

Volunteer

Orientation &

Handbook



RSVP

Lead with Experience

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What is RSVP?

RSVP or Retired Senior Volunteer Program is part of a national network of programs called Senior Corps that recruits adults 55 and older to use their talents and life experiences to help meet community needs through volunteer service. RSVP offers maximum flexibility and choice to its volunteers as it matches the personal interests and skills of older Americans with opportunities to serve in their communities. Volunteers provide millions of community service hours across the United States.

RSVP Polk is an organization dedicated to meeting community needs in Polk County, Florida, by placing volunteers whose wisdom can make a difference. RSVP is sponsored by the Polk County Board of County Commissioners and serves all municipalities and areas in Polk County.

Program staff is responsible for volunteer recruitment, training, and recognition to ensure volunteers have a meaningful, purposeful, and rewarding experience. Ongoing education and support for volunteers is an important component of RSVP. Through careful monitoring, data collection, and evaluation by program staff, volunteers know of the impact they are making in addressing community needs.

Current programs include: Tale Tellers, Reading Pals, Mentoring, and tutoring in elementary, middle and high schools throughout the service area. RSVP also partners with Habitat for Humanity, local food banks, disaster preparedness organizations, and other organizations providing basic needs for Polk County residents. RSVP Polk focuses most of its programs on improving literacy skills of students but is always exploring and developing new volunteer opportunities within the Polk County area.

Dear **RSVP Polk** Volunteer,

It is my pleasure to welcome you as a partner in service to your community! Today, more than ever, there is a tremendous need for volunteers throughout Polk County, Florida. It is because of people like you, who want to make a difference by sharing your time and talents that Polk County is a great places to live.

You are now part of an organization that has a long history of helping others. Not only are you a member of **RSVP Polk**, you are part of a movement that started in 1971 and has continued to gain. RSVP has grown to approximately 650 programs and 300,000 volunteers nationwide.

I'm certain that, while volunteering, you will be inspired by those you come in contact with and gain satisfaction that only comes from serving others. It is our goal to assure that your experience with RSVP is purposeful, rewarding, and an experience of a lifetime.

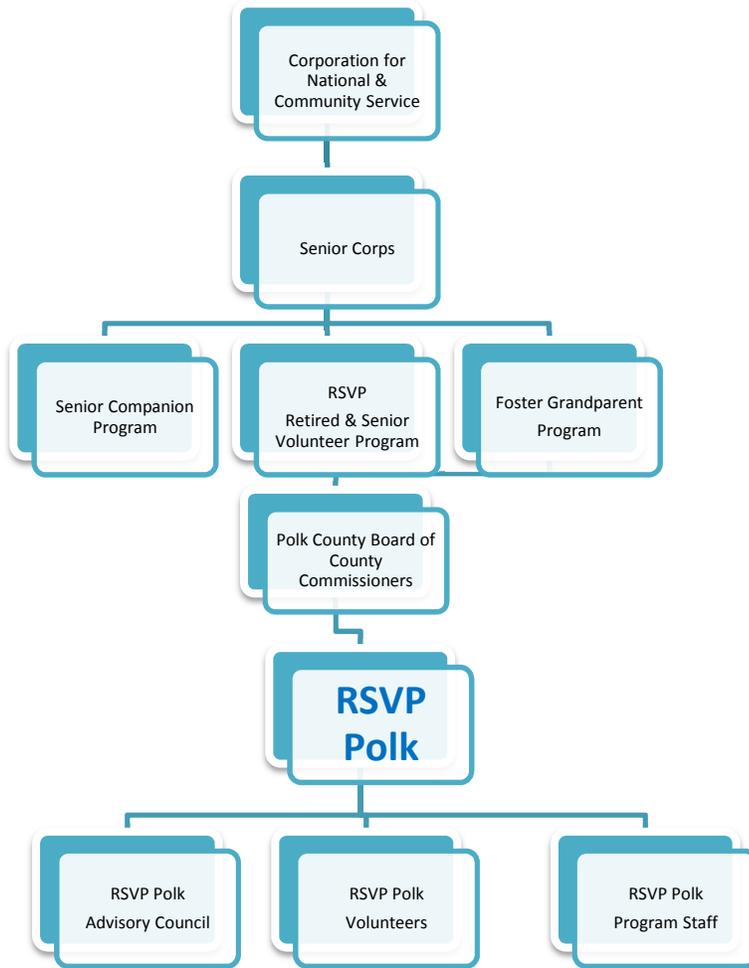
Thank you for volunteering with **RSVP Polk**!

Warmly,

Kathy Drainville

RSVP Polk Coordinator

Organizational Structure



Financial Structure

RSVP is funded by:



Mission

The mission of **RSVP Polk** is to respond to community needs by providing meaningful and purposeful volunteer opportunities for people 55 and older.

