



MICHIGAN STATE | Extension  
UNIVERSITY

# Volunteer Selection Process



## Acknowledgments

This material was originally developed between 1992 and 1994 under the direction of the MSU Extension Child Well-Being Task Force. In 1999, the process of reviewing and revising the materials for county use began. Appreciation is extended to the staff members and volunteers who piloted the process in 1993 and 1994, and who assisted with the revisions in 1999. In April 2000, the MSU Extension Administrative Team reviewed the revised document and endorsed its use for all MSU Extension units and programs. The MSU Extension Volunteerism Area of Expertise Team was responsible for support of this process within the MSU Extension system and revised the manual in 2006-07. In 2011, the MSUE Volunteer Management Team updated the document, and this version replaces all previous editions of the manual.

Resources from Extension programs in several states were used in preparing this process. We wish to express appreciation in particular to Minnesota, North Dakota and Washington for use of their materials in the original document.

All MSU Extension staff members who work with volunteers should familiarize themselves with the contents of this manual. The MSU Extension Volunteer Selection Process (VSP) must be completed for any MSU Extension volunteer who will be working with children in unsupervised situations or on an ongoing basis. Volunteers who work with adults with mental, physical or emotional disabilities are also required to go through the screening process. This system is required of all staff members, not just 4-H staff members. The Michigan 4-H Youth Development county staff members have been using this system since 1994 and are a good informational resource to others as they begin implementing the volunteer selection.

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# Introduction

Most people who choose to work with children and vulnerable adults are caring, responsible individuals who have the needs and best interests of those they serve in mind at all times. They are members of caring communities and are committed to helping young people on their journey to competent and contributing adulthood, and to helping those with disabilities to achieve their full potential.

Michigan State University Extension strives to respond to the needs of program participants by providing experiences led by volunteers. MSU Extension must make sure that the process of selecting individuals to serve as volunteers adequately identifies, selects, trains and supports those interested in volunteer leadership. As Extension workers and volunteers, we strive to do all we can to ensure that individuals who come to our programs are treated with respect and dignity, and are provided with safe, caring environments in which to learn and have fun.

Whether we are staff members or volunteers, teens or adults, all of us who work closely with young people and vulnerable adults have the potential to have profound impacts on the well-being of others. In addition to providing safe and appropriate environments, we must also be positive role models — focusing on how we communicate with others, our methods of problem solving and discipline, and how sensitive we are to the individual needs of all program participants.

The responsibility for the well-being of children and vulnerable adults lies with every one of us. **The purpose of this document is to outline a process that carefully selects and matches appropriate individuals with MSU Extension efforts to best meet the needs of everyone involved.**

## To Whom Does This Process Apply?

The Michigan State University Extension Volunteer Selection Process (VSP), as outlined herein, must be followed by all MSU Extension staff members who work with volunteers. Volunteers who desire to work directly with youth or volunteers who work with adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities must complete the VSP.

### Purpose

The purposes of the selection process are to:

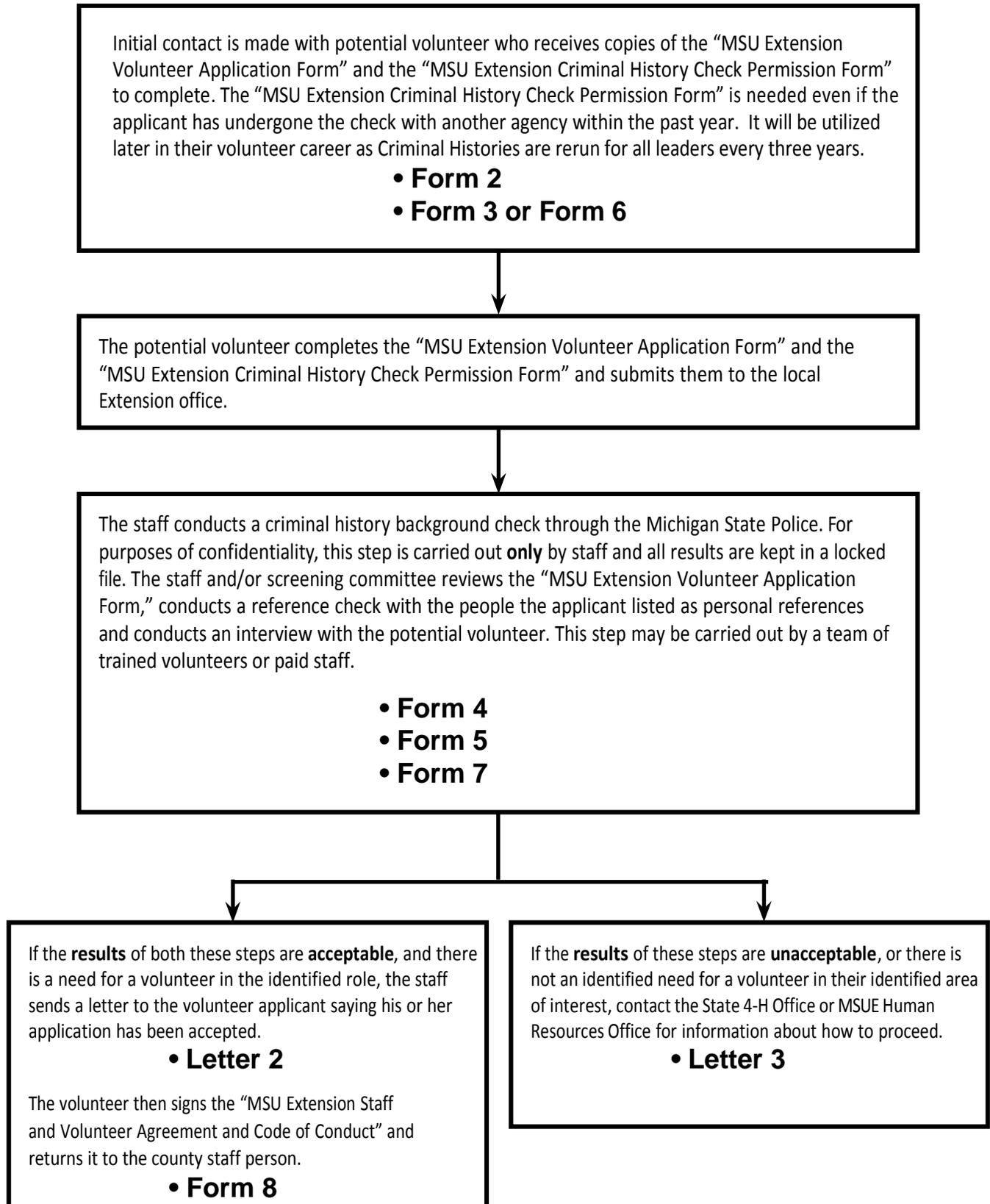
- Help ensure the appropriate selection and placement of volunteers for MSU Extension activities.
- Provide documentation of volunteer selection and placement.

### Rationale

- MSU Extension strives to provide a safe, nurturing environment for youth and vulnerable adults participating in its programs.

- MSU Extension has behavioral expectations for adults who volunteer in its programs. These expectations are written and available to parents and guardians, to those who wish to be volunteers, and to those charged with helping staff members make decisions about volunteer selection and placement.

## The MSU Extension Volunteer Selection Process



- A selection process is a method of strengthening recruitment and placement of volunteers and staff members for MSU Extension programs.

### **When to Use This Process**

New staff members and volunteers aged 19 and over who will have ongoing or unsupervised access to children aged 19 and under and/or to adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities during the course of their participation in MSU Extension programs are subject to the MSU Extension Volunteer Selection Process. “Ongoing” is defined as more than four meetings or gathering times or in-depth contact (such as overnight events and out-of-state or exchange trips). “Unsupervised” would mean that the person is alone with children or vulnerable adults for significant periods of time (15 minutes or more). Such volunteers include those who work with any MSU Extension programs involving youth or vulnerable adults (such as 4-H organizational leaders, 4-H project leaders, Master Gardeners, summer camp activity leaders, Sea Grant volunteers, trip chaperones, resource persons and adult host family members) and Proud Equestrians Program (PEP) therapeutic riding volunteers. Supervision of volunteers who have not completed the Volunteer Selection Process can be provided by MSU Extension staff members or volunteers who have completed the MSU Extension Volunteer Selection Process. If individuals will have ongoing contact with youth or vulnerable adults, it is required that they be processed through this system before they exceed the four-meeting threshold.

### **Procedure for Becoming a New Volunteer**

Throughout this procedure, Extension staff should use the “Prospective MSU Extension Volunteer Staff Action Form” (see Appendix A, Form 1) to ensure that all steps are carried out. The chart on page 2 of this document provides a graphic overview of this procedure. Keep in mind that there is some flexibility in the order of the steps in the procedure. However, the interview should always be the last step prior to making a decision to accept or reject the applicant. Note that references in this procedure to “staff” do not include volunteers. It is important that the entire process is completed prior to accepting or declining an application.

