

TENNESSEE EXTENSION

# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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# INTRODUCTION

## Who We Are

The University of Tennessee (UT) Extension and Tennessee State University (TSU) Cooperative Extension, also known as Tennessee Extension, volunteer programs are designed to foster a relationship between Tennessee Extension staff members and volunteers across all program areas statewide. Tennessee Extension volunteer programs include, but are not limited to, the Master Gardener programs, 4-H Youth Development programs, and Family Consumer Education programs. The University of Tennessee Extension is one of four units that provides instruction, research, and public service through the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture.



This volunteer handbook is designed to provide information and procedures that are relevant to volunteers. The handbook is issued via the Volunteerism website, [tiny.utk.edu/volunteerism](http://tiny.utk.edu/volunteerism), where the most current version may always be found.

Tennessee Extension does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status in provision of educational programs and services or employment opportunities and benefits.



# What We Do

UT Extension provides a gateway to the University of Tennessee as the outreach unit of the Institute of Agriculture. It is a statewide educational organization, funded by federal, state and local governments, that brings research-based information about agriculture, family and consumer sciences, 4-H Youth Development, and resource development to the people of Tennessee where they live and work.

Because Extension emphasizes helping people improve their quality of life where they are located, most Tennesseans have contact with Tennessee Extension through their local county Extension agents found in each of the 95 counties in Tennessee. Extension agents are supported by area and state faculty as well as by the educational and research resources and activities of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 74 land-grant universities, and 3,150 county units throughout the nation. The stated mission of the system is to help people improve their lives through an educational process that uses scientific knowledge to address issues and needs.



More information can be found at the following websites.

**UT Extension**  
[extension.tennessee.edu](http://extension.tennessee.edu)

**TSU Extension**  
[tnstate.edu/extension](http://tnstate.edu/extension)

# Core Values

Tennessee Extension holds the following core values about volunteerism.

- Tennessee Extension volunteers are a key component of our organization and the value of volunteers is in extending the reach of Extension throughout the communities in Tennessee.
- Volunteers have the opportunity to positively impact the lives of youth, local community, and the environment in which they serve.
- Extension volunteers contribute time, talent and knowledge which represents Extension’s roots in our community.
- Trained volunteers bring knowledge and a diverse skill-set to Extension programs and extend our programming efforts.
- Volunteers help identify needs in communities and work with agents by implementing programs that address those needs and are making a difference in their communities.
- Volunteers have been recognized as an asset to our programs and our organizational structure reflects that belief.

## Volunteers Vision

### Statement

Tennessee Extension provides a climate that fosters mutual respect and positive working relationships between volunteers and staff.

## Volunteers Mission

### Statement

Tennessee Extension actively recruits and retains a culturally diverse volunteer workforce and enables learning and growth of volunteers to advance the mission of UT Extension.



# Legality and Liability

The State legislature in the enactment of the Tennessee Claims Commission Act of 1984 recognized the need the protection of volunteers from legal actions while performing their service on behalf of the University. As such, the volunteers who are registered with the University receive the same civil immunity from liability, as does an employee of the University under the Act. Volunteers under the Claims Commission Act are not covered for Worker's Compensation.

The term "Registered Volunteer" means those persons who are not employees of the University who provide service to the University in an approved program. All Tennessee Extension volunteers are registered in SUPER (System for University Planning, Evaluation & Reporting) after completing an application and appropriate requirements for the volunteer level.

As a state agency, UT self-insures its general liability exposure. Each county Extension office is required to register volunteers in the UT Extension SUPER system. State statute provides that the state may provide a defense for any agent of UT, including a volunteer, against whom claims are filed. However, individuals are only eligible for defense if they can prove they were acting within the scope of their Tennessee Extension duties and in good faith.

To be acting in an official capacity as a Tennessee Extension volunteer, a person must be:

- Currently enrolled as an active volunteer.
- Acting in good faith and in accordance with volunteer guidelines.
- Engaged in activities that are planned, approved and carried out through Tennessee Extension.

Volunteers are responsible for their own personal injury claims, except when reimbursement may be provided through the UT Extension volunteer program.



