



City of  
**MOUNT  
VERNON**

# Volunteer Handbook

# INTRODUCTION

The City of Mount Vernon welcomes you as a volunteer!! Mayor Jill Boudreau encourages citizens to volunteer with the City of Mount Vernon and help further our mission to "create a lifetime positive difference for our Community". The City recognizes that volunteers provide a broad source of expertise and talent which can benefit the City and our community as a whole. By assisting staff with both daily tasks and new programs, volunteers enhance the level of quality services the City of Mount Vernon provides. We thank you for the time and devotion.

The purpose of the volunteer handbook is to provide overall guidance and direction so that you will be an effective, well-informed volunteer.

The policies outlined in the handbook are intended for guidance only, and do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. The City of Mount Vernon reserves the right, at any time, to change/revise terms and conditions of voluntary service. As such, the contents of this handbook are subject to change in order to reflect those changes. Areas not specifically covered by the policies will be addressed by management.

The City of Mount Vernon also reserves the right to utilize, or not utilize, services of volunteers. Volunteers are not considered to be employees and being a volunteer is not a guarantee of later employment with the City of Mount Vernon.

City volunteers will meet and make meaningful connections with new people, gain new skills, help solve neighborhood and community issues, explore career possibilities, and most importantly will finish their service with the satisfaction of knowing they are doing important work for their community. The City has many different ways that citizens, whether they are seniors, students, professionals, families or groups, can volunteer with on-going, group, or one-time activities.

Please feel free to contact management and/or the department's Volunteer Coordinator for additional information.

General Volunteer Inquiries:

Parks & Recreation:

Human Resources:

Community & Economic Development:

Library:

Lisa Esparza (360) 336-6215

Chelan Robbins (360) 336-6248

Mike Bonacci (360) 336-6209

# FUNDAMENTALS OF VOLUNTEERING

## **Definition of Volunteer**

The City of Mount Vernon may utilize volunteers to assist within the organization. A current employee may not volunteer in any capacity related to his/her paid position. While volunteers are unpaid, volunteers will be required to comply with City policies and procedures and will sign the Volunteer Agreement.

A volunteer must be officially registered prior to provide service.

## **Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities**

Volunteers will be offered meaningful and agreed upon placements. This includes effective training and supervision. They will be treated with respect and recognition for their contributions. Volunteers will be expected to perform tasks to the best of their abilities and to adhere to departmental goals and their Volunteer Agreement.

## **Scope of Volunteer Involvement**

Volunteers may be placed in all departmental programs and activities deemed appropriate. Volunteers will not be used to displace paid employee positions. Volunteers will receive a description of agreed upon duties prior to the start of their service hours.

# VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

**The following rules must be followed while volunteering for the City of Mount Vernon:**

1. Volunteers shall obey all applicable City, County, State and Federal laws.
2. Volunteers shall sign a volunteer agreement
3. Volunteers shall not commit any acts nor fail to perform any acts which constitute a violation of any of the policies, procedures, guidelines or directives of the City of Mount Vernon, whether stated in this volunteer handbook and/or in the City of Mount Vernon Personnel Policies.
4. Volunteers shall promptly comply with any lawful orders of supervisors.
5. Volunteers shall conduct themselves in a manner as to reflect most favorably on the City of Mount Vernon. Volunteers shall not engage in any conduct which is unbecoming of persons associated with the City of Mount Vernon.
6. While on duty, the volunteer will not use his or her volunteer status to obtain any goods, products or services.
7. Volunteers shall not solicit or accept any gift or gratuity from any person, business or organization for the benefit of the volunteer, City of Mount Vernon or others if it may reasonably be inferred that the person, business or organization:

(a) seeks to influence action of an official nature; (b) seeks to affect the performance or non-performance of an official duty (c) has an interest which may be affected directly or indirectly by the performance of the volunteer's duty; or (d) creates an appearance of fairness issue.

