

Illinois Master Naturalist
Policy Handbook

Illinois Master Naturalist

Table of Contents

How to Use This Document 2
Definitions and Acronyms 2
Introduction to the Master Naturalist Program 2
Master Naturalist Defined 3
Application, Screening, and Training 6
Volunteering in the Master Naturalist Program 8
Program Compliance 12
Information Management 12
Setting and Amending Master Naturalist Policies 13

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go.illinois.edu/MNHandbook

This document supersedes all previous University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist policy documents. This document will be reviewed and updated periodically as needed.

Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

extension.illinois.edu/MN

How to Use This Document:

This document is intended for University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist volunteers. The policies and guidelines outlined provide guidance for participating in the Illinois Master Naturalist program. Please consult with your local program coordinator for any questions regarding the policies, management, and coordination of the Illinois Master Naturalist Program.

Definitions and Acronyms:

MN: Illinois Extension Master Naturalist.

Illinois Master Naturalist Local Chapter/Local Chapter: a master naturalist program located at the unit or county level. Chapters are led by unit-level Extension staff.

Local Coordinator: The local University of Illinois Extension staff who coordinate the local chapter. These staff can be education program coordinators, educators, county directors, or office support. Although many local chapters operate with a team of Extension staff, each chapter has an identified "local coordinator" that serves as the point of contact.

State Specialist: The Illinois Extension State Master Naturalist Program Specialist. This individual is responsible for state risk management, curriculum development, and providing local guidance to local chapters and coordinators.

Introduction to the Master Naturalist Program

The University of Illinois Master Naturalist program is an educational volunteer training program offered by University of Illinois Extension. The program is designed to give participants an opportunity to experience nature, develop knowledge of and respect for the environment, and practice natural resources stewardship. The program is designed to increase the availability of university-based natural resources information to local non-profit, non-commercial community groups, and private individuals through trained volunteers known as Master Naturalists.

Master Naturalist Mission and Vision

The mission of the University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist program is to provide science-based educational opportunities that connect people with nature and help them become engaged environmental stewards. The vision of the program is to give individuals the opportunity to experience nature, develop knowledge of and respect for the environment, practice natural resource stewardship, and contribute to the natural resources outreach efforts of University of Illinois Extension.



Master Naturalist Program Objectives:

1. Offer Master Naturalist educational programs and materials that provide classroom and field-based training on the environmental and cultural resources of Illinois.
2. Cultivate volunteers to serve as educators and community ambassadors for environmental initiatives, as stewards in the management of natural resources in Illinois, and as stakeholders who will perpetuate the Master Naturalist Program.
3. Facilitate cooperation and collaboration among partnering groups and agencies.

To become a Master Naturalist, an individual must apply online to the local Extension office offering the program. After the local coordinator reviews the application, applicants may be invited for an interview. Not all applicants are accepted into the program. There may be more applicants than space allows for an in-person classroom or more applicants than the local office can accommodate. There may also be a waiting period before the local office is ready to take new applications. If an individual is not accepted into the current training group, their name may be kept on file, and they may be encouraged to reapply.

Master Naturalist Defined

Master Naturalists must be adults, 18 years and older. They are members of the local community interested in nature and stewarding the natural resources of Illinois.

Master Naturalist Title

Master naturalists have various titles based on where they are in their journey in the program.

MASTER NATURALIST TRAINEE

A program participant from the time they are accepted into the program through completion of the MN training.

MASTER NATURALIST INTERN

A program participant from the time they graduate from the MN training with a minimum of 40 hours of Master Naturalist training through the completion of 60 hours of volunteer service. This internship is recommended to be completed within 12 months of the end of classroom training. However, interns may take until Dec. 31 of the year following their training to complete their internship upon agreement of the local Extension unit Master Naturalist coordinator. Anyone who fails to complete the volunteer service requirement does not become a certified University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist.

CERTIFIED (ACTIVE) MASTER NATURALIST

Current volunteers can log in to their Volunteer Gateway profile to view the current status.

A Master Naturalist Intern who has completed their initial 60-hour volunteer service requirement or a returning previously certified University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist. To maintain Certified University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist status **requires a minimum of 30 hours of volunteer service and 10 hours of continuing education annually** and is valid for one year.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A former University of Illinois Extension Certified Master Naturalist who is temporarily unable to fulfill Active Master Naturalist requirements for health, family, or other personal reasons. Participants may remain on leave of absence for one or two years at a time upon the approval of their local coordinator. Return to active status after more than two years as an inactive Master Naturalist may require additional training and additional background screening. Master Naturalist Interns are not eligible for a leave of absence but can work with the local coordinator on an extension of the internship. Granting of internship extensions are to the discretion of the local coordinator but should not exceed two years (in addition to the original internship length).