1. The Extension staff person and/or trained volunteer selection committee or team gives to or sends the prospective volunteer:

- The county’s version of the “Sample Welcome Letter to MSU Extension Volunteer Applicants” (see Appendix B, Letter 1).
- The “MSU Extension Volunteer Application Form” (see Appendix A, Form 2).
- The “MSU Extension Criminal History Check Permission Form” (see Appendix A, Form 3).
- A confidential envelope addressed to an Extension staff person to return the completed forms.
- The staff member or volunteer selection committee may also want to share with prospective volunteers (and other interested people) the reproducible flyer found on page 39 of this document.

Accommodations must be made for volunteers with special needs.

2. The prospective volunteer completes and submits the “MSU Extension Volunteer Application Form” and the “MSU Extension Criminal History Check Permission Form” to the local Extension unit.

3. The Extension staff person or team of trained volunteers who process the application review the “MSU Extension Volunteer Application Form” and request information from references using the “MSU Extension Volunteer Telephone Reference Form” and/or the “MSU Extension Volunteer Mail Reference Form” (see Appendix A, Forms 4 and 5). Keep in mind that at least one of the two reference checks should be done over the telephone (or in person). Do not rely totally on references obtained through the mail. If you receive two positive reference checks, you may move forward with accepting the volunteer. (Hints for conducting successful phone interviews can be found in Appendix C.)

## The Criminal History Check System

4. Extension staff members conduct a criminal history check through the Michigan State Police website called the Internet Criminal History Access Tool (ICHAT). This is a free service provided by the Michigan State Police Applicant Identification Team. Information on ICHAT includes only criminal convictions in Michigan.

A criminal history check must be conducted on all MSU Extension volunteers every three years.

Once a staff member has registered, he or she will be able to perform (and access) background checks immediately through the ICHAT website. The information on the “MSU Extension Criminal History Check Permission Form” is needed and is in the order requested. To begin:

1. Press “Background Search” at the top of the left-hand column under the ICHAT logo.
2. Using the permission form, enter the information requested, check the “Usage Agreement” box and press the “Submit” button at the bottom of the page.
3. Once the search is finished, a shopping cart will appear. Put a checkmark next to the name of the person whose search you want to view. Press the “View Response” button.
4. On the next page, press the “View Results” button in the “Commands” column.

## Reading an ICHAT Response

For information about accessing the ICHAT system for the first time or for updating your ICHAT registration, see the section entitled “Accessing the ICHAT System,” on page 10 of this document.

The system will provide a separate response for each person searched. To get to the response, press the “View Response” button at the bottom right-hand side of the page. On the next page, press the “View Results” button at the bottom right-hand side of the page.

Some of the information entered for the search will be printed on the response. As a matter of good record keeping and maintaining confidentiality, if running more than one criminal check at a time, print separate responses for each check so that information on one individual will not be in another person’s file.

**When no record is located**, the system will return a message that states, “A search of Michigan’s Criminal History File has not located a record matching the information you provided.”

**If the search locates a criminal history record**, the record provided is considered a possible match, and decisions affected by the record should be reserved until the subject of the search has an opportunity to review the information and verify its content. Be sure to check to see if the descriptors match those provided by the

volunteer applicant. If they do not match, the response should be considered a false positive and noted in the volunteer's file. (For more information about ICHAT, go to its FAQs section on the Web at <http://apps.michigan.gov/ICHAT/FAQs.aspx>.)

The first part of the record will provide all the reported personal descriptors about the subject of record (that is, maiden name, height, weight, eye color, hair color and driver's license number). There will follow a chronological list of cases for which the subject was fingerprinted and case information provided. Each case is divided into three segments:

- Arrest

This segment includes the arrest date, law enforcement agency, police agency case number and the most serious arrest charge.

- Charge

In this segment, the prosecuting agency and a description of the most serious charge authorized for prosecution are given.

- Judicial

This segment lists the court date, name of court, court file number, description of either all charges in the case or only the convicted charge, and the sentence resulting from conviction.

Only the lead Extension staff person (for example and hereafter in this document, "lead staff person" refers to program coordinator, educator, MSU clerical tech responsible, etc.) working with the program and his/her supervisor may see the criminal history form and results for MSU Extension volunteer applicants. Once the results of the criminal history check have been received, the lead Extension staff member should review and note the date on the "Prospective MSU Extension Volunteer Staff Action Form." The results of the criminal history check and the "Prospective MSU Extension Volunteer Staff Action Form" should not be shared with non-Extension employees.

## Next Steps Based on the Criminal History Check

**If the applicant passes the criminal history check**, Extension staff members should proceed to step 5.

**If there is a question about the criminal history check**, consult with the State 4-H Office or the manager of the MSUE Human Resources Office about how to proceed. If a decision is made that the individual has not passed the criminal history check, the Extension staff member will be advised about how to proceed in declining acceptance of his or her application.

The Extension staff member may decide to waive the criminal history check if he or she can document that the individual has successfully gone through the selection process of another volunteer agency within the past year that is at least as rigorous as the MSU Extension process. The applicant should complete the applicant section of the "MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Certified through Other Agencies Form" (see Appendix A, Form 6). The Extension staff member should then forward the form to the appropriate agency. The results of this check should be noted on the "Prospective MSU Extension Volunteer Staff Action Form."

5. The staff person and/or team of volunteer interviewers schedules and conducts an interview with the individual and documents the results of this interview on the "Interview Report of MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Form" (see Appendix A, Form 7). So that several applicants can be interviewed at one time and in one location, specific dates can be set and applicants can sign up ahead of time. It may also be possible to do interviews in conjunction with other meetings. Group interviews are not allowed. (Hints for conducting successful interviews can be found in Appendix C.)

6. Set up a file for each person who applies to be an MSU Extension volunteer. The file should contain:

- A "Prospective MSU Extension Volunteer Staff Action Form."
- "MSU Extension Volunteer Application Form."
- "MSU Extension Criminal History Check Permission Form" and report sealed in an envelope marked "Personal/Confidential" or "MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Certified through Other Agencies Form."
- Copies of the "MSU Extension Volunteer Reference Form."
- Notes on or attached to the "Interview Report of MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Form."
- A copy of the individual's acceptance or denial letter.

There should be one set of files for individuals accepted as MSU Extension volunteers and a separate set of files for individuals not accepted as MSU Extension volunteers. These should be kept in a locked file in each county Extension office. The files for an individual accepted as an MSU Extension volunteer should be kept for the duration of his or her status as a volunteer and three years beyond. Files for those not accepted should be kept indefinitely.

**Only** the lead Extension staff person (program coordinator, educator) working with the program and his/her supervisor may see the criminal history form and results for MSU Extension volunteer applicants. Volunteer selection team or committee members (if a team or committee is used) can review the files of those who pass the criminal history check but may not examine the criminal history check forms of these files.

All persons involved in the volunteer selection process must be informed of the importance of confidentiality. All information on applicants and why they are accepted or rejected as volunteers with MSU Extension is kept confidential to the extent permitted by the law. Only the MSU Extension staff person and selection committee, if used, will be involved in discussion about applicants. **Discussions should not include the criminal history check.**

7. The MSU Extension staff member or selection team or committee reviews each file. In cases where the suitability of the applicant is questioned, the Extension staff person makes the final decision to accept or reject the applicant. If Extension staff members consider rejecting a potential volunteer because of information obtained from the criminal history check, reference checks and/or interview, they should contact the State 4-H Office or the manager of the MSUE Human Resources Office to review the situation.

8. An Extension staff person may place restrictions on a volunteer's duties. For example, a potential volunteer might be restricted from transporting program participants, handling funds and so forth. It is suggested that

Extension staff members contact the State 4-H Office or the manager of the MSUE Human Resources Office if they have questions about whether to place restrictions on a volunteer.

9. The Extension staff person promptly informs the applicant of the decision (and any restrictions mentioned on the potential volunteer's duties) using the appropriate form letter (that is, either the "Sample Letter to Use When Accepting a Potential MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant" or the "Sample Letter to Use When Not Accepting a Potential MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant" [Appendix B, Letters 2 and 3]). A photocopy of this letter is added to the person's file.

10. If the volunteer is accepted, he or she will sign the "MSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct Form" before enrolling through the county's volunteer enrollment system (see Appendix A, Form 8). All volunteers working with youth should be enrolled on the county Access 4-H software program.

## **Procedure for MSU Extension Staff Members**

It's important to note that MSU Extension staff members are also required to go through a process similar to the one outlined for volunteers in this document. New staff members will undergo a criminal history check and will be required to sign the "MSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct Form." This process will be completed by the MSUE Human Resources Office for all MSU paid staff members.

Still have questions? Throughout this process, questions related to many different situations can come up. For more information, refer to Appendix C, "Questions and Answers about the MSU Extension Volunteer Selection Process."

