



# City of Winooski Volunteer Handbook



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## **1. Thank You For Your Service!**

Winooski is proud to be the most diverse community in the state of Vermont and sees this diversity as a community asset. All who live, work, volunteer, and play in Winooski are granted equal access to City programs and services regardless of immigration status.

Volunteers who dedicate their time to community service in Winooski are an essential part of what makes our City a special place to live, learn, and work. Much of Winooski's vibrant community has been driven by a volunteer force - from youth to seniors and everyone in between. Many community members find personal and professional pride in volunteering. We welcome you to our network of hardworking, trustworthy, and community-minded volunteers.

Volunteer positions are unpaid, but provide a priceless value in enhancing engagement, networking, and community building.

In line with the City's official vision statement, volunteers help foster relationships across generations and cultures by providing safe, healthy environments and opportunities to connect and engage. Our hope is that through your service, community members who take advantage of City programming find themselves supported, inspired, and connected. We also hope our volunteers gain experience, meet neighbors, and deepen their connection to Winooski!

## **2. How to Apply**

Visit [winooskivt.org/volunteer](http://winooskivt.org/volunteer) to fill out an application or obtain one in person from any City managed program. After you apply, a staff or volunteer from the City will contact you to discuss your volunteer interests and potential placement. This step may include an interview and will identify any training, orientation, or screening that may be needed.

### **3. Why a Handbook?**

This Handbook was created to give you some essential information about the City of Winooski and about our volunteer policies, practices, and benefits.

We ask that you read this Handbook carefully and refer to it whenever questions arise. We hope that you are able to easily find all the information you need, but we encourage you to speak with your supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator if you have any questions.

### **4. Screening of Volunteers**

#### **Service Requirements**

The City of Winooski is dedicated to ensuring a safe, healthy, and connected community, which often involves serving and communicating with vulnerable populations. In order to guarantee thoughtful, respectful, and quality service, the City may, at its discretion, utilize any screening or background checks it deems necessary. These include, but are not limited to, formal background checks, informal interviews by phone, or in-person. These steps are designed to provide the community with responsible volunteers who are committed to the safety and engagement of all community members.

Volunteers may submit a background check annually and will be required to reapply if there is a one year or more break in service. Volunteers who have not yet reached the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian give permission for a background check to be performed.

#### **Court-Ordered Community Service**

The City of Winooski may accept court-ordered community service. Such requests will be directed to the Community Justice Center.

Volunteers who enter service for the City through the Community Justice Center are required to follow the Community Justice Center's application process. This involves additional paperwork and an interview process. Those volunteers should follow the instructions of their supervisor.

#### **Minors as Volunteers**

Volunteers who have not yet attained the age of 18 years must provide consent from their guardian/parent on either the online or material application to be submitted. This will be included via both the online and material application forms.

## **5. Volunteers and Staff**

Volunteers are individuals who have decided to donate their time to public service and the City of Winooski. They are not considered employees of the City at any time or for any purpose, and do not receive any pay or other remuneration for their services.

In order for the City to operate successfully, volunteers and staff should be distinguished from one another. In doing so, delineated tasks can be made appropriately where applicable. There is a reciprocal expectation where volunteers and staff have an obligation to check in with one another when necessary.

### **Role of Staff/Role of Volunteers**

Staff is here to supervise, train and assist volunteers in their work. Volunteers are not intended to replace paid staff.

### **Financial Policy**

City staff should be the only individuals to accept cash or payments on behalf of the City, unless a volunteer is directed otherwise by the staff. Should any volunteer be directed from their supervisor to handle any cash or payments to the City, the volunteer should act in the best interest of the City when conducting operations. Any mishandling of payments or financial operations by a volunteer will be subject to potential removal from service.

### **Volunteers Cannot Direct and/or Supervise**

Volunteers do not have the authority to give direction to any City employee or City elected or appointed officials.

### **Communications with News Media and Photographers**

Only authorized City of Winooski staff are allowed to speak on behalf of the organization, including communication with the news media. Volunteers should refer any media inquiries to their supervisor.

## **6. Personal Conduct**

The City expects the utmost professionalism from our volunteers. The purpose of our work is to serve the taxpayers of our community in the most effective and efficient manner possible. As part of our team, we hold volunteers to the same standards to which we hold our employees. Each employee or volunteer should come to work or service prepared to perform their job or volunteer duties well and to

improve both their skills and the systems of the City's government whenever possible. People who do business with the City, from paying taxes to building a commercial structure, deserve to be treated with respect, to be heard and understood, and to know they are being treated fairly. Finally, the nature of government requires the utmost attention to providing ethical treatment in all cases, regardless of the customer.