A volunteer who adopts a leave of absence status:

- Remains a Master Naturalist volunteer or a member of the Extension Master Naturalist volunteer program
- May report volunteer service or continuing education hours
- May attend monthly meetings, continuing education classes, and conferences at the local coordinator's discretion
- Is required to stay current on all background checks and sign the annual Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct and Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreement forms
- May not serve in a local county leadership capacity
- May not apply or serve on the State Advisory Board
- Time (years) in leave of absence status will not count toward years of service awards

ALUMNUS

A former University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist who successfully completed the 40-hour classroom training and the 60-hour internship, but who no longer maintains their annual active volunteer service and/or education update requirements. When an individual ceases to actively participate, his or her designation as a University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist becomes void. Instead, they become a Master Naturalist Alumnus. Certification as a Master Naturalist is restrictive in that it is valid only when the individual is participating in a University of Illinois Extension-sponsored or endorsed program for the coming year. Those not continuing in the program will not be re-certified and should be aware that if they represent themselves as Master Naturalist, they are violating their original commitment.

Return to active status after more than two years as a Master Naturalist Alumnus will require additional training. This amount of additional training is determined by the local coordinator with consultation of the state coordinator if needed. Additional training can include attending Master Naturalist classes or continuing education webinars/seminars. If auditing a Master Naturalist class, they will not have to pay to attend, but would have to pay any fees related to an online webinar/seminar.

Master Naturalist Program Status

Status in the program is determined by meeting requirements in Gateway or the online Volunteer Management system.

APPLICANT

A program participant who has filled out the initial application in the Volunteer Gateway. This individual has not yet been accepted into the program.

PAUSED

A sabbatical-like status for a former certified Master Naturalist or Intern who is temporarily unable to fulfill active Master Naturalist requirements for health, family, or other personal reasons. This is requested by volunteer and coincides with the "leave of Absence" title. The request should be communicated in writing to the program coordinator.

TEMPORARY INACTIVE

Active volunteers who do not record the minimum hours requirements (30 volunteer service hours and 10 continuing education hours) and/or fulfill the other requirements in the Volunteer Gateway automatically receive a Temporary Inactive status.

To return to active status, the volunteer must complete all missing requirements in the Gateway system and discuss with the local Extension staff plans for completing the full hours requirement in the following year. Otherwise, they will become permanently inactive and lose their Master Naturalist certification. Time (years) in inactive status does not count toward years of service awards.

Volunteers with temporary inactive status:

- Are eligible for all volunteer activities in the local county program and offered by the state program
- Are encouraged to attend monthly meetings, continuing education classes, and conferences
- Are required to stay current on all background checks and sign the annual Extension Code of Conduct and Master Naturalist Volunteer agreement forms
- May not serve in a local county leadership capacity
- May not apply or serve on the State Advisory Board

PERMANENT INACTIVE

Permanent inactive status defines an individual who has voluntarily or involuntarily left the Master Naturalist volunteer program. They no longer volunteer for the program and may not present themselves as a University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist.

Permanently Inactive Volunteers:

- Do not remain an Extension Master Naturalist Volunteer or a member of the Extension Master Naturalist Volunteer Program
- Do not have access to program and Extension resources, staff, websites, etc.
- Are not eligible for any volunteer activities in the local county program and offered by the state program
- Are not required to complete a background check or sign the annual Code of Conduct or Master Naturalist Agreement forms
- Do not report volunteer service or continuing education hours
- Are not eligible to serve in a local county leadership capacity
- Are not eligible to serve on the State Advisory Board
- Do not attend monthly meetings, continuing education classes, and conferences
- Do not attend local social gatherings, including awards banquets and holiday parties

Individuals on permanent inactive status may return and become reinstated as active volunteers in the Extension Master Naturalist volunteer program if approved by the local program coordinator. To rejoin the program, the volunteer must complete a volunteer application and contact the local program coordinator, who will confirm that the returning volunteer completed a background check and is in good standing. Returning to active status after more than two years as inactive will require additional training and a new background screening.

Use of the Master Naturalist Title

The title “University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist” is to be used only and exclusively in the University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist program in which certified and active MNs conduct educational programming and provide natural resource assistance to University of Illinois Extension and its local and state partners.