# VOLUNTEER MODEL

## Definition of a TN Extension Volunteer

An approved person who gives their time and performs a service for Tennessee Extension without pay. A registered volunteer is defined as a volunteer who has been enrolled as a volunteer in SUPER (System for University Planning, Enrollment, and Reporting) by an Extension staff member.

## Statement of Principles

Community members and families place trust in Tennessee Extension to provide quality leadership and care for all program participants, youth and adults. The opportunity to work in the community is a privileged position of trust that should only be held by those who are willing to commit to uphold behavior that fulfills this trust. **The following statement of principles is provided for all volunteers.**

In addition, as a volunteer, if you are working with youth in any Extension program, activity and event, you have been identified as a “Covered Person” for the purposes of the University of Tennessee Safety Policy 575 – Program for Minors. The following information, which is not all-inclusive, illustrates some examples of specifically expected and prohibited conduct. Engaging in prohibited behavior will lead to disciplinary action, up to and including, termination, as either unsatisfactory work performance or work-related behavior, or gross misconduct, under university policy.

### **1. Ethical and responsible conduct:**

In carrying out its educational, research, and public service missions, the university relies on the ethical and responsible conduct of all volunteers. Even the appearance of unethical or irresponsible conduct can be damaging to the public’s trust in the university. Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves fairly, honestly, in good faith, and in accordance with the highest ethical and professional standards, and to comply with applicable laws, regulations, contractual obligations, and university policies. (HR0580: 1)



## **2. Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse:**

Covered Persons must comply with Tennessee laws on mandatory reporting of child abuse and child sexual abuse. (HR0580: 2b)

A. Tennessee laws mandate reporting by any person who has knowledge of physical or mental harm to a child if:

The nature of the harm reasonably indicates it was caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect;  
or

On the basis of available information, the harm reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect.

B. Tennessee law also mandates reporting by any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused, regardless of whether it appears the child has sustained an injury as a result of the abuse.

C. A report of child abuse or child sexual abuse must be made immediately to one of the following authorities:

- The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (Call Central Intake Child Abuse Hotline at: (877-542-2873) or (877-237-0004).
- The sheriff of the county where the child resides.
- The chief law enforcement official of the city where the child resides.
- A judge having juvenile jurisdiction over the child.

## **3. Responsible Reporting of Suspected Violations and University Response:**

Volunteers are expected to report any good-faith concern that compliance violations might have occurred, including, but not limited to, the following: violations of state or federal law or regulations; fraud in the operations of government programs; misappropriation of state or federal resources; acts that endanger the health or safety of the public or employees; and mismanagement of programs, funds, and/or abuses of authority.

Volunteers are expected to report compliance concerns at the earliest possible opportunity by contacting their university contact, the next level of university contact, the appropriate campus/institute compliance officer, Office of Audit and Compliance (865-974-6611), or the Institutional Compliance office (865-974-4438). Volunteers wishing to remain anonymous should report their concerns to the State Comptroller's Fraud Hotline (1-800-232-5454). Concerns will be referred to the appropriate university office for investigation. Volunteers are expected to cooperate fully in investigations.

#### **4. Respect for Persons:**

Covered Persons are expected to be committed to creating an environment that promotes learning, diversity, fair treatment, and respect for others. (HR0580, #3; TSU6.9)

- Disorderly conduct, including, but not limited to, using discriminatory, abusive, or threatening language; fighting, provoking a fight, or attempting bodily harm or injury to another employee or to any other individual or threatening physical action or injury on university property or during university activities; or other conduct that threatens or endangers the health, safety, or well-being of any person.
- Violation of any university policy against harassment, discrimination, or retaliation.
- Treat others in a courteous, respectful manner, demonstrating behaviors appropriate for a positive role model for youth.
- Comply with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination policy. Make all reasonable efforts to assure Extension programs, activities and events are accessible to youth and adults without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation or disability.
- Do not require Extension program participants to purchase materials, supplies, equipment, animals or services from any specific vendor.
- Teach youth/adults to provide appropriate animal care and treat animals humanely.
- Recognize that physical punishment is not an appropriate form of discipline for youth and will not be allowed.

