

New York State Department of Correctional Services

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS WITHIN THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

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The New York State Department of Correctional Services welcomes and is fully supportive of members of the community who volunteer their time and talents to assist in providing meaningful, relevant programs and services to the inmate population.

Because these programs and services are provided within the confines of correctional facilities, the Department has certain expectations concerning the conduct of volunteers. As such, specific standards of conduct must be followed by all volunteers.

The following general guidelines and specific standards for volunteers must be complied with in order to ensure the safety and security of the facility staff, inmates and volunteers.

Questions or concerns related to these guidelines or standards should be presented to the appropriate facility staff person.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS**

1. As a volunteer, you must be registered prior to beginning your work within a correctional facility. If you meet the Department's requirements for annual Tuberculosis (TB) testing/screening, you must be tested if you enter a facility or combination of facilities for 8 hours or more, or if you enter a facility or facilities once a month or more. If you fail to have appropriate and timely TB testing/screening, you will not be allowed entry into a facility.
2. You must enter and exit the facility through the same gate, which will be designated by the facility. Upon entering the facility, you will be directed to pass through a metal detector, with the exception of our Department Camp, where you may be hand-scanned with a hand-held metal detector. You will be hand-stamped and you may be subjected to a search. The facility will provide you with an identification card, which you must wear while inside the facility. The identification card must be returned prior to your departure and retained on file at the facility. All items brought into the facility will be inspected.
3. You will be assigned a Staff Supervisor to work with while in the facility. You will be escorted by either this staff member, a Correction Officer, or another staff member, while in the facility.
4. It is expected that you will be dependable and punctual. If you are unable to provide your services at the appointed time, contact your Staff Supervisor, the Volunteer Services Office, or the Watch Commander, as far in advance as possible.
5. Any change in address or phone numbers should be reported to the Supervisor of Volunteer Services or your facility Volunteer Services Contact Person.

### **SPECIFIC STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERS**

1. **Personal Vehicles** - Parking of vehicles on State property will be permitted only in those areas designated by the facility. All vehicles will have windows closed, ignition off, doors and trunk securely locked with keys removed at all times. The vehicle will contain no firearms, ammunition, or any other weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, explosives or excessive civilian clothing.
2. **Sobriety** - Persons under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol will not be allowed into any of our facilities. Prescription medication must be brought to the attention of security staff upon arrival. Only that prescription medication absolutely necessary for the duration of your service will be permitted into the facility, on your person.

3. **Contraband** - Do not bring into the facility any items that might be defined as contraband. In a correctional facility, promoting prison contraband is a felony offense. Contraband is defined as:
  - a. Anything in possession that would constitute an offense under the law applicable to the public.
  - b. Any article or thing that is readily capable of being used to cause death or serious physical injury, including but not limited to, a hand gun, shoulder gun, cartridge, knife, explosive, or dangerous drug (including marijuana).
  - c. Anything that is introduced into a correctional facility with the intent to transfer to an inmate without the permission of the Superintendent or designee.
  - d. Anything that is not specifically authorized to be possessed by an inmate in a state correctional facility according to the rules and policies of the Department or local policies of the facility. (i.e. Alcohol and money are among the items inmates are not permitted to possess).
4. **Appropriate Dress** - Clothing should be appropriate and in general, keeping with Department requirements for all visitors (i.e. no halter/tank tops, mini skirts, shorts above the knee, see-through clothing, plunging necklines, T-shirts containing statements or references promoting crime, drugs, alcohol, or sadistic/violent, sexual, pornographic, vulgar, gang-related references, or ethnic slurs, shoes must be securely fitted to the foot, no flip flops, or sandals without a heel strap). If in doubt, you should not wear a questionable article of clothing, because you will not be admitted to provide your service at the facility.
5. **Articles Brought Into the Facility**
  - a. If your program requires that you bring special material, clear the items in advance with your Staff Supervisor.
  - b. The taking of photographs anywhere on facility property or inside the facility is prohibited, without specific prior approval from the Superintendent. Tape recorders, cassettes or cameras may be brought into the facility only with special permission of the Superintendent.
  - c. Cellular phones, pagers, personal digital assistants, cameras, recording devices, two way radios, laptop computers or other similar electronic devices are not allowed into any area of the facility, including the front lobby, and should remain securely locked in your vehicle.
6. **Valuables and Handbags** - Do not carry large sums of money or wear expensive articles or jewelry while participating in programs at the facility. Handbags should not be left unattended at any time.
7. **Items Given To Or Taken From An Inmate**
  - a. The exchange of money and/or gifts with inmates is prohibited.
  - b. Do not bring in or take anything from an inmate that is to be carried outside of the institution.
  - c. As a volunteer, you are not to carry oral messages or written correspondence in or out of the facility for an inmate.
  - d. Do not bring in literature which has not been pre-approved by facility staff.
8. **Facility emergencies** - In the event of an emergency of any kind, you will be required to immediately follow the direction of facility staff.
9. **Matters Of Inmate Discipline** - Matters of discipline are the responsibility of the security staff. Under no circumstances should you interfere. Any questions of judgment should be discussed privately with staff and never in the presence of an inmate. Matters of inmate misconduct should be reported immediately to your Staff Supervisor or to a security staff member, never an inmate.
10. **Confidentiality** - In your contacts outside the correctional facility, use discretion in revealing information you have acquired in the course of performing your service. Check with appropriate staff if you are doubtful about what requires confidentiality. Information gained that could adversely affect the safety and security of staff, inmates, or volunteers, should immediately be reported to a security supervisor.

