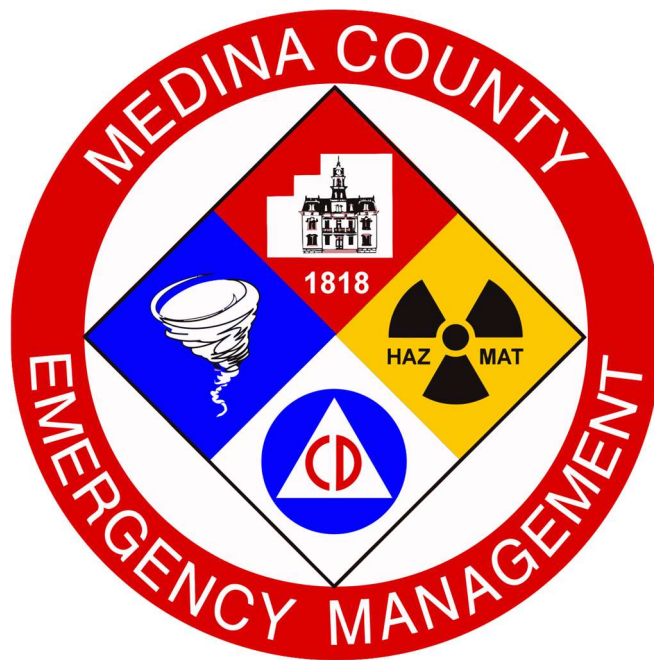


Medina County Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security

Volunteer Handbook



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Notice

The information contained in this manual is intended for use by CERT and Communications Unit volunteers of Medina County Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security (MCEMA). Any other use is prohibited. This manual may be updated regularly and MCEMA reserves the right to add, amend, or change policies and procedures at any time without notice.

Authority

Policies and procedures set herein are established by the Medina County Director of Disaster Services.

Date of Revision	Revision Number	Director Signature

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Abbreviations

CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
Comms. Unit	Communications Unit
EMA	Emergency Management Agency
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
MC	Medina County
MCCERT	Medina County Community Emergency Response Team
MCEMA	Medina County Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security
RACES	Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service
SHARES	Shared Resource High Frequency Radio Program
USDHS	United States Department of Homeland Security

Introduction

This handbook is designed to provide you with an introduction to the Medina County CERT (MCCERT) program and Medina County Communications Unit (Comms. Unit) program, as well as what to expect and what is expected of you as a volunteer.

These programs depend on volunteer participation for success. Your decision to volunteer is a commendable contribution to the safety and welfare of your community. Likewise, we hope that volunteering will be rewarding to you.

As an emergency management agency, we must maintain uniformity for efficiency and for our interface with the public; this guide will assist you in meeting the necessary standards. Volunteers should have a thorough knowledge of the program and a commitment to its mission and values. Please read this guide carefully and keep it handy for future reference.

Scope

This handbook applies to all volunteer members of the Medina County CERT and Comms. Unit. In addition to this handbook, operating procedures may be adopted.

Related Documents

The Medina County Policy Manual of the Medina County Board of Commissioners applies to all volunteers.

Medina County CERT & Comms. Unit Purpose

To provide dependable volunteer assistance that is deployable to individual jurisdictions in Medina County for disasters and for other times of need. MCCERT and Comms. Unit focus on participation in two key areas:

1. Natural Disasters/Large Scale Incidents Response – events that cause widespread damage, or injury or threats to large numbers of people or concentrated areas of occupancy. These incidents can include fires, storms, floods, communications and utility disruptions, and other incidents that displace residents and require a prolonged response from the public safety or health community. Volunteers can be deployed by MCEMA any time the local emergency response capabilities are overwhelmed or jurisdictions are in need of general assistance by volunteer forces.
2. Community Service Activities – opportunities to exercise during non-disaster situations, which foster the well-being of residents and to promote the mission of MCCERT and Comms. Unit including community events and public safety events

Mission Statement

To foster community preparedness and resiliency by recruiting, organizing, training and preparing volunteers to support local response to disasters and other emergency situations in Medina County; and to promote community disaster preparedness through public education and community outreach.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of MCCERT and Comms. Unit include the following:

