



**Youth Volunteer Corps
Of Yellowstone County**

Youth Volunteer Handbook

Youth Volunteer Corps of Yellowstone County

A Program of The Volunteer Center of United Way of Yellowstone County

United Way of Yellowstone County
The Volunteer Center



United Way
2920 2nd Ave. N.
Billings, MT 59101

Phone: 406-252-3839
Fax: 406-252-3830
Web: yvcyellowstone.org

Welcome!

The staff of Youth Volunteer Corps is here to provide you with support, and to help you become a valuable volunteer. Please communicate with any of us about problems or concerns you may have.

Pam Sanderson, Volunteer Center Director pam.sanderson@unitedway.org 406-252-3839 Ext. 15

Nathan Stahley, Program Manager nathan.stahley@unitedway.org 406-252-3839 Ext. 38



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Youth Volunteer Corps Terminology.....	4
Mission of YVC Program.....	5
Commitments to Volunteers.....	6
Volunteer Rights.....	7
Volunteer Ground Rules.....	8
Diversity and YVC.....	9
Introduction to Service Areas.....	10
How to Build Effective Relationships.....	11
Extending Your Role with YVC.....	12
Youth Leadership Team.....	13

Welcome!

Thank you for joining and welcome to the world of Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC). By becoming a YVC member you will be given various exciting opportunities to give back to the community and make a difference. This program will help you learn new skills, meet new people, and have fun as you explore what it means to volunteer and help others in need. It is designed to make your ideas, thoughts and presence known and let agencies and organizations see the amazing work you are capable of. We are excited to have you join our program and can't wait to help you make a presence in the community.

This handbook is designed to help guide and direct you through your time as a Youth Volunteer Corps member. Please take a few minutes to look it over and make yourself familiar with all of the great information we have compiled.

I hope your journey with YVC is educational, rewarding, and fun, and I look forward to supporting your growth as a volunteer.

Thank you

Nathan Stahley
Youth Volunteer Corps Manager

Youth Volunteer Corps Terminology

To help you better understand the terminology we may use during the course of programming we have included common abbreviations and definitions.

YVC – Abbreviation for the Youth Volunteer Corps. This is the generic term used for a Volunteer Corps affiliate operating in a local community or when referring to the network as a whole. Some YVC's are further defined by the geographical designation of their program. For example: Youth Volunteer Corps of Yellowstone County.

YVCA – Abbreviation for Youth Volunteer Corps of America. This is exclusive to the national office, based in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, a suburb of Kansas City which supports and oversees all the local YVC programs across the country.

Affiliate – A local YVC program that is affiliated with YVCA through a written formal agreement.

YV, YVs– short for Youth Volunteer(s)—the heart and soul of our programs. These are the young people who participate in service projects, doing the important work to improve and positively change their communities.

Team – A group of YVs gathered together, usually with the express intention of undertaking a volunteer project in their community. A team consists of more than two YVs, but usually is in the range of 5-15.

Team Leader (TL) – The adult-type person who leads a Team of Youth Volunteers on a service project. This is the one who is responsible at the project site for safety, orientation/training, and who often leads the reflection component of the project. The TL can be just about anyone: Program Director, adult volunteer, college student, work-study student, AmeriCorps member, senior volunteer, parent or youth. At this point we require Team Leaders be at least 19 years of age. Team Leaders undergo a formal training before leading YVs on a service project.

Project – An organized YV experience which is usually, but not necessarily, hosted by a non-profit agency in the community.

Reflection – A formal or informal processing of the volunteer experience. All YVC programs seek to include a formal reflection process or activity with each of their projects.

Program Director (Program Manager) – This is the person responsible for managing and operating a local YVC affiliate. Program Directors/Managers are staff members of the sponsoring organization. Each Program Director/Manager completes the YVCA introductory training and operates the program based on the 12 YVC Program Standards that are included in the written affiliation agreement.

Youth Leadership Team (YLT) – A group of active YV's who meet regularly to discuss potential YVC projects and give feedback about program decisions.

Mission of Youth Volunteer Corps Program

To create and increase volunteer opportunities to enrich America's youth, address community needs and develop a lifetime commitment to service.

- Summer Component
In the summer, teams of youth volunteers work on extended projects for days or a week supervised by trained Team Leaders. These projects allow the youth volunteer to see larger outcomes of accomplishment. The intensive design of the summer component reinforces teamwork, appreciation for diversity and civic responsibility. Registration for summer projects begins around April.
- School-Year Component
During the school year, young people from throughout the community work together on service projects after school, on weekends, and during school breaks. YVC Program Directors, Team Leaders and staff will work to design and implement age-appropriate service projects that are educational as well as service oriented.

Volunteer Orientation

All volunteers who join Youth Volunteer Corps must complete a short orientation with either a YVC staff member or Team Leader. This can be done prior to, or upon submission of an application and should be scheduled before a volunteer attends any YVC projects. During this short meeting, volunteers will be given a handbook, a brochure about the program, and a short breakdown of the purpose and role of YVC, YVC agencies, and YVC members. The intent of this meeting is to layout expectations and answer questions before volunteer participation.