8. Volunteers shall not use their official position or official identification for personal or financial gain to obtain privileges not otherwise available to them, or to avoid consequences of illegal acts. Volunteer identification should only be used in the performance of volunteer duties.
9. Volunteers acting in an official capacity shall not recommend or suggest in any manner the employment or procurement of any particular product, or private, professional or commercial service.
10. Volunteers shall not possess or store alcoholic beverages or prescription drugs or substances in any City of Mount Vernon vehicle or facility that affect one's ability to function in the volunteer's capacity. Volunteers shall not report for duty while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including medications that may cause drowsiness or affect one's ability to perform assigned duties.

### **Dependability and Reliability**

The dependability of a volunteer is extremely important. It is the volunteer's responsibility to notify their Volunteer Supervisor if unable to volunteer at an appointed time, or if there are other factors that may affect the volunteer's performance.

### **Confidentiality**

Volunteers represent the City of Mount Vernon to the citizens. As a volunteer affiliated with the City of Mount Vernon you will be seen as a visible extension of our paid staff to citizens we serve. While most City of Mount Vernon business is considered public information, certain information is confidential. Volunteers will not discuss or disseminate any confidential information that the volunteer may have knowledge of. It is vital that volunteers uphold the high professional standard that the public expects in order to maintain the City of Mount Vernon reputation of integrity, professionalism, and trust.

# CITY OF MOUNT VERNON POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## **APPEARANCE POLICY**

During business hours, the City requires volunteers present a clean and neat appearance, and to dress appropriately for their positions. Volunteers are expected at all times to present a professional image to customers and the public. Acceptable personal appearance, like proper maintenance of work areas, is an ongoing requirement with the City of Mount Vernon who have regular contact with the public are expected to dress in a manner that is acceptable in modern business establishments. Examples of inappropriate attire include, but are not limited to, suggestive or physically revealing attire, athletic clothing, cut-offs, halter-tops, spandex, shirts or hats with unprofessional logos, sandals commonly known as flip flops, thongs, jandals or pluggers, shorts and similar items of casual attire, unless such clothing is necessary and essential in the performance of the employee essential job function in which case the employee must receive approval from their Department Director. Volunteers who come to work dressed inappropriately will be sent home and directed to return to work in proper attire. Repeated violations may result in discipline.

Two issues of personal appearance require special attention: tattoos and body piercings. Although popular, the City considers tattoos and body piercings to detract from the professional appearance and image that it seeks to present.

**Tattoos.** The City requires that tattoos be covered under clothing during work hours. If any volunteer has a tattoo in a location that cannot conveniently be covered, given its location and/or the attire necessary for your position, please consult human resources to address the matter and, if appropriate, obtain a waiver.

**Body Piercings.** The City requires that body piercings that are visible to the public be removed during work hours. This includes piercings through the nose, tongue, and above the eye. The City will allow a maximum of two piercings per ear as an exception to this policy.

Religious accommodation: The City recognizes that certain forms of dress and adornment are required by the volunteer's religious beliefs or practices. The City complies fully with federal and state antidiscrimination laws that require employers such as the City to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious beliefs and practices. Please consult human resources if you believe a certain type or style of dress or adornment is required by your religious beliefs or practices.

## **DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION PROHIBITED**

The City of Mount Vernon will not discriminate against qualified applicants, employees or volunteers with a sensory, physical or mental disability. Volunteers whose disabilities require accommodation are asked to seek the assistance of the City in order to initiate a mutual discussion of the volunteer's and City's needs.

## **ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY**

It is the City of Mount Vernon's policy to foster and maintain an environment that is free from unlawful harassment. Toward this end, the City will not tolerate unlawful harassment that is made by an employee or volunteer toward any co-worker or member of the public. Employees and volunteers are expected to show respect for each other and the public at all times, despite individual differences.

Unlawful harassment is defined as verbal or physical conduct that demeans or shows hostility or aversion toward another employee or members of the public due to their protected class status. Harassment typically includes slurs or demeaning comments to employees or members of the public relating to race, ethnic background, gender, religion, sexual orientation (including gender identity), age, disability, marital status, military status or any other legally protected status.