- Recruit volunteers to serve the community during disasters, large-scale emergencies, and disaster preparedness activities.
- Provide training for volunteers to prepare them to serve in a variety of capacities during disaster response, recovery, and preparedness activities.
- Promote personal and family emergency preparedness in our community through public education and outreach.
- Provide resources to governmental and non-governmental organizations during emergency and disaster response and recovery

Principles of Operation

MCCERT and Comms. Unit will operate to the following principles:

- We treat all people whether they are survivors, other volunteers, clients, or coworkers with respect and dignity in all situations and under all circumstances.
- We will serve survivors, organizations, and agencies without bias or prejudice of any kind, treating all who ask for our assistance with respect and honor.
- We will show respect to those who lead our communities, by maintaining a positive, professional image as a part of the response community.
- We honor that volunteers are donating their time and expertise for the overall well-being of their communities.
- We will communicate clearly and consistently with volunteers, each other, team leaders, and others involved in all activities.
- No volunteer will be asked to perform beyond the scope of his or her licensure, credentials, training, or comfort level. However, each volunteer is responsible for conveying their limitations to team leadership.
- No volunteer will be knowingly placed at unreasonable risk during training or activation.

Organization and Administration

MCCERT and Comms. Unit are authorized by the Medina County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (MCEMA) and reports to the Director through the Program Manager. MCEMA is a county government office organized under Ohio Revised Code 5502.26. The office services each political subdivision of Medina County and is governed by an executive board.

MCCERT is registered as a Community Emergency Response Team as defined by the United States Department of Homeland Security (USDHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). MCCERT is registered in the State of Ohio with the Ohio Responds disaster volunteer system.

The Communications Unit is a RACES Station (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service, which is a FEMA emergency amateur radio communications program. Additionally, the EMA is also a SHARES (Shared Resource High Frequency Radio Program) Station, which is a program administered by the Department of Homeland Security's National Coordinating Center for Communications that provides the means of communicating via voice and email around the world on federal radio frequencies.

Background Checks

CERT and Comms. Unit volunteers will be background checked pursuant to the MCEMA Volunteer Criminal Background Screening SOP (Appendix I).

Ohio Limited Liability Protection

Ohio Revised Code Sections 5502.281 and 3701.04 outline the limited liability protections for registered volunteers during an emergency declared by the state or political subdivision or in disaster-related exercises, testing or other training activities. Volunteers agree to review this legislation. You may view the Ohio Responds Limited Liability Fact Sheet in Appendix II.

Workers Compensation & Vehicle Insurance

MCEMA CERT and Comms. Unit volunteers are covered by Worker's Compensation when they are acting in the capacity of an MCEMA volunteer. They are subject to the "Workers' Compensation" policy of the Medina County Policy Manual.

When driving personal vehicles for County business, volunteers must comply with Ohio's Financial Responsibility Law. Volunteers are subject to the "Vehicle Safety Policy" policy of the Medina County Policy Manual.

Volunteer Eligibility

Volunteer participation in MCCERT and Comms. Unit is open to individuals residing, working, or possessing an interest in Medina County. Anyone who meets the following eligibility requirements is eligible to become a volunteer:

- Be at least 18 years of age at the time of application
- Ability to complete an approved volunteer selection process, including a Criminal Background Screening
- Ability to register in the *Ohio Responds* volunteer registration database and maintain registration requirements
- Ability to take the Emergency Management Oath pursuant to ORC 5502.34.
- Ability to complete initial and on-going training as described in this handbook and as required by the MCCERT and Comms. Unit Program Managers
- Ability to meet the minimum training requirements
- Possess a valid State of Ohio driver's license, proof of insurance when requested, and a driving record suitable to county policy to operate a vehicle (personal or County owned) on County business. (If not able to do so, assignments that require valid driving rights will not be made for any MCCERT or Comms. Unit activities, but volunteer participation may be approved on an individual basis.)
- MCEMA is a drug-free organization per the "Drug and Alcohol Policy" of the Medina County Policy Manual. Therefore, the use of illegal substances and misuse use of prescription medications is prohibited. Volunteers are also prohibited from being under the influence of alcohol when partaking in any CERT or Comms. Unit activities.
- Ability to perform required tasks with reasonable accommodation
- Ability to abide by the Code of Conduct and Principles of Operation included in this handbook, standard operating guidelines as established by MCEMA, and the Medina County Policy Manual of the Medina County Board of Commissioners
- Ability to portray MCCERT/Comms. Unit in a professional manner and refrain from activities that would degrade or diminish the credibility of MCEMA or either of the programs.