Commitments to Our Volunteers

Confidentiality:

Any information you give us about yourself is strictly confidential, will only be used by program staff and only for programming purposes.

Supervision:

Youth Volunteer Corps Team Leaders will work in cooperation with volunteers to provide supervision during projects throughout the community.

Support:

Our volunteers are important to us. Because of this your Team Leader will always be available during projects to help guide you through difficult problems or stumbling blocks you may encounter. We will also offer group peer sharing for volunteers during the projects.

Training:

We want our volunteers to feel comfortable at each project therefore we provide a brief introduction before each service project. We also require a short YVC orientation for all new YVC members to help layout program expectations.

Tracked Hours

All hours that volunteers put in at YVC projects will be kept track of in a database. If you would like a list of your YVC volunteer activity talk to your Team Leader or the YVC manager.

Quality Projects

Year round, YVC staff works to create and implement quality projects. These projects will be created specifically for YVC members and require sign up to ensure success for all involved. During the school year we will provide weekend and afterschool projects on a regular basis. During the summer they will be longer, camp-like opportunities. We will post all upcoming projects on our website, yvcyellowstone.org, and on the community website database YouCanVolunteer.org.

Volunteer Rights

- To do meaningful and satisfying work.
- To be carefully assigned to projects which meet your interests and needs.
- To be oriented to the agency – its mission, goals, staff, activities and policies.
- To be trained appropriately for the type of work you will be doing.
- To receive supervision and guidance throughout your community service experience.
- To show initiative and leadership.
- To voice your opinion and have input into planning and implementation.
- To be treated as a co-worker.
- To have your YVC service hours documented (certificate or letter) upon request.

Volunteer Responsibilities

We have all had experiences in our life where we helped someone in our community and felt that great sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. That is what being a volunteer is meant to be.

Take an active and informed part in orientation.

Participate in community service projects with enthusiasm and commitment.

Follow all YVC ground rules

Maintain confidentiality and privacy with regards to agency information, clients and personnel.

Speak up; ask about things you don't understand. Provide timely and constructive feedback to the agency if necessary.

Be comfortable saying "no" if necessary.

Be willing to learn and keep on learning. Training is essential to any job well done. Learn from your community service experience. Be open and honest about your expectations and abilities.

Welcome supervision, you will do better and enjoy it more if you are doing what is expected.

Be dependable, your word is your bond, do what you have agreed to do and don't make promises you can't keep.

Clean up after any project.

Be proud, "Take pride in the volunteer's career—it pays handsomely in treasures of the spirit" (Dr. Daniel Thuray, Univ. of Maryland).

Volunteer Ground Rules

1. Will **not** use inappropriate language.
2. Will **not** use drugs and/or alcohol.
3. Will **not** engage in violence or harassment, including sexual harassment of others.
4. Behave respectfully towards your fellow volunteers, your Team Leaders, and the workers/residents of the agency for which you are volunteering.
5. Conduct yourself in a professional manner.
6. Always have a positive attitude. Work as a member of the team in dealing with problems and participating as part of the group.
7. Team Leaders are here to help, so be sure to share your thoughts and concerns.
8. RSVP for all projects/events you plan to attend
9. Be on time, it's important to the team.
10. Dress appropriately for project site and weather.
11. Notify your Team Leader in advance if you cannot be present for any project you have registered for.
12. Participate in the reflections/evaluations of each project.
13. Have fun!

Inviting Friends

YVC encourages and expects members to bring friends to projects, but when doing so there are a few things to keep in mind. **Everyone attending a YVC project must have completed the YVC application form and be 11-18 years old.** If you know ahead of time a friend will be with you be sure they bring their completed application with them to the project. Applications can be printed from our website or picked up from our office. **If you bring a friend to a project please notify a team leader immediately.**

Cell Phone Policy

To ensure that each Youth Volunteer Corp project is a positive and successful endeavor without distractions we must require cell phones to be turned off or set to vibrate mode during a project. The use of a cell phone is only permitted in the case of an emergency and during lunch breaks.

Identification Card

We request that all volunteers carry with them a form of identification as well as any necessary insurance information. In the rare case that an accident occurs and a volunteer is taken to the hospital this information can help guide emergency responders.

Team Leader Role

To represent the Youth Volunteer Corps and sponsoring organizations as an on-site supervisor and role model for youth volunteers assigned to work with the Team Leader on community service projects through local non profit agencies. All Team Leaders undergo a background check prior to serving.

Responsibilities:

Shows respect for other members by being on time and bringing necessary equipment to the meetings.

Accepts the responsibility of sharing in the business at hand; understands the participation is essential.

Tries to get other members to express their ideas for the benefit of all, even if it means less time for presenting personal ideas.

Listens appreciatively to others ideas and contributions.

Recognition

Every year YVC will hold several recognition events. These will be a time for us to reflect and thank members for their time volunteering. These events will also remind us of the work we are doing and the impact it has on the community.

Diversity and YVC

The projects and agencies we work with are diverse, but our membership is as well. We include youth ages 11-18 to expose volunteers to different lifestyles, backgrounds and ideas. By meeting and working beside peers with different experiences we believe you can learn about your community and each other.

