



**CITY OF**  
**Big Lake**

**City of Big Lake**  
**Volunteer Handbook**

## **Introduction**

This Volunteer Program Handbook contains policies and procedures for the information and guidance of volunteers in the City of Big Lake.

This handbook serves as a general guide for informational purposes only. It is not a contract between the City and its volunteers. Although we have attempted to cover matters that generally apply to volunteers, this handbook does not cover every situation that may arise.

The City may add, modify, or revise this handbook as deemed appropriate. In the event of a conflict between this handbook and state, federal or municipal statute, ordinance or regulation, the applicable law will control to the extent necessary to resolve such conflict.

This handbook is not intended to guide the City's volunteer fire fighters, police reserves, other first responders, or volunteers from other organized volunteer programs.

## **Orientation and Training**

Since each volunteer position is different, training will be provided by your staff supervisor. Training will be appropriate to the complexity of the volunteer position.

## **Supervision**

All volunteers will have a clearly identified supervisor. This supervisor may be a staff person or, in some cases, a volunteer. The supervisor is responsible for guidance and support of the volunteer and should be available for questions.

## **Age Minimum**

The City of Big Lake welcomes volunteers of all ages and ability levels. Volunteer opportunities will specify any age restrictions in the posting. The minimum age for volunteers is 16 unless accompanied by an adult or staff supervisor. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis. All minor volunteers will require parent/guardian approval prior to beginning volunteer work.

## **Volunteer Status and Guidelines**

Your participation in this program is voluntary. You may elect to end or modify your participation at any time. As a participant in the volunteer program, you are not in any sense an employee of the City, and

you will not be compensated for your service. Participation in the program is a privilege, not a right. Similarly, your service as a volunteer is subject to the direction and supervision of the City and its staff.

All volunteers will undergo a background check to assist in determining suitability for the position before training. Volunteers must provide a form of government issued identification to City staff prior to signing the General Authorization and Release form in City staff's presence.

In performing volunteer services for the City of Big Lake, you are responsible for assisting and serving the residents, program participants, and others with whom you come into contact. You should exhibit conduct that is ethical, professional, and responsive.

You are expected to follow all City guidelines, policies, and procedures. This handbook outlines most of the pertinent areas that govern your volunteer work. Your Program Supervisor or the Human Resource Representative may provide further direction and answer any questions you may have.

Failure to follow the City's guidelines and directives may result in the revocation or restriction of your privilege to participate in the volunteer program. The City also reserves the right to modify or terminate this program or any part of it at its sole discretion.

The following are general requirements for every volunteer position of the City of Big Lake. As a volunteer, you are expected to:

- Perform assigned duties to the best of your ability at all times.
- Render prompt and courteous service to the public at all times.
- Read, understand, and comply with the policies, procedures, and guidelines set forth in this handbook as well as those that are communicated to you in other ways through your program participation.
- Conduct yourself with decorum toward residents, the public, City staff, and elected officials, and respond to inquiries and information requests with patience and courtesy.
- Report any and all unsafe conditions to your immediate supervisor, the Recreation Coordinator, or the City Administrator.
- Keep the commitments you make to the volunteer program.

### **Safety Rules and Equipment Usage for Volunteers**

Volunteers must follow all City of Big Lake safety procedures and guidelines. Safety training for volunteers will be provided by City department supervisors or their designee.

For reasons of safety, security or legal considerations, some facilities and/or equipment are off limits to volunteers. For this reason, City Department Supervisors or their designee may approve or deny access for individual volunteers to enter specific City facilities.

Adult volunteers (at least 18 years of age) may operate (drive) non-licensed, motorized, self-propelled maintenance equipment with permission of a Department Supervisor or their designee. The City Department Supervisor or designee shall first perform an assessment that the volunteer is responsible

and qualified to operate the equipment. No one shall operate (drive) any equipment without using appropriate personal safety equipment, and without first receiving instruction as to its proper and safe operation. Volunteers shall inquire of the Department Supervisor or their designee about the safety equipment appropriate for operation of any equipment on which the volunteer has not had previous experience.

Volunteers under the age of 18 are not permitted to operate: motorized equipment; non-licensed motorized, self-propelled maintenance equipment; chain saws; or anything else as to which minors' operation is prohibited by law.

Some volunteers may occasionally be assigned and authorized to drive City of Big Lake licensed motor vehicles. If so, they shall first undergo a vehicle familiarization training session and successfully complete a driver's license record check similar to that required of employees who are authorized to drive licensed motor vehicles. All operators shall be familiar with and obey the safety and operating instructions provided by City of Big Lake staff and all traffic laws.

### **Appearance and Dress Guidelines**

Your appearance is a direct reflection on the professionalism of City services. A neat, well-groomed volunteer will present a positive image of the City and demonstrate the pride our City volunteers have. Please check with your volunteer supervisor for the appropriate attire for your position.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The credibility of local government rests heavily upon the confidence that citizens have in public officials, employees, and volunteers to render fair and impartial services to all citizens without regard to personal interest and/or political influence. Thus, volunteers must scrupulously avoid any activities that suggest a conflict of interest between their private interests and City responsibilities. The City has adopted a Conflict of Interest ordinance that addresses these issues with respect to City officials, employees, and volunteers. Volunteers are required to follow all applicable laws related to conflicts of interest, including the City's Personnel Policy.

