

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) – VOLUNTEER CRITERIA

Updated July 2023

Volunteers within EFNEP fall within one of four categories: members of a formal volunteer program, non-agency¹ volunteers; agency-paid volunteers, and students/interns. These are defined as:

- **Formal Volunteer Program.** Incorporation of a trained volunteer program – an existing volunteer program or one developed specifically for EFNEP.
- **Non-Agency Volunteers.** Individuals who may or may not have volunteer experience who want to assist with EFNEP without financial compensation.
- **Agency-Paid Volunteers.** Volunteers who are not paid by Extension, who assist with EFNEP as part of their job responsibilities in another organization or agency.
- **Students/Interns.** Individuals who are not paid to support EFNEP, but who want to assist with EFNEP as part of their formal learning experience.

Each of these categories is described in more detail, below. Regardless of volunteer category, all volunteer involvement must be done in conjunction with EFNEP guidelines and priorities, as per the university's EFNEP Coordinator, and must be in alignment with university and Cooperative Extension guidelines and requirements.

FORMAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Potential benefits to EFNEP and to volunteers

In addition to specific program management, delivery, and technical skills gained.

Benefits to EFNEP

- Adds context, culture, or other sensitivity where EFNEP paraprofessionals are of a different culture or linguistic background than EFNEP participants.
- Helps create and reinforce “buy-in” initially and throughout the class series.
- May extend the reach of EFNEP.

Benefits to Volunteers

- Provides a way to document program expectations that meet volunteers' other needs, such as volunteer hours that may be used for other purposes.
- Provides a way to give-back, to be part of a class series and see participants' progress.

¹ Agency refers to any public or private entity with which EFNEP may partner.

Examples of who might be volunteers

- Past EFNEP graduates
- Community partners
- Retired teachers
- Retired health care workers
- Individuals who want to give back to their community
- Master Wellness volunteers
- AmeriCorps/Vista volunteers

These volunteers may have been previous EFNEP participants who would like to continue to participate, teachers, and others who have considerable interest, knowledge, and experience related to EFNEP. They would be considered champions for EFNEP and must receive appropriate training and be able to work well with paraprofessional staff.

Examples of potential responsibilities

Contingent upon university and programmatic approval.

- Working in conjunction with paraprofessionals assist with teaching and preparing content and resources for adult and youth classes; assist with data collection, but not data entry and analysis of food recalls.
- Staff displays for events where most of the audience is EFNEP eligible.
- Conduct food demonstrations at farmers markets and other low-income sites to create opportunities to participate in EFNEP.
- Provide cultural context and translation, where necessary.

These volunteers must be highly orientated and trained on EFNEP requirements and protocols including, but not limited to, EFNEP's core content areas.

Recruitment and management of volunteers

Must be in line with university and EFNEP procedures, and give special attention to maintaining program fidelity and integrity.

Only adults may serve in a formal volunteer program. Examples of recruiting sources are:

- EFNEP participants, community clubs/classes, retiree groups, faith-based and other organizations, and existing volunteer programs, such as Master Wellness and AmeriCorps/Vista.

Staff time is required to manage and coordinate volunteers, including:

- Having volunteers sign a code of conduct and follow university and program requirements.
- Developing a training and volunteer management toolkit.
- Tracking time, absences, performance, and training needs.
- Identifying potential sources of new volunteers.

Initial and ongoing training needs

Expectations need to be clearly spelled out and monitored for volunteer and programmatic success.

Trainings need to be developed, conducted, and/or coordinated by the university.

Properly trained volunteers need to be able to convey content that is consistent with national guidelines and in conjunction with the EFNEP lessons that are part of the university's selected and nationally approved resources which cover the core content areas, and personnel and administrative guidelines.

Examples of related content may be: MyPlate, physical activity, food safety, food buying, label reading, working with low-income audiences, working with adults and/or youth, Cooperative Extension, civil rights, working with paraprofessional staff, data collection, program evaluation and reporting, working knowledge of what else Extension offers.

