

OSU Extension Volunteer Selection Policy & Procedures
Frequently Asked Questions

Change in Volunteer Selection Policy

Why has the OSU Extension volunteer selection policy and procedures changed?

Over the past several years, several changes have taken place in relationship to volunteers working with youth, elderly, and individuals with disabilities. Included in those changes are increased expectations of parents, guardians, and caregivers that the organization provide a safe and positive environment for their child/charge; new state law providing guidelines for volunteer selection policy and procedure; and desire of the organization to continually provide an emotionally and physically safe environment.

Can you provide an overview of what the new policy and procedure will require?

Each new volunteer will: (1) receive a position description at time of application or when changing position; (2) complete an application in it's entirety; (3) have, at minimum, two references collected; (4) complete an interview; (5) successfully pass a criminal history fingerprint background check; and (6) read, agree to, and sign a Standards of Behavior.

When will the new volunteer selection policy and procedures be implemented?

The new Ohio State University Extension Volunteer Selection Policy and Procedures will become effective on November 1, 2002.

What are the benefits of the changes in the volunteer selection policy and procedures?

Ohio State University Extension desires to provide positive, educational experiences for all members and service recipients. Implementing a more comprehensive selection process allows O.S.U. Extension faculty and staff to make sound decisions regarding an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities in relationship to the position they wish to volunteer. Additionally, this selection process allows potential volunteers the opportunity to become better acquainted with O.S.U. Extension programs and determine if this organization best fits their volunteer interests. Finally, this new selection process continues to communicate to parents, guardians, community leaders, and potential and current service recipients/members of the importance the organization places on engaging volunteers.

Who is affected by the new volunteer selection policy and procedures?

All new, potential volunteers recruited by OSU Extension faculty and staff, who will be working with members of a vulnerable population, will be required to adhere to the new policy and complete each procedure as outlined in the policy.

Policy & Procedures Implementation

How do we determine if this policy applies in our situation?

Extension professionals should carefully examine the responsibilities of specific positions within their program area. If the position identifies actual or potential responsibilities for working with members of vulnerable populations, then individuals applying for those positions will complete all procedures associated with the volunteer selection policy that is effective November 1, 2002.

What happens if a potential volunteer refuses to complete any part of the required policy or procedures?

Individuals must fully complete all requirements in order to be considered for acceptance as a volunteer for Ohio State University Extension. Individuals not fully completing all requirements will not be accepted to volunteer by the organization.

Who determines if a potential volunteer is going to be accepted or not accepted?

The appropriate Ohio State University Faculty or Staff member will make the final decision of acceptance or non-acceptance, based on information collected throughout the selection process.

Another organization that I work/volunteer for is collaborating with OSU Extension to deliver an educational program; do I need to complete OSU Extension's volunteer selection procedures?

Individuals in this situation will be required to meet, at minimum, the standards set by the Ohio State University Extension volunteer selection policy and procedure.

I am a volunteer in ABC County and am moving to XYZ County and would like to volunteer in that county. What requirements do I have to complete?

It is acceptable to transfer volunteer status from one county to another county. It would likely not be necessary to have an individual complete the newly implemented volunteer selection policy and procedures, however Extension professionals should consider the responsibilities of the individual position and base their decision on those factors. For example, it may be necessary to require additional training or education or even to contact references or conduct an interview to ensure that the individual has the necessary skills, abilities and knowledge. It would be acceptable for the county in which the individual is moving from to provide the volunteer file to the new county and retain a copy of that file for their records. In an effort to obtain current contact information, Extension professionals may require that the individual in the above referenced situation complete a new application.

We are attempting to determine when it is necessary for an individual, who considers themselves a "parent helper" to complete the OSU Extension volunteer process.

First, we must recognize that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two, however answering the following question may provide some clarity: (1) does the individual provide on-going support, leadership, supervision or guidance to children,

other than their own and on two or more occasions each year? If the answer were yes, then the individual would need to complete the volunteer selection process.

Please know that this same scenario may be used for any member of a vulnerable population, not just a 4-H club!

Is there a specific time period that the “2 or more times” covers?

There is not a set definition of what this means, however if the individual is volunteering two or more times in any given year (or twelve month time period) it would be advisable for them to complete the volunteer selection procedures as outlined.

What type of information do I need on individuals who are not required to adhere to the new policy?

Ohio State University Extension has not established specific information needed from individuals' who are volunteers, but not serving nor having the opportunity to serve members of vulnerable populations. However, it would be beneficial to collect much of the basic information found on the application and have the individual sign the standards of behavior. Extension professionals should closely examine the responsibilities of individuals in these situations and implement a selection process that is representative of the level of responsibility of the potential volunteer.

Civilian Background Checks

Who will be responsible for paying for fingerprint background checks?