Examples of activities which do not comply with this policy include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Acceptance of any gift from an interested person in violation of the City of Big Lake's Volunteer Policy;
- Using your authority, influence, or City position for the purpose of private or personal financial gain;
- The use of City time, facilities, equipment, or supplies for the purpose of private or personal financial gain;
- Entering into a business transaction when it involves using confidential information gained in the course of volunteering; and
- Conducting personal business while volunteering.

A copy of the City's Personnel Policy in full is available from the Human Resource Representative or online at <http://www.biglakemn.org/DocumentCenter/View/1642/2017-PERSONNEL-POLICY-UPDATED-AS-101018?bidId=>.

### **Government Data Practices Act**

The City is subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Under the law, all data is public unless classified as non-public.

If you receive a request for public data, immediately forward the request to your Program Supervisor or the City Clerk.

### **Handling Residents' Feedback**

Resident feedback provides an opportunity to identify and respond to local concerns. How complaints are handled determines the level of confidence and respect the public holds for its municipal government.

Always be polite, listen and document the resident's concerns. Allow the resident to fully explain their concerns before asking for clarification or providing an explanation. Do not argue with the complainant even if the resident is angry, unreasonable, or insulting toward you and/or the City. Politely transfer the call to your Program Supervisor if the conversation becomes argumentative or foul language is used.

When you receive a complaint, it is very important to follow through properly. This can be accomplished by doing the following:

- Receive and record information pertinent to the complaint.
- Report the complaint to your Program Supervisor.
- Follow up to see what action has been taken to correct the problem.

### **Keeping Commitments and Attendance**

It is essential that you report for service when you have made a commitment to do so. A successful volunteer program requires both the City and the volunteer to meet their agreed upon obligations. Failure to attend may result in the revocation of your participation in volunteer activities. You may be required to record and report your volunteer service hours.

You serve as a volunteer at your pleasure; however, you are subject to the direction and control of the City and the City reserves the right to end this relationship at any time.

### **Emergency Closing Procedure**

It is the City's policy to continue to provide appropriate service levels during periods of inclement weather or other emergencies. If a State of Emergency is declared, you may use your own discretion whether you wish to remain engaged in the volunteer program during the State of Emergency.

## **Personal Use and Disposal of City Property**

All City property and equipment is publicly owned. City-owned equipment and facilities are not generally available for personal use by staff or volunteers. City property that becomes obsolete, damaged, or is no longer needed shall be disposed by salvage, trade, public auction, or bid. Volunteers may only acquire public property through the above means.

## **Political Activity**

Volunteers may seek election or appointment to public office, except to the extent prohibited by the provisions of state or federal law. Political activity must not interfere with a volunteer's duties or performance. As a volunteer, you may not perform political activities during service hours.

## **Telephone, Internet, E-Mail, and Social Media Use**

The City's Electronic Communications Systems (ECS) are in place for conducting official business. While occasional use of these systems for personal use is acceptable, volunteers must demonstrate a sense of responsibility and may not abuse such privileges. Communications of any kind by a City volunteer over the City's ECS, whether work-related or personal, is subject to monitoring and review by the City at any time, with or without notice or permission.

All communications sent must be respectful in tone and professional. The City's ECS may not be used for forwarding "chain letters" or for any purpose which is illegal or against City policy.

City telephones are for conducting official City business. Personal use is permitted on occasion or in an emergency.

## **Solicitation**

Volunteers may not perform non-City of Big Lake solicitation or distribute non-City of Big Lake literature during volunteer work hours.

## **Work Environment**

The City is committed to providing a safe work environment as well as an environment in which everyone is treated with dignity, decency, and respect. The City pledges its best efforts to avoid discrimination against or harassment of any volunteer or volunteer applicant because of race, color, creed, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status, status with regard to public assistance, physical or mental disability, or any other status protected by state or federal law.

The City prohibits discrimination against or harassment of any volunteer or volunteer applicant on the basis of protected class status. Volunteers who participate in discrimination are in violation of City policy and are subject to revocation of their volunteer status. For additional information, the non-discrimination and harassment policies are available for review from human resources.

Retaliation against anyone for making a complaint under this policy or assisting with investigations of complaints made under this policy is also strictly prohibited.

Any person who feels that they have been discriminated against shall immediately contact the City Administrator or the Human Resource Representative.

The City of Big Lake prohibits all employees and volunteers, except sworn peace officers, from carrying or possessing firearms while acting in the course and scope of employment of the City. Volunteers must agree not to carry or possess firearms while in the course and scope of City-related activities.

The City of Big Lake provides a non-smoking environment. All City facilities are smoke and tobacco free. All City vehicles are also smoke and tobacco free.

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of any controlled substance, including alcohol, is prohibited on City property.

The personal safety of each volunteer is of primary importance. To the greatest degree possible, the City seeks to maintain a safe and hazard-free environment. You are expected to develop safe work habits and to contribute to the safety of others.

You should follow all directives of City staff regarding safety. If you observe or become concerned about any potentially unsafe condition, immediately notify your Program Supervisor, the Recreation Coordinator, or City Administrator. You are also required to immediately report accidents resulting in personal injuries and/or vehicle, equipment, or property damage to your Program Supervisor or the Recreation Coordinator.