MNs are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid public service work in this University of Illinois Extension-sponsored program. The titles are valid only when the volunteer is participating in the University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist program.

The title may only be utilized on work applications by active MNs. However, individuals who have completed the training may list the MN training course under “coursework” or a similar title.

Conflicts of Interest

A Master Naturalist should not display credentials or give the appearance of being a University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist

at a place of business or work unless that place is conducting an authorized University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist activity.

It is improper to imply that the University of Illinois Extension endorses any product or place of business. Master Naturalists must not use their title in any form of commercial advertisement. The title Master Naturalist is to be used only when conducting unpaid volunteer work in the program. In the event that products must be discussed in an educational program, the volunteer must provide at least three equal options.

When Master Naturalists make public presentations on natural resource subjects, it is permissible for them to accept unsolicited gifts or be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred in conducting the class. However, it is inappropriate to seek pay for personal gain for speaking engagements conducted as a Master Naturalist. Such speaker fees or honoraria are permissible when the fee is given to the local Extension Unit Office.

Master Naturalist Identification

Name badges that indicate the level of the Master Naturalist participant may be used. Temporary name badges are appropriate for Master Naturalist Trainees and Master Naturalist Interns. Active Master Naturalists should use official University of Illinois Extension name badges to identify themselves as representatives of University of Illinois Extension while conducting programs as Master Naturalist unless anonymity for safety of the volunteer is important.

Master Naturalist Apparel

Official University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist apparel may be ordered through an approved Extension vendor, with the guidance of the local coordinator. Master Naturalist apparel must be compliant with University of Illinois Extension logo guidelines.

Application, Screening, and Training

Application Procedures

To become a Master Naturalist, a Master Naturalist applicant must follow the application procedures of the local Master Naturalist chapter. Once a class is determined, a volunteer application must be submitted online through the Extension Volunteer Gateway System.

Screening of Applicants

Screening techniques, such as in-depth applications, background screening procedures, live (in-person, virtual, or phone) interviews along with references and other sources will be used to determine if candidates are appropriate for the program.

All Master Naturalist trainees accepted into the program must complete the Illinois Extension volunteer screening process.

Steps to Become an Illinois Extension Volunteer

- Application submission and review
- References should be sought from three persons who know the applicant, including a family member, a work relationship, and a personal character reference.
- Interview with Illinois Extension staff
- Criminal history check and registered sex offender check through Sterling Volunteers
- Illinois Department of Children and Family Services – Child Abuse and Neglect System (CANTS) check
- Illinois Extension Child Protection Training
- Volunteer orientation/training

Regular Background Checks

Master Naturalist trainees who wish to become certified and volunteer and who have been accepted into the program are required to complete a full background screening as part of the volunteer selection process. This includes

completion of the volunteer application; an interview; references, a DCFS CANTS check; national background check through Sterling Volunteers system and a name check against the National Sex Offender Registry Check at (http://www.nsopw.gov/en-US. The university will treat this information as confidential.

A volunteer DCFS CANTS check, completion or updated volunteer application, National Sex Offender Registry Check, and the national background check though Sterling Volunteers system must be renewed no less than every three years of volunteer service.

Required Forms*

Once:

- Extension Risk Waiver, signature required
- Child Protection Training Certificate

Annually:

- Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Master Naturalist Program Volunteer Agreement
- Talent Release Form, signature required

As Needed:

- Emergency Medical Form
- Background check authorizations

*Individual programs may require additional steps or forms.

Applicants should receive explanations of volunteer opportunities, particularly those that the individual will commit to for the internship. If these opportunities are not suitable to the candidate because of conflicts with the schedule, no interest in offered program areas, etc., then advise that the candidate reapply to the program in the future.

Protection of Minors Training

All Master Naturalist volunteers must complete online Child Protection Training developed by University of Illinois Extension as a requirement of becoming and continuing to be a volunteer.

The training includes University of Illinois policies regarding protection of minors and the volunteer's responsibility for reporting incidences of abuse and/or neglect of minors to an Extension employee within the unit in which they are volunteering (e.g., county director. *The Extension employee and volunteer will then contact the University of Illinois Police Department and DCFS together*.