History

The Administration on Aging launched RSVP in 1971, allowing retired persons in America to continue leading active lives while contributing to the needs of their communities in meaningful ways. Eleven projects were started in the summer of 1971. By 1974, there were 666 projects nationwide. In 1988, RSVP had grown to 750 projects supported by federal funding. Today, there are approximately 650 due to budget cutbacks.

In 1993, RSVP became part of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), which is a federal agency. CNCS was created to meet the personal, educational, environmental, and public safety needs of the United States, and to encourage citizens to volunteer, full or part time, regardless of age.

Local History

The Polk County Board of County Commissioners became the sponsor of RSVP in 2007. Prior to 2007 the program was run sponsored by the United Way of Central Florida and a community organization.

Sponsorship – Polk County Board of County Commissioners

RSVP Polk is sponsored by the Polk County BoCC. The BoCC serves as the fiscal agent for the program and employs program staff. The RSVP office is located in Bartow, FL in the former Polk General Hospital building at 2135 Marshall Edwards Dr. RSVP Polk is part of the Social Services Division and managed by Volunteer Polk. The Polk County BoCC provides RSVP Polk with office and meeting space, staff training, and ensures the program has the resources to meet the grant requirements. The mission of the Polk County BoCC is to enhance the quality of life for people throughout Polk County.

Advisory Council – Purpose and Function

The primary purpose of the RSVP Advisory Council is to monitor and review program development and assessment. The Council is made up of key individuals from Polk County who have a passion for volunteering and a commitment to the mission of RSVP. Members appraise matters related to the program, make suggestions concerning the functions of RSVP, and provide support to the program as it serves volunteers, partner agencies, and the community. The Council meets quarterly in a Polk County BoCC facility.

Volunteer Information

Who can become an RSVP Volunteer?

Anyone who is 55 or older with a desire to be involved in their community by sharing their skills and talents can become an RSVP volunteer. There are no educational, income or experience requirements, nor dues or membership fees to join.

What can RSVP volunteers do?

In Polk County, the primary focus of RSVP is K-12 Education, which includes tutoring and mentoring. Volunteers are matched with opportunities based on personal preference and the nature of the position. Each opportunity has a description to clarify specific duties, the training required, location of the station, etc. Additional opportunities are always being explored.

What does RSVP offer active volunteers?

- The opportunity to enhance current skills or learn new skills
- Free supplemental insurance
- RSVP Newsletter
- Ongoing recognition

What are the benefits of volunteering?

- Social interaction and the chance to meet new people
- Staying active and mentally engaged
- Positively impacting the individuals you work with
- Giving back to your community
- Living a purposeful life
- Can help reduce stress
- Can discover hidden talents
- Assist with uniting people from diverse backgrounds to work toward a common goal

Volunteer Stations

What is a Volunteer Station?

A Volunteer Station is a public or non-profit entity that has a written agreement with RSVP to provide volunteer opportunities. RSVP volunteers help stations fulfill their mission and serve their clients whether they are students, residents, or community members with a need. Volunteer Stations agree to provide a safe environment for RSVP volunteers and accept the responsibility of volunteer supervision. Key individuals from stations assist with volunteer training and recognition.

Fitting in at Volunteer Stations

Volunteer Stations appreciate and value the time and talent volunteers offer. When volunteering, don't be shy – ask questions about the organization.

Below is a list of details you will want to know about the Volunteer Station:

- Know and understand your role at the Volunteer Station.
- Know what change you are working to make or the problem you are working to address.
- Understand the mission or purpose of the Volunteer Station.
- Know your supervisor and the station staff you work with. They will answer your questions and address any concerns you may have.
- Know what policies and procedures you are subject to as a volunteer, including the check-in procedure for your station.
- Learn the little things such as the location of the restrooms, coat racks, work space, parking area, etc.

Policies and Procedures

Approval Policy

All volunteers are subject to approval by the Volunteer Station prior to serving in their volunteer assignment.

Background Check Policy

Federal regulations provided by CNCS strongly encourage background checks. RSVP Polk supports all stations that require a background screening and will pay the cost of background screenings for enrolled RSVP volunteers.

Non-Discrimination Policy

No persons, regardless of race, religion, color, creed, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, political affiliation, marital status, age, disability (physical or mental), veteran status, or genetic information shall be excluded from participating in RSVP.

Limited-English Proficiency Policy

RSVP Polk will make reasonable efforts to assist limited-English speaking individuals who want to become RSVP volunteers. Program staff will utilize resources and staff to assist with translation. If available, additional community resources will be utilized for individuals with native languages other than Spanish. If all local options have been exhausted, program staff will utilize additional resources such as the Personal Interpreter program through Language Line Services, an over-the-phone interpretation service.

