

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
PAROLE DIVISION**



**POLICY AND OPERATING
PROCEDURE**

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SUPERSEDES: 03/16/00

SUBJECT: VOLUNTEER SERVICES PROGRAM

AUTHORITY: TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE ANN. § 493.005 AND TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE ANN. § 501.009

PURPOSE: To establish policies and procedures for the administration and supervision of the Volunteer Services Program in district parole offices and District Reentry Centers (DRC) operated by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Parole Division (TDCJ-PD).

POLICY: It is the policy of the TDCJ-PD to actively encourage volunteer organizations to provide the following types of assistance/programs for offenders:

1. Literacy and education programs;
2. Life skills programs;
3. Job skills programs;
4. Parent-training programs;
5. Drugs and alcohol rehabilitation;
6. Support groups;
7. Program monitoring, assisting in groups, and setting up classrooms;
8. Clerical duties at the district parole offices, such as answering telephones, signing in offenders, shredding, filing, or faxing documents, etc.; and
9. Other programs as determined by TDCJ-PD to aid in the transition between confinement and society in an attempt to reduce recidivism.

Volunteer organizations shall be utilized by the TDCJ-PD to provide programs to offenders as time, space, and staff permit, and in keeping with sound practices for security and orderly operations. Volunteer organizations shall be invited to the TDCJ-PD offices and DRCs to provide programs with the understanding that all activities, including the individual(s) involved, content, length, frequency, materials, and setting for such programs shall be approved by the Office Volunteer Coordinator.

PROCEDURE:

- I. Volunteer services, and those involved, shall be defined as follows:
 - A. Volunteer Services: Planned activities that aid staff in promoting positive offender adjustment and which utilize citizens as the primary resource.
 - B. Volunteer: A citizen who provides a service to the Parole Division, its facilities, and its offenders without receiving compensation from the Parole Division.
 1. Approved Volunteer: An individual who provides a service or who participates in volunteer activities on a regular basis, approved through the application process. All Approved Volunteers are required to complete the volunteer training program.
 2. Special Volunteer: Any individual who provides a service or participates in volunteer activities no more than four (4) times or has not established a pattern of regular, scheduled participation. After the fourth (4th) visit as a Special Volunteer, the individual will be required to become an Approved Volunteer for future visits. Special Volunteers do not complete a TDCJ Volunteer Services Application (Appendix A) or Training Program but are subject to a criminal history check.
 3. Employee Volunteer: An individual who is employed by the TDCJ-PD and provides a service or participates in a volunteer activity on his personal time. Participation shall be within the guidelines of TDCJ-Personnel Directive 22, *General Rules of Conduct and Disciplinary Action Guidelines For Employees*. Employee Volunteers are considered “Approved Volunteers” for recordkeeping purposes.
 4. Student Intern Volunteer: A student enrolled in a university or community college who desires to volunteer for limited periods of time and is taking course work that requires internship experience for course credit, pre-professional training, or work experience. Student interns must complete the Student Intern Memorandum of Agreement forms (Appendix K1–K3) before starting internship.
 5. Ex-offender: An individual convicted of any crime (excluding traffic violations) who has discharged their sentence (i.e., no longer incarcerated, has completed parole, community supervision, or mandatory supervision, and all requirements under the law).
 6. Offender: An individual under the supervision, custody, or incarceration of the TDCJ, including offenders housed in a privately operated federal, county, or other state facility outside of Texas. These offenders may include those who were sentenced to the TDCJ but are not yet in TDCJ custody.
 - C. Volunteer Program Supervisor (VPS): A Program Supervisor III, Specialized Programs, who is responsible for overseeing volunteer program goals, planning, and evaluation for the Parole Division.

- D. Region Volunteer Coordinator (RVC): A Parole Division Region Chaplain who is responsible for recruiting and processing applicants, and coordinating the Parole Division's goals and objectives regarding volunteer programs. The RVC shall be responsible for reviewing volunteer programs within his region to ensure maximum utilization of appropriate programs according to the specific needs of the population.
- E. Office Volunteer Coordinator (OVC): An individual who is employed by the TDCJ-PD, designated by the parole supervisor of his district parole office, and responsible for coordinating volunteer activities within the district parole office. The OVC shall be responsible for recordkeeping and orientation to the office's volunteer program. In addition, the OVC completes, maintains, and updates the Volunteer Assignment Description forms (Appendix N).
- F. Parole Division Volunteer Committee: A committee composed of the VPS and Parole Division Chaplains.