## **Accessing the ICHAT System**

### **Obtaining an Agency Code**

To access this service, you must obtain an agency code. Most counties have already received this number from the Michigan State Police. If you need an agency code, fax the following information, with a request for access, to the attention of the representative identified in the appendix:

- Organization name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Federal ID number (for government agencies and school districts). Your institute director can give you this number.
- Name of contact person.

You will be issued an agency code and information to access the system.

### **Registering to Use the ICHAT System**

Once you receive this information, you will need to register in the ICHAT system. To do this, press the "Register" link on the right-hand side of the row under the ICHAT logo. On the next page, enter:

Once you have double checked your information, press "Save" and you will be registered.

- Your log-on ID: This is your email address.
- A password that is at least six characters long and contains at least one number and one special character (for example, a "\*" or a "!").
- You will select a security question to answer.
- A response to the security question you chose.
- Your first name.
- Your middle name (this is optional).
- Your last name.
- Your office's street address.
- Your office's city.
- Your office's state.
- Your office's zip code.
- Your daytime phone number (this is optional) .
- The agency code mentioned above.

## Changing Your Account Information

If you ever need (or want) to change some of the information, you can do so by logging onto the system and pressing the "My Account" link at the top of the column on the left-hand side of the website. On the next page, press the "Manage Profile" button. Make whatever changes you wish and press the "Save" button at the bottom of the page.

## Additional Safeguard Procedures

12345678  
**Name:** DOE/RAYMOND/HUGH/ **Sex:** M **Race:** W **Dob:** 01/01/1982  
**Height:** 504 **Weight:** 135 **Hair:** BROWN **Eye:** HAZEL  
**Address:** 012 FORESTAL DR **City:** YOUR TOWN **State:** MI **Zip:** 40000  
**Offense:** 750.520E1B **Description:** CRIMINAL SEXUAL CONDUCT  
4TH DEGREE (INCAPACITATED VICTIM)  
**Alias:** DOE/R/H/  
**Alias:** DOE/RAY/H/  
**Alias:** DOE/R/HUGH/  
**Alias:** DOE/HUGHIE/R/  
**Alias:** RAYMOND/HUGH/D/  
**[Click HERE for Photograph](#)**

To ensure compliance with state law for nonprofit organizations, staff members must check the Michigan Public Sex Offender Registry (MIPSOR) website ([www.mipsor.state.mi.us](http://www.mipsor.state.mi.us)) a minimum of twice per year or every six months to see if the names and addresses of any county volunteers are listed as individuals convicted of criminal sexual conduct. Use the "MSU Extension Sex Offender Registry Check Completion Form" (see Appendix A, Form 9) when completing the MIPSOR check. If the name of an MSU Extension volunteer appears on the list, contact the State 4-H Office or MSUE Human Resources for instructions about how to proceed.

## Using the MIPSOR Website

An example of a MIPSOR listing is shown in the box above. Each record includes the offender's full name, race, sex and birth date. The name is listed beginning with the last name, then first name, middle name and any suffix (for example, Jr., Sr., II). The offender's sex is listed by either "M" for male or "F" for female. Appearing next on the second line is the person's race, which will be indicated by a letter (in this example, "W" means white). The date of birth is listed numerically by month/day/year. Line three lists the subject's height (in this example, the offender is 5 feet 4 inches [which is shown as 504]). His weight is listed numerically in pounds. The offender's hair color and eye color are spelled out. On the next line the individual's current street address, city, state and zip code are given.

Line five lists the offense code and the offense (crime) for which the offender was convicted. Line six contains a second or subsequent offense for which that offender was convicted. A more complete explanation of each offense is provided; scroll downward until you locate the information under "Offenses." Also listed are the possible variables for the CSC offenses, definitions and circumstances that would describe penetration. Next the listing provides any aliases the offender might have used. Finally, the offender's photograph may be available.

## Reporting Suspected Abuse and/or Neglect

Because of the nature of their jobs, some people are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect. A camp director and camp staff members in a state-licensed camp, a physician, coroner, dentist, medical examiner, nurse, a person licensed to provide emergency medical care, audiologist, family therapist, certified social worker, social work technician, school administrator, school counselor or teacher, law enforcement officer or regulated child care provider who has reason to believe that a child under 18 has been abused or neglected is mandated by law to report the suspected abuse. Failure to do so is a crime.

Extension staff members have an ethical and moral responsibility to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect and must comply with Michigan State University Extension policy. A person making a report in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal liability. The identity of a reporting person shall be confidential, subject to disclosure only with the consent of that person or by judicial process. A report should be made when there is suspicion that a child or adolescent may have been abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused. A report is only a request for an investigation. The person making the report does not need to prove the abuse. Investigation and validation of child abuse reports are the responsibilities of the child protection service workers. A report can be made to any county Department of Human Services. The following information will be requested:

- Name, age and sex of the child and other family members
- Description of suspected abuse and related circumstances
- Address, phone number and/or directions to the child's home

A social worker from the Department of Human Services will investigate the reported abuse and/or neglect. The investigation will result in one of the following conclusions: abuse or neglect ruled out, uncertain findings, or abuse or neglect confirmed. In confirmed cases, a service plan is developed to prevent the recurrence of abuse and/or neglect of the child.

Extension staff members must report suspected child abuse and/or neglect from an ethical and moral perspective and in order to comply with Michigan State University Extension policy.

## **Suspending or Dismissing a Current Volunteer**

Sometimes it is necessary to suspend or dismiss a current MSU Extension volunteer. This action is typically taken when the individual in question is involved in a legal situation that may make his or her continued involvement as a volunteer inappropriate or when behavioral questions are raised that require investigation by Extension staff members. Because each situation is unique, it is impossible to put together a comprehensive list of actions that would result in suspension or dismissal. Staff members must talk with their supervisor, district coordinator, institute director and MSU Extension Human Resources for assistance in working through challenging situations. Another resource is the Conflict Resolution Team, which can be contacted through your institute.

Volunteering with MSU Extension is a privilege, not a right. Though volunteers who are dismissed from the organization have no right to an appeals process, we do want to ensure that every effort has been made to help the individual be successful in his or her volunteer experience. It is important to address behavioral issues and put a plan in place to modify behaviors, if possible, before reaching the decision to dismiss. Documenting efforts to correct problems is also important. A checklist (found in Appendix C) will help staff members work through this process. Suspension or dismissal of a current volunteer by MSU Extension staff members can be done only after consultation with their supervisor, district coordinator and appropriate campus personnel (MSUE Human Resources, State 4-H Office). Letters 4 and 5 in Appendix B are samples to be used with suspension or dismissal actions.

## **Confidentiality, Paperwork and Records**

All applicant information (including why applicants are accepted or rejected as volunteers with MSU Extension) is kept confidential to the extent permitted by the law. Only the MSU Extension lead staff person and selection committee, if used, will be involved in discussion about applicants. Discussions must not include the criminal history check. All paperwork should be completed and kept on file in accordance with the MSU Extension Volunteer Selection Process.

Annually, the lead staff person in charge of MSU Extension programs that use volunteers who deal directly with youth or populations with special needs should complete the “MSU Extension County Volunteer Selection Process Audit Form” (see Appendix A, Form 10) with his/her supervisor. The completed audit document must be kept on file in the county office. It will be reviewed by the institute director as a part of the annual county Extension educator review.

## Helpful Resources

Many resource materials are available to help staff members, volunteers and other community members explore issues about children's well-being. Helpful human and material resources are available from your local Michigan Department of Human Services office. For example, there are booklets such as "Children's Protective Services in Michigan" and "What Everyone Should Know about Child Abuse." Most counties also have a child abuse and neglect council. These offices offer resource persons and materials that you may want to use in staff and volunteer training.

## Useful Web Resources

The following Web sites also offer useful resources:

- State of Michigan, Department of Human Services (See the section titled "Children's Protective Services")  
*[http://michigan.gov/dhs/0,1607,7-124-5458\\_7699---,00.html](http://michigan.gov/dhs/0,1607,7-124-5458_7699---,00.html)*
- Helpline.org (A project of the Rotary Club of Santa Monica and Center for Healthy Aging)  
*[http://www.helpline.org/mental/child\\_abuse\\_physical\\_emotional\\_sexual\\_neglect.htm](http://www.helpline.org/mental/child_abuse_physical_emotional_sexual_neglect.htm)*
- Child Welfare Information Gateway (A service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) <http://www.childwelfare.gov/can/index.cfm>

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# **Appendix A**

# **Forms**

FORM 1: **This form can be adapted to meet local needs.**

## Prospective MSU Extension Volunteer Staff Action Form

Copies of the “MSU Extension Volunteer Application Form,” the criminal history check report (which should be in a sealed, confidential envelope) or the “MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Certified Through Other Agencies Form,” the copies of the “MSU Extension Volunteer Reference Form” and the notes on or attached to the “Interview Report of MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Form” should be attached to this form and kept in an individual, confidential file.