The following options may be exercised: (1) a sponsor, donor, or grant dollars pay for costs associated with fingerprint check; (2) program pays costs associated with fingerprint check; (3) potential volunteer and program share costs associated with fingerprint check; or (4) potential volunteer pays costs associated with fingerprint check.

What will happen to reports that are received from the Bureau of Criminal Investigation?

All reports will be sent to a central location at Ohio State University Extension, Columbus campus (currently the State 4-H Office). Results of individual reports will be communicated to the appropriate Extension professional responsible for the processing of that individual's application materials. Hard and/or electronic copies of all reports will be kept in a secure storage facility.

What happens if there is a conviction on the record of a potential volunteer?

Current legislation outlines fifty offenses that are considered automatically disqualifying offenses. Offenses beyond the fifty listed will be evaluated individually and decisions will be based on the nature of offense, time since offense, rehabilitative action taken and/or completed by the individual, and relationship to potential volunteer responsibilities.

Will OSU Extension be conducting random background checks on current volunteers?

Ohio State University Extension will not be conducting random criminal history fingerprint background checks on current volunteers. However, the organization does reserve the right to request and receive fingerprint background checks if there is reason to do so.

Who will have access to fingerprint background check reports that you receive?

Ohio State University Extension has designated two individuals who process and file all reports and communicate results to the appropriate Extension professional. Actual reports will not be sent to Extension offices.

Will volunteers have to submit to a fingerprint background check every year?

At this time, the policy only requires that fingerprint background checks be conducted when an individual initially applies to be a volunteer.

Are Extension faculty and staff required to submit to background checks?

All new Extension faculty and staff will be required to submit to a fingerprint background check. Current employees are strongly encouraged to submit to a fingerprint background check.

I volunteer/work for another organization and was required to submit to a fingerprint background check last month; do I need to do another one?

Ohio State University Extension will accept the results of a criminal history fingerprint background check that was conducted by the Bureau of Criminal Investigation & Identification providing it was done within the previous twelve (12) months. Additionally, the individual will be responsible for securing proof of the check and/or paying for all costs associated with securing proof of the fingerprint check.

Submitting Civilian Background Checks & Receiving Reports

Will the Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification accept a check from a local Extension affiliated committee to pay for background checks?

The Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification will accept a check from a local committee (ie Extension Advisory, 4-H, etc.). Please ensure that the check includes the name of the committee and it is not a personal check. Sending a personal check will cause the fingerprint process to be stopped for the individual or individual(s) that have been submitted under that payment.

What happens if criminal fingerprint record check results are sent to the county Extension office instead of the state office?

Should this happen, please forward the original copies of the record check results to: 2120 Fyffe Road; Ag. Admin. Bldg. Room 25; Columbus, OH 43210; Attn: Fingerprint Records. Additionally, please make the correction locally to have all future reports sent to the above location.

How long does it take to receive the results on an individuals civilian background check?

We are experiencing a 3 to 4 week turn-around time for results once they are submitted to the Bureau of Criminal Investigation & Identification (BCI&I). Those individuals who use the web-check system are getting results slightly quicker. It is important to remember that the county Extension professional is responsible for submitting the list of individuals that have submitted fingerprints to the State 4-H Office. Once the State 4-H Office receives results, they can then match results with the correct individuals and counties and report to the appropriate county.

What happens to fingerprint cards that are sent to the Bureau of Criminal Investigation & Identification?

Cards that are sent to BCI&I are scanned to compare those fingerprint impressions that they have on record with those submitted on the card.

How do we request a copy of a volunteers result be sent to another organization?

Ohio State University Extension is willing to provide a copy of an individuals' civilian background check report to another organization. The county Extension professional needs to inform our office (State 4-H Office) of the individual report and the contact name and organization to send it. Likewise, if an individual would like to have a copy of their report, please provide us with the name of the individual (and address) and we will be more than happy to send it.

We have potential volunteers that were fingerprinted in the last 12 months and they are bringing a copy of their report to our office. What do I do with them?

Please just send the reports to the State 4-H Office and we will make sure they are filed with all other reports and appropriately entered into our database.

Procedures – other than civilian background checks

Can we change the application so that specific information may be collected that is relevant to our county or program area?

It is recommended that if Extension professionals desire to collect additional information, that an additional page be added to the application. This additional page may include questions relevant to experience, skills, abilities, knowledge or specific volunteer opportunities (such as a specific club, group, or committee) that the individual may desire to be involved with.

Can we change anything on the standards of behavior?

The standards of behavior should not be changed. Extension professionals may desire to include an additional logo specific to their program area; however, the Ohio State University Extension logo should remain on the document.

Should we use specific materials developed for the Master Gardener program or the more generic materials that have been newly developed?

Specific materials have been developed for the Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener program. Specifically, a cover-letter for potential volunteers who show interest in the program, an application and standards of behavior have been developed. Within the Master Gardener program, these specific documents should be used when selecting new volunteers.