These volunteers must also:

- Have sensitivity to work with low-income audiences.
- Understand the basics of EFNEP classes and topics, including basics of food safety and handling.

Training must be ongoing and must be consistent with performance and duty expectations.

How to keep volunteers involved and engaged

- Provide additional side-by-side training with paraprofessionals to function as a team, as appropriate.
- Use a volunteer contract and have specific tasks assigned only to them.
- Recognize their work and efforts in a way that is meaningful to them.
- Track hours that they can use for documentation for their own needs.
- Include volunteers in program newsletters and social media content.

Recognizing, honoring, and discharging from service, e.g. addressing performance issues

Careful supervision of volunteers is critical to ensure that potential concerns can be addressed early – before issues escalate and become problematic for the program and university.

- Determine a “term of service” and re-evaluate each term.
- Develop a guide for expectations of volunteers including their rights and responsibilities.
- Develop departure and dismissal guidelines.
- Hold recognition events for positive actions.
- Discharge from service after three warnings for minor offenses; immediate dismissal may be necessary for major offenses.

Interface of paraprofessional staff, supervisors, and volunteers

Must follow EFNEP's legislative intent to support direct education by paraprofessionals. Use of volunteers must be supportive of and coordinated with paraprofessional efforts.

With clearly defined roles and oversight by nutrition professionals, volunteers can support the work of frontline staff. They may lead shared and coordinated activities. Paraprofessionals should be included in planning and implementation processes for use of volunteers.

- Paraprofessionals should be part of the formal volunteer program process so that they do not feel threatened or displaced. This may be a good opportunity for paraprofessionals to provide on-site leadership with increased responsibility and to gain experience that could lead to upward mobility.
- Both paraprofessionals and their supervisors need to understand the value that formal volunteers bring, such as an extra set of ears, eyes, and hands to help deliver the program.
- A statewide implementation plan that has been approved by the national office is required. It must describe the interface between volunteers and paraprofessional staff and how communication and oversight of volunteers will be handled.

Challenges and how to address them

Challenges:

- Identifying individuals whose knowledge, experience, and interactive styles fit well with EFNEP.
- Time needed to address:
 - Recruitment
 - Consistent training
 - Tracking, ongoing monitoring, and supervision of volunteers
 - Managing inconsistent performance

How to address:

- Many challenges may be anticipated and prevented through developing and applying a volunteer orientation, training, and oversight manual.
- Include volunteers in regular program staff orientation and training, as appropriate.
- Dismiss volunteers who display low dedication and availability to EFNEP.

Balancing program, university, and community requirements and expectations

Volunteer program requirements should not become an added burden or contradict the settings and structures through which the program is conducted.

Follow university/Extension guidelines for background checks using non-EFNEP funds to cover costs for volunteers.

- Must have knowledge of EFNEP guidelines and protocols as well as university guidelines.
- Careful screening and ongoing monitoring of volunteers is essential for all participants, but especially when dealing with youth; many universities have stricter rules for programming with youth than for adults.
- Background checks are often required by the university.
- Volunteers need to understand that they are “the face” of EFNEP and the university and so should act accordingly.

Volunteer Plan

Incorporation of a formal volunteer program requires a nationally approved volunteer plan. This volunteer plan should include all of the following:

- Provide a description of the volunteer program with justification.

- Address each of the criteria listed in the first column above.
 - Give special attention to who the formal volunteer program will involve, what their expertise is, what their responsibilities will be, how they will be supervised and monitored, and how they will interface with paraprofessional staff.
 - Indicate how volunteer data will be monitored.
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NON-AGENCY VOLUNTEERS

Potential benefits to EFNEP and to volunteers

In addition to specific program management, delivery, and technical skills gained.

Benefits to EFNEP

- May help with recruitment and involvement of new families.
- Raises potential for increasing collective impact.

Benefits to Volunteers

- Provides a way for volunteers to build social relationships with peers.
- Increases the volunteer's experience with adult and youth learners.
- Reinforces learning for former participants.
- Allows exploration of job options.