Volunteer Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date Application Received \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Conducted By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Criminal History Screening Received \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### References Checked:

1. Reference Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

2. Reference Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

3. Reference Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Code of Conduct Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Final Disposition of Application

\_\_\_\_\_ Accepted – Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Not accepted – Date \_\_\_\_\_

If not accepted, check one of the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ Did not pass criminal history check

\_\_\_\_\_ Unsupportive references

\_\_\_\_\_ Inappropriate role model for youth or vulnerable adults (refer to “MSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct Form” which defines role models)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

MSU is an affirmative action, equal-opportunity employer. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.

FORM 2: Although county identification and other county information can be added to this form, the content should not be changed.

## MSU Extension Volunteer Application Form

Extension volunteers working with youth aged 19 and under and/or with adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities must complete this application.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (Zip)

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Home) (Work)

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a valid driver's license? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Do you have a valid automobile insurance policy? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Why do you want to be an MSU Extension volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

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Describe briefly your volunteer experience, work you have done with youth, vulnerable adults and/or community groups, and training you've received as part of that/those volunteering experience(s).

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List your interests and skills (for example, drama, food and nutrition, computers, photography, health/safety/wellness, animal science, horticulture, leadership, group process skills, citizenship, natural resources, marine and water resources, community service, career development). Feel free to list any and all others!

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I prefer:      \_\_\_ working with youth: \_\_\_ aged 5 to 8   \_\_\_ aged 9 to 12   \_\_\_ aged 13 to 19  
\_\_\_ Working with adults      \_\_\_ working with adults with disabilities  
\_\_\_ Working with youth with disabilities

**(check all that apply)**

How much time are you willing to spend as an MSU Extension volunteer?

Weekly \_\_\_\_\_ hours                      Monthly \_\_\_\_\_ hours

Have you volunteered in other counties within Michigan or in other states? If so, please identify them for us.

Other Michigan counties: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

Other states (and counties): \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

List three references. Include business associates, employers or social friends. (Do not list relatives.) Be sure you include persons who can provide information about your qualifications and suitability for working as a volunteer with MSU Extension programs.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Address  
Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Home) (Work)  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Address  
Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Home) (Work)  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Address  
Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Home) (Work)  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been turned down as a volunteer with another organization?

\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes — If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you applied to become a volunteer (or have you volunteered) in another county or state in 4-H, another youth organization or any other organizations? \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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I understand that my enrollment as a volunteer is contingent upon successful completion of the application process. I give my permission for the above-named references to release information about me and for my criminal history to be verified.

I understand that MSU Extension does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status and that this application will be handled in a confidential manner.

I agree to serve as a volunteer for Michigan State University Extension. I understand that either party may cancel this relationship at any time.

I certify that the above information is correct. I agree to inform MSU of any changes.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form to: (YOUR LOCAL 4-H PROGRAM COORDINATOR OR EDUCATOR)

**Thank you for your willingness to share your talents!**

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FORM 4: **Although county identification can be added to this form, the content that follows should not be changed.**

## **MSU Extension Volunteer Telephone Reference Form**

This form is provided for staff and/or selection committee members to use when visiting by telephone to check references listed by a prospective volunteer. Since some of the questions are about issues that appear on the "MSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct Form," you may want to review that form before conducting the interview.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Potential Volunteer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Reference Being Interviewed Telephone

Introduction: Introduce yourself. Indicate to the interviewee: *"Your name was given to us by (indicate potential volunteer's name). He or she is interested in being a volunteer with Michigan State University Extension. To help us better understand where this person might fit into our organization, we would like to ask you a few questions. This call should take no more than five minutes. Is this a good time or should I call you at a more convenient time? (Indicate potential volunteer's name) has indicated he or she approves of you releasing information about him or her. Thank you."*

1. How do you know this person? How long have you known him or her?

---

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---

---

2. Please comment about this person's ability to work with young people or vulnerable adults.

---

---

---

---

3. Please comment about his or her sense of responsibility and follow-through on commitments.

---

---

---

---

4. Please comment about this person's leadership skills, organizational skills, people skills, etc.

---

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---

5. Are there any reasons why you feel this person would be an unsuitable volunteer to be working with young people or adults with disabilities?

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6. Would you be comfortable having your child, or individuals you know, under this person's guidance? Why?

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7. Has this person ever been convicted of a crime of which you are aware?

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Any other comments:

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Thank you very much for your help. We appreciate your contributions.

Phone interview conducted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

FORM 5: **Although county identification can be added to this form, the content that follows should not be changed.**

## **MSU Extension Volunteer Mail Reference Form**

\_\_\_\_\_ is applying as an MSU Extension volunteer to work with youth aged 19 and under and/or with adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities. He or she has given your name as a reference, with approval for you to release information about him or her.

Adults in volunteer positions help individuals have fun while learning new skills, increasing their abilities to work together, managing their own activities and developing into productive adults. MSU Extension seeks your help in providing information about people to serve in volunteer roles and will appreciate your prompt completion of this reference form. Please return it in the enclosed, preaddressed, stamped envelope.

Use this checklist to evaluate the applicant's qualities. Use the following marking system:

**E** = Excellent    **G** = Good    **F** = Fair    **U** = Unknown

- |                                |                         |   |                        |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---|------------------------|
| ___ Understanding children     | ___ Ability to organize | ___ Flexibility                             | ___ Dependability      |
| ___ Ability to complete a task | ___ Sense of humor      | ___ Initiative                              | ___ Enthusiasm         |
| ___ Sense of fairness          | ___ Resourcefulness     | ___ Honesty                                 | ___ Respect for others |
| ___ Communication skills       | ___ Patience            | ___ Understanding persons with disabilities |                        |

Share your impression and knowledge of the applicant's qualifications for the position by using specific examples where possible.

1. How long have you known him or her?

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2. Please comment about this person's ability to work with young people or vulnerable adults.

---

---

---

3. Please comment about his or her sense of responsibility and follow-through on commitments.

---

---

---

4. Please comment about this person's leadership skills, organizational skills, people skills, etc.

---

---

---

5. Are there any reasons why you feel this person would be an unsuitable volunteer to be working with youth and/or adults with disabilities?

---

---

---

6. Would you be comfortable having your child, or individuals you know, under this person's guidance? Why?

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7. Has this person ever been convicted of a crime of which you are aware?

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Any other comments. Please attach an additional sheet if you need more space.

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Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you!**

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FORM 6: **Although county identification can be added to this form, the content that follows should not be changed.**

## **MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Certified Through Other Agencies Form**

**Note to MSU Extension Staff:**

Michigan State University Extension values volunteers who work to provide quality educational programs in safe environments. As a part of a volunteer selection process, all MSU Extension volunteers must complete an application form and go through a selection process.

Volunteers who have been screened and accepted by other nonprofit organizations may not have to complete the entire MSU Extension selection process. They will not have to complete the entire process if:

1. They have been screened and accepted, and have references on file with another nonprofit organization; and
2. This process has been completed within the past year; and
3. The nonprofit organization has as vigorous a selection process for volunteers as MSU Extension.

If the volunteers meet all of the above criteria, they must complete the information below for you to forward to the other agency. Each volunteer should also undergo an individual interview, as to determine if they can fill the available and open volunteer role. If accepted, the volunteer should sign the volunteer code of conduct. A staff member from that agency then completes the other side of this sheet and returns it to you. Once you have the form on file, the mandatory application process is complete.

### **Extension Volunteer Application**

This application form is for volunteers who have been screened by another agency within the past year. Please complete the form below. Since you have applied for and have been accepted as a volunteer with another organization in the community, it is not necessary for you to complete the selection process that is mandatory for all new volunteers with MSU Extension. Once this form has been completed, we will contact the other organization.

#### **Applicant Section**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of volunteer organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address, if known \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number, if known (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years with that organization \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Organization Section

The person listed on the other side of this form is interested in becoming a Michigan State University Extension volunteer. \_\_\_\_\_ has indicated that he or she has been a volunteer with your organization within the past year. Volunteers who want to work with MSU Extension must complete a criminal history screening process. However, if such volunteers have been accepted **within the past year** and have references on file with another organization (such as schools, churches, parks and recreation departments, Girl Scouts, or Boys' and Girls' Clubs), they will not need to complete that part of the volunteer selection process with us. We are asking you to complete the form below and return it to \_\_\_\_\_

---

I certify that the above volunteer has completed our volunteer selection process and was accepted as a volunteer for the \_\_\_\_\_  
(organization)

This volunteer selection process was completed on \_\_\_\_\_.  
(date)

This volunteer was screened, accepted and has references on file with my office.

Print name of person completing form \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

FORM 7: Although county identification can be added to this form, the content that follows should not be changed.

## Interview Report of MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Form

Name of volunteer \_\_\_\_\_

Position discussed \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_ Location of interview \_\_\_\_\_

Name of interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Throughout the interview, consider how well the volunteer and position fit together. Consider how the volunteer listens and responds to questions in the following suggested areas. Be sure to ask questions in each area. Since some of the topics that follow are about issues that appear on the "MSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct Form," you may want to review that form. Before the interview, you may also want to go over the information contained in Appendix C about conducting successful interviews.

