



Washington State University  
Extension Child Protection and

Child Abuse Prevention  
Volunteer Application  
and Procedures

Revised 2003

**PURPOSE/RATIONALE/DEFINITIONS OF SCREENING  
EXTENSION VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF WHO DESIRE TO WORK  
DIRECTLY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

Revised 2003

**PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT:** Washington State University believes in the right of every child to a safe and nurturing environment. Actions against children that contribute to child abuse or neglect are contrary to the values of Cooperative Extension (CE). We oppose such actions in all settings where children are concerned.

**POLICY STATEMENT:** All Extension volunteers and salaried staff will receive information and training on how to recognize and properly respond to suspected child abuse/neglect. Screening will be conducted for all volunteers and salaried staff who will have regularly scheduled unsupervised access to children under sixteen years of age or developmentally disabled persons during the course of his or her employment or volunteer commitment.

**PURPOSE OF SCREENING:** To provide a safe environment for young people involved in Cooperative Extension activities.

To help insure the selection and placement of qualified volunteers and staff for all Cooperative Extension activities that involve youth.

- RATIONALE:**
1. Cooperative Extension should provide a safe environment for young people participating in its programs.
  2. Washington State passed legislation in April 1987 which enables non-profit organizations to obtain information on child/adult abuse convictions of applicants. Since 2002, online procedures for background checks have improved the process.
  3. Extensive media coverage has enhanced our society's awareness of the child abuse issue. Because of the concerns surrounding this issue, most major youth serving agencies have instituted *screening processes*.

**DEFINITION OF APPLICATION FROM THE LAW:** Any prospective volunteer or salaried staff who will have regularly scheduled unsupervised access to children under sixteen years of age or developmentally disabled persons during the course of his or her employment or involvement with the business or organization under circumstances where such access will or may involve groups of (1) five or fewer children under twelve years of age, (2) three or fewer children between twelve and sixteen years of age, or (3) developmentally disabled persons.

**WASHINGTON COOPERATIVE EXTENSION DEFINITION:** Any person who will have regularly scheduled unsupervised contact with young people in first grade through 19 years of age and developmentally disabled persons of any age.

## COOPERATIVE EXTENSION VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES 2003

The following steps of APPLICATION, INTERVIEW, and CONTRACT need to occur prior to an individual enrolling as a volunteer in the Washington State University Cooperative Extension programs. All adults in host families also need to be screened.

### APPLICATION:

**1. Have applicant complete and return the completed forms.**

Volunteer Application Form—Part A which provides the general information and volunteer interests and skills; and Part B Background Disclosure and References.

**2. Complete online criminal history background check at <http://watch.wsp.wa.gov>.**

*Information about background checks:*

The Washington State Patrol Identification and Criminal History Section (WASIS), has established this web site (<http://watch.wsp.wa.gov>) as the official Internet source providing criminal history conviction records for the state of Washington. WATCH stands for Washington Access To Criminal History.

This database is comprised of records sent to WASIS by courts and criminal justice agencies throughout the state. This database includes conviction information, arrests less than one year old with dispositions pending, dependency proceedings, and information regarding registered sex and kidnap offenders. The WSP criminal history file also contains additional information such as arrest records, that is not open to the general public.

The Criminal Records Privacy Act specifies criminal history dissemination guidelines. Conviction data may be released without restriction. Non-conviction information is not available to the public. Legislation requires that information be kept about the person requesting the report, such as target of the search, the name of the person requesting the search, and date the search was conducted.

**WASIS cannot guarantee the records you obtain though this site relate to the person on whom you are seeking information. Searches based on names, dates of birth, and other identifiers are not always accurate. The only way to positively link someone to a criminal record is through fingerprint verification.**

The WASIS search will result in:

- a) A candidate list of records that match or closely match the search criteria used.
- b) A NO RECORD response which means there is no conviction record in the WSP database that match the search criteria used.
- c) An indication that there were two or more exact name and date of birth matches to the search criteria used.

Please send technical comments, questions, and inquiries regarding this site to: [WATCH HELP \(watch.help@wsp.wa.gov\)](mailto:watch.help@wsp.wa.gov). Please send questions and inquiries regarding criminal history to: [CRIMINAL HISTORY INFORMATION \(crimhis@wsp.wa.gov\)](mailto:crimhis@wsp.wa.gov). To ensure a response, please include your name, daytime telephone number, e-mail address, and postal address.

