

Lake County Volunteer Network/RSVP Volunteer Handbook



Lake County Volunteer Network

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www.lakecountyohio.gov/senior-services



AmeriCorps
Seniors

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WELCOME

On behalf of the Board of Lake County Commissioners, we welcome you as a new volunteer! In Lake County, volunteer services, including AmeriCorps Seniors grant programs, are administered by the Lake County Volunteer Network (LCVN). The LCVN is a division of the Board of Commissioners Senior Services. By joining the LCVN, you have become part of a local and national network of volunteers who collectively give thousands of hours of time, wisdom, and support to meet urgent needs in our community.

PURPOSE

The LCVN is a division of the Board of Commissioners (BOC) Senior Services and serves all of Lake County. The Senior Services department was created in 2016 after completing a countywide study that led to a strategic blueprint for sustainable programming and identified the gaps in services for older adults. In 2020, the BOC created the LCVN, demonstrating its commitment to engage persons aged 55 and older in meaningful volunteer opportunities. These volunteers meet the needs of local nonprofit and government agencies and fill critical service gaps while also enjoying significant benefits themselves. The LCVN currently has a network of 400+ senior volunteers serving at a variety of volunteer agencies. It is funded by the Lake County Senior Services levy and the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP grant.

This handbook provides information on policies and procedures, the conditions and terms of volunteer service, and volunteer benefits.

AMERICORPS HISTORY

In 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was established under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. On September 29, 2020, CNCS and Senior Corps were rebranded as AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors, respectively.

Today, AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors serve more than five million individuals of all ages and backgrounds and help meet local needs through a wide array of service opportunities. These include projects in six priority areas: disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families.

The Senior Demonstration Program and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) are two of the AmeriCorps Seniors signature programs that the LCVN has been or is currently involved with.

AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP

Since 1971, AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP has matched older adults who are willing to help with local organizations on the front lines of meeting community needs. AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP projects link the skills of the volunteers with the identified needs of the community. AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in RSVP do not receive any monetary incentive or stipend, but the project may reimburse volunteers for certain out-of-pocket costs associated with their service activities. In addition, volunteers receive accident, personal liability, and excess automobile liability insurance, and they receive community recognition. The LCVN was awarded a three-year

AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP grant effective April 10, 2025.

AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Demonstration Program

The LCVN received federal funds from AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Demonstration Program (SDP) for the grant period July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2024. The Senior Demonstration Authority authorizes the director of AmeriCorps Seniors to make grants to or enter into contracts with public or nonprofit organizations for the purposes of demonstrating innovative activities involving older Americans as volunteers. Volunteers in the Senior Demonstration Program receive accident, personal liability, and excess automobile liability insurance, and they receive community recognition.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Lake County is a community that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. Diversity drives innovation, productivity, and engagement, all of which are beneficial to a community's health and success. As calls for social equality echo throughout the nation, the Lake County BOC is committed to providing opportunities for all Lake County residents, businesses, employees, volunteers, and visitors to be recognized and heard.

Lake County administration seeks to provide equal opportunities for all employees and volunteers, ensure equal public access to all services, and to prevent implicit bias in our actions. We recognize that we are a team of individuals with different and unique qualities, and as we grow this team, we strive to also reflect the diversity that exists in our community.

We value the original contributions each employee/volunteer makes to their position, and we hear and acknowledge the ideas and perspectives of employees, volunteers, and members of the public. We embrace fairness so that all can have an opportunity to pursue their goals and have equal access to services, programs, events, and employment resources. This allows us to create an inclusive environment that best serves everyone's needs.

We provide opportunities for all team members to contribute to the County's success, and we help to increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the value and benefits of equitable, inclusive diversity. Our commitment to the public and our employees/volunteers is to create an environment in which underrepresented populations feel safe and welcome.

VOLUNTEER ENROLLMENT

Eligibility

- A. **This program is available to all, without discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, religion, age, national origin, genetic information, disability, military status, familial status, political affiliation, or any other characteristic protected by law.**
- B. Volunteers participating in Lake County Volunteer Network programs must be 55 years of age or older, live in or near the community being served, and be capable of performing the duties for their assignment. LCVN volunteers must be able to provide such service without detriment to either themselves or the people served and be willing to abide by the project requirements.