II. The Parole Division Volunteer Committee is responsible for the development of the Volunteer Services Program. The policy shall be a guide to implementing a comprehensive Volunteer Services Program and consist of written procedures that shall include the types of volunteers, approval process, monitoring, and evaluation.

A. The VPS and the RVC shall develop strategies to promote public awareness of the TDCJ-PD Volunteer Services Program.

B. Program Goals and Objectives

1. The Parole Division Volunteer Committee is responsible for the development of the division-wide volunteer program goals and objectives. Goals and objectives shall be consistent with the mission of the TDCJ-PD.
2. The Parole Division Volunteer Committee shall meet quarterly to assess the capability of the Parole Division to utilize volunteers and determine the areas where volunteers are needed.
3. Region staff, as well as volunteers and offenders, shall give input via the Volunteer Program Assessment/Suggestion Form (Appendix G). This assessment shall be the basis for establishing volunteer service objectives for the upcoming year.

C. Volunteer Application Process

1. The RVC instructs the applicant to complete the TDCJ Volunteer Application (Appendix A) on the website or by mailing it to Volunteer Services, P.O. Box 99, Huntsville, TX, 77342-0099.

Note: The application is available on the TDCJ website.

2. Human Resources (Huntsville) conducts a criminal background check on each applicant through the Texas Crime Information Center (TCIC) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). A criminal record or specific offense on record does not exclude a volunteer applicant. However, the criminal record may be used to determine placement or denial of the applicant. Thereafter, an annual background check shall be conducted each year from the volunteer approval date.
3. Process for approval or denial of volunteer applicants:
 - a. The Volunteer Services Office (Huntsville) forwards a list of all applicants to the VPS.
 - b. The VPS shall forward this list to the Region Director for review and approval or denial of the applicants. The Region Director shall return the list to the VPS with a final decision.
 - c. The VPS shall forward the list to the Volunteer Services Office (Huntsville).
4. The Volunteer Services Office (Huntsville) sends the applicant a Volunteer Training Letter (Appendix D) to participate in volunteer services, as well as training information. All volunteers shall complete a volunteer training/orientation session before final approval is granted.
5. Offenders currently on parole and ex-offenders may be accepted as Approved Volunteers with the following stipulations:
 - a. An offender on parole status must have a clear criminal background for the previous eighteen (18) months and provide a letter from his supervising parole officer approving participation in the TDCJ-PD volunteer program. Offenders on Super-Intensive Supervision Program (SISP), Electronic Monitoring, Sex Offender, or maximum supervision will not be accepted as Approved Volunteers.
 - b. An ex-offender must have a clear criminal background for the previous eighteen (18) months and demonstrated successful reentry into the community since discharging his sentence.
6. The Region Director shall refer the applicant to another office, if the applicant requests a volunteer position at an office where a relative or friend is supervised.
7. All volunteer applications and their files will be retained by the Volunteer Services Office (Huntsville).

8. Security Threat Group (STG) Gang Affiliation

- a. All ex-offenders and offender applicants will be screened for a gang affiliation through the TDCJ Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO) and/or the Texas Anti-Gang Information Tracking (TAGIT) System.
- b. Applicants who are confirmed gang members, but have completed the Gang Renunciation and Disassociation (GRAD) process, will not be excluded from the TDCJ volunteer program unless there is evidence that placement of the individual would affect the safety and security of the office, employees, volunteers and offenders.
- c. Any individual who is confirmed as a member of a STG while incarcerated, and who did not complete the GRAD process, shall require the approval of the TDCJ-Volunteer Review Committee.

9. Employee and Ex-employee Applicants

- a. Applicants who are currently or previously employed by the TDCJ will undergo an employment check through the TDCJ Parole Division Human Resources Office for disciplinary history and rehire eligibility. The applicant's disciplinary history will be considered when approving the volunteer applicant. Applicants ineligible for rehire will not be approved as volunteers unless the Region Director disagrees and a decision is staffed with a Parole Division Deputy Director.
- b. Employees will not be eligible to serve at a district parole office or DRC where they are currently assigned, unless the parole supervisor approves the employee volunteer's assignment. Approval must be in writing and placed in the employees' volunteer file.

D. Volunteer Training

1. Applicants are not considered approved until they attend a volunteer training/orientation session. Training topics shall include, but are not be limited to safety and security, rules of conduct, lines of communication, confidentiality, and other pertinent information. Additional training similar to on-the-job training will be required at the district parole offices, DRCs, or other areas of the TDCJ-PD.
2. Volunteers shall attend a volunteer training/orientation session within six (6) months from the date of the letter notifying them to attend training. Should circumstances prevent the applicant from attending the training/orientation session within the six (6) months time frame, a one-time extension may be granted to the applicant. In this event, a second criminal background investigation will be conducted to confirm the applicant's criminal history status has not changed.