**3. Process enrollment forms after interviews and reference checks.**

**4. Conduct orientation and training.**

#### **SUGGESTED INTERVIEW PROCESS:**

Minimum expectation: Share written information about responsibilities of volunteer, learn volunteer's interests via a response form and answer their questions.

Potential volunteer provides names of 2 references (required). You will see the Application Form asks for 3 references. Asking for 3 names will help you if one reference doesn't reply.

Ideal: In-depth face-to-face interview to discuss responsibilities of available positions. Learn volunteer's interests and answer their questions. Some are listed in Part A of the Application Form. Make a separate list of opportunities in your county or area. Use suggested ideas from this packet. Agree on job responsibilities. Contact the 2 references supplied by potential volunteer by mail, phone or in person.

#### **CONTRACT:**

Minimum: Have 4-H volunteers sign "A Valuable Partnership" Volunteer agreement C1000, available from Bulletins. Have volunteers in other volunteer programs sign an acknowledgement appropriate for their role.

Keep one copy on file a the county Extension office and return one copy to volunteer.

Ideal: Discuss these documents during an orientation session. Have volunteers sign document annually. Discuss job responsibilities with volunteer and have them sign a job agreement form.

### **ANNUAL VOLUNTEER JOB REVIEW AND FEEDBACK:**

Minimum: Conduct a review for management volunteers.  
Offer the opportunity of a review to others in program.

Ideal: Conduct a review for management volunteers who would conduct reviews of other volunteers who would conduct similar reviews with the project, activity, and other leaders at the 4-H club level, for example.

## COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SCREENING GUIDELINES 2003

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

Design a management system for screening volunteers and staff that fits your county situation. Determine a written policy of who will have access to the confidential files and how the procedures will be handled. Keep the records in a locked file for as long as the individuals are Extension volunteers.

In some counties the extension educator or salaried program assistant will conduct the interviews and reference checks. In others, volunteers will be trained to carry out these roles. Both ways have advantages. If a faculty/staff member interviews, you get to know your volunteers and establish a supportive relationship. The information you gain will help you determine the training that this individual needs.

If trained volunteers conduct the interviews and reference checks, it may relieve staff time. Have you thought about seeking volunteers who already have some of the necessary skills? Personnel managers would be good choices.

If you send application forms in the mail, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to increase the return rate.

### SCREENING CATEGORIES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

**Persons under age 18:** Any person under age 18 who acts in an adult capacity, i.e. camp counselor, club leader, school age care volunteers or staff, is to be screened following these same guidelines. Signature of a parent/guardian is needed on the application and criminal history disclosure form.

**Other adults that reside in the volunteer's residence if meetings for programs are to be conducted in the home:** Complete criminal history disclosure form, Part B of the Volunteer Application Form. Extension office conducts online background check.

**Extension faculty/staff who work directly with children:** Any salaried staff who will work with youth, including master gardeners or nutrition assistants who make home visits or who work with youth groups or schools. Complete criminal history disclosure form, Part B of the Volunteer Application Form. Extension office conducts online background check.

**Adults in host families:** Fill out volunteer application form. Complete criminal history disclosure form, Part B of the Volunteer Application Form. Extension office conducts online background check.

## VOLUNTEERS SCREENED THROUGH OTHER AGENCIES

If you are working with volunteers who have been screened through other agencies and you are aware that the screening procedures are at least as rigorous as Cooperative Extension's screening procedures, the volunteers do not need to be screened a second time. Request these agencies printed documentation (i.e. a copy of their procedures/a list of screened individuals) be sent to you for your Extension office files.

**Do not** accept a volunteer until you receive the accurate and complete WASIS documentation from the other agency or organization.

## FILING/REPEAT CHECKS

A valid WSU Extension Volunteer Application and Criminal History Response needs to be on file during a volunteer's tenure.

Current Extension policy requires criminal history checks before an individual enrolls as an Extension volunteer. Counties may decide to periodically re-screen volunteers.

