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**Best Practices for Posting Volunteer Needs During COVID-19**

In the past, potential volunteers just wanted to know what they’d be doing and where they’d be doing it so opportunity descriptions could be simple. With COVID-19, volunteers will likely have many more questions before they are willing to register to help.

Here are a few things to consider when writing your opportunity description. Including answers to these questions will make it quicker for the Volunteer Center to activate your opportunity to the public and make it easier for the public to respond to your need.

1. Exactly where are you asking volunteers to perform their tasks?

* If they will be volunteering from home, click YES for the new “virtual” field. This will eliminate the need for you to enter an address or zip code for the opportunity and will allow volunteers to find your activity when they search for remote volunteer needs.
* If volunteers will be coming to your location to perform tasks, tell them exactly how you will ensure their safety while volunteering. For example, will you provide masks and hand sanitizer or will volunteers need to bring their own? Will there be enough space for social distancing at the location? How many volunteers will be working together? Will they be sharing equipment?

1. For “virtual” opportunities where volunteers will be working from home:

Are they “crafting” something like a greeting card or artwork?

* Who are they creating something for?
* How will their creations be delivered to your clients? Is there a drop off location and time, or should volunteers contact you for pickup? Should volunteers be prepared to mail their creations to your clients? Remember to include phone numbers and email addresses (with links) in your description if volunteers will need them to complete the task.

Are they providing food items?

* Who are they providing food for?
* Are there any special requirements for the food or packaging?
* Will volunteers be dropping food off to clients or your location? In some cases, you may prefer not to provide specific locations and ask volunteers to contact you for instructions. Remember to include your contact information.
* Are there specific days of the week or times that the food is needed?

1. Are volunteers helping you distribute food, PPE or other essential items?

* Will they be using their own vehicles? If yes, do the vehicles need to be a certain size to accommodate the delivery?
* Will volunteers be lifting heavy items, or will staff/volunteers help at the pickup and drop-off locations?

1. Are you taking advantage of our new “interest” categories?

* Use “donate for COVID-19 response” only to request monetary or food or essential item donations.
* Use “emergency response” only when the task is directly connected to providing support for people impacted by COVID-19. For example, if your organization has always asked volunteers to make blankets for hospitals and you are simply reminding the community that these items are needed, the “emergency response” category is not appropriate. However, if your organization needs more blankets because of additional hospital requirements during the pandemic, then “emergency response” is fine.

If your organization is eligible to offer SSL hours to students and is posting an age-appropriate opportunity, please carefully read the MCPS SSL requirements (especially for “virtual” opportunities) at <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/ssl/virtual.aspx>. To qualify for SSL approval, virtual opportunities will need additional details in their descriptions, including a pre-worded statement regarding student safety and privacy and SSL hour equivalencies. All opportunities that may attract students will be reviewed by MCPS before they are activated on the public database. For more information on SSL, please contact Donna Kleffman at [donna\_k\_kleffman@mcpsmd.org](mailto:donna_k_kleffman@mcpsmd.org).

If you have questions about posting your opportunity that are not related to SSL, please contact Carol Ross at [carol.ross@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:carol.ross@montgomerycountymd.gov) and Molly Callaway at [molly.callaway@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:molly.callaway@montgomerycountymd.gov).

See more on the [FAQ page on the VC website](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter/nonprofits-gov/faq.html).