

Recruiting Volunteers for Teaching¹

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This is one publication in the series The Cooperative Extension Volunteer Teacher. This volunteer teacher series addresses the need for guidelines to assist Extension county faculty in the important task of preparing the volunteer to teach.

Extension Volunteer Teachers

Recruiting volunteers to teach in Extension programs can be done in all the ways that volunteers are typically asked to give their services to a program. All methods work, but some work better than others. The volunteer teacher is a very special volunteer. This person represents the Extension county faculty and the local program, the Extension Service, and the University of Florida. For this reason, it is recommended that volunteer teachers be selectively recruited from persons who have indicated a high interest in a particular subject, course, or program and who have the qualifications that are described below.

Selectively recruiting a few potential volunteer teachers serves several purposes. Volunteers will be recruited for only those programs that have a clearly defined instructional component that can be delivered by a volunteer. They will not be recruited in large numbers and they will be recruited for a specific

period of time. This eliminates the necessity for developing additional activities that may not be required by the Extension program, but that are desired by the volunteer.

An outstanding teacher is an asset to any program. The fact that he/she is a volunteer makes them no less valuable. The importance of the volunteer teacher demands that he/she be recruited very carefully so that the other steps in the process are beneficial. In addition to being a valuable resource, a good volunteer teacher can be a model for others that might be recruited at a later date. Several outstanding volunteer teachers can be the beginning of a cadre of very specialized community resources that reflect one of many benefits of the local Extension program. Conversely, a volunteer teacher who does a poor job will have negative results with Extension clientele and adversely affect other aspects of the Extension volunteer program.

Extension volunteer teachers are typically recruited from those persons who have been active in a particular program and who show interest in participating in some type of volunteer activity. Having participated in the program is the first requirement for being a volunteer teacher, but

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participation alone is not sufficient to qualify to be an Extension volunteer teacher. To assume that an individual will go from participant to teacher without adequate preparation and orientation does not reflect the importance of the role of the teacher nor the value of the volunteer's time.

A General List of Requirements for the Volunteer Teacher

When a person has indicated they are interested in being a volunteer teacher, they should be aware of some general requirements that are expected in the course of their work as a volunteer. These requirements are the first step in screening a volunteer to see if they are suitable for the job of teaching others. The criteria listed below should be shared with the volunteer so that they are aware of the expectations the Extension office has of them. The presence or absence of these characteristics can be determined during an interview with the volunteer. The following list of general requirements, adapted from the State of Florida Office of Volunteerism (no date), can be used as a guide for the Extension Program Coordinator. During the interview, the Extension Program Coordinator is attempting to learn the following things about the potential volunteer:

Maturity.

Is this person mature enough to work with the persons he/she will be teaching?

Personal stability.

Does this person have personality problems that will affect the way they interact with others?

Acceptance of others.

Is there an absence of rigidity, prejudice, bigotry, moralizing, or judgmental attitudes toward others not like themselves?

Willingness to learn and accept supervision.

Are they willing to accept new information from others or do they have all the answers without needing help from the supervisor?

Cooperative rather than aggressive behavior.

Are they willing to work on a task without taking over everyone else's job?

Warmth and empathy for others.

Do they have a sincere desire to help?

Reasonable self-confidence and ego-health.

Do they have a constant need for love, recognition, and reinforcement or can they find fulfillment in the task and in working with others?

Commitment (amount of time and length of time).

How willing is the volunteer to make a serious commitment of time and energy to a job?

Dependability.

What is the past employment, other volunteer work? Are there employment references?

Availability.

What hours can the volunteer work? When and how often are they available?

Record of Criminal Conviction.

An arrest and conviction record should not necessarily exclude a person from being a volunteer. There is a need, however, to look closely at the nature of the offense, date of last conviction, and offense patterns.

Interests and hobbies.

Are the person's interests and hobbies of the sort that will enhance his/her capabilities to teach or to work with people in the Extension program?

Other volunteer experience.

This is not a necessity, but indicates interest and reliability.

Education.

Is their education and experience adequate for the clientele to be taught?

Reasons for wanting to be a volunteer.