3. New volunteer applicants must present the Volunteer Training Letter (Appendix D) to the trainer(s) in order to attend the training session.
4. Applicant volunteers shall sign a Volunteer Training Sign-In Roster form (Appendix E) and an Acknowledgment of Volunteer Training/Orientation form (Appendix F) at the conclusion of the training session. These forms are written records of volunteer training and written acknowledgement of the Parole Division rules and risks. The volunteer trainers will forward the forms to the Volunteer Services Office (Huntsville). Appendix F serves as the needed documentation confirming the volunteer applicant completed the process to become an approved TDCJ volunteer.
5. Employee volunteers shall be expected to complete a volunteer training/orientation session.
6. Volunteers shall be required to attend volunteer training every two (2) years. The volunteer may attend refresher training at an on-site location or participate in refresher training online at the TDCJ website (http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/php/volunteer_training). Volunteers who complete the online refresher training must attend subsequent refresher trainings at an on-site location. The volunteer shall attend the refresher training session within six (6) months of the two-year anniversary date. TDCJ Volunteer Services Department will generate a report to monitor and identify those individuals who have not participated in a refresher training course within the required time frame. Volunteers who fail to attend a refresher training course will be placed in a pending status and not allowed to perform volunteer services until the refresher training is complete.

E. Guidelines

During training/orientation, volunteers shall be advised regarding the seriousness of personal/emotional involvement with offenders. Special emphasis shall be made to Executive Directive PD-29, *Sexual Misconduct with Offenders*. If the volunteer chooses to establish a personal relationship, the volunteer shall advise the OVC and RVC and request to be removed from volunteer status and tender his (or her) resignation as a volunteer. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, the following guidelines shall be strictly observed:

1. One-on-one visits or counseling shall be subject to the approval of the Region Director.
2. All volunteers shall dress in a manner appropriate to their position and duties, avoiding eccentricities in personal appearance.
 - a. Shirt and shoes are mandatory.
 - b. Halter tops, T-shirts, tank tops, fishnet shirts, or see-through fabrics may not be worn.

- c. Shorts and cutoffs are not allowed.
 - d. Men shall wear long pants.
 - e. Women may wear dresses, skirts, or long pants. If a dress or skirt appears too short [more than three (3) inches above the top of knee], the volunteer may not be allowed in the office.
 - f. Shirts and other articles of clothing with pictures or language that may be considered profane or offensive by current public standards are not permitted.
 - g. Volunteers shall be advised in writing of the above and shall be advised that violation may result in suspension in accordance with the procedures for termination of volunteers.
- 3. On-the-job training and/or training that is essential to perform assigned tasks shall be the responsibility of the OVC or the RVC. Supplemental training shall be encouraged.
 - 4. The OVC or the RVC shall guide volunteers to appropriate volunteer placement. Placement will be made only when the aforementioned screening and training procedures are completed. All approved volunteers shall be provided with a Volunteer Assignment Description form (Appendix N) detailing responsibilities and duties.

F. Supervision/Monitoring of Volunteers

- 1. The OVC or the RVC shall arrange for the supervision of volunteers and consult on a regular basis with the Region Director or designee regarding evaluation, monitoring, and issues of mutual concern. The OVC or the RVC shall ask the volunteer to complete annually the Volunteer Program Assessment/Suggestion Form (Appendix G).
- 2. Parole Division staff shall provide direct supervision of volunteer programs in the subject area in which the volunteer serves. Direct supervision shall not necessarily imply that the supervisory staff person be physically present while the volunteer activity is being performed.
- 3. Volunteers are required to complete the Volunteer Participation Log (Appendix J). The completion of the participation log shall be monitored by departmental designated staff.
- 4. The OVC shall complete the Monthly Volunteer Statistical Report for the office's volunteers and submit completed forms monthly to their Region Director or designee by the fifth (5th) business day of each month.