It is important volunteers understand they are representatives of the City during service hours.

### **Customer Service**

It is our goal to provide quality and consistent customer service to program participants. This value includes maintaining a pleasant demeanor and a general willingness to "go the extra mile" to make sure our program participants needs are met. We expect that volunteers will share this commitment to customer service and to keeping our community members satisfied.

### **Substance Abuse**

The City is concerned for the general safety and well being of its volunteers and the general public, and is committed to providing all volunteers with a safe and productive environment free from alcohol and drugs.

The use of controlled substances is inconsistent with the behavior expected of volunteers, may create unacceptable safety risks, and undermines the City's ability to operate effectively and efficiently. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance during service or while engaged in City activities away from City office premises is strictly prohibited. A volunteer using prescription drugs that could affect their service ability should have their physician state in writing any restrictions and/or emergency procedures relating to the use of those medications.

The sale, possession, or consumption of any intoxicating beverages during volunteer hours, or the act of presenting oneself for service under the influence of alcohol, is strictly prohibited. Volunteers who become aware of any violations of this policy are required to report any such violation to their supervisor or volunteer coordinator immediately.

The City acknowledges that substance abuse is a serious and complex disease that may negatively affect an individual's volunteer performance and personal life. If a volunteer needs to exit service in order to seek medical assistance, their supervisor will review the option of re-entering service on a case by case basis.

Consequences of prohibited conduct will be determined on a case by case basis.

Violation of any part of this policy may result in termination of the volunteer relationship with an individual.

The City may take appropriate action under this policy if there is a reasonable suspicion to believe any violation has occurred on behalf of a volunteer.

## 7. Further Details

### **Conflict of Interest**

The City is dedicated to providing a safe, healthy, and connected community for all. The purpose of this policy is to ensure volunteers are not using their service hours for any personal or financial advantage. If a volunteer is a minor under the age of 18, a parental/guardian agreement will be necessary for their entry into service. A **Conflict of interest** means any of the following:

1. A direct or indirect personal or financial interest of a volunteer, their spouse, household member, child, stepchild, parent, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, aunt or uncle, brother-or-sister-in-law, business associate, or employer or employee in the outcome of a service opportunity.
2. Representing or distributing information or literature unrelated to the City's mission or program which the volunteer serves.
3. Accepting gifts or other offerings for personal gain by virtue of their service which are not available to the public in general.

If any situation leads the City of Winooski, or the program manager pertaining to the volunteer's service, to suspect any conflict(s) of interest, the program managers will use their discretion to deem whether or not separation from service is necessary. See separation section (9).

### **Confidentiality**

From time to time City of Winooski volunteers may be in contact with confidential information. Should this occur, volunteers should be aware that disclosing material clearly identified as confidential by any means including but not limited to labels, policies, procedures, law, statute, or ordinance, may be cause for loss of volunteer status. Volunteers who are unsure how to handle confidential information should ask their supervisor for guidance.

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all confidential or privileged information and documents to which they have access while serving as volunteers. Volunteers will not be placed in positions where they may have access to confidential personnel and/or financial records.

### **Liability Insurance**

Volunteers working in City programs are covered only by the City's general liability insurance. The City will not provide any medical, health, accident or workers' compensation benefits for any injuries sustained while functioning as a volunteer. In the case of personal injury or accident, the volunteer is to

rely on his/her own personal insurance resources. In addition, volunteers who drive their personal vehicles in the course of their volunteer work should be aware that liability follows the owner of the vehicle. They are responsible for maintaining their own automobile insurance and they are not covered under the City of Winooski's automobile insurance.

### **Use of City Vehicles**

In order to be authorized to operate a City vehicle, an operator must be an employee of the City of Winooski and must possess a valid Driver's License. This license must be the appropriate license for the vehicle being operated. Authorization of City **volunteers**, AmeriCorps members, and other City agents will be authorized on a case-by-case basis by the Department Head and City Manager. Volunteers are not covered by the City's insurance policy in the case of an accident in their own vehicles. However, should a volunteer be required to drive a City vehicle, accidents in a city vehicle will be covered under the City's insurance policy.

The driver and all occupants must wear seat belts at all times when operating and City vehicles. The driver must obey all traffic laws at all times. Drivers of City vehicles must follow all motor vehicle laws, rules of the road, and operate the vehicle in a safe and courteous manner.