### LEADERSHIP SKILLS

\_\_\_\_\_ Experiences working with children or vulnerable adults

\_\_\_\_\_ Experiences working with other adults

\_\_\_\_\_ Experiences collaborating with other organizations

\_\_\_\_\_ Skills and qualifications

\_\_\_\_\_ Involving parents and others

\_\_\_\_\_ Promoting teamwork

Comments:

### DIVERSITY

\_\_\_\_\_ Experiences and feelings about diversity (racial, socioeconomic, persons with disabilities, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Ideas for promoting respect and understanding

Comments:

## **ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Experience organizing youth or adults
- \_\_\_\_\_ Record-keeping skills
- \_\_\_\_\_ Knowledge of how to conduct effective meetings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Communication skills (writing or speaking)
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Time-management skills

Comments:

## **HUMAN RELATIONS SKILLS**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Handling conflict
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discipline techniques when working with youth
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dealing with situations that don't go as planned
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problem-solving skills

Comments:

## **UNDERSTANDING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Understanding of young people
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons for volunteering
- \_\_\_\_\_ Views on competition
- \_\_\_\_\_ Understanding of disabilities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not applicable

Comments:

## **UNDERSTANDING ADULT LEARNING**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Understanding of adult motivation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons adults volunteer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Views on collaboration
- \_\_\_\_\_ Understanding of disabilities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not applicable

Comments:

For help in conducting effective interviews, see the suggestions in Appendix C.

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Distribute the original to the MSU Extension office and provide a copy to the volunteer.

## Code of Conduct

Michigan State University Extension prides itself on providing quality educational programs. The primary purpose of this Code of Conduct is to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.

**As an MSU Extension volunteer, I promise that I will:**

- Accept responsibility to represent \_\_\_\_\_ County/Unit and MSU Extension programs with dignity and pride by being a positive role model.
- Respect, adhere to, and enforce the rules, policies and guidelines established by \_\_\_\_\_ County/Unit and MSU Extension programs, and be courteous and respectful in dealings with other program participants and MSU staff.
- Abstain from, and not, tolerate physical or verbal abuse.
- Comply with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws.
- Avoid criminal activities.
- Under no circumstances, possess, sell or consume alcohol or possess, sell or use controlled substances at an MSU Extension activity or event.
- Under no circumstances, attend or participate in an MSU Extension activity or event under the influence of alcohol and/or controlled substances.
- Operate machinery, vehicles and other equipment in a responsible manner.
- Report a violation of the Code of Conduct of which I am aware to a MSU Extension staff member or the person in charge of the program.

It is important that all Michigan State University Extension volunteers comply with the Code of Conduct. Failure to comply with any component of the code or participation in other inappropriate conduct as determined by MSU Extension representatives may lead to dismissal as a volunteer from the MSU Extension program.

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FORM 9: **Although county identification can be added to this form, the content that follows should not be changed.**

## **MSU Extension Michigan Sex Offender Registry Check Completion Form**

All youth-service organizations in Michigan are required by law to complete a Michigan Public Sex Offender Registry check every six months on all volunteers within the program. It is MSU Extension's policy to conduct this check every six months on all volunteers who work with youth or vulnerable adults as part of Extension programs. This may be done one of three ways.

1. Print the list of all registered offenders, [www.mipsor.state.mi.us](http://www.mipsor.state.mi.us), by zip code and cross-reference with names and addresses of volunteers within the program. Once lists have been cross-referenced, attach both lists to this form.
2. Type all volunteers' names and birth date into the Michigan Public Sexual Offender Registry individually. Print individual results; complete this form; and staple to volunteer list.
3. Print a list of volunteers (by zip code) and staff initial each volunteer's name who does not appear on the registry.

Completed forms and accompanying materials should be kept in a locked file cabinet with the other required volunteer selection paperwork.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

County/Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Program(s) check is being completed for (e.g., 4-H, other MSUE programs, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

---

### **Staff Person Completing Check**

Printed Name

---

Title

---

Signature

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FORM 10: **Although county identification can be added to this form, the content that follows should not be changed.**

## **MSU Extension County/Unit Volunteer Selection Process Audit Form**

Annually, the lead staff person(s) in charge of MSU Extension programs (that use volunteers who deal directly with youth or populations with special needs) should complete this audit with their supervisor. Upon completion of this audit, the completed checklist should be kept on file in the county Extension office.

### **Paperwork, Records and Confidentiality**

All applicant information (including why they are accepted or rejected as volunteers with MSU Extension) is kept confidential to the extent permitted by the law. Only the MSU Extension staff and selection committee, if used, will be involved in discussion about applicants. Discussions must not include the criminal history check. All paperwork should be completed and kept on file in accordance with the MSU Extension Volunteer Selection Process.

- Each volunteer has a clearly labeled individual file that contains:
  - \_\_\_ Prospective MSU Extension Volunteer Staff Action Form
  - \_\_\_ MSU Extension Volunteer Application Form
  - \_\_\_ MSU Extension Criminal History Check Permission Form
  - \_\_\_ MSU Extension Volunteer Telephone and /or Mail Reference Forms
  - \_\_\_ Interview Report of MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Form
  - \_\_\_ MSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct Form
  - \_\_\_ Criminal history check result in sealed envelope marked confidential or MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant Certified Through Other Agencies Form
  - \_\_\_ Any other official correspondence related to MSU Extension volunteer role
- Sex Offender Registry Check Completion Form is done twice yearly.
- Files are kept in a locked file cabinet.
- Files of MSU Extension volunteers are kept three years past last date of active involvement.
- Files of MSU Extension volunteer applicants who were not accepted or MSU Extension volunteers who were dismissed are kept indefinitely.

---

Program Staff Signature	Date
Supervisor Signature	Date

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**MICHIGAN STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

**Extension**

Volunteer Selection Process

# **Appendix B**

# **Sample**

# **Letters**

LETTER 1: This letter should be adapted to meet local needs.

## Sample Welcome Letter to MSU Extension Volunteer Applicants

### LETTERHEAD

Welcome!

We're pleased that you're interested in learning more about the Michigan State University Extension program and that you want to consider becoming an Extension volunteer. Individuals who participate in Extension-sponsored programs develop self-confidence, learn decision-making skills, meet and learn to relate to new friends, gain an understanding about thinking globally and acting locally, and much more!

Competent, caring adults who are concerned about young people [vulnerable adults] are an important and integral part of positive youth development [a positive program]. Volunteers become positive role models for youth [vulnerable adults] who participate in Extension-sponsored programs.

Your willingness to step forward and provide leadership to Michigan's youth [vulnerable adults] during these rapidly changing times will bring great dividends and rewards to you. Working with children and youth [vulnerable adults] can bring you immense satisfaction as you watch them develop. You, too, can gain new skills and meet new people as you participate in county, state and regional volunteer training workshops. The purpose of our volunteer system is to help you get to know Extension better and for Extension to get to know you better. Knowledge about your interests, skills and background will help make a better match between your volunteer interests and the needs of youth [vulnerable adults].

Components of this volunteer system include filling out a volunteer application form, completing a volunteer selection process and visiting with an Extension representative. If you are accepted as an Extension volunteer, the last step will be signing a volunteer agreement.

After you successfully complete this process, you will be oriented to your role as an Extension volunteer and have opportunities to participate in various workshops. Michigan State University Extension stands ready to support and assist you in your Extension volunteer role.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

*(Name of Extension staff member or unit lead)*

Enclosures: MSU Extension Volunteer Application Form  
MSU Extension Criminal History Check Permission Form  
Confidential Return Envelope

LETTER 2: This letter should be adapted to meet local needs.

## Sample Letter to Use When Accepting a Potential MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant

### LETTERHEAD

*(Date)*

*(Applicant's name and address)*

Dear *(applicant's name)*:

We have received and reviewed your application to be a Michigan State University Extension volunteer in \_\_\_\_\_ County. We're pleased to welcome you as an Extension volunteer.

*(Customize letter with information about next steps such as enrollment procedures, volunteer orientation, volunteer training, restrictions on the volunteer's duties, etc.)*

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

*(Name of Extension Program Coordinator AND supervising educator, Unit lead)*

LETTER 3: **The content of this letter should not be changed unless you are advised to do so by the State 4-H Office or the manager of the ANR Human Resources Office.**

## **Sample Letter to Use When Not Accepting a Potential MSU Extension Volunteer Applicant**

### **LETTERHEAD**

*(Date)*

### **Personal and Confidential**

*(Applicant's name and address)*

Dear *(applicant's name)*:

We have received and reviewed your application to be a Michigan State University Extension volunteer in \_\_\_\_\_ County. We must advise you that we decline acceptance of your application and will not be registering you as an Extension volunteer.

