



GREATER NASHVILLE
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Volunteer Handbook

Greater Nashville Regional Council

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GNRC.org



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1. About GNRC

The Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC) is one of nine regional development districts established by the General Assembly under the Tennessee Development District Act of 1965. GNRC, which operates as a council of governments (COG), represents 13 counties and 52 cities in Middle Tennessee. County members include Cheatham, Davidson, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, Montgomery, Robertson, Rutherford, Stewart, Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson and Wilson counties.

GNRC's mission is to assist local communities and state agencies in the development of plans and programs that **guide growth and development** in the most desirable, efficient, and cost-effective manner, while ensuring the **continued long-term livability of the region**.

GNRC is governed by a regional council comprised of:

- city mayors,
- county mayors/executives,
- state legislators,
- appointments representing business/industry,
- and appointments representing minority populations.

In carrying out this mission, GNRC convenes elected leadership and local practitioners to brainstorm strategies for improving quality of life; facilitates cooperative policy-making in order to prioritize state and federal investments into area social services and public infrastructure; and provides a public forum for Middle Tennesseans to shape regional decisions.

1.1 GNRC's Local, State and Federal Designations

GNRC has the following local, state and federal designations which guide the agency's agenda:

- **State Development District:** GNRC provides mechanisms for regional cooperation and technical support for planning and economic development initiatives.
- **Federal Economic Development District:** Creation and maintenance of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (grant programs, engagement of community leaders and the private sector, strategic blueprints for regional collaboration)
- **Area Agency on Aging and Disability:** GNRC provides programs, services, advocacy, inter-agency linkages and coordination, and information sharing opportunities to improve the quality of life for older or disabled Middle Tennesseans.
- **Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization:** Development of the region's long-range transportation plan and short-range improvement program. Contributes to issues regarding land use, economic development, the environment, safety and security, and public health.
- **Middle Tennessee Mayors Caucus:** Forum to discuss issues that cross political boundaries, identify shared opportunities/challenges, and develop collaborative strategies for action.
- **Mid-Cumberland Area Development Corporation:** Provides small business assistance across Middle Tennessee; offers access to loans.
- **Middle Tennessee Tourism Council:** Lead regional tourism agency.

2. Volunteer Program

The Greater Nashville Regional Council understands the value volunteers bring to the work of an organization. With the help of countless volunteers, their talents, and passion the impact of GNRC's programs and services is amplified.

GNRC's Volunteer Coordinator oversees recruiting and retention of volunteers and works with program managers to develop opportunities to engage volunteer efforts across the organization. Day to day training and supervision for some volunteer roles may be facilitated directly by some program staff.

2.1 Types of volunteers

Tier One volunteers have direct and ongoing access to clients and/or sensitive information, and therefore must complete the full application and screening process. SHIP/SMP volunteers, as well as Guardianship volunteers, are a special category of tier one volunteers and must complete all state background and training requirements according to the separate Tennessee SHIP/SMP Volunteer Risk and Program Management (VRPM) Handbook and the Tennessee Public Guardianship for the Elderly Volunteer Management Manual.

Tier Two volunteers do not have direct access to clients and/or sensitive information and therefore do not need to complete a criminal background check before serving at the Greater Nashville Regional Council. GNRC reserves the right to check references for volunteers as appropriate.

2.2 Eligibility

To become a volunteer, one must be at least 18 years of age (unless they are accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult), possess a heart for service and understand the mission of the Greater Nashville Regional Council and its programs.

2.3 Orientation and Training

Orientation and training are essential to developing the knowledge and skills that volunteers need to serve the people of their communities effectively. Each new volunteer is asked to participate in an orientation session. During the orientation, new volunteers receive information on the Greater Nashville Regional Council's mission, the volunteer policies, important safety information, volunteer roles and expectations.

All regular scheduled volunteers are required to participate in an **annual training**. Training provides the volunteer with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to be successful in her/his current position. Volunteers receive training on policies and procedures, volunteer guidelines, and the volunteer agreement. Training may be provided in person or through materials distributed via email.

Some volunteer positions require more extensive training, continuing education, and testing. Should your volunteer position require such trainings, you will be informed of those training schedules before you accept the volunteer position.

2.4 Screening

After attending the volunteer orientation, but before being scheduled to serve, the Greater Nashville Regional Council conducts a criminal background check on all Tier One applicants. The criminal background check includes local criminal record checks from local law enforcement records for all known residences of the volunteer.