Volunteer Orientation

New appointees are subject to a probationary period of one year from the time of their acceptance into either of the programs. All required trainings shall be completed within the probationary period. The Program Manager may extend the probationary period with reasonable discretion (i.e. the needed training wasn't available).

Training

Initial Training

All volunteers are required to complete four courses as part of the basic training required for volunteer participation. In addition to this, there will always be ongoing training that is required to maintain status as a deployable volunteer.

The basic training courses include:

Online Courses through FEMA Independent Study. These courses can be found online at:

<https://training.fema.gov/is/crslist.aspx>

- IS 100, Introduction to Incident Command
- IS 200, ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents
- IS 700, National Incident Management System
- IS 800, National Response Framework

- *Recommended* - IS 317 Introduction to Community Emergency Response Teams – This is an 8-hour online independent study course.

Required for CERT Volunteers

- Basic CERT 20-hour course: This course is offered face-to-face at times and locations to be announced.

Ongoing Training

To maintain sharp skills and to meet the ever-changing demands of response, it is required for volunteers to participate in ongoing training activities. This also allows volunteers to develop specialized skills to fill specific roles within a disaster response or leadership roles within the team.

Volunteers are required to participate in training specific to MCCERT and Comms. Unit capabilities in Medina County. Volunteers may not be deployable, based on the situation, until they have been trained in the requested capability.

MCCERT is likely to train for the following capabilities:

- Volunteer Reception Center Management
- Damage Assessment
- Missing and Endangered Persons Response Support
- Communications
- First Aid and CPR certification
- Safety Orientations

- Donations Management and Bulk Distribution
- Administrative Functions, such as recorders or scribes
- Logistical Support
- Emergency Operations Center support

Comms. Unit is likely to train for the following capabilities:

- Communications Support
 - Local repeater and simplex radio operations
 - HF Radio Operations
 - Weather/ Skywarn
 - Mesh networking/video surveillance
 - DMR Radio Operation
 - SHARES
 - Mobile Command/ Support Trailer Operations
 - Public Safety Radio Operations
 - Digital Radio Communications
- First Aid & CPR certification
- Damage Assessment
- Missing and Endangered Persons Response Support
- Emergency Operations Center support

Special training may be provided at any time during the year, or at the job site prior to assignment when appropriate. Regular meetings or special training may be held at the Medina County EMA office or another location if necessary.

Volunteers are expected to give attendance reservations when requested. Some training may require a head-count in advance.

Additional trainings, drills and exercises may be offered throughout the year to establish and maintain team capability.

Volunteers should provide copies of certificates for relevant training courses they complete throughout the year. We will keep an accurate training file to track team capabilities and analyze training needs. **MCCERT and Comms. Unit will not take the responsibility as the primary training record repository for individuals. Volunteers should always keep their own copies and monitor their own continuing education requirements and renewal dates.**

Volunteer Participation

Minimum Participation Requirement

All volunteers are required to attend at least 2 regular meetings or activities (deployments, trainings, events) per 6 months. For an activity to count towards this requirement, it must be approved by the program manager, as an activity that counts towards this requirement. Regular

participation is required to ensure volunteers remain capable of performing the required tasks, prior to deployment. Failure to meet this requirement may result in removal from the team roster.

Code of Conduct

All volunteers shall understand and agree to meet the standards of conduct of the MCEMA. These standards address ethical conduct while acting in the role of volunteer, as well as safe work practices and demonstrating respect for others. All volunteers will submit a signed Code of Conduct form. See Appendix III.

If it is deemed the volunteer has violated the MCEMA Code of Conduct, the volunteer may be dismissed from volunteer service.