Are these compatible with the mission of the program? Do they reflect an attitude of altruism?

Transportation.

Does the volunteer have a dependable way of getting where he/she needs to go?

These items are suggested as guides for the County Extension faculty to use in selecting volunteers for teaching. Every item is not appropriate for every situation, and county faculty should use their judgement about whether to seek information on given items.

The Application

Every potential volunteer should submit an application for a position. This application should be a part of the volunteer's permanent personnel file. The application shown in Box 1 is adapted from the Florida 4-H Program. The items can be altered to fit specific situations on a county level.

The Interview

After the application has been received and reviewed, an interview with the volunteer should be conducted by the Extension Program Coordinator who will work with the volunteer. An interview will help to determine if a volunteer is an acceptable candidate for teaching Extension classes or groups. A well planned interview will reduce the amount of paperwork that has to be done by the volunteer and the Extension faculty supervisor. An interview will also serve as a screen for those persons who are not suited to be volunteer teachers. Rejecting a person who wants to be a volunteer teacher is a difficult job. However, it is better to reject a person who may not do a good job than to live with the consequences of inadequate performance that reflects on the integrity of Cooperative Extension. As well as making the volunteer aware of the nature of the task to be performed, an in-depth interview will also

demonstrate that the Extension Service views volunteer teachers as an important resource.

It is possible to misuse the interview screening session. While the purpose is to gather information, it should not turn into an interrogation. Facts that are not pertinent to the volunteer teacher role should not be asked (State of Florida Office of Volunteerism). The questions in Box 2 will help the Extension Program Coordinator elicit information from the volunteer about the criteria listed above as well as other pertinent facts.

After the interview has been conducted and the interview form completed, it should be filed in the Volunteer's permanent personnel file so that the information can be retrieved in the future if necessary. Other volunteer teacher positions may become available or information on the form may be useful for the Extension office. Remember that all written comments may be read by others.

The Job Description of the Volunteer Teacher

The good volunteer job must offer something for the volunteer such as a chance to learn new skills, the opportunity to meet new people, etc. A good job description includes a statement about what needs to be done and why this job is important to the local Extension office. It should state why a volunteer rather than a salaried person should be doing this job. Saving money is not a good reason to utilize volunteers because they may believe they are exploited in order to extend the financial resources of the office.

According to Brown (1982), the following elements should be included in a volunteer job description:

1. a statement of the necessity of the job;
2. how the job fits into the overall organization;
3. the specific duties of the job;
4. the time needed from the volunteer;

5. the job does not replace a professional or salaried employee;
6. a clear statement and understanding of the policies and procedure; and
7. a statement of the opportunities that are provided for the volunteer.

A sample job description that includes these elements is given in Box 3.

The Letter of Acceptance

If the candidate for volunteer teacher is accepted, it is appropriate to communicate this acceptance in a letter to the volunteer. While a verbal acceptance is all that is required, a written communication implies the significance of the position of Extension volunteer teacher. It also serves as a written record for the Extension office. This letter should contain as many specifics as necessary to make a commitment on the part of the Extension supervisor and to communicate the importance of the position to the volunteer. A sample letter is given in Box 4.

Rejecting a Volunteer Teacher Applicant

Sometimes it is necessary to reject a person who has been recruited by the Extension faculty or who has recruited themselves for a volunteer teacher position. This should also be communicated to that person in a letter. A sample letter is given in Box 5.

It is important to remember that letters of rejection as well as acceptance should be kept on file and that these may be read by other people. The letter of rejection should express appreciation for their interest, the reason for rejection, and encouragement to apply for other positions if appropriate.

The Extension Volunteer Teacher Record

After the volunteer has been accepted to be an Extension teacher, a record should be kept on the training provided, the teaching that the volunteer does, the classes taught, and the hours volunteered. This record can be used for the recognition program as well as accountability purposes. A sample

volunteer record log is given below. Another record log is the Certified Volunteer Unit Log utilized by the Florida Association of Family Community Education Program (formerly Florida Extension Homemakers Council, Inc.). A sample of the type of log that should be kept is shown in Box 6. Another record log is the Certified Volunteer Unit Log utilized by the Florida Association of Family Community Education Program (formerly Florida Extension Homemakers Council, Inc.)