G. Reassignment, Suspension, and Termination of Volunteers

1. Volunteer eligibility shall be reviewed annually by the OVC or RVC. Individual volunteers may be removed or terminated based upon the Parole Division needs or poor performance.
2. The OVC or the RVC, in coordination with office staff, shall arrange for appropriate action in the event a volunteer violates office rules or does not perform responsibilities in accordance with the assignment description or the expectations of the parole supervisor. The OVC or the RVC shall complete a Violation of Policy Form (Appendix O) when a volunteer violates office rules, regulations, or fails to perform responsibilities in accordance with the assignment description or expectations. Serious or unusual incidents involving volunteers shall be reported to appropriate authorities and Region Director.
3. The OVC or RVC shall contact the Volunteer Services Office (Huntsville) within three (3) business days of the date of the charge/incident to change the approval status of the volunteer to “pending” on the TDCJ mainframe volunteer database, VS00. The volunteer will not be allowed to continue until an investigation has been completed and a decision is made regarding action to be taken, if any. Violations that result in a letter of instruction do not require placing the volunteer on pending status.
4. The OVC and/or the RVC shall initiate an investigation into the allegations of improper behavior to include witness statements and a statement from the volunteer, if required.
5. Sanctions will be progressive in nature, but determined by the seriousness of the violations, results of the investigations, previous violations and history of the volunteer. Sanctions shall include, but are not limited to, a letter of instruction, verbal reprimand, suspension, restriction(s), reassignment, retraining, removal from the program, or any combination of the above.
6. The OVC and/or the RVC shall consult with the VPS, prior to notifying the Director of Volunteer Services of final disposition of sanctions.
7. The OVC and/or the RVC shall contact the volunteer to discuss the results of the investigation and provide any sanctions, if any. An entry into the VS00 will be made documenting the sanction(s) and any changes to the volunteer’s status within 15 business days after the volunteer is notified. The volunteer may appeal the decision to the appropriate division volunteer authority. Actions may include transfer to another assignment, suspension, or termination. In the event of termination, the OVC and/or the RVS shall submit a copy of the Violation of Policy Form and results of the investigation to the VPS and the Region Director or designee.

8. The OVC and/or the RVC shall send a copy of the Violation of Policy Form, and supporting documentation to the VPS. The VPS will review and submit to the Director of Volunteer Services.
9. For volunteers whose status is terminated, an electronic message will be sent to the VPS.
10. The Violation of Policy form will be placed in the volunteer's permanent file.

H. Program Accountability and Evaluation

1. The Region Director shall delegate VS00 data entry to the RVC. Data entry in VS00 includes adding new volunteers, updating the status of current volunteers, and entry of all volunteer hours worked.
2. Volunteer Participation Logs (Appendix J) shall be sent to the VPS and the RVC on a weekly basis.
3. The RVC shall enter all volunteer hours worked within three (3) business days of receiving the Volunteer Participation Logs.
4. No later than the fifth (5th) business day of each month, statistics shall be provided by the Region Director or designee to the VPS regarding volunteer participation for the preceding month.
5. The VPS or designee shall submit a Monthly Volunteer Statistical Report to the Rehabilitation Programs Division by the third (3rd) Friday of each month. A fiscal year summary of all statistical monthly reports shall be submitted to the Rehabilitation Programs Division within fifteen (15) business days of the previous fiscal year's end.
6. The Volunteer Services Office (Huntsville) shall maintain a file on approved volunteers and activities to contain the following information:
 - a. TDCJ Volunteer Services Application (Appendix A);
 - b. Acknowledgement of Volunteer Training/Orientation (Appendix F);
 - c. Criminal History (NCIC/TCIC);
 - d. Volunteer Assignment Description Form (Appendix N); and
 - e. Other pertinent information.
7. All volunteer files shall be maintained by the Volunteer Services Department on a fiscal year basis and during the volunteer's tenure with TDCJ. Files will be maintained for three (3) years after the volunteer becomes inactive.

8. The OVC and the RVC shall ensure volunteers receive adequate recognition, both formal and informal for their contribution.
9. The OVC and the RVC shall be responsible for assessing the status of staff-volunteer relations and shall promote productive relationships.

I. TDCJ Volunteer Service Plan: Appendix of Volunteer Forms

- Appendix A – TDCJ Volunteer Application
- Appendix B – Monthly Volunteer Application Summary
- Appendix C – Devotional/Worship Items Inventory List
- Appendix D – Volunteer Training Letter
- Appendix E – Volunteer Training Sign-In Roster
- Appendix F – Acknowledgment of Volunteer Training/Orientation form
- Appendix G – Volunteer Program Assessment/Suggestion Form
- Appendix H – Special Volunteer Approval Form
- Appendix I – Letter of Orientation for Special Volunteers
- Appendix J – Volunteer Participation Log
- Appendices K1–K3 – Student Intern Memorandum of Agreement forms
- Appendix L – Partners Program Application
- Appendix M – Affidavit of Computer Broadband Capability
- Appendix N – Volunteer Assignment Description
- Appendix O – Violation of Policy Form
- Appendix P – Volunteer Review Committee (VRC) Form
- Appendix Q – Volunteer File Audit Checklist

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