An internet records clearance must be completed on each of those applicants and documented in the volunteer's file. The internet records clearance involves a background check of the following: Drug Offender Registry (<https://apps.tn.gov/methor-app/search>), TN Felony Offender Database (<https://apps.tn.gov/foil-app/search.jsp;jsessionid=9HopBqVxzqG6AR8Aghq2P2sD>), National Sexual Offender Registry (<https://www.nsopw.gov/?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>), and Department of Health Abuse Registry (<https://apps.health.tn.gov/AbuseRegistry/>).

All volunteers with direct and ongoing access to clients and/or sensitive information must be free from criminal and abusive history that could pose a risk to vulnerable adults. Should any record appear for a prospective volunteer, further investigation may be taken, and that information will be reviewed by the Volunteer Coordinator and other GNRC staff. This group of staff members will decide concerning the volunteer serving in that position.

2.5 Acceptance and Appointment

Service as a volunteer with GNRC will begin with the acceptance or appointment to a volunteer position. Notice will be given by the Volunteer Coordinator or an authorized representative of GNRC. Volunteers may begin actively volunteering only after they have been officially accepted for that position and have completed all necessary screening and paperwork. The details of each volunteer position, including requirements regarding training and screening, will be laid out in the volunteer role description which can be viewed by the volunteer at any time.

2.6 Duties

After receiving the acceptance of service, volunteers are asked to communicate with the Volunteer Coordinator for their assignments. The volunteer's proficiency in certain tasks may be determined by their staff liaison. In the instance where a volunteer is not able to complete a duty successfully, the Volunteer Coordinator will work with the volunteer to find a more suitable service role. Some volunteer positions may have a set term. After a term is finished, a volunteer may choose to serve in that position again. GNRC welcomes long-term volunteers!

2.7 Supervision

Volunteers are a valued and necessary member of the team who support and assist the staff to do their jobs more effectively. All volunteers work under the direction of the Volunteer Coordinator, who has final authorization on all procedures and decisions. Other staff liaisons help the Volunteer Coordinator lead, advise, and coordinate service efforts. Volunteers report directly to the Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator works with GNRC staff to identify the best fit for volunteers in the organization. Once a volunteer is assigned to a program their day-to-day activities will be directly supervised by staff as appropriate. The Volunteer Coordinator ensures that volunteers know their duties and are teamed with GNRC staff who can provide appropriate training, direction, and supervision.

It is very important to maintain regular contact with the Volunteer Coordinator especially when circumstances affect your volunteer work, including:

- Changes to your scheduled volunteer shift
- Reporting problems that occur while volunteering
- Taking an extended leave of absence or resigning from volunteering
- Giving suggestions to improve the volunteer program

2.8 Scheduling

Staff expect volunteers to self-schedule and it is your responsibility to notify the Volunteer Coordinator as early as possible if you are unable to serve. Substitutes may only be recruited from those who are currently enrolled as volunteers with the agency and have completed training for the specific assignment.

2.9 Re-Assignment

Volunteers who are at any time re-assigned to a new position will be interviewed for that position and will receive all appropriate orientation and training for that position before they begin work. In addition, any screening procedures appropriate for that specific position must be completed, even if the volunteer has already been working with GNRC.

3. Volunteer Policies

3.1 Confidentiality Policy

GNRC is committed to protecting the information of its beneficiaries, clients, and constituents. As a volunteer, you may have access to information that should not be shared with others. Confidentiality is required by law under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). All clients of GNRC have a legal right to privacy and must trust that their personal information will be protected. Protected Health Information (PHI) of clients and beneficiaries must always remain confidential. It is never appropriate to share information about clients received during volunteer service with anyone outside GNRC. Lack of confidentiality is a violation of a client's rights and a violation of HIPAA.

To demonstrate your understanding of the importance of maintaining confidentiality, all volunteers must sign the Confidentiality Statement annually. The HIPAA Privacy Rules address who has access to protected health information and the rights of individuals to keep this information about themselves from being disclosed. This rule protects information that is written, spoken, OR in electronic form.

3.2 Performance Feedback Policy

To achieve the best quality performance through prompt identification of problems, followed by timely and appropriate corrective measures, the volunteer program has a performance improvement program in place. There are several methods by which volunteer performance is evaluated, including:

- Volunteers are surveyed annually to provide feedback about their personal volunteer experience and the program.
- The Volunteer Coordinator creates monthly and annual reports which document volunteer hours and the number of volunteers recruited.
- Assessments are done when volunteers begin their time of service, and then on an annual basis.
- Volunteer files are reviewed regularly to ensure that appropriate documentation is included.