Application and Orientation Process

- A. Interested individuals will complete a volunteer application form, which can be accessed online at www.lakecountyohio.gov/senior-services, or by mail by calling (440) 350-5360.
- B. An in-person orientation session, which will be scheduled after receiving the volunteer applications, will present information about the LCVN, AmeriCorps Seniors, and available volunteer positions. If appropriate, the orientation will also prepare volunteers to fill their roles by providing an understanding their potential activities and the special and exceptional needs of the people they may work with.
At the orientation session volunteers will be:
 - Required to present a government-issued identification to verify age; review of identification will be documented on the application form.
 - Asked to provide a signature if the application form was not signed.
 - Provided with a copy of the volunteer handbook.
- C. When reviewing available volunteer positions and determining suitable placements, equal attention will be given to the interests and goals of the volunteers and the requirements of the positions. Partner agencies, referred to here as volunteer stations, may also be involved in the volunteer selection process. Volunteer stations reserve the right to accept or deny prospective volunteers.
- D. Volunteers who work with children or other vulnerable populations may be required to submit to a National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW) and criminal background check prior to volunteering. Individuals who refuse to comply with this request will not be permitted to volunteer with those vulnerable populations. Volunteers required to have NSOPW and criminal background checks will be provided with the LCVN written policy. Should the NSOPW and/or criminal background check yield any findings, the program director and human resources administrator for the Board of Commissioners will review the nature of the offense and determine whether the individual is able to volunteer.
- E. If any LCVN volunteer will be engaged in a volunteer position that requires a professional or technical license, the LCVN will request proof of the appropriate credentials. Copies of licenses/certificates will be maintained as part of the volunteer's file.
- F. If there is evidence of a decline in a volunteer's abilities, LCVN may request written proof from a physician regarding the ability of a volunteer to perform assigned duties.

VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT AND TRAINING

Volunteer Stations

- A. In general, volunteers are recruited and enrolled by the LCVN and placed with an organization referred to as a volunteer station. For the purposes of AmeriCorps Seniors, a volunteer station is a public agency, secular or faith-based private non-profit organization, or proprietary healthcare organization that accepts the responsibility for assignment and supervision of AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers. Each station has a signed memorandum of understanding and a designated station supervisor who serves as the LCVN contact for that station.

- B. If a volunteer is interested in and referred to a station, the station volunteer staff will provide additional details on the volunteer position and may require additional paperwork and an interview.

- C. At minimum, volunteer stations are responsible to:
 - Fully and honestly disclose the expectations and responsibilities of the volunteer position, including any potential risks or liabilities.
 - Provide safe working conditions for volunteers.
 - Provide orientation and training for volunteers in their volunteer role.
 - Provide a written volunteer assignment description and resources required for volunteer assignments.
 - Designate a staff member to serve as supervisor to the LCVN volunteer(s) and to serve as a liaison to the program.
 - Keep a daily volunteer log with sign-in and sign-out times.
 - Collect and maintain records and data required for the LCVN grant reports.
 - Verify volunteer time.

Supplemental Trainings

The LCVN will create additional training opportunities throughout the year to build knowledge and skills of LCVN volunteers. Some training opportunities may include key project policies and procedures, information, and services to keep volunteers healthy, active, and engaged in the program.

LCVN/RSVP RESPONSIBILITIES

We want your volunteer experience to be satisfying and meaningful for you. We will answer your questions, share in your successes, and help you if issues arise during your service.

Here are some of the responsibilities of the LCVN staff:

- To ensure that volunteers have opportunities to express their concerns, interests, and observations about the program to the program staff and the station.
- To assure volunteer confidentiality and privacy.
- To involve volunteers in the operation and appraisal of assignments and project operations.
- To solicit comments and/or recommendations from volunteers related to their service experiences and incorporate relevant information into the program as applicable.
- To adopt specific strategies to retain a diverse group of volunteers.
- To identify and promptly address any issues or problems that affect the retention of a diverse team of volunteers.

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All LCVN volunteers have the following rights:

- To be appropriately oriented and trained by the LCVN and their assigned stations.
- To be referred to volunteer assignments that meet their individual needs and interests.
- To be made to feel welcome and treated with respect.
- To receive written volunteer assignment descriptions that outline the duties and expectations of their individual roles.
- To receive supervision and guidance throughout their community service experiences.
- To do meaningful and satisfying work in a safe environment (if anyone is dissatisfied with their assignment, the LCVN will attempt to find them a different position).
- To have their service hours documented.
- To have access to a grievance process.