11. **Relationship with Inmates**
  - a. While working with inmates on a regular basis, a professional relationship must be maintained. Care should be taken to avoid becoming emotionally involved with inmates.
  - b. The New York State Department of Correctional Services has zero tolerance for sexual abuse. Sexual conduct or contact with a person committed to the custody of the Department is a crime, whether it occurs inside a correctional facility, during the transportation outside a correctional facility, or while the inmate is a participant in a temporary release program. Any sexual abuse of an inmate by a volunteer or intern will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, even if the inmate “willingly” participates in the act.
  - c. Any volunteer or intern who receives a report that an inmate is the victim of an incident of sexual abuse, sexual threat, or staff voyeurism, must be aware of the sensitive nature of the situation. Any volunteer or intern who receives such a report shall immediately notify his or her staff supervisor who shall immediately notify the Watch Commander. If the staff supervisor is not available, the report shall be made immediately to the Watch Commander.
12. **Personal Information** about yourself, such as information pertaining to your family, home address, phone number, and personal habits should not be revealed.
13. **Correspondence, Visitation and Telephone Calls** - You are not permitted to correspond with, visit or accept phone calls from inmates at any of the facilities of the New York State Department of Correctional Services. Exemptions to this prohibition may only be granted by the Deputy Commissioner for Program Services or designee. If you wish to seek an exemption, you must submit a written request to the facility Superintendent, explaining the reason for your exemption request.
14. **Comments And Presentation Content** - It should be kept in mind that presentations and/or materials presented during a volunteer program should be kept positive in nature and that in a correctional setting, statements may be misconstrued or magnified by inmates to the extent that they could jeopardize the safety and security of community guests, volunteers, staff and inmates. To that end, profanity, vulgarity and comments that are critical of a particular agency or group of individuals will not be tolerated.
15. **Reentry** - Volunteers who choose to work with offenders upon release from the Department should only do so under a structured program whose focus is to assist formerly incarcerated persons in their community re-integration process. Before beginning to work with formerly incarcerated persons, the volunteer must communicate in writing their interest to the SCFVS. Such communication should be reported to the Superintendent and placed in the volunteer’s file.
16. **Criminal Charges** - *A Report of Criminal Charges* (see Directive 2112, “Report of Criminal Charges”) must be filed if you are charged with the commission of a felony or misdemeanor. Violations which allege possession and/or use of a controlled substance must also be reported. If you are charged with the above you must report in writing the required information to the facility Superintendent.
17. **Use Of Information Obtained While A Volunteer** - No information gained as a Department of Correctional Services volunteer may be used for an interview or publication. This includes publishing information on a web site. Any person working for any editorial or news department of any media or organization will not be allowed to serve as a volunteer without the specific approval of the Director of Public Information.

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I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Volunteer Standards of Conduct and Guidelines. I understand that I will be held accountable for, and act in accordance with these guidelines and standards of conduct. I further understand that any violation may result in my termination as an approved volunteer. I acknowledge that I am physically fit to participate in the approved activity.

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Print Name of Volunteer

Witness

Date

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