- The use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any drugs or substances that may affect the driver's ability to drive safely are prohibited. Smoking is prohibited in City vehicles.
- In the event of a motor vehicle accident, it is the driver's responsibility to immediately notify police, their immediate supervisor, and ensure that an Accident Report is completed at the scene.
- Municipal Vehicles may only be used for legitimate municipal business.
- Municipal vehicle shall contain only those items for which the vehicle has been assigned.
- The use of cellular phone and handheld devices is prohibited, unless exempted by State law.
- The City reserves the right to deny any volunteer the use of a City vehicle and may choose not to indemnify any volunteer who fails to adhere to vehicle use policies and procedures. Any City volunteer that does not adhere to this policy and corresponding procedures may be subject to appropriate action up to and including removal from service.
- With permission from the corresponding program manager, proof of the volunteer's insurance will be required, as well as a valid drivers license.

### **Injury and Accident Reports**

All accidents and injuries will be reported and documented by the Program Manager as soon as possible. If immediate notice to the program notice is not possible, volunteers will notify the Program manager within 24 hours.

### **Emergency Procedures**

Each program has a set of Emergency Procedures in place. During emergency events, please refer to the procedure plan as provided by City staff.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

It is the intent of the City of Winooski to recognize, support and adhere to the standards set forth in the City's Equal Opportunity Policy, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The City of Winooski will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in any aspect of the volunteer relationship, and will make reasonable efforts to work with individuals of various abilities in determining what, if any reasonable accommodations may be required. Volunteers with ADA-related concerns should first contact their direct supervisor, then the City's Human Resources Representative.

### **Harassment**

City of Winooski volunteers shall be treated and treat others equally with respect and regard for race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, ancestry, place of birth, age, physical or mental condition, HIV status or veteran status. The City shall not tolerate behavior that attempts to physically or verbally intimidate volunteers, employees, or customers of the City or engage in any activity that could be considered physically or emotionally violent.

The City of Winooski prohibits sexual harassment by and of its volunteers and employees. Sexual harassment is unlawful under federal and state law. The City of Winooski is committed to providing environments free from this unlawful conduct.

Should a volunteer witness discriminatory or harassing behavior, or should a volunteer participate in discriminatory or harassing behavior, such behavior shall be reported to the volunteer supervisor immediately. Participating in such behavior may result in loss of volunteer status. The City prohibits any retaliation against volunteers who report harassment.

## **8. Concerns**

A volunteer who has a concern about an assignment related issue should discuss the issue with their staff supervisor. Every attempt will be made to resolve or create a plan to resolve the problem during this discussion. However, if the matter remains unresolved, it will be referred to the Department Director for further consideration.

## **9. Separation**

### **Performance**

When a volunteer's performance is not meeting the needs of the City, City staff will attempt to make reasonable efforts to help the volunteer improve, or find another appropriate assignment. Failure to

improve may result in suspension of a volunteer's service temporarily or permanently. Volunteers will be required to reapply for service opportunities. Should a volunteer decide to discontinue service, they will be offered the opportunity to provide an exit interview.

### **Separation**

All volunteers willingly and freely offer their service and time with no expectation of payment or compensation. The City of Winooski recognizes the right of volunteers to discontinue their service at any time for any reason. The City of Winooski may limit the use of volunteers based on staff determination of needs and City policies. Volunteers will be dismissed if their behavior or language is harmful or threatening. Ground for separation may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Failing to meet background check criteria
- Incompetence or inefficiency in performance of volunteer duties.
- Negligent, careless or intentional conduct that endangers the safety or wellbeing of staff, volunteers, or the public.
- Negligent use of, willful damage to, or waste of public property.
- Failure to perform assigned duties.
- Using abusive language or unbecoming conduct toward the public, staff or fellow volunteers, or the inability to work with staff, volunteers or the public to the extent of affecting the efficiency of service.
- Consuming and/or being under the influence of intoxicants or non-prescribed controlled substances while on duty.
- Theft or use of equipment or services for private gain or for unlawful purpose.

This list is not comprehensive. All unacceptable behavior or violations of policy will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, this handbook is not a contract, but rather a set of guidelines and expectations for volunteers and City staff to adhere to.

**Volunteer Agreement/Acknowledgement of Receipt of and Willingness to Abide by  
the City of Winooski Volunteer Handbook**

I have received a copy of the City of Winooski's Volunteer Handbook, have reviewed it and had the opportunity to ask my supervisor questions about it. I understand that the City of Winooski Volunteer Handbook serves as a guideline, and the policies described in it may be changed, with or without advanced notice.

I understand the policies and procedures described in the City of Winooski Volunteer Handbook and agree to abide by them.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(parent/guardian)

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**Volunteer Statement of Confidentiality**

This confirms my understanding that, as a volunteer of the City of Winooski, I will respect the right of all users of programs and participants in activities to have information about them handled in keeping with accepted practices to preserve confidentiality.

In addition, I understand the right to confidentiality of volunteers, employees and program users.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_