Orientation and Training

All new volunteers will receive an orientation, which will cover an introduction to RSVP and an overview of Polk RSVP. Before serving at a Volunteer Station, volunteers will receive training appropriate to their position. Training opportunities will also be provided throughout the year. All volunteers are strongly encouraged to attend all trainings.

Conduct

When volunteering, an RSVP volunteer must act in accordance with the Volunteer Station's guidelines for staff and/or volunteers. Any concerns regarding the guidelines should be taken to the station supervisor. If concerns are not resolved, the volunteer should contact the RSVP Director.

Note: Volunteers must be on time. If you are unable to arrive at your scheduled time, please notify your station supervisor. If you are going to be absent, please follow the process outlined by RSVP staff for your volunteer assignment.

Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of a trusting relationship between volunteers, clients, Volunteer Stations, and RSVP. Some volunteer opportunities involve knowing sensitive information about the individuals being served. Issues or concerns regarding clients should only be discussed with the station supervisor or RSVP staff. It is important to never release the name, address, phone number or any other information that may identify the client to anyone except the Volunteer Station and/or RSVP staff. For your

own safety, it is also important to only release personal details to RSVP and Volunteer Station staff.

Inclement Weather

In the case of inclement weather or poor road conditions, volunteers should exercise caution. Use good judgment in making a decision to travel to the volunteer assignment. Volunteers who will be absent due to weather should notify the Volunteer Station.

Reporting Volunteer Hours

It is very important that RSVP staff know how much time a volunteer spends at their station. The federal government requires programs to keep track of volunteer hours as a means of assessing the program's performance.

Volunteer hours indicate active status and allow volunteers to participate in recognition events and remain eligible for the supplemental insurance coverage. Volunteer Stations will collect and report hours to RSVP staff based on Attendance Sheets. Volunteers are required to indicate the number of hours served on the Attendance Sheet each time they volunteer.

Recognition

Recognition efforts for volunteers will be conducted throughout the year. Once a year, RSVP will sponsor a Volunteer Celebration to acknowledge volunteers and their efforts. Volunteer recognition is important to RSVP and we welcome any suggestions of ways to recognize volunteers.

Publicity

It is the intent of the program to make the general public aware of RSVP volunteer service through an ongoing publicity program. This will include newsletter and newspaper articles on volunteers and service, which may include photographs, as well as radio spots. RSVP retains the right to use photographs of volunteers taken by staff or shared with staff by volunteers or Volunteer Stations.

Volunteer Safety Policy

Volunteer safety is important to RSVP. Concerns regarding safety at a Volunteer Station should be reported to the station supervisor and RSVP Director as soon as possible. If a volunteer is involved in an accident while on assignment, they should notify the RSVP office within 24 hours. Should a volunteer's medical, physical, or other condition change at any time, it is the duty of the volunteer to inform the RSVP Director so that appropriate changes may be made with regard to volunteer activities.

Volunteer Insurance

All active volunteers are provided with supplemental accident medical, volunteer liability, and auto liability insurance, which supplements existing insurance policies at no cost to the volunteer. The coverage protects an RSVP volunteer during their volunteer assignment (travel if associated with volunteer assignment, and while performing duties at the station). Volunteers using a personal auto must keep up-to-date minimum levels of liability insurance as mandated by the State of Florida. See CIMA pamphlet for details.

Volunteer Insurance (Continued)

In case of an accident, auto or otherwise, the volunteer should:

- Report the incident within 24 hours to the RSVP staff, who will notify the insurance company.
- File appropriate claim forms with their own primary insurance provider including Medicare or Medicaid.
- Keep insurance statements and itemized bills, as they will be needed to file a claim.

Volunteer Status

Volunteers will remain active throughout the program year in which they serve. At the end of each year, volunteers will be asked if they want to continue their volunteer service. They may choose to remain active, go on a temporary leave of absence (see policy), or withdraw from their service with RSVP. Volunteers may also change their volunteer status at any time by notifying RSVP staff.

Note: Once a volunteer has withdrawn, he/she is no longer covered by CIMA insurance.

Leave of Absence

If a volunteer needs to temporarily suspend their volunteer service, they may go on a Leave of Absence (LOA) for up to three years. Volunteers may return to active service as soon as they are ready by notifying the RSVP office. Each summer, RSVP will contact volunteers who are on a LOA to determine if they want to remain on a LOA, return to active volunteering, or withdraw from the program. While on a LOA, volunteers will continue to receive the RSVP newsletter and other correspondence from the program, such as information regarding new volunteer opportunities or service projects. At the end of three years on a LOA, volunteers will be automatically withdrawn from RSVP.