Thank you for your interest in MSU Extension.

Sincerely,

*(Names of Extension program coordinator and supervising educator and/or unit lead)*

*(Blind copy: State 4-H Office or and/or manager of the MSU Extension Human Resources Office)*

LETTER 4: **The content of this letter should not be changed unless you are advised to do so by the State 4-H Office or the manager of the ANR Human Resources Office.**

## **Sample Letter to Use to Suspend a Current MSU Extension Volunteer**

LETTERHEAD

*(Date)*

### **Personal and Confidential**

*(Volunteer's name and address)*

Dear *(volunteer's name)*:

This letter is to officially inform you that you have been suspended as a volunteer with the \_\_\_\_\_ County/Unit *(name of program)* \_\_\_\_\_ program. This suspension will remain in place until the legal issue you are involved with is resolved. Upon resolution, we will meet with you to review your status as a \_\_\_\_\_ County/Unit *(name of program)* \_\_\_\_\_ program volunteer.

It is inappropriate for you to use the *(name of program)* \_\_\_\_\_ program name and emblem in any of your activities during this time. It is also inappropriate for you to meet with any *(name of program)* \_\_\_\_\_ program participants in the context of the *(name of program)* \_\_\_\_\_ program.

Thank you for your cooperation and immediate attention to this request.

Sincerely,

*(Names of Extension program coordinator and supervising educator and/or unit lead)*

*(Blind copy: State 4-H Office and/or institute director, manager of the MSUE Human Resources Office)*

LETTER 5: The content of this letter should not be changed unless you are advised to do so by the State 4-H Office or the manager of the ANR Human Resources Office.

## Sample Letter to Use to Dismiss a Current MSU Extension Volunteer

### LETTERHEAD

*(Date)*

### Personal and Confidential

*(Volunteer's name and address)*

Dear *(volunteer's name)*:

This letter is to confirm our conversation on *(date)* notifying you that you are no longer a volunteer with the \_\_\_\_\_ County/Unit *(name of program)* \_\_\_\_\_ program effective immediately. Therefore, it is inappropriate for you to use the *(name of program)* \_\_\_\_\_ program name and emblem in any of your work. It is also inappropriate for you to meet with any *(name of program)* \_\_\_\_\_ program participants in the context of the *(name of program)* \_\_\_\_\_ program.

Sincerely:

*(Names of Extension program coordinator and supervising educator and/or unit lead)*

*(Blind copy: State 4-H Office and/or institute director, manager of the MSUE Human Resources Office)*

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
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**Volunteer Selection Process**

**APPENDIX C:  
Other Materials  
and Information**

# Michigan State University Extension Volunteer Selection Process

**It is clearly our responsibility as MSU Extension workers — including volunteers — to do all we can to ensure that children and vulnerable adults who come to our programs are treated with respect and dignity, and are provided with safe, caring environments in which to learn and have fun.**

This selection process is for volunteers who desire to work directly with youth or adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities. Its purpose is to help ensure the appropriate selection and placement of volunteers for MSU Extension activities involving youth or vulnerable adults.

Most people who choose to work with children or vulnerable adults are caring, responsible people who have the needs and the best interests of the participants in mind at all times. They are members of caring communities who make significant contributions to the well-being of those involved in our programs.

MSU Extension responds to the needs of children and vulnerable adults by providing experiences with the leadership of adult volunteers. MSU Extension must ensure that the process of selecting individuals to serve as volunteers adequately identifies, selects, trains and supports those interested in volunteer leadership.

All who work in our programs have the potential to profoundly affect the well-being of the participants. In addition to providing safe and appropriate environments, we must also be positive role models — focusing on communication, problem solving and discipline, and be sensitive to each one’s individual needs.

## Rationale

- MSU Extension strives to provide a safe, nurturing environment for youth and vulnerable adults participating in its programs.
- MSU Extension has behavioral expectations of volunteers working with youth and vulnerable adults. These expectations are written as an “MSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct Form” and are available to parents, to those who wish to be volunteers and to those charged with helping staff make decisions about volunteer selection and placement.
- The MSU Extension Volunteer Selection process is designed to help us protect the well-being of children and vulnerable adults by carefully selecting appropriate individuals to work with our participants.
- The selection process is a method of strengthening recruitment and placement of volunteers and staff for Michigan State University Extension youth-related programs as well as those programs serving adults with severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities.

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## **What is ICHAT?**

The Internet Criminal History Access Tool (ICHAT), maintained by the Michigan State Police, contains the public records of all felonies and serious misdemeanors punishable by over 93 days. Law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and courts in all 83 Michigan counties are required to report these felonies and misdemeanors to the Michigan Criminal History Record Criminal Justice Information Center. For more information about the ICHAT system, see the [ICHAT FAQs](#).

## **Where can I find the ICHAT system on the web?**

The ICHAT Web site home page is found at <http://apps.michigan.gov/ICHAT/Home.aspx>.

## **Who is the ICHAT coordinator?**

Shannon Cordingly is the ICHAT coordinator. Her contact information is:

Telephone: 517-241-0713

Fax: 517-241-0866

Email: [mssp-crd-ichathelp@michigan.gov](mailto:mssp-crd-ichathelp@michigan.gov)

## **How can I access the ICHAT system?**

To access the service for the first time, you must register at the ICHAT web site. After that, you will simply log in.

## **How do I register?**

1. Go to the [ICHAT home page](#).
2. Press the "Register" link on the right-hand side of the row under the ICHAT logo.
3. On the next page, enter:
  - Your logon ID: (your email address)
  - A password that you select
  - A security question and response to that question
  - Your first name, middle (optional) and last name
  - Your office's street address, city, state and zip code
  - Your daytime phone number (this is optional)
  - Your office's agency code

## **What is our office's agency code?**

This is (generally) 3 numbers and a capital letter (e.g., 123A) that ICHAT assigned your county office when it first signed up for this service. The agency code identifies your county office as an organization for which the normal \$10 fee is waived. We do not know what your county's agency code is. You may find yours by going into "My Account" on the ICHAT web site and pressing "Manage Your Profile." It will be at the bottom of the page. If you cannot yet access that site, you will need to look for it in the ICHAT correspondence in your office.

## **When is the ICHAT system available?**

You may access the system online 24/7. However, if you must speak to someone in the office, you will need to do so during regular office hours.

### **How do we change the agency administrator (formerly called the primary ICHAT user)?**

If the person in your office, listed as the agency administrator, is resigning or retiring, to ensure continuity you will need to change your account to reflect that change. To change the agency administrator, send an email to [Shannon Cordingly](#). Include the following information in your request:

1. Your county's federal tax ID number (EIN)
2. Your office's current address
3. Your office's current phone number
4. The name of the new agency administrator
5. The new agency administrator's MSU email address
6. The number of people in your office who will be using ICHAT
7. The estimated number of ICHAT searches your organization will be performing every year

### **How can we add an authorized user to our county's ICHAT account?**

1. The person must register to use the ICHAT system. (See the instructions above.)
2. Then the agency administrator must go to the [ICCHAT home page](#).
3. Press the "My Account" link at the top of the column on the left-hand side of the page.
4. On the next page, press the "Manage Agency Users" button.
5. Put a check mark in front of "Logon ID."
6. Add the person's MSU email address.
7. Press "Add Agency User."

### **How can we change the number of ICHAT searches our county performs annually?**

With the new requirement that staff run ICHAT checks every three years on current volunteers, you may need to increase the number of ICHAT searches you told the ICHAT administration your county would perform annually. To do this, email [Shannon Cordingly](#). The email will need to contain the following information:

1. Your agency code. (Find yours by going into "My Account" on the ICHAT Web site and press "Manage Your Profile." It will be at the bottom of the page.)
2. The new number of searches you expect to run annually
3. Reason for the increased number of searches

# Hints for Conducting Successful Interviews and Sample Interview Questions

## Guide to Interviewing

Interviewing is a conversation between two or more people on a subject of mutual interest in which each person has a chance to give and gain information. Whenever possible, it is optimal to conduct the interview face to face. Interviewing new volunteers helps you gain information about their interests and skills that will assist you in matching them with the work that needs to be accomplished. It should help place qualified applicants in specific jobs.

An interview need not be a formal, nerve-wracking session. Rather, it should be people learning about each other and the organization. It helps identify persons who are good role models for others. The interview will also help determine applicants' strengths and areas where they need additional training. It is a chance to make friends for the organization.

## Before the Interview

### Decide

- What information you need to get.
- What information you need to give.
- Time needed to interview.

### Arrange

- With the other person(s) the time and place to meet.
- A location where you can be free from interruptions.

### Prepare by

- Organizing thoughts.
- Selecting the questions you will ask.
- Gathering needed materials.

## During the Interview

- Use the application to help determine interview questions to ask.
- Help the applicant feel comfortable and at ease. Begin informally and establish rapport.
- Listen and tell the applicant about the job(s) available (for example, duties, skills, qualifications and experiences needed, working relationships with others, authority and accountability, benefits, training and resources available, and time required). Be honest!