LCVN volunteers also have responsibilities. They must be prepared to fulfill their volunteer commitments as agreed upon with each assigned station supervisor. The LCVN program asks each volunteer to observe the following basic principles while performing any volunteer assignment:

- Respect the days and hours agreed upon for your assignment.
- Always notify your supervisor if you cannot report for service, will be late, or must leave early (we realize that emergencies and conflicting commitments will arise).
- Be truthful when reporting your hours of service.
- Cooperate with station staff and other volunteers.
- Follow the policies set forth by the LCVN and the station.
- If a problem arises with regard to the assignment, speak with the station supervisor and/or the LCVN Volunteer Services Coordinator.
- If you will be away for an extended period of time, or if you choose to discontinue serving at a particular volunteer station, please inform the station supervisor and the LCVN Volunteer Services Coordinator in advance.
- If while working at your volunteer assignment you encounter confidential information concerning the volunteer station, its employees, and/or the people it serves, you must maintain the confidentiality of that information.
- Keep the LCVN Volunteer Services Coordinator informed of any changes in your phone number, mailing address, and/or email address, and in your ability to serve as a volunteer.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND MANDATORY REPORTING

As a volunteer, you must confirm that you are aware of your obligation to follow the Code of Conduct. You are agreeing to:

- Exercise due care and diligence in carrying out your role and responsibilities.
- Complete all necessary training and adhere to the guiding principles as outlined in the LCVN Volunteer Handbook.

- Maintain the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which you are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a staff member, volunteer, client, or other person.
- Refrain from accepting, obtaining, or attempting to obtain money or anything else of value, including gifts or tips, from the individuals you work with as part of your volunteer role.
- Refrain from engaging in sexual conduct with the client/consumer, or in conduct that a reasonable person would interpret as sexual in nature, even if the conduct were considered consensual.
- Refrain from engaging in behavior that a reasonable person would interpret as inappropriate involvement in the consumer/client's personal relationships.
- Refrain from being designated to make decisions for an older adult with whom you are volunteering in any capacity. This includes the declaration of mental health treatment, power of attorney, durable power of attorney, or guardianship, unless you are assigned as a guardian through the Probate Court.
- Refrain from unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance.
- Immediately disclose any business, commercial or financial interest where such interest might be construed as a real, potential or apparent conflict with your duties as a volunteer.
- Take any allegations, concerns, or observations of neglect, abuse, or exploitation of older adults and children seriously and report concerns to Children & Adult Protective Services at (440) 350-4000, option 1. After making a report with Adult Protective Services, please inform the LCVN staff.

VOLUNTEER HOURS AND BENEFITS

Timekeeping Procedures

- A. The LCVN requires volunteers to report hours monthly. This helps us tell the story of volunteer impact on the community and allows us to apply for additional funding. Volunteers must have reported hours each year to remain an active volunteer member of the LCVN/RSVP.
- B. Each time you volunteer it's important to sign in and out at your volunteer station. Follow station procedures.
- C. Volunteer hours are required to be reported on a monthly basis via www.lakecountyohio.gov, visit the Lake County Volunteer Network tab. Directions on how to report the volunteer hours are included in the volunteer orientation packet, emailed out each month, and linked on the web page.

Volunteer Benefits

LCVN offers several benefits to its volunteers to show appreciation for serving the Lake County community, including free excess accident and liability insurance through CIMA Insurance to all active LCVN volunteers. The coverage is for out-of-pocket medical expenses if a volunteer sustains injuries while volunteering for LCVN. See the CIMA brochure for more information.

A. CIMA Auto and Life Liability Insurance

- Excess accident medical insurance covers volunteers for personal injury during travel between their homes and places of assignment, during volunteer service, during meal periods while serving as a volunteer, and while attending project-sponsored activities. Protection will be provided against claims in excess of any benefits or services for medical care or treatment available to the volunteer from other sources.
- Excess personal liability insurance is provided against claims in excess of protection provided by other insurance. It does not include professional liability coverage.
- Excess automobile insurance is available to drivers who drive in connection with their service. They will be provided protection against claims in excess of the greater of either:
 - Liability insurance the volunteers carry on their own automobiles.
 - The limits of applicable state financial responsibility law, or in its absence, levels of protection to be determined by CNCS for each person, each accident, and for property damage.

Volunteers who drive their personal vehicles to or on assignments or project-related activities shall maintain personal automobile liability insurance equal to or exceeding the levels established by CNCS.

Volunteer drivers must have valid licenses and basic liability insurance. If you are injured while volunteering you need to call the LCVN office immediately and inform a staff person of the injury to start the CIMA Insurance process, even if you are unsure if you will need medical attention.