Disability Inclusion

Youth Volunteer Corps believes the opportunity to serve should be made available to all, including individuals with disabilities. Accommodations and accessibilities can be made for individuals with disabilities in advance of the project date.

Introduction to Service Areas

Many YVC projects serve different groups. We aim to have a small orientation before you jump in and start volunteering at each agency, but sometimes its hard to know exactly what do to until you have started doing it. Below you will find a short introduction to a few groups we volunteer with and some things to remember when working with then.

Senior Citizens

The average age of senior citizens living in nursing homes is about 82. Many of them don't have families or can't be with their families, and they can be lonely. That's where volunteers can step in and make a huge impact. Just visiting and spending time with the elderly is a great way to lift their spirits. Treat them as though they're your own grandparents and tell stories, listen to their advice, read them the newspaper, or maybe play bingo. This sort of volunteer work will not only have a positive influence on you, but also on them – you can make them laugh, and they can teach you life lessons.

Things to remember: Sometimes elderly people have conditions that make it more difficult to work with them. Common limitations include memory loss, difficult moving, and difficulty hearing. Each individual will be different, and it is best to get to know those who you are working with to discover what limitations, if any, they have.

People with Disabilities

Often those with disabilities can be a challenging group to work with because of the varying levels of functionality. Volunteers take on a role similar to working with the elderly in a sense that you are there to be a companion. Playing games, putting together puzzles, and encouraging them are keys to being a positive influence. Often when working with a person who is disabled it is expected that you act as their chaperone and guide. Some disabilities can limit functionality to a point that constant monitoring is needed and keeping an area safe and being aware of possible dangers is important. The degree this is needed will depend on the individuals with whom you work.

Things to remember: Every individual disability will be different. Getting to know those you are working with will shape the role you take as volunteer. Asking questions to other volunteers and staff members can help guide you. Often they are more familiar with the types of disabilities. Remember that there are different levels of functionality and that some individuals will need more direction and others will need less.

Children

Children are a wonderful and unique group to work with. They are easy to entertain and eager to learn. The general role as a volunteer with children is to help with basic learning and development. Some ways this is done is by reading to them, playing games with them, and just plain showing them the world to them. One important rule is that if you want to teach a kid you need to act like a kid. Making funny faces and playing silly games can be rewarding for the children, and fun for the volunteer.

Things to remember: Children often have short attention spans. Keeping things entertaining and fun helps keep their attention. Be flexible and remember that kids pick up on everything we do.

How to Build Effective Relationships

Skills to Help Develop Positive Relationships as a Team

- **Listening:**
One of the most overlooked aspects of communication is the act of listening. Listening in the true sense means not talking, not lecturing, and not advising. Many times, a few minutes spent really listening will diffuse much of the frustration of communication.
- **Attitude:**
Another important aspect of communication is attitude. During communication, people often react not to what you are saying, but how you are saying it. Be aware of your attitude after a particularly tough day; it may negatively affect how you talk or listen to others.
- **Humor:**
Humor is often the missing link in relationships. Sometimes even the most intense discussions can use an injection of humor. It can serve to relieve a particularly stressful moment and, at the least, can indicate that things are still okay in the world.

Conflict Resolution Strategies

- **Negotiating:**
Listen to each person's point of view and discuss which position might be best.
- **Compromising:**
Meeting halfway – both parties agree to sacrifice something in order to resolve the conflict.
- **Active Listening:**
Focus on the other person and try to understand their feelings. Be aware of body language, voice and tone.
- **Chance:**
Flip a coin or draw straws when indecision arises.
- **Sharing:**
Working together to meet the needs of both parties.

Extending Your Role

The success of Youth Volunteer Corps depends greatly on the participation and positive efforts of youth volunteers. Each volunteer plays an important role in establishing life long positive community relationships. While we expect all volunteers to participate in projects throughout the year, we have other ways each of you can help our program grow.

Ways you can help:

Communications

- Call volunteers about projects
- Do presentations
- Help write mailings
- Organizing and participate in table top recruitment

Project Development

- Decide project areas, length and times
- Help plan recognition events
- Explore youth service areas

Promotion

- Print T-shirts
- Create brochures, postcards and posters
- Create promotional items

Technology

- Update and manage our Facebook page
- Post upcoming opportunities online
- Update our project database
- Design and send emails using Constant Contact

Youth Leadership Team

Individuals who would like to take a more active role in shaping YVC will have the opportunity to be a part of YVC's Youth Leadership Team (YLT). YLT members meet regularly and share ideas for future projects, discuss ways to fundraise, evaluate YVC policies and rules, and also just have fun. For more information talk to your Team Leader of YVC staff.

Youth Leadership Team Member Duties:

Attend YLT meetings on a regular basis

Take an active role in meeting discussions

Help with team related activities

Some of which may include:

- Setting up fundraising activities
- Organizing and or choosing YVC projects
- Reviewing YVC rules, policies as needed
- Helping with the process of picking new Team Leaders