Any harassment of a fellow employee or member of the public will be cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Examples of behaviors which are inappropriate and/or illegal include (but not limited to): *Negative or offensive comments; jokes; slang names or labels; talking about or calling attention to another employee's physical or mental capacity in a derogatory or offensive manner; displaying offensive pictures, cartoons or calendars on City property.*

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT PROHIBITED**

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is unlawful. Sexual harassment is also inappropriate and offensive and will not be tolerated by the City of Mount Vernon. The City considers sexual harassment a serious offense and an employee or volunteer who harasses another employee, volunteer, or member of the public will be disciplined as in any other case of serious employee misconduct.

Examples of sexual harassment that the City prohibits its employees or volunteers from engaging in include: *Vulgar or sexual comments, jokes, stories, and innuendo, Graphic or suggestive comments about someone's body or manner of dress, Gossip or questions about someone's sexual conduct or orientation, Vulgarity, leering, inappropriate touching and obscene or suggestive gestures, Display in the work place of sexually suggestive photographs, cartoons, graffiti and the like, Unwelcome and repeated flirtations, requests for dates, and the like, Unwelcome sexual advance by a supervisor or a coworker, Solicitation or coercion of sexual activity, dates, or the like by the threat (expressed or implied) of punishment, Intimidating, hostile, derogatory or otherwise offensive remarks that are directed at a person because of that person's sex, where the remarks cause discomfort or humiliation and interfere with the performance of the employees duties.*

Employees or volunteers engaging in sexual harassment are subject to discipline, up to and including termination. (See following Discrimination/Harassment Complaint Procedure, for guidance on what to do if you or your co-worker experience sexual harassment).

## **DISCRIMINATION/HARASSMENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

If at any time you believe you are being subject to harassment or discrimination, or if you become aware of such conduct being directed at someone else, you should promptly notify the Human Resources Director. If you believe the Human Resources Director is involved in the harassment, you should report the conduct to the Mayor. All reported incidents will be investigated under the following guidelines:

- A. The City will appoint or retain an investigator who can be neutral and fair to all parties involved in the investigation. The City may bring an outside investigator if there is no one employed by the City who can complete a fair and timely investigation.
- B. All complaints will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law, and will be disclosed only as necessary to allow the City to investigate and respond to the complaint. No one will be involved in the investigation or response except those with a need to know. Any special concerns about confidentiality will be addressed at the time they are raised.
- C. Any employee or volunteer who is found to have violated this policy is subject to corrective action up to and including termination.
- D. The City will not permit retaliation against anyone who makes a complaint or who cooperates in the investigation of a complaint. Allegations of retaliation will be investigated separately, and if sustained, will be subject to corrective action up to and including termination.

## **WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY**

The City of Mount Vernon prohibits violence in the workplace and is committed to maintaining an environment that is free of all forms of violence, including verbal or physical threats, intimidation, and abusive statements or any conduct that reasonably causes other to feel intimidated or unsafe.

Employees and volunteers, with the exception of Commissioned Officers, are prohibited from bringing weapons to work or on City premises. The City reserves the right to inspect employee's or volunteer's desks, offices, file cabinets, computers, City-owned vehicles or other similar work spaces, with or without notice, when the City has a legitimate belief of misconduct or when the City needs to obtain work-related materials in the employee's possession. Furthermore the City reserves the right to inspect with or without notice, all personal packages, automobiles and other items, that come on to City property when exigent/emergency circumstances exist and there would be harm if the City waited to obtain consent/warrant.

*The definition of Exigent/Emergency Circumstances comprise of circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to believe that entry (or other relevant prompt action) was necessary to prevent physical harm to the officers or other persons, the destruction of relevant evidence, the escape of a suspect, or some other consequence improperly frustrating legitimate law enforcement efforts.*

The City of Mount Vernon prohibits the following:

- a. Any act or threat of violence made by an employee against another person's life, health, well being, family or property.
- b. Any act or threat of violence, including but not limited to, intimidation, harassment, or coercion.
- c. Any act or threat of violence that endangers the safety of employees, clients, vendors, contractors or the general public.
- d. Any act or threat of violence made directly or indirectly by words, gestures or symbols.
- e. Use or possession of a weapon on the organization's premises, except for commissioned officers.

