



STATE OF WASHINGTON

SERVE WASHINGTON

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Guidelines for volunteers and volunteer organizations during COVID-19 outbreak in Washington

During this national emergency, we understand individuals who are not suffering from the coronavirus may want to help. However, all volunteer activities **must** follow critical health and safety protocols so we can protect volunteers, residents, clients, and agencies.

For the latest COVID-19 health guidance, statistics, and resources, visit coronavirus.wa.gov.

General guidelines for volunteers:

All individuals should consider their level of risk for the virus prior to engaging in any volunteer service. Those who are at increased risk for severe illness based on CDC guidelines may need to take extra precautions. Please review the [COVID-19 Information for Specific Groups of People](#).

DO NOT attempt to volunteer if in the last 14 days you:

- Have any of the symptoms related to COVID-19 as identified by the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Health. Please review them at [Washington State Department of Health Coronavirus FAQs](#).
- Have been around anyone who has COVID-19.

DO call ahead to the service agency to confirm there is an activity need and ask if you should take any additional safety precautions before, during and after the shift.

DO NOT volunteer if you live with or are in frequent contact with people in higher-risk categories for the virus.

DO ask about any risk that may be associated with the task and **DO NOT** take part if you feel uncomfortable with the risk level.

DO practice universal infection control precautions:

- Clean and wash your hands for a minimum of 20 seconds before, during, and after volunteering.
- Wear a face covering in indoor public settings and in outdoor public settings when you cannot maintain at least six feet distance from others.
 - See [Guidance on Face Coverings and Masks from the Washington State Department of Health](#).

Avoid physical contact with others and maintain a distance of at least six feet.

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue.
- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

DO give yourself extra time for the volunteer organizations or agencies to screen and clear you to volunteer.

DO follow the organization's direction to clean all spaces thoroughly before and after use, including table surfaces and doorknobs/handles.

DO use proper personal protective equipment the organization offers you to complete the task.

DO practice social distancing (staying at least six feet apart), **especially** when you interact with the public and deliver items/food or process meal pickups.

DO expect that organizations can cancel volunteer shifts or opportunities, especially shifts related to working with vulnerable populations. Please show grace and understanding.

DO volunteer if you can find opportunities in your area by visiting [Serve Washington Volunteer Opportunities](#) to find a volunteer center near you.

DO find ways to give back to your community whether it's in-person, virtual, or through in-kind or cash donations.

General guidance for volunteer organizations:

All organizations should work with their human resources office to determine their volunteer engaging policies during the coronavirus. Organizations should also refer to workplace guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the [Washington State Department of Health](#) and the [Washington State Department of Labor and Industries](#) for guidance relevant to their industry.

- Educate volunteers about the coronavirus and how to prevent transmission and your organization's COVID-19 policies. Hang posters in facilities with best practices/social distancing/hand washing, etc.
- Realize that the way you traditionally provide services may shift – assess which volunteers are essential to your critical operations.
- Regularly clean and sanitize gathering spaces or meal distribution sites. You need to properly dispose of cleaning materials and discard any contaminated materials.
- Have proper personal protective equipment available and train volunteers on how to use them before letting them do any tasks that require the equipment.
 - See [Coronavirus Hazard Considerations for Employers: Face Coverings, Masks and Respirator Choices](#) for more information
- If congregating is necessary for your task, consult public health partners, exercise extra measures, and communicate to volunteers the precautions you are taking.
- Keep social distance rules of at least six feet in place during volunteer tasks.
- Provide sufficient and accessible infection control supplies (e.g., hand hygiene products, tissues, disinfecting wipes, and receptacles for disposal) at all locations.
 - When in doubt, visit [CDC](#) or [Washington State Department of Health](#) for recommendations.
- Make sure all volunteers understand any risks associated with the task you would like them to do and understand if they are not comfortable with that level of risk.
- Screen all volunteers and clients, if possible, before you allow them to volunteer.
 - We highly recommend you take a volunteer's temperature as they come in for a shift, especially if they will

- handle food.
- Consider having an isolation space ready in case anyone shows up with symptoms.
- See “[Recommended Guidance for Daily Screening of Employees and Visitors](#)” for more information.
- Modify volunteer opportunities so they follow social distancing recommendations, such as:
 - Deliver food to someone by setting food on the doorstep. Make sure the resident does not open the door to collect food until the delivery person leaves.
 - In a food distribution setting, reduce the number of volunteers on duty to maintain recommended distance – no hand-to-hand hand-off of goods. Place goods on a controlled table, line, and room or area entry. Maintain enhanced cleaning.
 - Perform wellness checks on volunteers or other groups by using a phone tree or similar methodology. Conduct wellness checks on the elderly and vulnerable populations through phone calls, text messaging, or talking through their front door.
 - Provide infrastructure support, such as maintaining school gardens, sanitizing playgrounds, and other projects where there is access to “empty” areas. Follow social distancing during these projects.
 - Assist with coordinating in-kind donations related to COVID-19 community needs (food donations, supply drives, blood drives, etc.).
 - Assemble hygiene and disaster preparedness kits for high-need populations, such as the homeless, those living in shelters, and other low-income communities.

For background and up-to-date information, please visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevent Coronavirus Disease](#) webpage.

For local up-to-date information, visit your county emergency management webpage.

External Resources:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidance](#)
- [Washington State Official COVID-19 Website](#)
- [Washington State Department of Health COVID-19](#)
 - [WA DOH Facebook](#)
 - [WA DOH Twitter](#)
- [COVID-19 Reopening Guidance for Businesses and Workers](#)
- [Washington Department of Labor and Industries: COVID-19 Prevention: General Requirements and Prevention Ideas for Workplaces](#)
- [Washington Nonprofits Coronavirus Resource Page](#)
- [Energize Inc.: “Supporting Volunteer Efforts During Coronavirus”](#)
- [CDC Foundation: Resources for Community-based Organizations](#)
- [Council of Nonprofits: The Nonprofit Community Confronts the Coronavirus](#)
- [EPA: Disinfectants for Use against COVID-19](#)