Communication

Effective communication is vital for MCCERT and the Comms. Unit to achieve its goals and objectives, whether it is communication between team volunteers or communication to external groups. Volunteers are expected to follow the designated chain-of-command when communicating with leadership and command. The following sections provide guidelines for internal and external communication.

Internal Communication

The team leadership will utilize the most efficient means possible to communicate with volunteers. Communication will include information on trainings, drills, activations, and other team issues. Methods of communication will include:

- *EMA notifications systems: These county systems will provide the basis for most activation and deployment. Volunteers are required to sign up for notifications through the prescribed local system(s) for activation purposes.*
- *E-Mail*
- *Direct Phone Calls*
- *Social media*
- *Phone Trees*
- *Radios*
- *Meetings and Training Sessions*

Note: It is the responsibility of the MCCERT and/or Comms. Unit volunteer to keep the Program Manager updated with new contact information, such as cell phone numbers and email addresses.

Representing the Organization

It's important to ensure reliability of information. Therefore, only the Program Manager will represent the volunteer programs for outside communications unless specifically delegated otherwise. And, only the Program Manager will use social media to represent the volunteer programs unless specifically delegated otherwise.

Volunteers must not provide any information to the media nor answer any media questions while on assignment/deployment. If approached by a member of the media while acting in the capacity of a MCEMA volunteer, please direct all media inquiries to your supervisor or as directed by the incident commander.

Confidentiality Policy

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they may be exposed to while serving as a volunteer. This includes all information leading to the identification of an individual such as name, social security number, address, phone number, etc. and must be considered Protected Information (PI).

MCEMA volunteers agree to abide by the terms of confidentiality as outlined in this Handbook. Volunteers understand that accessing or releasing confidential information and/or records, causing confidential information and/or records to be accessed or released to another individual without proper authorization would constitute a violation of the confidentiality policy of MCEMA.

Dress Code

Volunteers are expected to dress appropriately for all team activities. Logo t-shirts, sweatshirts and other apparel items may be available for purchase at the volunteer's own expense. MCEMA will provide logo apparel when funding is available. When available, designated team shirts should be worn with jeans, khaki or black pants or shorts.

Projecting our image as ordinary citizens, neighbors, friends, and community members is a strength. **Conveying a militant, overstated, or tactical appearance is not helpful, and could misrepresent the program's identity and capabilities.** Garments that are designed (or styled) primarily for tactical use (for example: assault vests/ carriers, hard knuckle gloves, duty belts, fire turn-out gear, flight suits, military uniforms) are not permitted while participating in MCCERT or Comms. Unit activities. Non-camo BDU pants are ok.

Volunteers shall **NOT** wear identification apparel from other first responder groups and departments during deployment unless the deployment is officially a joint effort of both organizations. Fire department or police department wear, military wear, or other garments associated with other groups is not appropriate unless the joint organizations have activated the team.

Whenever volunteers are in uniform, they must be mindful that they are representing not only themselves, but their team, Medina County EMA, and Medina County. Volunteers may be suspended for use of inappropriate language, vulgarity, gestures, or other unprofessional actions.

Safety vests or outerwear may be available to volunteers for use as appropriate during activations, and shall be utilized when provided. Volunteers may need to provide their own outerwear and protective items; team items are provided as grant funds allow. Volunteers are also required to carry their Government-issued ID (Ohio Operator's License) on all activations. Appropriate footwear, hats, and coats should be worn as necessary. Volunteers should also wear appropriate protections such as sun block, sunglasses, etc. MCEMA does not provide outerwear or all protective gear for its volunteers; volunteers are required to maintain their own health and safety as a responder. MCEMA is not responsible for the lack of appropriate clothing under austere or emergency conditions.

Equipment

Depending on the activity, volunteers should have access to personal equipment for use in activations. Volunteers may be required to use and care for team supplies and equipment while activated. Volunteers should use accountability forms for team-issued supplies and equipment, and should check for damage and function prior to use and after use, just prior to turning it back in.

Any personally owned equipment or supplies used by the volunteer during training or deployment is the sole responsibility of the volunteer. MCCERT and Comms. Unit will not assume responsibility for any items brought by a person affiliated with the team, or unaffiliated. MCEMA is also **NOT** responsible for any injury caused to persons or property in the course of using this tool for an assigned job or an alternate purpose.