- Give the applicant time to answer your questions. Record responses on the “Interview Report of MSU Extension Volunteer Form.”
- Encourage questions.
- Suggest other positions that may be more suitable or of interest.
- Leave the door open for either the applicant or the organization to decide later.
- Close the interview by telling the applicant what the next step will be.
- End on a positive note! Thank the applicant for his or her time and interest.

### **After the Interview**

- Record the information and your impressions as soon as possible.
- Proceed with the next steps in the selection process.

### **Qualities of an Effective Volunteer Interviewer\*\***

- Ability to converse easily with strangers
- Acceptance of all people
- Skill in observing or sensing other people’s reactions, attitudes, concerns and personality traits
- Familiarity with the programs and the organization
- Ability to guide the conversation efficiently without sacrificing sensitivity or purpose

### **Common Errors that Interviewers Make\*\***

- Asking questions that have an obviously preferred answer
- Making decisions too early in the interview
- Following a routine pattern of interviewing without recognizing individual differences instead of adapting each interview to the individual
- Lacking knowledge of precise job requirements
- Letting pressure of duties shorten the interview time
- Doing more talking than listening
- Failing to direct the interview and thereby wasting time
- Not knowing what to look for
- Tending to be overly influenced by individual factors such as personal traits rather than considering the person as a whole
- Lacking skill in asking questions and probing
- Failing to describe the job and organization in sufficient detail

- Being interviewed by the candidate instead of leading the interview

\*\*Adapted from The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs, by Marlene Wilson (Boulder: Volunteer Management Associates, 1976), p. 123.

## **Effective Interviewing\*\*\***

### **Use open-probe messages designed to gather more information.**

These include phrases such as:

- Tell me more.
- Oh?
- Can you be more specific, please?
- Why do you think (say) that?
- Really?
- That's interesting.
- What is your plan?
- Explain what you mean by . . . .
- What would happen if . . . ?
- What do you think about that?
- Can you give me an example?
- Would you go into more detail about that?
- I'd really like to know more about that.

An open probe shows interest in what the person has said and encourages the person to talk more. You can make an open probe simply by nodding your head in agreement and then raising your eyebrows in a questioning manner. Most people will talk more in response. An open probe is one that cannot be answered with a "yes," "no" or other one-word response. The probe asks for more information and signals to the speaker that you are listening and that you want to hear more.

### **Do not use closed-probe messages designed to get the response you want (usually one-word answers).**

These include phrases such as:

- Did that make you happy?
- Where do you work?
- Have your children been in 4-H?

- Do you have a plan?
- When did that happen?
- Are you supportive of . . . ?
- That was good!
- I've heard what I wanted/needed to hear.
- This happened in what year?
- Did you accomplish your goal?
- Did you ever . . . ?
- Do you do too much?

Closed probes are statements or questions that bring the topic of conversation to a close. They usually are questions with one-word answers, often “yes” or “no.” Closed probes get little information from people and do not stimulate them to talk more.

### **Use active listening**

Active listening is accomplished when one party concentrates on what another is saying and asks open probes to get the speaker to open up and talk more. The listener does not offer empathy by relating what the speaker is saying to some other experience the listener has had, no matter how similar it is. The active listener also does not try to solve the problem or situation the speaker is talking about. The only goal of the listener is to get more information from the speaker on the specific topic of conversation.

### **Active listening exercise**

Conduct an active listening exercise with a group by splitting the group into pairs. Have one person from each pair be the speaker and the other the listener. The speaker will tell the listener about a problem that concerns him or her. The problem may be with a friend, neighbor, co-worker, relative, pet, etc. Tell the listener to try to get the speaker to tell the listener everything there is to tell about the situation. The listener may not talk about himself or herself or about anyone the listener knows who has had a similar experience. The listener may not change the topic. The listener may not offer his or her own opinion about the subject. The listener may only ask questions to get the speaker to tell the listener about the subject. After about five minutes, stop the exercise and ask the pairs the following questions:

- How did it feel to be a listener?
- Did the listeners experience any frustrations?
- Did the listeners find it hard to think of open probes?
- What was the thing you (the listener) most wanted to do while the other person was talking?

## **Ask the speakers**

- How did it feel to be the speaker?
- Did you feel that the listener understood you?
- Did it help you to find a solution to the problem you were talking about?
- How do you feel toward the listener?
- Did the listener keep to the rules and not change the topic of conversation or offer opinions, solutions or similar stories?

## **Time Saver**

Create a list of interview questions for each volunteer position and keep them on file with a copy of the position description. When it is time to conduct an interview, share the position description and list of interview questions with the person who will conduct the interview. Using standardized interview questions will bring consistency to your screening process and simplify preparations.

## **Sample Interview Questions**

These questions are meant to be samples – there is no requirement to use all or part of this list in your volunteer interview process.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Name three of your strengths/ weaknesses.
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why are you interested in volunteering? Why volunteer with this program?
- Describe your ideal volunteer position.
- What do you feel would be the most important qualities for this position?
- Give me a definition of a [insert MSU Extension position title here].
- What training would make you feel more comfortable in this position?
- Do you have any questions about the position or the organization?
- Have you ever done this type of volunteer work before? Please explain.
- What do you hope to gain from your volunteer experience?
- What do you do in your leisure time? Do you feel that you would be able to incorporate these activities in your experience with MSU Extension programs?

- What would your employer say if asked what your greatest strength is? What would you say is your greatest strength?
- How would someone close to you describe you (for example, friend, spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, parent, roommate)?
- What style of management suits you best? With what style of leadership would you like to work?
- What job did you like best? Which aspects of that job appealed to you?
- Describe a situation at work that made you angry. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to enforce a policy. How did you do it?
- Are you someone who prefers to work alone? In groups?
- What frustrates you? What motivates you?
- What have you done within the past year that has brought you the most satisfaction?
- Do you have any experience in educational settings or teaching? If yes, please describe.
- Are there placement situations in which you would be uncomfortable working?
- Often people have a favorite age group with which to work. What is your favorite age group to work with? Why? Are there any age groups with which you prefer not to work?

### **Questions specific to program areas working with youth**

- Children benefit most when they can work with the same person over time. Are there any circumstances that would prevent you from volunteering consistently throughout the school year?
- What experience do you have working with children and youth?
- Tell me what you most enjoy about working with children. What are some of the challenges?
- Describe any experience you have as a tutor or mentor.

\*\*\*Developed by Elizabeth Wells, Ottawa county MSU Extension 4-H youth educator, 1993.

## Questions and Answers about the MSU Extension Volunteer Selection Process

Who needs to go through the Volunteer Selection Process (VSP)?

Q. Do all adults aged 19 and older living in a potential Extension host family household need to go through the Volunteer Selection Process when a young person from another county, state or country may be placed in that home?

A. Host families for all international exchanges must go through the States 4-H International Exchange Program Process. Each family will be thoroughly reviewed by this process. All adults living in the family home (or who would have extensive contact during the stay) would need to be included in the family interview process. This would include child care workers, extended family members and/or others who may spend any extended period of time at the home. Criminal history checks would be done for all adults. (The “MSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Agreement” and the “Code of Conduct” both need to be signed and on file for all adults.)

For all local, county and statewide exchanges, the VSP must be completed as indicated below. Because the young person will be living with the host family — which includes all adults living in the household — all of those adults must go through the Volunteer Selection Process. Any adult in a host household should sign the hosting agreement (if there is one), the “MSU Extension Criminal History Check Permission Form” and the “MSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Agreement” and the “Code of Conduct” forms. If host families go through this process, they will be considered both hosts and volunteers (if they want to assume both roles).

Q. Do individuals who judge 4-H projects at county fairs and other events need to go through the Volunteer Selection Process?

A. Yes, if the judge has ongoing or unsupervised access to children aged 19 and under and/or to adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities. In most cases, however, judges do not have such access to children or vulnerable adults, so it is unnecessary for them to go through the Volunteer Selection Process.

Q. We involve individuals, including some teens from institutions (such as juvenile court and correctional facilities), in our 4-H Proud Equestrians Program (PEP) and Master Gardener Program. Some of these individuals have been convicted of criminal sexual conduct. Their work with MSU Extension is part of their sentence and is viewed as community service. They have no unsupervised access to children aged 19 and under and/or to adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities. Please comment.

A. If you involve people residing in juvenile and correctional facilities or people assigned to community service by a court order as MSU Extension volunteers working with youth or vulnerable adults, inform the facility’s or court’s staff that MSU Extension is unable to accept individuals who have been convicted of criminal sexual conduct as volunteers working with youth or with adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities. Ask them not to assign those individuals to this responsibility. If this agreement cannot be reached, MSU Extension will be unable to use volunteers from their institution or

court in Extension programs in which volunteers work with youth and vulnerable adults. If this agreement is reached, confirm it in writing with the staff at the juvenile court or correctional facility.