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Box 1: Application to be an Extension Volunteer Teacher

Name _____
Last First Middle

Mailing Address _____
Street City Zip

Month/Day/Year Driver's License Number Social Security No.
Date of Birth

Phone Number Day () _____ Best time to call _____

Phone Number Evening () _____ Best time to call _____

Have you ever been an Extension Volunteer Teacher? ___Yes ___No

If yes, how many years _____ Where _____
City State

Why are you interested in being an Extension Volunteer Teacher?

Do you prefer to work with: Youth___ Adults___ Both___ ?

What time commitment do you initially desire?
_____ 1-3 months _____ 4-6 months _____ 6-12 months

Previous work or volunteer experience: (List current or most recent experience first. Use an additional page if necessary.)

Employer or Organization	Position Title/VolunteerRole	Year

Skills, Training, Education

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**Have you been convicted of a criminal offense in the last seven years?
Have you been found guilty of a criminal offense even if adjudication was withheld?
Have you pled nolo contendere?**

If yes to any of the above, please give date, nature of offense and disposition.

A criminal record will not necessarily bar an applicant; a criminal record will be considered as it relates to specifics of the position for which you have applied.

References: List two persons not related to you who have definite knowledge of your qualifications. Complete address is required.

Name _____ **Phone** _____

Address _____
City State Zip

Name _____ **Phone** _____

Address _____
City State Zip

I authorize contact of listed references. I understand that misrepresentation or omission of facts requested is cause for non-appointment as a Cooperative Extension Volunteer or for termination after appointment. If appointed as a volunteer, I agree to abide by the expectations of Cooperative Extension and to fulfill the volunteer responsibilities to the best of my ability.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Return the application at your earliest convenience to assure prompt processing. Please contact us at the following address if you have questions or wish further information.

Return to:

(Application adapted from Department of 4-H & Other Youth Programs, IFAS, University of Florida. (May, 1991) Volunteer Screening.

Box 2: Interview Form for Extension Volunteer Teacher Applicants

Name _____

Address _____
Street City Zip

Phone _____

Education: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 2 1

College - 1 2 3 4

College plus - 1 2 3 4

Degree _____

Children _____

Children's ages _____

Time available for work _____

Have auto _____

1. To learn about special skills ask:

- a. Tell me about an accomplishment you feel especially proud of.
- b. What do you feel most confident doing?
- c. What types of experiences (classes, jobs, etc.) have you had?

2. To learn about interests ask:

- a. If you could have any job, what would it be?
- b. What do you do in your leisure time?
- c. What did you like most (or least) about your last job?

3. To learn about motivations ask:

- a. Why do you want to be a volunteer teacher?
- b. What would you like to get out of being a volunteer teacher?
- c. Which of your skills would you like to enrich with your volunteer teaching for this program?
- d. What would you like to teach or in what program would you like to teach?

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4. To learn about attitudes, ask:

- a. What kinds of interpersonal skills do you bring to the program?
- b. Do you find that you prefer to work with others or to work alone?
*On what do you base your preference?
- c. Have you ever worked with people you didn't particularly care for?
*How did you get along with them.

5. Describe the volunteer position to the candidate:

- a. List the responsibilities that are needed for the position. Refer to the job description that is given below or the one that describes the position for which you are recruiting.
*What questions do you have about the job description?
- b. List the skills that are needed for teaching the course, lesson, etc.
*What questions do you have about the skills that are required for teaching this lesson?
- c. Tell about the general physical and social environment.
*Do you have any questions about these?
- d. Tell about general office policies, procedures, parking, smoking/nonsmoking areas, lunch breaks, bathrooms, etc.
*Do you have any questions about these?

Name of Person Conducting the Interview _____

Comments:

Recommendations:

May Box 3: (Sample)
Job Description for an FCL Volunteer Teacher

Title: Extension Volunteer Teacher - Family Community Leadership

Duties: Teach leadership classes of two hours each using the Family Community Leadership materials. Duplicate all materials related to each class. Keep a register of all participants.