## **5. Respect for Property:**

Obey the laws of the locality, state and nation. This means no one will:

- Neglect or damage university property.
- Steal or engage in dishonest behavior.
- Tamper with or wantonly destroy university data, records, or other information; gain unauthorized access to such information; disclose confidential information; or otherwise misuse university data or information.
- Engage in unauthorized use of university vehicles, mail services, identification and credit cards, telephones, computers, computer equipment, or other university equipment or materials. Computers and computer accounts are provided to employees to assist them in the performance of their jobs. Employees do not have a right to privacy in anything they create, send, or receive on a university computer. The university has the right to monitor, for business reasons, any and all aspects of any university computer system, including employee e-mail.
- Solicit, collect money, or circulate petitions on university property at any time without permission of the chief business officer or designee.

## **6. Standards of Safety**

- Possession of firearms, explosives, or other dangerous materials on university property or during university programs, activities or events, is prohibited unless the covered person is authorized either by university policy or law to carry firearms, explosives, and other dangerous materials and it is also necessary to do so in the course of employment (police officer, R.O.T.C. personnel, etc.)
- The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of alcohol, illegal drugs, intoxicants, or controlled substances is prohibited. As are in addition, abuse of prescription drugs while on duty; use of alcohol in a university vehicle on or off university property; possession or use of alcohol while on duty (except at university-sponsored events and other events a Covered Person is expected to attend as part of his or her duties); or attend an Extension program activity or event (reporting to work) under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol or while unlawfully using controlled substances.

- Refusal to obey security officials, Emergency Management personnel, or other proper authorities in emergencies.
- Failure to comply with safety rules, regulations, or common safety practices.
- Failure to report an accident involving on-the-job injury or damage to university property.
- Smoking in violation of university policy.

## **7. Compliance with Laws and University Policies**

- Behavior or conduct unacceptable to the university or the community at large.
- Any violation of any law in the performance of duties or that affects the ability to perform duties satisfactorily.
- Failure to comply with Tennessee laws on mandatory reporting of child abuse and child sexual abuse.
- Failure to comply with laws regarding mandatory reporting requirements applicable to health care professionals' interactions with patients while acting within the scope of university employment.
- Gamble on university property or during UT Extension and Tennessee State University programs, activities or events.
- Flagrant violation or failure to observe traffic or parking regulations.

## **8. Work Performance**

- Failure to wear proper identification (name tag) in the prescribed manner as may be required by UT Extension, the University of Tennessee, and Tennessee State University.
- Failure or refusal to maintain or obtain required licensure, certification, or registration.
- The volunteer understands that he/she has no actual authority to bind or represent the university with regard to any third parties. The volunteer agrees to avoid giving the impression of having apparent authority to bind or represent the university with regard to third parties. Accordingly, the volunteer may not sign or enter into any agreement or contracts on behalf of the university.

# VOLUNTEER MODEL

## Decision Trees

Volunteers in Tennessee Extension can be categorized as a Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 volunteer depending upon their direct contact with minors. Extension Agents will work with volunteers to determine which level a volunteer should be categorized. A Decision Tree for Adult Volunteers is provided to help determine the level.

### ADULT VOLUNTEER LEVELS

**Level 1 Volunteer** - Volunteer works under supervision of Extension employee at all times and has no direct contact with minors.

**Level 2 Volunteer** - This volunteer has direct contact with minors with no overnight involvement and no frequent contact for longer than two weeks with minors.

**Level 3 Volunteer** - This volunteer has direct contact with minors with possible overnight involvement and does have frequent contact for longer than two weeks with minors.

Decision tree can be found at [tiny.utk.edu/ExtDecisionTree](http://tiny.utk.edu/ExtDecisionTree).

# Application Process

All volunteers must have a volunteer application on file to serve as a Tennessee Extension volunteer. The application process has been designed to collect pertinent information, as well as satisfy certain requirements for volunteers.