Examples of who might be volunteers

- Past EFNEP graduates
- Community partners
- Retired teachers
- Retired health care workers
- Individuals who want to give back to their community
- Students, trained teen ambassadors, and other young adults who are not part of a formal learning process

These volunteers differ from formal volunteers in that they lack formal training and/or the university lacks a nationally approved formal volunteer program.

Youth volunteers need to be at least 13 years old, or adhere to the age requirement set by each university.

Examples of potential responsibilities

Contingent upon university and programmatic approval.

- Assist paraprofessionals with programmatic duties such as handing out lesson materials, recruiting for classes, classroom setup, class management, food demonstrations, class activities, and child care.
- Assist paraprofessionals with collection, but not data entry or analysis of food recalls.

Recruitment and management of volunteers

Must be in line with university and EFNEP procedures, and give special attention to maintaining program fidelity and integrity.

Examples of recruiting sources are:

- EFNEP participants, community clubs/classes, retiree groups, faith-based and other organizations for adult volunteers.
- Student clubs/classes, 4-H programs, and university departments for youth volunteers.

Management must be ongoing to assure program fidelity and integrity and compliance with university and EFNEP guidelines and procedures.

Initial and ongoing training needs

Expectations need to be clearly spelled out and monitored for volunteer and programmatic success.

Trainings need to be developed and conducted by the university.

Training needs will vary depending on the expectations of the volunteer. Examples may be:

- Recruitment – Some training in explaining EFNEP and the lessons and how the program will be conducted.
- Classroom – Discussion or training on how the educator needs the classroom to be set-up.
- Curriculum, food preparation or demonstration, and/or small activities – Detailed training will be needed.
- Youth – Follow university guidelines pertaining to the 4H youth development program or provided by other youth serving organizations in addition to EFNEP requirements.

Paraprofessionals should contact the volunteer prior to each lesson.

How to keep volunteers involved and engaged

- Provide on-going affirmation.
- Give certificates for volunteer hours.
- Give opportunities for staff development, contingent upon university guidelines.
- Have recognition/award programs.
- Include volunteers in resources such as newsletters and other media that are shared about the program.

Recognizing, honoring, and discharging from service, e.g. addressing performance issues

Careful supervision of volunteers is critical to ensure that potential concerns can be addressed early – before issues escalate and become problematic for the program and university.

- Determine a “term of service” and re-evaluate each term.
- Develop a guide for expectations of volunteers including their rights and responsibilities.
- Develop departure and dismissal guidelines.

- Hold recognition events for positive actions.
- Immediate dismissal may be necessary for major offenses.

Interface of paraprofessional staff, supervisors, and volunteers

Must follow EFNEP's legislative intent to support direct education by paraprofessionals. Use of volunteers must be supportive of and coordinated with paraprofessional efforts.

With clearly defined roles and oversight by nutrition professionals, volunteers can support the work of frontline staff. They may lead shared and coordinated activities. Paraprofessionals should be included in planning and implementation processes for use of volunteers.

- A clear communication and volunteer oversight process, including program and university expectations, needs to be worked out with paraprofessional staff before volunteers are used.

Challenges and how to address them

Challenges:

- Identifying individuals whose knowledge, experience, and interactive styles fit well with EFNEP.
- Time needed to address:
 - Recruitment
 - Consistent training
 - Tracking, ongoing monitoring, and supervision of volunteers
 - Managing inconsistent performance

How to address:

- Many challenges may be anticipated and prevented through developing and applying a volunteer orientation, training, and oversight manual.
- Include volunteers in regular program staff orientation and training, as appropriate.
- Dismiss volunteers who display low dedication and availability to EFNEP.

Balancing program, university, and community requirements and expectations

Volunteer program requirements should not become an added burden or contradict the settings and structures through which the program is conducted.

Follow university/Extension guidelines for background checks using non-EFNEP funds to cover costs for volunteers.

- Must have knowledge of EFNEP guidelines and protocols as well as university and partner guidelines.
- Careful screening and ongoing monitoring of volunteers is essential for all participants, but especially when dealing with youth; many universities have stricter rules for programming with youth than for adults.
- Background checks are often required by the university.
- Volunteers need to understand that they are “the face” of EFNEP and the university and so should act accordingly.