Volunteer Inactivation/Dismissal

A volunteer may be inactivated for the following reasons:

- The volunteer acknowledges his/her "At Will" status. See Appendix IV.
- The volunteer requests inactivation.
- The volunteer fails to meet the minimum participation requirements.
- The volunteer fails to respond to multiple attempts at contact made by the MCEMA.
- A volunteer may be dismissed from volunteer service in the MCEMA for behavior deemed detrimental to the goals and mission of the MCEMA which may include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Violation of MCEMA Code of Conduct and/or MCEMA policies and procedures as outlined in this handbook
 - Gross misconduct or insubordination

- Theft of property or misuse of agency materials
- Criminal Conduct
- Misrepresentation of the agency or program
- Misrepresentation of qualification, licenses, or training
- Exceed the limits of your licensed authority as defined by the applicable state licensure scope of practice
- Failure to perform assigned job duties

Adoption

This Community Emergency Response Team & Communications Unit Handbook was reviewed and adopted on the _____ day of _____, 2019.

Christina Fozio – EMA Director

Date

Matt Sturgeon - CERT Program Manager

Date

Ben Nau - Comms. Unit Program Manager

Date

APPENDIX I: Volunteer Criminal Background Screening

MCEMA SOP SUBJECT: Volunteer Criminal Background Screening	NEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT <input type="checkbox"/> PERMANENT <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY <input type="checkbox"/> PURGE DATE:
Date: September 28, 2016	

This agency has the responsibility to protect the security, safety, and health of employees and volunteers, to safeguard public assets and resources, and to assure individuals in responsible positions are worthy of the trust they are given. Therefore, this agency has adopted this policy regarding volunteer screening.

This policy applies to any volunteer who conducts work under the auspices of Medina County Emergency Management Agency.

Before a final candidate is offered a volunteer position, a criminal background check utilizing Ohio BCI and FBI databases will be conducted by the Medina County Sheriff's Office.

A conviction will not necessarily result in exclusion. If the background check reveals criminal convictions or other serious misconduct (other than minor misdemeanors), the Disaster Services Director will determine if the results could exclude the candidate for the position by considering the following:

- a. The nature and gravity of the offense or conduct;
- b. The time that has passed since the offense or conduct and/ or completion of the sentence;
and
- c. The nature of the job held or sought.

If it is determined that the exclusion is job related and consistent with business necessity, the candidate will be notified that he may be excluded because of past criminal conduct, and he will be provided an opportunity to give additional information to demonstrate that the exclusion should not be applied. The Director of Disaster Services will consider the candidate's additional information to determine if the exclusion should be upheld.

Current volunteers shall self-disclose criminal convictions within three business days of the conviction to the Director of Disaster Services or her designee.

APPENDIX II: Limited Liability Protection Factsheet



LIMITED LIABILITY PROTECTION

Ohio Revised Code Section 121.404 was repealed effective on July 3, 2012. This change was the result of Ohio EMA and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) taking over management and administration of the Ohio Responds volunteer database from the Ohio Community Services Council.

Ohio Revised Code Sections 5502.281 and 3701.04 now take the place of Section 121.404 and have essentially the same language. These statutes require that the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (OEMA) jointly share the responsibilities of the statutes.

The limited liability protection for registered volunteers during an emergency declared by the state or political subdivision or in disaster-related exercises, testing or other training activities) remains the same.

ORC 3701.04 (B) The director (of health), in accordance with Chapter 119 of the Revised Code, shall adopt rules jointly with the executive director of the emergency management agency to do both of the following, as required by section 5502.281 of the Revised Code:

- (1) Advise, assist, consult with and cooperate with agencies and political subdivisions of this state to establish and maintain a statewide system for recruiting, registering, training and deploying volunteers reasonably necessary to respond to an emergency declared by the state or a political subdivision;
- (2) Establish fees, procedures, standards and requirements necessary for recruiting, registering, training and deploying the volunteers.