Depending upon the level assigned to the volunteer, a volunteer will be required to complete certain sections of the application process. The decision tree provides specific details of which section applies to each level of volunteer. The application for adult volunteers can be found at [tiny.utk.edu/volunteerism](http://tiny.utk.edu/volunteerism). Youth volunteers shall continue to complete the existing 4-H enrollment forms and/or youth volunteer applications found at the county level.

Volunteers are responsible for contacting their agent to update their contact information if changes occur.

## Background Checks

All Level 3 volunteers are required to have a background check every four years as they continue to volunteer with Tennessee Extension. Volunteers shall work with the agent to determine the best course of action for obtaining a background check. In the event a volunteer can provide a current background check (within the last four years) to the agent from another source (i.e. current employer), the volunteer should provide the information to the agent.



# Volunteer Status

Every summer, to remain in active status, the volunteer must communicate to the agent the volunteer's desire to remain in active status. If the volunteers' contact information or availability changes, the volunteer will need to contact the agent or county office. Volunteers who are not active will be placed in an inactive status with Tennessee Extension, which may be reactivated if the volunteer wishes to return to active status and completes all processes necessary to satisfy current requirements.

## Periodic Review

Tennessee Extension is proud to work with volunteers to ensure the success of its mission. To guarantee that our volunteers are fulfilling the mission of Tennessee Extension and to make certain that our volunteers' needs are met, it is necessary for agents and volunteers to conduct a periodic review.

The review serves as an assessment of the effectiveness of Extension volunteers to ensure that volunteer services are being consistently delivered with program expectations and ensuring the needs of the individuals served are met. The periodic review shall be viewed as a discussion in which the volunteer and agent discuss what is working well and any opportunities for change.





# PROCEDURES

## Child Protection

It is of the utmost importance that Tennessee Extension provides a safe environment for all participants of our programs, especially children and elderly adults. Tennessee Extension abides by the university's requirement of mandating any reports of child abuse and child sexual abuse. Specific details and steps for reporting abuse are found in the Statement of Principles. The Child Protection Training is available to any volunteer for completion and is required of all Level 3 volunteers. The Child Protection Training for volunteers can be found at [tiny.utk.edu/volunteerism](http://tiny.utk.edu/volunteerism).

## Transporting Minors

### UT policy regarding 15 passenger vans:

The University of Tennessee faculty, staff, student workers, or volunteers are not permitted to use\* 15 passenger vans to transport youth and/or adult clientele.

\*Includes use of motor pool vans and personal vehicles.

UT Policy F10705 states that the rental of a 15 passenger van is prohibited due to safety reasons.

### Volunteers Transporting Youth

The preference is for parents to transport their children to events and meetings.

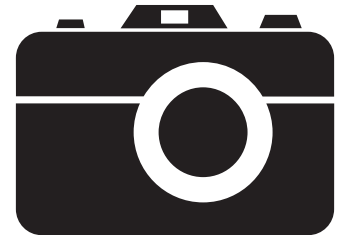
Only an **approved**\* volunteer can be contacted by an Extension agent to transport minors. Driver expectations are as follows:

- possess a valid driver's license
- have automobile insurance
- comply with state and local laws
- utilize a vehicle that has enough working seat belts for all passengers

\*An approved volunteer in this instance has a Level 3 volunteer application on file, is enrolled in SUPER as an active volunteer, and does not have driving restrictions as a condition of their volunteer service.

# Consent and Publicity Release

Often, opportunities in the county arise where photos and videos of program participants are captured. To ensure the safety of program participants, the Tennessee Extension representative must gain the permission of the participants. Please check with your agent to be certain permission has been granted before printing, posting, or sharing any photos or videos of program participants.



## Social Media

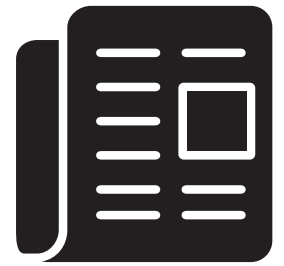
Using social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, can be successful. However, we must be mindful to use social media tools in a safe and professional way. The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture has provided social media guidelines and best practices to follow. It is important to read the guidelines before engaging in any social media practices.

