# Safety Guidance for Organizations & Volunteers

*For more information about the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/. For the most recent updates on COVID-19 in Ohio, please visit the Ohio Department of Health at https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/.*

*For more COVID-19 resources from Columbus Public Health, please visit www.columbus.gov/coronavirus.*

The health and safety of volunteers must remain a priority. All organizations accepting volunteers must follow the health guidelines described below to ensure the volunteers and those being served stay safe.

If any of the following conditions apply to you, stay home and **DO NOT SIGN UP** to volunteer:
- You are sick.
- You are over 50.
- You have a chronic health condition (e.g., chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system).

## Recommendations for Volunteers Serving During the COVID-19 Outbreak

- Wash your hands often, including at the start and end of your volunteer opportunity. Use soap and water and scrub for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when sneezing or coughing. Do not use your hands.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands.
- Monitor your heath more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.
- Do not gather in large groups.
- Keep at least 6 feet between you and others.

*Adapted from: https://www1.nyc.gov/site/helpnownyc/volunteer/volunteer.page#safety_guidance*

## Recommendations for the Volunteer Organization

### Incorporate "Social Distancing" Into Your Volunteer Programs

As you're providing essential services to your community, you may have to adjust your strategy in order to keep you, your coworkers, volunteers and other community members safe. Here are some ways you can adapt your programs to incorporate social distancing and adhere to virus protection protocol:

- **Restructure your volunteer needs.** Provide opportunities for volunteers to work individually or at least 6 feet apart.
- **Take advantage of the internet.** Instead of holding volunteer training sessions in person, ask volunteers to join you via an online conferencing service like Skype or Google Hangouts. Upload documents online so that volunteers in self-quarantine can access training and onboarding materials easily.
- **Reinvent the drive-through.** Consider organizing a drive-through station for supply donations and distribution to limit person-to-person contact.
- **Create help-from-home projects.** Develop projects and creative ways your volunteers can support your mission from home. Writing letters, gathering and delivering supplies, even virtual mentoring are just some examples of activities that keep volunteers engaged.

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- **Schedule volunteer shifts.** If your programs involve human contact, schedule volunteer opportunities in staggered shifts, and keep the maximum number of participants between 3 and 5 per shift. This will minimize the number of volunteers congregating in a single location at one time.

## Help Your Volunteers Feel Safe

If you do choose to maintain your volunteer programs while public health recommendations are in effect, ensure your volunteers feel safe with these three tips:

- **Prepare your volunteer space.** Set up hand sanitizer and hand washing stations. Print out and hang up Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for effective hand washing and sanitation. Dedicate extra time for cleaning your spaces, and provide personal protective equipment (PPE) when necessary.
- **Be aware of your vulnerable populations.** Support your volunteers who may be more vulnerable to COVID-19 (see above), especially older participants. Communicate it's in their best interest to stay home, make them feel valued and let them know you'll be ready to receive their help when it's safe to do so.
- **Be responsive.** Your volunteers probably have lots of questions. Even if you don't have all the answers, you can help your volunteers feel safe by simply being responsive to their concerns and questions. Carve out extra time in your day to communicate with your volunteers on a personal level.

*Adapted from:* [https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/volunteer-management-response-covid19/](https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/volunteer-management-response-covid19/)

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