Volunteer Reimbursement Policy

Due to limited resources, RSVP Polk does not reimburse for transportation or meals associated with volunteer assignments.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

The use of illegal drugs or alcohol, or being under the influence of the same, while performing hours of service is prohibited and shall be cause for termination of all volunteer placements through RSVP.

Volunteer Dismissal Policy

RSVP may dismiss a volunteer for cause including, but not limited to, failure to perform assigned duties, excessive or unapproved absence, a breach in confidentiality, misconduct, or working under the influence of illegal drugs and alcohol. All decisions regarding dismissal of a volunteer will be agreed upon by the RSVP Coordinator, the Manager of Volunteer Polk, and the RSVP Volunteer Station Supervisor.

Appeal Process

All appeals to action affecting an RSVP volunteer must be made in writing to the RSVP Coordinator with a copy sent to the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council will review the complaint and if necessary, conduct an investigation with the appropriate individuals, including the RSVP Coordinator and the volunteer making the appeal. Additional persons may be involved such as other volunteers, station and/or RSVP staff. The Council will determine what action should be taken to correct the situation. The Council will respond in writing to the appealing volunteer explaining the Council's decision and necessary action.

Policy Changes

Policies in this handbook are subject to change without notice. The Advisory Council will review the handbook annually to ensure contents are appropriate, effective, and timely. The most recent volunteer handbook is posted on the Polk County BoCC website:

www.polk-county.net/volunteer

This handbook was revised in July 2014

Volunteer Responsibilities

When accepting a volunteer assignment with RSVP, responsibilities include:

1. Attend the volunteer orientation and trainings.
2. Ask questions at your Volunteer Station if you are unsure about something. If you still have questions, please call the RSVP office.
3. Arrange for a substitute volunteer if you know you will be absent.
4. Notify your station if you will be absent.
5. Sign the RSVP Attendance Sheet so your hours can be properly recorded.
6. Keep station business and client information confidential.
7. If you are in an accident, notify the RSVP office and your station immediately.
8. Notify the RSVP office if you are having problems at your station.
9. Notify the RSVP office if there are changes in your contact information.
10. Notify the RSVP office if there are changes in your health that affect your volunteer service.

Special Limitations for RSVP Volunteers

1. While representing RSVP, volunteers should not engage in any of the following activities:

- Electoral activities
- Voter registration
- Voter transportation to polls
- Efforts to influence legislation

2. While representing RSVP, volunteers must not engage in any activity which would otherwise be performed by any employee or result in the displacement of any employee.

3. While representing RSVP, volunteers must not receive a fee for service from service recipients, their legal guardians, members of their family, or friends.

4. While representing RSVP, volunteers must not give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or attempt to convert others to another opinion or religion.

Questions and concerns are always welcome! Please feel free to call the RSVP office and/or visit with an RSVP staff member at any time.

Terms and Acronyms

Advisory Council: A diverse group of people that the RSVP Sponsor formally organizes to ensure community participation in the project. The council meets quarterly to assess, evaluate, and promote RSVP.

AmeriCorps: A program of the Corporation for National and Community Service whose members serve with local and national organizations to meet community needs and, after their service, receive educational awards to help finance education and training.

CNCS: Corporation for National and Community Service is the federal agency that provides federal funding for RSVP. CNCS oversees AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the National Senior Service Corps.

Community Need: A problem within a community that the program intends to address.

Evaluation: Process of systematically looking at how a program works and what effect it has on participants. The evaluation process is used for reporting and continuous improvement.

eGrants: The website utilized by CNCS to electronically submit and monitor grant proposals and program activity.

Foster Grandparent Program (FGP): One of three programs that make up the National Senior Service Corps sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service. FGP is a program in which stipend volunteers serve 20 hours a week providing services to children with special and exceptional needs.

In-kind Contributions: Non-cash donations.

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding is a written agreement signed by the RSVP Director and the Volunteer Station representative who identifies project requirements, working relationships, and mutual responsibilities.

National Community Service Trust Act: The act of Congress in 1993 which established the Corporation for National and Community Service and its programs, including RSVP.

National Senior Service Corps (NSSC): The collective name for three programs: Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent Program (FGP), and Senior Companion Program (SCP), also referred to as Senior Corps. NSSC falls under the umbrella of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program): One of the three programs that make up the National Senior Service Corps sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Volunteers must be 55 years of age or older and serve where there is an identified need.

Senior Companion Program (SCP): One of the three programs that make up the National Senior Service Corps. Volunteers provide assistance to frail and homebound individuals, receive a stipend, must be income eligible, and at least 55 years of age.

Sponsor: The public agency or non-profit organization that is responsible for the operation of the local RSVP program. The sponsor is the grantee and is the fiscal agent for the CNCS grant.

Stations: Non-profit private or public organizations that accept the responsibility of assigning, supervising, and training RSVP volunteers.