer Services Coordinator should employ strategies, including but not limited to the following:

1. Ensure that volunteers are clear on their role and performance expectations;
2. Ensure that volunteers have flexibility to try different tasks and roles to diversify their skills and experience, and minimize the potential for volunteers to become stagnated;
3. Value the volunteer's time by ensuring they are assigned tasks that are productive and worthwhile;
4. Support volunteers through access to appropriate training opportunities;
5. Provide ongoing supervision for the volunteer;
6. Provide honest and constructive feedback to the volunteer, and ensure volunteers have regular opportunities to provide honest feedback on their responsibilities and experiences;
7. Provide ongoing formal or informal recognition of and/or reward the volunteer's work. This may include the following:
    a. Appreciation luncheon/dinner
    b. Presentation of certificates or plaques
    c. Letters of appreciation
    d. Recognition party

Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of client information and are guided by all confidentiality and HIPAA privacy laws (see policy 2.5 Information Management: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and policy 2.6: Confidentiality/Safeguarding Information). Volunteers may only have access to the minimum amount of information needed to carry out their job responsibilities. Volunteers must not be included in staff discussions that include confidential client information, or have access to confidential information on staff computers, if that information is not necessary for their role.

FORMS AND TOOLS

Volunteer Application for Liability Insurance Coverage (Form 5298)
Liability Insurance Coverage for Volunteers
Confidentiality Agreement
Individual Volunteer Application

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