3.3 Grievance Policy

GNRC has an "open door" policy. When a volunteer has a conflict or dispute related to her/his position, she/he should feel free to bring the matter to the Volunteer Coordinator or the Deputy Director at any time. If an open discussion does not resolve the problem to the volunteer's satisfaction, the volunteer may initiate formal grievance procedures.

Step 1- Present a signed and dated letter to the Volunteer Coordinator outlining the policy or procedure that is causing the grievance. Within 10 working days the Volunteer Coordinator will meet with appropriate parties to discuss the grievance.

Step 2- If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting, within 10 working days, the Volunteer Coordinator will meet with the volunteer and staff liaison. The Volunteer Coordinator will provide a written report to the Deputy Director of GNRC outlining the complaint and recommendations for resolution. The Deputy Director will meet with all parties involved, if necessary, to gain a better understanding of the situation and make a recommendation of action to the Executive Director for final decision.

Step 3- The decision of the Executive Director is final and binding.

3.4 Disciplinary Policy

Repeated complaints or concerns regarding a volunteer's actions or behavior will be documented in the volunteer's file and the Volunteer Coordinator will meet with the volunteer regarding the incident. If a volunteer does not uphold his/her duties or does not serve GNRC as a positive representative, their volunteer position may be terminated.

The following procedure shall apply for unsatisfactory voluntary work performance:

1. **Verbal Warning:** If a concern/problem is reported, the volunteer will be notified verbally and a note made in the volunteer's personnel file.
2. **First Written Warning:** If a concern / problem is reported a second time, the Volunteer Coordinator will meet with the volunteer about the concern / problem. This will result in a written warning. A written warning will include: the nature of the concern, strategies put in place to resolve the concern and establish a date to reevaluate the volunteer relationship. The volunteer will be advised in writing of the need to improve work performance and that a further period of review has been set.
3. **Second Written Warning:** If concerns / problems are reported for a third time, the volunteer will be interviewed by the Volunteer Coordinator. This will result in a second written warning. This warning will review and rewrite: the nature of the concern, strategies put in place to resolve the concern and establish a date to reevaluate the volunteer relationship. A final written warning will be given.
4. **Volunteer Separation:** If above interventions do not resolve concerns / problems, the Volunteer Coordinator reserves the right to terminate the volunteer position.

If any volunteer behaves in a manner that is dangerous, harmful, or contrary to GNRC's ethical policies or otherwise inappropriate, dismissal may take place immediately.

3.5 Safety Policy

The safety of each volunteer is very important to GNRC. GNRC provides an environment as free as reasonably possible from recognized hazards. Volunteers are expected to comply with all safety and health requirements whether established by management or by federal, state, or local law. If the volunteer should identify any unsafe condition, he/she may report it immediately so the appropriate action can be taken. Examples include: spills, slipping/tripping hazards, obstructed exits, etc.

3.5.1 Fire Safety and Evacuation Procedures

In the event of a fire or discovery of smoke, volunteers are to notify the nearest staff member immediately. No volunteer should risk personal safety by trying to put out a fire. If fire alarms are activated, all volunteers should follow staff to the nearest exit and evacuate the building immediately. No attempt should be made to finish current tasks or to find personal belongings. All volunteers should wait with staff outside the building until everyone has been accounted for or an all-clear is announced.

Should tasks be performed at other locations, volunteers are to follow the disaster plan that is in place at their service location. If possible, notify the Volunteer Coordinator of your safety and location once it is safe to do so.

3.5.2 First Aid/Accident Response

In the event of an accident resulting in injury or in the case of illness on the GNRC premises, prompt and appropriate treatment will be sought. All accidents, no matter how minor, should be recorded on the Incident Reporting Form.

If a volunteer is injured or exposed to a bodily fluid or hazardous material to open skin or mucous membrane while participating in GRNC volunteer activities, volunteers must inform the Volunteer Coordinator or the safety officer immediately. An Incident Report Form must be completed within two business days of the injury/exposure and sent to the Volunteer Coordinator.

3.6 Dress Code Policy

Dress according to what is appropriate and comfortable for your volunteer position. In the office the general guideline is business casual attire. Please ask the Volunteer Coordinator if you have any questions regarding what appropriate attire for your volunteer position is.