Upon receiving a complaint, the City will promptly investigate the matter to determine relevant facts and circumstances. Information about any complaint will be treated as confidentially as possible, consistent with proper investigation and responsive action. Based on its investigation, the City will take immediate and appropriate corrective action. Individuals who lodge good faith complaints or who participate in a City investigation will not be retaliated against or otherwise treated adversely for having done so.

#### **NON-SMOKING POLICY**

Smoking is prohibited in City Vehicles and Facilities, including City-owned buildings and offices or other facilities rented or leased by the City, including individual employee offices.

In accordance with RCW 70.160, smoking is prohibited within twenty-five (25) feet of any entrances, exits, windows that open, and ventilation intakes that serve an enclosed area where smoking is prohibited. The law also applies to any "place of employment," which the law defines, in part, as "work areas" and any area which employees are required to pass through during the course of employment.

#### **SOLICITATIONS AND DISTRIBUTIONS**

Solicitations of funds, sales of tickets, unauthorized posting of notices, distribution of literature and solicitation of membership in organizations in City facilities or at City work locations during working time are prohibited unless authorized by the Mayor.

#### **CITY PROPERTY / PERSONAL PROPERTY / PRIVACY LIMITATIONS**

- A. City Property/Personal Liability:** The City of Mount Vernon may furnish desks, closets and/or lockers for security of employee and volunteer's coats, purses and other personal possessions. The City does not, however, assume responsibility for any theft or damage to the personal belongings of employees.
- B. City Property/Privacy Limitations:** Employees and volunteers should have no expectation of privacy when using such or any other City property. The



City regards desks, closets, lockers, work spaces, computers, file cabinets and files, city vehicles, furniture and other City property, as well as data, programs, communications, messages and other property created on, acquired by, developed for or located in any City facility or equipment, either in printed or digital format, as City property. The City reserves the right to search the same, including any personal possessions contained in them when it determines that there is a security, health, or other appropriate reason to do so. Such reasons may include, without limitation, the following: the need to locate City property; health or safety concerns; reasonable suspicion of misconduct; termination of employee; or for other business-related purposes.

The City reserves the right to review the contents of any document or communication, created or stored on a City computer or phone system, including electronic mail, text messaging, and voicemail. Employees and volunteers do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in these areas or in any other City work areas or when using City equipment.

- C. **City Equipment/Personal Use:** City equipment is provided at public expense to assist volunteers in carrying out official City business. Inappropriate or excessive use of City equipment for personal purposes may subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- D. **Removal of City Equipment:** City property shall not be removed from the premises of the City or authorized City job sites except as required for the official and authorized performance of their duties.
- E. **Personal Property:** The City recognizes that volunteers may need or want to bring personal property to work. The City to refrain from bringing unnecessary or inappropriate personal property to the workplace.

Any property that is not appropriate for the conduct of normal business, that may be disruptive to workflow, may pose a safety risk to employees, volunteers, or the public, or which violates the terms of any City policy may be considered unnecessary or inappropriate. It will be within the City's sole discretion to determine whether certain personal property is unnecessary or inappropriate.

The only personal property that an volunteers may be asked to use for City business is their personal vehicle. However, volunteers may choose to bring and use personal property in the performance of job duties. If personal property is used to perform job duties, volunteers must obtain written approval from a supervisor prior to its use and the property must comply with City standards.

It is the volunteer's responsibility to safeguard personal belongings. The City will not be liable for lost, damaged or stolen property of its employees and at

no time will the City replace or reimburse an employee for personal property that an employee brings to the workplace. Volunteers are encouraged to exercise reasonable care to safeguard personal items brought to work. For example, employees should not bring valuables to work and should not leave personal items where they might be damaged or stolen.

Improper or excessive use of personal property brought onto City property or worksites or during service hours (for example, the excessive or inappropriate use of personal cell phones for personal phone calls, text-messaging, imaging or videotaping), may also result in termination.