Q. Which volunteers in the 4-H PEP need to go through the Volunteer Selection Process?

A. New and potential volunteers who have ongoing or unsupervised access to children aged 19 and under and/or to adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities must go through the process. This includes instructors, program coordinators, leaders, side walkers and stable management helpers.

Q. Do volunteers in our Master Gardener or Conservation Stewards programs need to go through the Volunteer Selection Process?

A. ANY MSU Extension volunteer who will be involved in unsupervised delivery of programs involving youth and/or adults who have severe mental, physical or emotional disabilities in any MSU Extension program area must go through this process. Master Gardeners/Conservation Stewards and others are subject to VSP only when they will be/are volunteering directly in support of and on behalf of MSU Extension educational programs.

## **Criminal History Check**

Q. How long does it take to do a criminal history check with the Michigan State Police?

A. The Web-based system allows for immediate response on criminal history checks. The information required to conduct the search is asked for on the "MSU Extension Criminal History Check Permission Form."

Q. Are there criminal convictions for which volunteer applicants will be automatically rejected?

A. Yes, a conviction for criminal sexual conduct means that an individual will not be accepted as an MSU Extension volunteer. Convictions for other offenses will be considered on an individual basis.

Q. How often should criminal history checks be done?

A. Michigan State University Extension requires that staff members run this check every three years on all new and current volunteers.

Q. If a criminal history record is located, what is the procedure for following up with local law enforcement officials?

A. Begin by informing the State 4-H Office or the MSUE Human Resources Office about the situation. Then, if necessary, contact the local sheriff's office or police department and explain the situation. Request a short meeting with someone who may be able to help you. You may wish to ask the following questions:

- Is anything pending on this individual about which I may need to know?
- Is there any reason I should not consider this individual as a volunteer with MSU Extension?

Q. How do I contact other states where people have been volunteers?

A. You may contact the local county Extension office in that state or call the local police station. Some states offer a free criminal history check on the Web.

## **Sex Offender Registry**

Q. If a volunteer appears on the sexual predator list, must he or she be automatically dismissed?

A. Yes. Be sure to contact the State 4-H Office or the MSU Human Resources Office in this instance.

Q. Can a person be a volunteer who has a sexual predator living in the same house?

A. Yes, with restrictions.

## **Handling Difficult Situations**

Concerns about a volunteer's misbehavior or suspected misbehavior must be faced squarely, without delay. If you are unsure how to handle a given situation, seek help, right away. Such situations call for sound judgment and timely attention. Questions about these guidelines should be addressed to the State 4-H Office or the MSUE Human Resources Office.

Q. If there's a concern about a potential volunteer and use of controlled substances or alcohol that might affect this person's ability to be a volunteer working with youth or vulnerable adults, how do we discuss this with the individual's references?

A. The person doing reference checks should indicate that the potential volunteer will be working directly with youth or vulnerable adults and needs to be a positive role model. Next the person doing reference checks should ask the references if they are aware of any problems that the applicant may have with the use of controlled substances or alcohol that would affect his or her ability to be a positive role model for others. Indicate to the references that this topic is routinely considered as we select volunteers and that their responses are confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Q. If I dismiss or suspend a volunteer, will I get sued and have legal headaches?

A. You may get sued and you may have a headache, but MSU will provide you a lawyer and will bear responsibility for any judgment or settlement entered in a civil case brought against you. MSU supports its employees when they are acting in the performance of their assigned duties. Similarly, MSU volunteers who face liability because of their participation in approved activities are also protected in the event of a lawsuit.

Q. If I decide to suspend or dismiss a volunteer, is he or she entitled to a hearing or to an appeal?

A. No. Being a volunteer is a privilege, not a right. The privilege can be limited or removed without formal proceedings. However, the law protects all MSU Extension program participants from discriminatory treatment on the basis of sex, race, age, national origin, religion, disability unrelated to the ability to participate and physical characteristics. Also, as a matter of policy, MSU Extension welcomes participants without regard to sexual orientation. If you are considering suspending or

dismissing a volunteer, you must confer with your supervisor and notify the MSUE Human Resources office or the State 4-H Office. This will ensure wise decision making. Also, though there is no formal right to an appeal, a dismissed volunteer is certainly free to raise any concerns in a letter to the supervising educator.

Q. If I learn that a volunteer has been charged with a crime, what should I do?

A. Tell the volunteer that he or she is suspended from active participation in MSU Extension programs, pending a review. Do not discuss the matter further with the volunteer until you have conferred with your supervising educator, your district coordinator, and the MSUE Human Resources Office or the State 4-H Office.

Q. If I learn that a volunteer or volunteer candidate has a criminal record, should I think about taking some action, such as suspension or dismissal?

A. Yes. A felony conviction must always be taken seriously. A misdemeanor conviction may also indicate a problem. If the misdemeanor was for shoplifting 14 years ago, that may call for questions but not likely any action. If the misdemeanor charge was for indecent exposure, even years ago, dismissal would be appropriate.

Q. That last answer ends on a harsh note. Please explain.

A. Keeping people (especially young people and vulnerable adults) safe has to be MSU Extension's chief concern in its volunteer programs. People who have run afoul of the law because of any form of sexual misconduct or indiscretion are poor volunteer candidates. People who prey on children or vulnerable adults look for opportunities to be with these individuals. If you have reason to believe that a volunteer or applicant may have an emotional or psychological impediment to healthy relations with others, you must pursue your concern.

Q. How important is confidentiality in these situations?

A. Extremely important – you do not want a person's reputation to be damaged because personal information was disclosed to someone who did not have a specific need to know the information. A volunteer does not have a right to be a volunteer, but he or she does have a right not to be the subject of rumors and loose talk. If you know personal or embarrassing information about a person, you stand to face legal problems if you share that information with anyone who lacks a specific need to know.

Q. When I learn of possible questionable behavior by a volunteer, what should I do? What is the first step?

A. First, pause to consider whether the circumstances require immediate action. For instance, suppose you hear from a source you trust that a volunteer who is scheduled to supervise a weekend trip for adolescents offered to provide alcohol for some of the teens who are participating. In that situation — indeed, in any situation that raises concerns related to sex, drugs (including alcohol) or violence — it is important to act without delay. You would want to take whatever measures are necessary to negate the underlying concern. Once you have dealt with the possible need for immediate action, you need to gather information.

Q. How do I gather information?

A. The best way to get information is to ask people the questions that journalists ask: Who? What? Where? When? How? You want detailed factual information. You would do well to write down the information so that you can later refer to your notes and be confident that they are fairly stated and complete.

Q. Once I have gathered information, what do I do then?

A. Normally, after you learn what you can from other people, you talk with the person whose behavior is in question. Having the information will allow you to assess the seriousness of the situation and to develop a remedial plan. Some matters – for instance, a volunteer’s habit of using foul language – call for a conversation with the volunteer so he or she is clear regarding your expectations. It bears repeating that in serious or possibly serious situations, you should be in close contact with your supervising educator.

## **General**

Q. In counties that have no 4-H Youth educator, who should sign the MSU Extension staff and volunteer agreement forms?

A. The Extension staff person responsible for the program (whether an educator or program coordinator) should sign the forms.

Q. A current leader said he or she wanted to have an attorney review the MSU Extension volunteer agreement that includes the code of conduct. Is that OK?

A. Yes.

# Volunteer Dismissal Checklist

- | Yes                   | No                    |  |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
|                       |                       | Before You Make the Decision   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Do you have on file the volunteer's application and signed code of conduct forms?                                |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you discussed with the volunteer how he or she views the issue?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you discussed with the volunteer necessary behavior changes?  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you considered other ways of dealing with the volunteer?  |
|                       |                       | As You Think About the Decision  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Did the volunteer have prior knowledge of the issue in question?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Is dismissal your last action or is the behavior severe enough to warrant immediate dismissal?                   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Is this decision consistent with other volunteer dismissals?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you reviewed organizational policies and procedures about volunteer issues?                                 |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Are you moving at an appropriate pace?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you consulted with your supervisor, regional director and/or campus personnel?                              |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you considered who should know about the dismissal?   |
|                       |                       | Documentation Needed   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you carefully documented the situation?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Does the documentation include the facts as you believe them to be true?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Does the documentation describe the specific behaviors or actions that are inappropriate?                        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Does the documentation include previous meetings with the volunteer about the issue?                             |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Does the documentation support specific violations of the Code of Conduct?                                       |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Do you have written documentation that supports the violation of the Code of Conduct?                            |
|                       |                       | How to Communicate the Decision  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you arranged for a private location to meet with the volunteer?   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you arranged for your supervisor and/or another staff member to participate in this meeting with you?       |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Have you prepared correspondence to the volunteer that clearly communicates his or her dismissal as a volunteer? |

This does not represent MSU Extension's progressive disciplinary action or official procedure. This document is intended as a guide for use when dismissing current volunteers.

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