AGENCY PAID VOLUNTEERS

Potential benefits to EFNEP and to volunteers

In addition to specific program management, delivery, and technical skills gained.

Benefits to EFNEP

- Helps with participant recruitment, retention, and education.
- May lead to follow-up participant learning.
- Builds goodwill and establishes EFNEP presence.
- Provides transportation, room set up, and/or other assistance with lessons.
- Results in increased awareness, understanding, and support of EFNEP.

Benefits to Volunteers

- Increases learning opportunities for the agency and community.
- Broadens opportunities in areas where agency is responsible.
- Fits within the volunteer's regular workday.
- Achieves mutual goals for EFNEP and the agency.

Examples of who might be volunteers

- Agency staff
- Teachers
- Coordinators of other programs
- Lunchroom workers
- Other paid staff

These volunteers assist with EFNEP as part of their employment. They may assist with recruitment, implementation, follow up, and other program tasks.

Examples of potential responsibilities

Contingent upon university and programmatic approval.

Prior to the first EFNEP lesson, supervisors and/or paraprofessionals meet with agency staff to discuss roles and responsibilities.

- Paraprofessionals teach participants, while agency volunteers, help behind the scenes with logistics, participant recruitment, meeting reminders, food and other supplies, and class management.
- Volunteers may assist with collection, but not data entry or analysis of food recalls.

Recruitment and management of volunteers

Must be in line with university and EFNEP procedures, and give special attention to maintaining program fidelity and integrity.

Recruitment and management of agency staff as volunteers needs to be worked out between the agency and program leadership – possibly local program leadership/supervisors – to ensure that EFNEP receives the support and resources needed for success with participants.

Initial and ongoing training needs

Expectations need to be clearly spelled out and monitored for volunteer and programmatic success.

Trainings need to be coordinated between the agency and university.

How to keep volunteers involved and engaged

- Paraprofessionals should contact volunteers prior to each lesson, as appropriate, or have some other agency informal or formal agreement.
- Provide on-going affirmation.
- Give certificates for volunteer hours.
- Hold volunteer appreciation and recognitions each year.
- Include volunteers in determining what and how to share back to the agency.

Recognizing, honoring, and discharging from service, e.g. addressing performance issues

Careful supervision of volunteers is critical to ensure that potential concerns can be addressed early – before issues escalate and become problematic for the program and university.

- Invite agency staff to a volunteer banquet or other recognition event; notify agency of volunteers' contribution to success of the program and partnership; nominate the volunteer for awards.
- If a performance issue arises, follow pre-determined procedures, worked out between the program and the agency.
- Immediate action may be necessary for major offenses.

Interface of paraprofessional staff, supervisors, and volunteers

Must follow EFNEP's legislative intent to support direct education by paraprofessionals. Use of volunteers must be supportive of and coordinated with paraprofessional efforts.

With clearly defined roles and oversight by nutrition professionals, volunteers can support the work of frontline staff. They may lead shared and coordinated activities. Paraprofessionals should be included in planning and implementation processes for use of volunteers.

A clear communication and volunteer oversight process, including program/agency expectations, needs to be worked out with paraprofessionals and agency staff before volunteers are used.

Challenges and how to address them

Challenges:

- Programming may be affected when agency staff leave their positions or agency leadership and priorities change.

How to address:

- Regular communication with volunteers AND with the agency is important to assure success of EFNEP within the agency and to maintain and further develop the partner relationship.

Balancing program, university, and community requirements and expectations

Volunteer program requirements should not become an added burden or contradict the settings and structures through which the program is conducted.

Follow university/Extension guidelines for background checks using non-EFNEP funds to cover costs for volunteers.