## **VOLUNTEER HOURS**

Each department will have additional policies, procedures, and guidelines to follow depending upon individual assignments. Volunteer Coordinators will cover information specific to the particular assignment with the volunteer.

## **VOLUNTEER PROCESSING & SCREENING**

### **Service Descriptions**

The Volunteer Coordinator, in consultation with staff, will write service descriptions for the volunteer positions available in the Department. This listing will be updated and revised as needed.

### **Placement**

Volunteers will receive a service description prior to beginning their assignment. The description will include duties to be performed and qualifications, the designated staff supervisor and work location, dates of job performance, and needed supplies. No placement will be made unless the requirements of both the volunteer and the supervising staff can be met.

### **Recruitment**

Volunteers will be recruited by the Volunteer Coordinator and department staff, to expand public engagement within the City of Mount Vernon.

### **Recruitment of Minors**

Volunteers under the age of 18 must have consent of a parent or guardian prior to volunteering. Volunteer age requirements will vary depending on the position. Minors may need to have a parent/guardian volunteer with them during their time of service.

### **Background Screening Process**

Volunteers in certain assignments such as those working with youth, elderly or developmentally disabled will be required to submit to a criminal background check annually. Approval of volunteer placements will depend on clearance of Washington

State Patrol Background Check. Prospective volunteers who refuse a background may be declined placement.

Additional screening for volunteers to be considered for positions of leadership and/or authority will include social security verification, address verification and checked against the local Sex Offender Registry. Approved volunteers will be issued a Photo Identification badge.

Photo ID badges provide assurance that a volunteer is qualified and authorized to offer leadership, authority or supervision in one of the City of Mount Vernon's programs or events. This is a key component to our risk management practice to provide participants, families and the public with identifying information to make our programs and community safe.

#### **Staff Involvement in Orientation and Training**

Staff members who will supervise volunteers will have the primary responsibility of providing hands on orientation and training to volunteers assigned to them.

## **RESIGNATION/TERMINATION**

Volunteer placements are made on a conditional basis. Either the City of Mount Vernon or the volunteer may terminate the arrangement, at any time, if it is not agreeable or acceptable to either party and/or when the assignment has been completed.

Volunteers are requested to give as much notice as possible if resigning from or interrupting the volunteer assignment for an extended period of time. Should a volunteer desire reassignment, he/she should notify his/her volunteer supervisor.

# **VOLUNTEER SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION**

## **General Support**

Volunteers will receive the following support from the City of Mount Vernon: initial contact with the Volunteer Coordinator either in-person, by e-mail or telephone; on-site orientation/training by a staff person; a post-activity contact by the Volunteer Coordinator; documentation of service hours; and formal recognition.

## **Recognition**

All people volunteering their time and skills to the City of Mount Vernon will be thanked for their service.

## **Types of Volunteer Recognition**

One or more of the following options can be completed:

- Thank you letter or card from Director and/or Mayor.
- Article and photos in the city newsletter about the service project.
- Certification of appreciation.
- Photographs of volunteer project.
- T-shirts or other novelty items for special events.
- Letters to the local newspaper editor.
- Press releases.
- Special presentations at City Council.
- Thank you ad in the Skagit Valley Recreation & Activity guide, City of Mount Vernon's website and/or Skagit Valley Herald.
- Volunteer appreciation event.

# RECEIPT OF VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

I have received a copy of the Volunteer Handbook, which outlines the policies and procedures of the City of Mount Vernon. I have read and understand the information in it and agree to abide by the policies while volunteering.

*The handbook does not constitute a contractual arrangement or agreement between the City of Mount Vernon and its volunteers of any kind including, but not limited to, the terms and conditions of volunteering. The City of Mount Vernon reserves the right to utilize, or not utilize, the services of volunteers.*

I understand that it is my responsibility to secure information from my supervisor if I have questions or concerns about any of the information outlined in this Volunteer Handbook. I understand that these policies and procedures are continually evaluated and may be amended, modified or terminated at any time and at the sole discretion of the City of Mount Vernon with or without notice.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assigned Department

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Volunteer Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date