ORC 5502.281 (A) The executive director of the emergency management agency, jointly with the director of health shall do both of the following:

- (1) Advise, assist, consult with, and cooperate with agencies and political subdivisions of this state to establish and maintain a statewide system for recruiting, registering, training, and deploying the types of volunteers reasonably necessary to respond to an emergency declared by the state or a political subdivision;
- (2) Establish fees, procedures, standards, and requirements necessary for recruiting, registering, training, and deploying the volunteers as required under this section.

...

(C) A volunteer registered under this section is not liable in damages to any person or government entity in tort or other civil action, including an action upon a medical, dental, chiropractic, optometric, or other health-related claim or veterinary claim, for injury, death, or loss to person or property that may arise from an act or omission of that volunteer. This division applies to a registered volunteer while providing services within the scope of the volunteer's responsibilities during an emergency declared by the state or political subdivision or in disaster-related exercises, testing, or other training activities, if the volunteer's act or omission does not constitute willful or wanton misconduct.

(D) As used in this section:

- (1) "Registered volunteer" means any individual registered as a volunteer pursuant to procedures established under this section and who serve without pay or other consideration, other than the reasonable reimbursement or allowance for expenses actually incurred or the provision of incidental benefits related to the volunteer's service, such as meals, lodging, and child care.
- (2) "Political subdivision" means a county, township, or municipal corporation in this state.

APPENDIX III: Volunteer Code of Conduct

As an MCEMA volunteer, I SHALL:

- Abide by the Principles of Operation as stated on page six of this handbook.
- Maintain and abide by the standards of my profession, including licensure, certification and / or training requirements to support my MCEMA role.
- Maintain confidentiality of all information related to MCEMA volunteer activities unless otherwise authorized by the Director or Program Manager.
- Refer any request from the media for information or comments directly to my direct supervisor.
- Put safety first in all MCEMA activities and always promote safe work practices.
- Respect and use all equipment appropriately.
- Report injuries, illnesses, and accidents to the appropriate staff member immediately.
- Dress appropriately for the job assignment and environment.
- Treat others with courtesy, sensitivity, tact, consideration and humility.
- Accept the chain of command and respect others regardless of position.

As a MCEMA volunteer, I SHALL NOT:

- Act in the capacity of a MCEMA volunteer, nor present myself as a MCEMA volunteer, at any time without prior authorization / deployment from the MCEMA leadership.
- Misrepresent my role and/or job duties or work outside my scope of duties or credentials as a MCEMA volunteer
- Use MCEMA equipment or partner agency equipment or resources for personal use.
- Respond for duty under the influence of alcohol, prescription/non-prescription medication or any other substances that may influence my ability to perform assigned tasks to the very best of my ability.
- Use profane language and/or engage in disruptive behavior including what could be considered physical or sexual abuse, or harassment.
- Accept or seek on behalf of myself or any other person, any financial advantage or gain as a result of the volunteer's affiliation with the MCEMA.
- Authorize the use of or use for the benefit or advantage of any person, the name, emblem, services, or property of the MCEMA, except in conformance with MCEMA policy.

I certify that I have reviewed the Medina County Emergency Management and Homeland Security Code of Conduct and that I am willing to conduct myself in accordance with the code.

Volunteer Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Volunteer's Printed Name: _____

APPENDIX IV: Volunteer Acknowledgement of “At Will” Status

The Medina County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Volunteer handbook describes important information about the Medina County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (MCEMA), and I understand that I should consult my supervisor or the fiscal manager regarding any questions not answered in the handbook. I have entered into my volunteer relationship with the Medina County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security voluntarily and acknowledge that there is no specified length of my relationship with MCEMA. Accordingly, either the MCEMA or I can terminate the relationship at will, with or without cause, at any time, so long as there is no violation of applicable federal or state law.

Since the information, policies, and benefits described here are necessarily subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions to the handbook may occur, except to the MCEMA's policy of “at-will” volunteerism or employment. All such changes will be communicated through official notices, and I understand that revised information may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies. Only the MCEMA has the power to adopt any revisions to the policies in this handbook.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that this volunteer handbook is neither a contract of employment nor a legal document. I have received the handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

VOLUNTEER'S NAME (printed): _____

VOLUNTEER'S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____