Qualifications: Teaching skills. Good oral communication skills; Interpersonal skills in listening, giving feedback, involving others in participatory exercises; Supportive of Cooperative Extension program and mission; An understanding of the Cooperative Extension Service County and State programs, the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and the University of Florida.

Time Required: Four hours a week - two in the location where the classes are to be taught and two at the County Extension Office preparing for the class and working with the Extension Agent Supervisor.

Training Required:

- (a) Volunteer Teacher Orientation - 2 hours;
- (b) Understanding the learner and using appropriate teaching methods - 2 hours;
- (c) Collecting data for reporting and evaluating - 2 hours;
- (d) Attendance at the FCL State Training Institutes or Extension leadership development series, or on the job training with a county extension faculty member trained in leadership development. Number of hours determined by supervisor.
(Other areas will have different training requirements.)

How This Job Contributes to the goals and purposes of the University of Florida and Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences: Leadership development is a crucial need in Florida communities. Leaders that have been trained in specific skills can enhance the effectiveness of local organizations. These trained leaders can contribute to their community by sharing their skills to teach others to be effective in their neighborhoods and community organizations. This program is a part of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service and the (example) Sunshine County Cooperative Extension.

(Box 4: Sample Letter to Volunteer Teacher Applicant)

*Mrs. Jane Doe
123 Elm Street
Sunshine, Florida 32200*

Dear Mrs. Doe:

I am pleased to inform you that you have been accepted as an Extension Volunteer Teacher for a period of (one year/6 months/3 months) to teach in the Sunshine County Extension Program in Family Community Leadership. You will be supervised by Mrs. Mary Roe, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent. Mrs. Roe will work closely with you in the preparation of the class materials and all aspects of teaching and record keeping. She will be responsible for your work and for responding to your requests for assistance.

Please call Mrs. Roe at your earliest convenience and schedule an appointment. As you are aware, an orientation to the Extension Service and the institutions it represents is required. Other requirements include an overview of teaching methods that are appropriate to the subject matter; an overview of the reporting that is required for accountability; an explanation of the performance review that we provide to you. Each of these will be explained by Mrs. Roe.

Congratulations Mrs. Doe. We are pleased to have you join us as an Extension Volunteer Teacher. We hope that you will benefit from your contributions to the Extension program. Extension places a high value on Volunteer Teachers. Thank you for caring enough to share your time and talents with the Sunshine County Extension Program.

Very truly yours,

*Jane Director, CED
Sunshine County*

cc to the following: County Faculty Supervisor, DED, Program Leader

(Box 5: Sample Letter of Rejection to a Volunteer Teacher Applicant)

*Mrs. Mary Doe
125 Elm Street
Sunshine, Florida 32200*

Dear Mrs. Doe:

Thank you for your interest in the Sunshine County Extension Program. We appreciate your commitment and your willingness to be an Extension Volunteer Teacher in the Family Community Leadership Program. We are not able to provide this opportunity at this time. Although your qualifications are outstanding, (choose one of the following or insert another reason) we have selected another individual who had more experience in teaching; more training in the leadership skills development area; do not need additional volunteer teachers at this time.

We will be recruiting volunteers at a later date for other positions in our Extension Office. May we contact you for one of these positions when they are available? In Cooperative Extension, we value our volunteers and we seek to place each of them in a position that we feel will be most rewarding for them.

Again, thank you for your interest in being an Extension Volunteer Teacher.

Very truly yours,

*Jane Director, CED
Sunshine County*

cc to the following: County Faculty Supervisor, DED, Program Leader

Box 6: (Sample) Extension Volunteer Teacher Record

Name _____ Supervisor _____

Position Extension Volunteer Teacher in Leadership Development

Date Accepted _____

Date Orientation Given _____ By Whom _____

Training provided	Date	Hours/length
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____

Classes Taught/Location	Date	Hours taught
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____

Recognition Given/Type	Date	By Whom
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____

Performance Appraisals	Date	By Whom
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____