[https://ag.tennessee.edu/marketing/Documents/SocialmediaGuidelinesandBPs\\_final.pdf](https://ag.tennessee.edu/marketing/Documents/SocialmediaGuidelinesandBPs_final.pdf)



# Contact by the Media

Always remember that if contacted by media for an interview related to your service as an Extension Volunteer, you are a representative of the university.



As a representative of the university, we do not share our personal opinions on legislation (current or pending), university policies (current or pending), political campaigns, regulatory issues (current or pending), etc.

If in doubt, before agreeing to an interview contact your county office for guidance.



When speaking with a reporter, remember EVERYTHING is on the record.

These guidelines apply to social media as well. This applies to both UT and personal accounts. When posting on a personal social media account, try to remember that even though it's your personal page, you may be viewed by many as someone who is affiliated with UT. Social media posts are permanent, global and discoverable in a court of law.

# Marketing and Logos

Logos play a very important role in a brand's visual identity. Using the correct logos, and using them consistently, strengthens and elevates the perception of the overall brand. Current, approved logos may be obtained from your Extension office. Please be sure to use any Extension logos in an appropriate manner and always contact your Extension office for assistance and approval.

It is recommended that you wear a nametag when volunteering to identify yourself as an Extension Volunteer.

# Funds and Fundraising

When fundraising for a club, project group, or under the Tennessee Extension umbrella for any reason, all volunteers must be conscious of upholding the principles of Tennessee Extension, must get approval in advance for the activity from their county Extension contact person, and must use all funds for Extension purposes. **Fundraisers may not be conducted without first gaining approval from your Tennessee Extension contact person.**



All monies must be handled through the UT county financial accounting system. Also, all monies must be maintained in the county office. Keep good records and be very open about such activities, including having a specific purpose for the funds. If a group is selling anything, sales tax should be figured in the price. Sales tax exemption for purchases is only available to Tennessee Extension via payment with county office checks or procurement card. Please direct questions concerning money to your Extension agent.

## Protocol for Grievances

If you have a grievance, please contact your Extension agent, County Director, and/or Regional Director.

# RESOURCES

## Programs and Program Area Links

Tennessee Extension has numerous links to our many programs and program areas. Please feel free to browse some of these links below for more information.

UTIA

<https://utia.tennessee.edu/>

UT Extension

<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/>

TSU Extension

<https://www.tnstate.edu/extension/>

Tennessee 4-H

<https://4h.tennessee.edu/>

Agriculture and Natural Resources

<https://utextensionanr.tennessee.edu/>

Community Economic Development

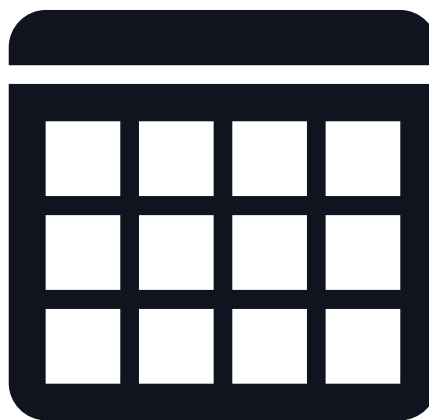
<https://utextensionced.tennessee.edu/>

Family and Consumer Sciences

<https://fcs.tennessee.edu/>

## Extension Calendar

Tennessee Extension hosts a variety of events throughout the calendar year. For a list of upcoming events and programs, please view the calendar at [calendar.utk.edu/ut\\_extension](http://calendar.utk.edu/ut_extension).



## Extension Publications and Multimedia Catalog

Tennessee Extension has a catalog that contains more than 1,100 items including publications, books, videos, and other educational materials developed by subject-matter specialist to assist people across Tennessee. These resources will provide you with more information as you continue to learn about Tennessee Extension. Access to these resources may be found on the Publications and Multimedia Catalog website at [extension.tennessee.edu/publications](http://extension.tennessee.edu/publications).





Thank you for your interest and  
willingness to serve as a Tennessee  
Extension Volunteer!