## INTERVIEWS

One purpose of interviewing is to learn how well an individual's philosophy fits with Cooperative Extension philosophy of youth development. Another purpose is to gain information about the new volunteer's interests and skills that will assist you in matching them with the work that needs to be accomplished. You can also determine the areas where they need additional training. Discussion of interests will help you learn about the volunteers as well as share Cooperative Extension's philosophy.

Interviews may be done individually or in a group. Individual interviews will yield more information but can be quite time consuming if you have a large number of new volunteers.

A group method may be more efficient and offers the opportunity of sharing ideas. Others could add their ideas. You could have each individual write an answer to one of the questions and keep their answers in their file.

If volunteers will be recruiting other volunteers, provide them training to do so. For example, train main 4-H leaders to conduct similar interviews with the 4-H project leaders in their clubs.

## REFERENCE CHECKS

Reference checks provide another person's perception of how well the applicant can work with youths. They may also provide you with additional information about the applicant that may be

useful in matching the skills of the volunteer with the work that needs to be done. Reference checks can be conducted by PHONE or by MAIL. PHONE checks often provide the most candid information, but the references may be difficult to locate during regular office hours. MAIL checks are likely to provide more responses if you include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

WSU Attorney General's office suggests that a "reasonable effort" be your guide for number of contacts to secure a reference. The definition of a "reasonable effort" for seeking references is two references to contact: original plus one more.

## EXPECTATIONS/RESPONSIBILITIES

Discuss expectations/responsibilities of Cooperative Extension and volunteers 1) as part of the interview with the volunteer, or 2) as part of an orientation session. Topics to be covered include *Child Abuse: Information for WSU CE Faculty, Staff, and Volunteers C1001*. 4-H Volunteers would sign the 4-H volunteer agreement *A Valuable Partnership C1000*, available from Bulletins.

## PROCEDURES IN CASES WHERE APPLICANTS HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD

1. On receipt of a negative report from the online WSP WATCH, there is a duty to inform the applicant within 10 days.
  - a) If there is no criminal record, the applicant is otherwise qualified. Send a letter of acceptance.
  - b) If there is a criminal record, send a letter of denial, example following. This is the same as Form D, Option 2 used in the 1995 packet so it is one you may already be using and may continue to use.
2. If the applicant calls in response to Option 2, indicating he or she is still interested in becoming a volunteer, agent asks that person over the phone the circumstances surrounding the criminal conviction, and why he/she believes this should not prevent him/her from becoming a volunteer.

Helpful questions:

- What were the circumstances surrounding the crime?
- Did this involve a crime against a child?
- Was there any plea bargain where a more serious crime was plead down to a lesser crime? What was the original charge?
- Why does the applicant believe this crime should not prevent him/her from becoming a volunteer?

- Is there anyone who knows about this conviction and who can attest to suitability of applicant to work with youth?
3. Call the Associate Director for WSU Extension if you have questions. A conference call can be set up with the WSU Division of the Attorney General’s Office regarding the case. More investigation may be necessary.
  4. If the decision not to appoint is made, send a letter, Option 3 below.
  5. If the decision is made to appoint, send a letter outlining the orientation and training expectations and special conditions may be agreed upon.
  6. In case an applicant claims there is an error in the State Patrol’s records, have the applicant call the State Patrol and then notify the agent when the problem is cleared up. The agent is entitled to rely on the information given by the State Patrol.
  7. If the agent receives new information which should be considered, go back to Step 3.

**SAMPLE LETTER**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

The Washington State Patrol reports that you have a civil or criminal record in their Washington State Patrol Identification and Criminal History Section (WASIS) files. Their records show the following:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

We cannot accept you as a volunteer without further information. If you still would like to be an Extension volunteer, we request that you contact us so that we can discuss your application. Please understand what while we do not wish to discourage people from volunteering, at the same time we must provide a safe atmosphere for youth in Cooperative Extension activities.

If you feel the information provided by the State Patrol is in error, please contact them immediately. Phone (360) 705-5100.

**SAMPLE LETTER**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

After considering your application and the additional information you have provided, we have decided not to accept you as an Extension volunteer at this time. We appreciate your interest in our organization.

