

Frequently Asked Questions for Volunteering

Where can I volunteer?

There are many organizations in York County to volunteer for. Almost any non-profit and many for-profits have volunteer opportunities. Areas of service include: aging, healthcare, children & youth, environment, community support, basic needs, clerical, animals, special events and fundraising.

What should I consider first in deciding where to volunteer?

What do you enjoy doing or what causes are important to you? Is there an area you would like to learn more about or want to get experience in? Where do you feel you can help the most with the talents or skills you can share with the agency (e.g., computer/internet services, graphic design, peer mentoring)?

Also consider the time you are able to commit to volunteering. Will it be evenings or weekends only? Your availability will be important in determining what opportunities you can participate in.

Can you get transportation to an agency or do you need to provide a service “offsite”? Examples of helping offsite include: collecting food, clothing, or blankets for food banks or shelters; making decorations for bulletin boards, or residents in a nursing home; help with a newsletter, special event or fundraiser; or provide computer/internet services.

How do I know if people my age are eligible to volunteer with particular agencies?

Simply call the agency and ask if there is an age restriction. Some agencies require a person to be 16 or 18 depending on insurance regulations or protect the confidentiality of their clients.

In agencies whose minimum age is not regulated by law or insurance, this can change from year to year depending on the current staff in charge. There can also be some flexibility depending on the maturity and experience of the person applying.

Where do I call?

Call the agency and ask for the Volunteer Coordinator or person who works with volunteers. You could also call the Youth Volunteer Initiative Coordinator at the United Way of York County (717-771-3821), who may be able to provide a contact name and more information.

Important Note: Call well in advance of when you want to start volunteering. It is rare for an agency to be able to take a volunteer immediately. Normally, there is a required process of applying, filling out an application, scheduling an interview, and completing orientation and training. Think about the questions you want to ask before you call.

What do I say?

Tell them you are interested in their organization and would like to find out about their various volunteer opportunities. Tell them who you are, why you want to volunteer, and if you have a required number of hours to perform. Mentioning how old you are is also helpful because some positions have a minimum age. You may also want to ask about training, parking, required minimum hours, when are positions available, and if there is a dress code.

Volunteer Managers are very busy so you may have to leave a message. Speak clearly when you leave your name, number, and why you are calling. You can also provide a good time to be contacted and your address to receive information by mail. Spelling your name and address is helpful to ensure accuracy.

What happens after the phone call?

The agency contact may talk to you about their positions, schedule an interview with you, or send you information on their agency and volunteer positions by mail.

How should I dress for an interview with an agency?

You should wear clean, neat clothes that give a good first impression. When in doubt, dress “up” rather than “down”.

Will employers look favorably on someone who has volunteered and not been paid to do something?

Yes, in fact, employers are happy to see that you have done something without being paid to do it. It shows that you are motivated by caring and compassion – not just money.

Is there a better time of the year to volunteer?

Not really. Some organizations are extremely busy during holidays and summers; others are busier at the beginning of the month rather than the end; and many have special programs or events that determine volunteer needs. There are opportunities throughout the year.

Can I receive credit in school for work done as a volunteer?

Some schools have a class just about Volunteering and Community Service, while others require a minimum number of volunteer hours for graduation. All schools encourage students to be involved in volunteer activities.

Check your local school to find out if they participate in such volunteer initiatives.

Are there other ways to check on volunteer opportunities?

Yes, contact your local volunteer center and provide them with the same information on your needs as you would an agency. As a referral resource, they will be able to provide information on the types of volunteer opportunities that are available in your community and even tell you a little about the duties and requirements. They will then provide names and phone numbers of selected agencies so you can contact them directly for more information.

Many local newspapers and media resources also provide articles on local volunteer opportunities. The Internet is also a great resource to find out about volunteering. For example, check out your local volunteer center's website or a specific agency's website.

Making your decision:

After you have checked out a few agencies and reviewed their volunteer needs, decide what is the best fit for you and make the commitment to volunteer! The opportunity can be very rewarding to you, the agency, the community, and the people you help directly or indirectly!!

A Special Note to Parents: Volunteering is not a substitute for child care (i.e. during the summer). Agencies are not equipped to take youth 'fulltime, 5 days a week'. Contact FIRST: 755-1000 or 1-800-673-2529 for information on child care, summer programs and activities.