- Must have knowledge of EFNEP guidelines and protocols as well as university and agency guidelines.
 - Careful screening and ongoing monitoring of volunteers is essential for all participants, but especially when dealing with youth; many universities and agencies have stricter rules for programming with youth than for adults.
 - Coordinate background checks with the cooperating agency and university guidelines.
 - Mutual respect must be shown by volunteers and EFNEP staff for both partners – the cooperating agency and EFNEP.
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STUDENTS/INTERNS

Potential benefits to EFNEP and to volunteers

In addition to specific program management, delivery, and technical skills gained.

Benefits to EFNEP

- Encourages interest in a career with Extension.
- Provides satisfaction of having quality experiences for students in professional training.
- Increases program exposure, such that students become champions of EFNEP, whatever their career choice may be.

Benefits to Volunteers

- Increases cross collaborations with university departments.
- Creates opportunity to use hours for resume volunteer experiences.
- Increases experience with adult and youth learners.
- Facilitates career choice exploration

Examples of who might be volunteers

- University students studying food science and nutrition, social work, medicine, public health, consumer science, and other fields who are volunteers as part of their internship, practicum, class project, or other learning experience.
- High school students who are volunteers as part of class projects or other supervised learning experience.

Examples of potential responsibilities

Contingent upon university and programmatic approval.

- Assist the paraprofessional with programmatic duties such as preparing and handing out lesson materials, food demonstrations, class activities, classroom setup, and child care.
- Assist with collection, but not data entry or analysis of food recalls.

Recruitment and management of volunteers

Must be in line with university and EFNEP procedures, and give special attention to maintaining program fidelity and integrity.

Recruitment sources would be university departments, and possibly high schools.

Management to be determined by university/high school advisors, preceptors, and EFNEP local program leadership/supervisors.

Initial and ongoing training needs

Expectations need to be clearly spelled out and monitored for volunteer and programmatic success.

Coordination needs to be worked out between the program, university faculty, advisor, preceptor, and/or other supervisor.

How to keep volunteers involved and engaged

- Needs to be tied to their learning requirements.
- Provide on-going affirmation.
- Give certificates for volunteer hours, as appropriate.
- Include in recognition/award programs, as appropriate.
- Include in resources such as newsletters and other media that are shared about the program.

Recognizing, honoring, and discharging from service, e.g. addressing performance issues

Careful supervision of volunteers is critical to ensure that potential concerns can be addressed early – before issues escalate and become problematic for the program and university.

- Develop protocol for notifying departments, major advisors, and preceptors of positive and negative actions of university and high school student volunteers.
- If a performance issue arises, follow pre-determined procedures, worked out between the program and the advisor or preceptor.
- Immediate dismissal may be necessary for major offenses.

Interface of paraprofessional staff, supervisors, and volunteers

Must follow EFNEP's legislative intent to support direct education by paraprofessionals. Use of volunteers must be supportive of and coordinated with paraprofessional efforts.

With clearly defined roles and oversight by nutrition professionals, volunteers can support the work of frontline staff. They may lead shared and coordinated activities. Paraprofessionals should be included in planning and implementation processes for use of volunteers.

- A clear communication and volunteer oversight process needs to be worked out with others who are guiding students in this part of their learning process.

Challenges and how to address them

Challenges:

- Similar to formal volunteers but narrower in scope; consider the advisor/preceptor relationship, and the student/worksite relationship.

How to address:

- Work with advisors, preceptors, and others who provide supervision to prevent and address issues that may arise

Balancing program, university, and community requirements and expectations

Volunteer program requirements should not become an added burden or contradict the settings and structures through which the program is conducted.

Follow university/Extension guidelines for background checks using non-EFNEP funds to cover costs for volunteers.

- Must have knowledge of EFNEP guidelines and protocols as well as university, high school, and/or practicum/ internship/community experience guidelines.
- Use of student volunteers may be more strictly regulated by universities. Following university guidelines are critical.
- Volunteers need to understand that they are “the face” of EFNEP and the university, and so should act accordingly.

The volunteer plan can be submitted electronically to the national office at any time. However, it is preferable that the volunteer plan be sent by email to sg-aifg-ree-efnep@usda.gov, concurrent with the submission of the annual update or 5-year plan to WebNEERS, and the formal volunteers program be referenced in the annual update or 5-year plan.