3.7 Drug Free Facility and Non-smoking Environment Policy

In order to promote the safety and wellbeing of clients, volunteers and employees, GNRC is a drug free facility. The drug free facility applies to all volunteers with this agency. The unlawful use, manufacture, dispensation, possession, distribution or sale of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited and considered a willful violation of GNRC's policy which will result in volunteer termination.

The GNRC facility is maintained as a smoke-free environment, because of concerns for the total health of individuals, and due to the awareness that second-hand smoke is detrimental to the health of non-smokers.

3.8 TITLE VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Policy

"No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal Financial Assistance (FFA)." Service recipients receive equal treatment, equal access, equal rights, and equal opportunities without regard to their race, color, national origin (including English proficiency), age, gender, religion, or disability. GNRC promotes a comfortable and productive service environment for all volunteers. In keeping with this policy, sexual, racial, religious, ethnic, or other kinds of harassment of volunteers is a violation of this policy and will not be tolerated. We expect volunteers to treat each other, those we work with, and GNRC staff with respect.

GNRC values the service of volunteers with disabilities and we strive to include such individuals in all facets of the program to the best of the volunteer's ability, and to ensure access to all GNRC facilities. When requested, the program will make reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of in-kind staff and volunteers with disabilities.

All regularly scheduled volunteers are required to review Title VI of the Civil Right Act of 1964 annually and provide an acknowledgement that is kept in the volunteer folder. Information on Title VI and the acknowledgement form will be sent out annually to all volunteers.

3.9 Personal Property Security

Reasonable efforts are made to provide security for GNRC volunteers and their personal property, GNRC property, and authorized visitors to the premises, but GNRC volunteers are responsible for safeguarding their personal property.

3.10 Conflict of Interest

GNRC expects volunteers to scrupulously avoid any conflict, direct or indirect, between their own respective individual, professional or business interests and the interests of GNRC or its member governments and the citizens of this Region.

4. Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

GNRC volunteers are valuable resources to GNRC's programs and our communities and therefore have certain rights and responsibilities. At the same time, volunteers are expected to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, to comply with the program's volunteer policies, and to remain dedicated to the program's values, goals and procedures. Volunteers agree that GNRC may decide to end a volunteer's relationship with the program or to change the nature of the volunteer's assignment when appropriate.

As a volunteer, you have a right to:

- Receive meaningful assignments
- Be treated as an equal
- A safe service environment
- A respectful service environment free of harassment
- Receive an orientation and ongoing training
- Receive effective coordination
- Receive constructive feedback on a regular basis
- Receive informal and formal recognition
- Receive clear information about the duties and boundaries of their volunteer assignment in their volunteer position description
- Receive all the pertinent information you need to perform your assignments
- Refuse any tasks or work assignments, especially when the assignment requires you to do something for which you have not been trained
- Security and confidentiality for the records in your volunteer file
- Examine the contents of your volunteer file
- Make complaints and file grievances
- To be granted a leave of absence when necessary
- Resign from your service at any time

As a volunteer, you have a responsibility to:

- Provide services responsibly and objectively, without regard to the background or characteristics of the beneficiaries/clients or with favoritism to specific services, providers, or products
- Represent GNRC only to the extent of your position description and role
- Alert the Volunteer Coordinator when you are unsatisfied with your assignment
- Use your affiliation only in the interests of GNRC, and not to promote religious or political beliefs or personal business dealings
- Accept direction, coordination and support from your designated supervisor and the Volunteer Coordinator
- Inform the Volunteer Coordinator of any conflicts of interest that may arise after placement in your volunteer position
- Ask questions and speak up in a constructive and effective manner when things are not right
- Report any abuse that you may witness involving program beneficiaries or clients
- Report incidents or hazards such as accidents, injuries, errors, unprofessional behavior and the like immediately to the Volunteer Coordinator
- Notify the Volunteer Coordinator of absences that will prevent you from performing an assigned task
- Report on your volunteer activities on a monthly basis, if required by your volunteer role
- Protect the confidentiality of any program beneficiaries and/or clients
- Follow policies and procedures to ensure the security of any clients' electronic and hard copy data
- Attend all meetings and complete required training programs, including continuing education programs

We thank you for your interest in volunteering with the Greater Nashville Regional Council.

It takes people like you to make our communities better and improve the livability of our region.

Thank you for your time, commitment, and talents shared!

