

Contacting a Community Agency

Each community agency has a very different intake, application, and interview process when it comes to accepting volunteers. Your approach to an agency about a volunteer opportunity is essential to securing your volunteer placement. Some tips for communicating with a community agency are provided below.

- ❖ Do some research about your agency before making a phone call. Never call an agency without knowing the basics about what they do.
- ❖ Since most community agencies are very busy places and often have a small staff, it is possible that more than one phone/email message will need to be left for the Volunteer Coordinator before he/she can respond.
 - When leaving a message for a community agency, remember to speak slowly and clearly. A volunteer coordinator cannot call you back if they are not able to understand your phone number.
- ❖ Ask the agency about any information that is unclear to you from the website, make sure the agency is right for you and that you understand their procedures for background checks, application process, and training.
 - If a background check is required make sure you know who is responsible for covering the costs.
 - If the agency requires training, check with your professor to see if training hours will be accepted as service hours.
- ❖ Fill out an online application (if available) rather than calling. Then if you do not receive a response follow up with a phone call.
- ❖ Advanced planning is important. Know what your professor expects in terms of hours, visits per week, learning objectives, and deadlines. Make sure you communicate this clearly to the agency before you begin.
 - Show the agency your syllabus and any evaluation tools.
- ❖ Know the agency's hours and make sure they correspond to times that you are available. Make sure the agency knows your schedule.
- ❖ When planning your volunteer schedule make sure to remember: exams, holidays, and the possibility for illness. **DO NOT** wait until the end of the semester to begin your hours.
 - If you split your hours up equally throughout the semester it will allow for a better experience for you and for the agency.
- ❖ Keep an open mind and understand that service is not always exciting. You may not enjoy every task that you are given, but understand that it is what the agency needs.
- ❖ Make sure that you are honest about dates that you will end your service (do what you say you will do).
- ❖ During your experience, share and reflect about your experience with your site supervisor.
- ❖ When you finish volunteering at an agency send them a thank you card.
- ❖ Include your service experience on your resume and submit your service to the ServScript Program.

The Center for Leadership & Social Change staff are happy to assist you further if needed, and answer any questions you might have. The Center for Leadership & Social Change is located in the Dunlap Student Success Center at Florida State University, 100 S. Woodward Avenue, Tallahassee, FL 32306-4161. Contact us at 850-644-3342 or thecenter@admin.fsu.edu