**EXPECTATIONS FOR COUNTY/AREA CHILD PROTECTION AND CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION TRAINING**

LEVEL	ACTION
1. INFORMATION	<p><b>REQUIRED</b></p> <p>Volunteers read the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>C1001 Child Abuse: Information for WSU Cooperative Extension Faculty, Staff, and Volunteers</i></li> </ul> <p>ALL volunteers and staff who will work with youth under age 19 <i>must</i> participate in training and watch the video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Put the Child First.</i></li> <li>• Use the following Ideas for Using the Video “Put the Child First” to guide discussions following the video.</li> </ul> <p>4-H volunteers read and sign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Behavior Guidelines in C1000 A Valuable Partnership: Volunteers and the 4-H Youth Development Program</i></li> </ul>
2. ORIENTATION	<p><b>HIGHLY RECOMMENDED</b></p> <p>Face-to-face discussion of the above information. This can be one-on-one discussions, part of a new volunteer orientation meeting with update sessions as needed, and orientation sessions for master gardeners, chaperones, camp counselors, host families, etc.</p>
3. EDUCATION	<p><b>RECOMMENDED</b></p> <p>Education helps prepare people to advocate for the safety and well-being of children. By providing periodic workshops on youth protection, parenting education, ethics education, and conflict resolution, volunteers and parents gain skills and knowledge to strengthen their adult-youth relationships.</p> <p>Utilize appropriate guest speakers, videos and handouts make sessions more interesting.</p>

## IDEAS FOR USING THE VIDEO “Put the Child First”

Every WSU county extension office received a copy of this video in the fall of 2002. If you want to borrow the video, order from the AV Clerk, through e-mail: [ceeps@wsu.edu](mailto:ceeps@wsu.edu). To keep a videotape in your county, order from, Susan Butts, State 4-H Office, at [sbutts@wsu.edu](mailto:sbutts@wsu.edu), phone 335-4128 or FAX 335-2808.

### VIEWING

“Put the Child First” is a very useful video for stimulating discussion among staff and volunteers about their reactions to child abuse and the appropriate ways to respond to children who disclose their abuse in some manner.

When introducing the “Put the Child First” video, keep in mind the possibility that some participants may have experienced some form of abuse. It’s a good idea to have a professional available to assist adults who may find it difficult or painful to watch this video. If anyone needs some private time after watching the video, encourage them to leave the room to talk things over with the professional or to go for a walk.

Be sure to view the video yourself before showing it to a group in order to decide on when and how you want to introduce it to the participants. Consider asking them to look for situations that they may be able to identify with, to look for ideas that may help them, to write down any questions they may have, and to think of ways they might use this video. Tell them it is 15 minutes long and that there will be time to debrief following viewing of the video.

### DEBRIEFING

After you show the video, ask small groups of participants to discuss their reactions to it. You may wish to have the following questions on newsprint or printed for each group:

1. What do you feel while watching the video?
2. Were you able to identify with any of the volunteers in the video? If so, which ones did you identify with and why?
3. Was there anything in the video, if in the same circumstances, you might do differently? If so, why?
4. What did you learn from the video that will assist you in your work with young people?
5. What ways could you use this video in your community?
6. Additional questions or comments.

Depending on the group’s response to the video, you may need to bring participants back to the larger group and have a general discussion regarding their reactions and the video’s value as a training tool in your community.

Be sensitive to the group dynamics and adjust the agenda where appropriate. Plan on at least 15 minutes for debriefing after the video, but be ready to allow more time if necessary.

*Jan Hiller, Extension 4-H Youth Development Specialist, 9/2002*

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**Ad Hoc Extension Screening/Child Protection Committee (2003):**

- Linda Fox, Associate Dean and Associate Director, Cooperative Extension, Washington State University Pullman
- Samantha Hayes, 4-H Program Assistant, Pierce County
- Kay Hendrickson, Area Youth and Families Educator, Benton/Franklin
- Jan Hiller, 4-H Youth Development Specialist, Washington State University Pullman
- Kathleen Manenica, Food Sense Program Coordinator, Washington State University Puyallup
- Janet Schmidt, Extension Educator, Whitman County
- Elizabeth Tennison, 4-H Volunteer Coordinator, King County
- Rod Tinnemore, State Master Gardener Coordinator, Washington State University Puyallup

May 19, 2003

FOX C/my docs/personnel/child protection/WSU Cooperative Extension Volunteer.doc