B. Laketran Dial-A-Ride

- LCVN has an agreement with Laketran to provide free Dial-A-Ride transportation for volunteers traveling to and from a volunteer assignment. Volunteers call the LCVN to be approved to ride free-of-charge and the LCVN is billed for this transportation each month.
- Volunteers must be pre-approved by LCVN for this service. LCVN staff then contact Laketran to inform them of all approved LCVN volunteers. Please contact the LCVN for details on how to be pre-approved and how to schedule a ride.

C. Annual Volunteer Recognition Event

The Lake County Volunteer Network values the time and talent that LCVN members devote to serving others. Each year the LCVN holds a volunteer recognition celebration to acknowledge and celebrate the impact LCVN volunteers have had on the community. All volunteers who served that year are invited to the event. Special awards are presented at this celebration to selected volunteers who were nominated by their station or one of their peers.

D. Access to new volunteer assignments and TEAM RSVP opportunities

- Many non-profit agencies have done-in-a-day projects, special events, large mailings, fundraisers, etc., that require an extra set of volunteers. The LCVN has created a special category of volunteers just to fit this need called TEAM RSVP. Many volunteers are not able to commit to weekly or monthly volunteer opportunities due to personal scheduling conflicts. TEAM RSVP gives busy people an opportunity to volunteer sporadically for one-time events. All

volunteers are required to report their TEAM RSVP hours each month. The station does not report these hours for the volunteer.

- The LCVN constantly receives requests for new volunteer opportunities and keeps volunteers informed through regular email blasts and/or bi-annual hard-copy mailings to member volunteers.

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

Staff and volunteers of the LCVN, may not engage in the following activities while performing activities supported by the RSVP grant or AmeriCorps:

1. Political activities – including partisan or non-partisan activities, either directly or indirectly, engage in any activity to influence the outcome of any election to public office or any voter registration activity. This prohibition includes activities associated with a candidate or contending faction or group in an election; or any activity to provide voters or prospective voters with transportation to the polls or similar assistance in connection with any such election. This also includes any activity designed to influence the enactment of legislation, appropriations, regulation, administrative action, or executive order proposed or pending before the Congress or any State government, State legislature or local legislature or legislative body, other than for normal and recognized executive-legislative relationships or participation by an agency or officer of a State, local or tribal government in policymaking and administrative processes within the executive branch of that government. Volunteers shall not express preferences or seek to influence decisions concerning any candidate, political party, election issue, or voting decision while on service hours.
2. Religious activities - LCVN volunteers and staff may not give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in any form of proselytization as part of their duties.
3. Labor and anti-labor activity - LCVN will not directly or indirectly use grant funds to finance labor or anti-labor organizing or related activity.
4. Non-displacement of employed workers - LCVN volunteers may not perform any service or duty or engage in any activity that would otherwise be performed by an employed worker, or that would supplant the hiring of or result in the displacement of employed workers or impair existing contracts for service.
5. Compensation for service - An agency or organization to which AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers are assigned, or which operates or supervises any RSVP program may not receive any compensation from AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers or from beneficiaries for services of AmeriCorps Senior volunteers.
6. Fair labor standards – a sponsor that employs laborers and mechanics for construction, alteration, or repair of facilities must pay wages at prevailing rates as determined by the Secretary of Labor.
7. Nepotism – Persons selected for project staff positions may not be related by blood or marriage to other project staff, sponsor staff, or officers, or members of the sponsor Board of Directors, unless there is written concurrence from the Advisory Council.
8. Abortion services or referrals - while participating in any volunteer activities supported by a federal grant, volunteers may not engage in providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services.
9. Activities that are prohibited by applicable executive orders.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Lake County Board of Commissioners prohibits discrimination against persons in classes protected by the law who volunteer for or participate in an activity or program sponsored or provided by a Lake County department under the authority of the Lake County Board of Commissioners.

Pursuant to federal law and regulations, no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any public entity.

Any benefits of a Lake County program, service, or activity are available to all without discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, religion, age, national origin, genetic information, disability, military status, familial status, political affiliation, or any other characteristic protected by law. See Appendix A for full policy.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Lake County Board of Commissioners will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs, or activities. A grievance procedure is established to meet the requirements of the ADA. It may be used by anyone who wishes to file a complaint alleging discrimination on the basis of disability in the provision of services, activities, programs, or benefits by Lake County Board of Commissioners. See Appendix B for full policy and procedure.

