

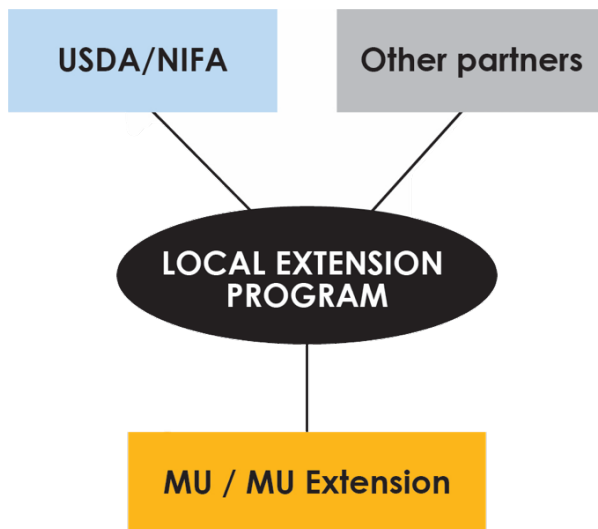
# Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct

Talking points for University of Missouri Extension employees

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## The purpose of this guide

This guide is intended to help University of Missouri Extension faculty and staff answer questions volunteers raise regarding the annual MU Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct, required background screening and the requirements of being a mandated reporter.



Volunteers are an integral part of programs and services that MU Extension delivers. As shown in the diagram above, our work is always part of a larger picture. We must follow the policies and guidelines of our organization and respect those of our program partners and funders.

It is crucial to our success that we clearly communicate to our volunteers what is expected and required of them in order to perform this valuable MU Extension work.

## Background screening

All University of Missouri employees undergo a background check as a condition of employment. It is assumed that at some point they will be working with youth — leading programs,

workshops, conferences and state events. Background checks will be performed on volunteers, as follows:

- All **4-H** and **Master Naturalist** volunteers will have background checks performed.
- **Master Gardener** volunteers who lead programs with youth participants will have background checks performed.

## The MU Extension Code of Conduct

Similar to university employees, extension volunteers must follow standards of personal conduct, as outlined in the MU Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct, which must be reviewed and signed annually in order to be an MU Extension volunteer.

The Code of Conduct protects both the volunteer and MU Extension. Following this code ensures that volunteers are backed by MU Extension.

This Code of Conduct serves as a reference for any disciplinary action taken with volunteers. It enables MU Extension to ensure that volunteers follow specific guidelines, and sets forth disciplinary action that may be taken for those whose conduct violates this code.

## What is a mandated reporter?

All MU Extension employees and volunteers who carry out extension programming on behalf of the university are required to be mandated reporters. This means that employees and volunteers who work with vulnerable populations, such as youth or the elderly, are **mandated by law to report** to the proper authorities any abuse or neglect they observe among the groups they work with. In most cases, the proper reporting authority in Missouri is the Department of Social Services (DSS), Family Support Division.

Following are common questions and concerns that some volunteers may have about being a mandated reporter and how you can reply.

- **Am I required to be a mandated reporter?** Yes. MU Extension volunteers and employees are required to be mandated reporters whether or not they work with youth.
- **Can I simply report my concerns or observations about abuse or neglect to my supervisor?** No. In cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, the mandated reporter must be the one who contacts the Children's Division Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.
- **Will the family be told that I reported the suspected abuse or neglect?** No. The mandated reporter's identity is confidential.
- **What happens to me if I don't recognize symptoms of abuse or neglect?** In instances where you do not recognize symptoms of abuse or neglect, and it is not obvious that abuse or neglect is occurring, there are no repercussions for not calling the hotline. However, it is important to educate yourself to recognize signs of abuse and neglect.
- **I worry that if I call, the family will be punished.** The DSS Family Support Division is a resource and help for families who may need assistance, resources or education. They are here to help, not to punish families.
- **I just don't want to get involved.** Consider the outcome if you do not. Your position as an MU Extension employee or volunteer comes with the responsibility of being the voice for a child who is being abused or neglected. It is your responsibility to report such incidents so the child can be protected.

## For more information

Contact **Eric Jackson**, Director of Risk and Volunteer Management. Phone 573-882-0456, or email [jacksonjamese@umsystem.edu](mailto:jacksonjamese@umsystem.edu)

## Learn more with these resources

This guide is a summary of important policies and protocols developed by MU Extension.

For more in-depth information, see the following links to important documents and resources.

- MU Extension Volunteer Management Human Resource website and MU Extension Volunteer Policy Explained (video)  
<https://muextensionway.missouri.edu/support-units/human-resources/volunteer-management>
- MU Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct  
[https://missouri.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3XcCMH9n9Og9M6F](https://missouri.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3XcCMH9n9Og9M6F)
- Constructive Coaching of MU Extension Volunteer Guide  
<https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/ExtensionWay/Docs/hr-VolunteerConstructiveCoachingGuide-for-MUProfessionals.pdf>
- Missouri DSS Family Support Division reporting  
**Hotline:** 1-800-392-3738  
**Online reporting** for non-emergencies:  
<https://apps.dss.mo.gov/OnlineCanReporting/default.aspx>

### Program-specific resources

- Missouri Master Gardener Program's Statewide Operational Guidelines is found at  
<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/mg1>
- Missouri Master Naturalist State Program Manual <https://extension2.missouri.edu/m201>
- Missouri 4-H Risk Management of Volunteer-Led Programs Online Manual can be found  
<https://muextensionway.missouri.edu/courses/105108-4-h-policy-and-procedures-risk-management-of-volunteer-led-programs>
- All other program areas, access the MU Extension Risk Management of Volunteer-Led Programs Online Manual at  
<https://muextensionway.missouri.edu/catalogs/search/result/?it=Courses>



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