Confidentiality: Information provided by a potential or enrolled volunteer regarding her/his/their disability shall be kept confidential, except that appropriate supervisors, managers, and safety and health personnel may be informed regarding any restrictions in service duties or necessary accommodations. Information may also be provided to government personnel to comply with various laws and regulations.

Self-Identification: A potential or enrolled volunteer with a disability is not required to disclose information about any physical or mental limitations, whether or not he/she/they believe it will interfere with their capability to perform the essential functions of the position sought or held. However, if you would like program personnel to consider any special arrangements to accommodate a physical or mental impairment, you may identify that impairment, describe the functional limitations that result from that impairment, and suggest the type of accommodation that you believe would be appropriate. Medical verification of the condition may be requested for the volunteer to be protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Volunteers may request a reasonable accommodation by completing the Reasonable Accommodation Request Form (attached as Appendix C) and submitting it to the LCVN Volunteer Services Coordinator.

VOLUNTEER STATUS, SEPARATION, AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Volunteer Status Policy

LCVN volunteers are individuals who complete an enrollment form, attend a volunteer orientation, and are successfully placed in a volunteer position with a volunteer station. There

are no restrictions based on education, income or experience. Volunteers must maintain an updated membership form and regularly submit volunteer service hours. Any time a volunteer's basic information changes, the volunteer should notify the LCVN. A volunteer may choose to temporarily inactivate or close his or her enrollment at any time.

Inactive Volunteers

Volunteers who do not serve on a regular basis or intensively on short-term assignments may become classified as inactive. If a volunteer will be unable to serve for a period of time due to illness, travel, or other needs, the volunteer is responsible for informing the LCVN office or station supervisor ahead of time. After twelve consecutive inactive months, a volunteer will be contacted to see if he/she/they are able to return to active status or should be classified as inactive, at which point they are no longer considered enrolled in service. A volunteer may re-enroll, but if the gap in service is longer than 30 days, the entire enrollment process, including all relevant background checks, must be repeated.

Closed/Terminated Volunteers

Volunteers are subject to discipline and/or dismissal if they have extensive or unauthorized absences, evidence of misconduct, an inability to perform assignments or accept supervision, or if they do not otherwise adhere to the rules and procedures of the LCVN or partner stations. Disciplinary action shall be determined by the LCVN or station management, and it can range from verbal warnings to immediate discharge, depending on the seriousness of the offense. Volunteers are given an opportunity to file a grievance in accordance with the LCVN policy.

Grievance Procedure

The grievance procedure provides a LCVN volunteer with a means of presenting grievances without fear of reprisals.

1. During their service, volunteers are expected to consult with the LCVN Volunteer Services Coordinator regarding any action, occurrence or attitude either expressed or implied that is perceived as unfair or inequitable.
2. If a satisfactory agreement for resolution cannot be made through regular supervisory channels, volunteers may appeal to the LCVN Senior Services Manager within seven business days, in writing.
3. If a volunteer files a written grievance with the Senior Services Manager and no satisfactory solution is reached within seven working days after the grievance is received, the Senior Services Manager will forward the written grievance to the Senior Advisory Panel. If a volunteer brings a grievance forward, the Senior Advisory Panel's decision will be final.

Volunteer Services Coordinator/RSVP Director: Cristen Kane cristen.kane@lakecountyohio.gov (440) 350-5360	Senior Services Manager: Alyea Barajas alyea.barajas@lakecountyohio.gov (440) 350-2748
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PROGRAM EVALUATION AND GUIDANCE

Program Evaluation

In order to maintain our programs, the LCVN must demonstrate the impact we are having within our communities to the BOC of Lake County and the Corporation for National and Community

Service. As a requirement of receiving federal funding, we must collect and report impact data periodically. Program measures are customized for each program. Your volunteer assignment/position description may also be directly linked to a performance measure. If it is, you may, throughout your service year, be asked to complete a survey regarding your duties. Please take the time to complete this paperwork so that we can accurately demonstrate the vital work our volunteers do to meet the critical issues facing our communities.

Advisory Council

Federal regulations for all AmeriCorps Senior Corps programs mandate that community participation in the program shall be secured by way of an Advisory Council. This Council shall be comprised of individuals who are:

- Knowledgeable about human and social needs of the community.
- Competent in the field of community service and volunteerism.
- Interested in and knowledgeable about the capabilities of older adults.
- Capable of helping the LCVN meet its administrative and program responsibilities, including fund-raising, publicity, and impact programming.
- Reflective of the diverse composition of the service area.