Core Course Training

COURSE TOPICS

University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Core Course training consists of a minimum of 40 hours of instruction based on the Illinois Master Naturalist Manual. Exact topics presented may vary due to local needs. However, all programs will include sessions on the following topics:

Foundation Chapters (required

- Chapter 1 Introduction to the Illinois Master Naturalist Program
- Chapter 2: Understanding the Natural World
- Chapter 13: Geology
- Chapter 14: Soils of Illinois
- Chapter 15: Environmental Ethics and Philosophy
- Chapter 19: Natural Divisions: The Biogeography of Illinois

Ecosystem Chapters (minimum of two)

- Chapter 3: Understanding Prairie in the Prairie State
- Chapter 4: Forests of Illinois
- Chapter 5: Wetlands
- Chapter 6: Agricultural Lands and Wildlife
- Chapter 7: Urban Areas and Wildlife
- Chapter 18: Flowing Water - Illinois' Streams and Rivers

"Ologies" Chapters (minimum of two)

- Chapter 8: Ornithology

- Chapter 9: Mammalogy
- Chapter 10: Herpetology
- Chapter 11: Botany
- Chapter 12: Entomology

Supplemental Chapters (as appropriate)

- Chapter 16: Archaeology - People and the Early Illinois Landscape
- Chapter 17: Weather and Climate
- Chapter 20: Art of Interpretation and Teaching
- Chapter 21: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access

Topics not covered in the Illinois Master Naturalist Manual may also be part of core course training, provided approval of the topic is obtained from the State Master Naturalist coordinator.

ATTENDANCE

Master Naturalist trainees are expected to attend all training sessions. In the event a training session must be missed, it is the responsibility of the trainee to plan for making up the missed session. The local coordinator will determine the make-up activities/ assignments. Trainees cannot certify if they have missed more than 20% of the training.

COURSE FEES

Master Naturalist course fees are set by local units offering the training and are based upon the suggested state pricing guidelines. The course fee should also account for additional training costs, such as meeting room rental fees, educator expenses, and photocopying costs. The fee should include the cost that is paid for the Master Naturalist curriculum.

In instances where a course applicant indicates he or she prefers not to complete the volunteer internship portion of the course or if, through the interview process, a non-volunteer option for training may be available at the discretion of the local unit. Additional fees can be added if this option is available.

Volunteering in the Master Naturalist Program

Screening for Active Volunteers

Yearly, all active Master Naturalists must sign a copy of the Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreement and Extension Code of Conduct and have their name checked against the National Sex Offender Website. A volunteer background, DCFS CANTS check, and criminal history check with Sterling Volunteers must be renewed no less than every three years of volunteer service.

A volunteer charged with a criminal offense but not yet convicted may be suspended as determined by consultation between the local staff, the regional director, and state program leadership. The volunteer will be notified (with a receipt requested) that they are on suspension as a Master Naturalist volunteer pending resolution of the matter. Upon resolution of the matter, the individual may request that their volunteer appointment be restored to active status. The county director, in consultation with the administration and the Master Naturalist program leadership, will determine whether the volunteer's appointment should be restored based on the facts and circumstances.

Annual Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreement and Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct Documents

All University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist must sign an Annual Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreement and Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct as part of their commitment to the program. A digitally signed copy of these agreements will be on file in the Illinois Extension Volunteer Gateway.

Eligible Volunteer Activities

A volunteer's service with sponsoring and partnering groups or agencies that further the mission of the Illinois Master Naturalist program is considered eligible.

Additional volunteer service is eligible as pre-approved by the local coordinator and/or state coordinator. University of Illinois Extension non-discrimination forms must be signed every three years by non-state or federal entities that have not previously collaborated with Extension. All volunteers are required to discuss with their local coordinator all planned activities prior to volunteering.

Generally, volunteer work is done in the local community or in regional natural areas but need not be limited to local efforts. Projects may involve natural resource stewardship at local parks and preserves, community scientist efforts, environmental educational and outreach, administrative service, and leadership in perpetuating the MN Program. Travel time to volunteer service activities can be included in volunteer service hours.

For liability reasons, MNs are not permitted to conduct home visits as part of their volunteer role.

Natural Resource Stewardship

Natural resource stewardship includes but is not limited to hands-on management, planting, invasive species control, wildlife and vegetation monitoring, and trail work as it relates to the management of the state's natural resources. Some activities may require additional training and certification. Opportunities for stewardship of local and state parks, natural areas, and preserves can be performed by coordinating with partnering groups and agencies.

In addition to attending existing and scheduled volunteer workdays, MNs may contact partner groups about opportunities for independent service projects. MNs are particularly encouraged to coordinate with partnering groups and agencies regarding opportunities to assume an ongoing stewardship role at locations and preserves in need of continuing site stewardship. Independent service projects and other opportunities must be pre-approved by the local coordinator in consultation with the unit director and state coordinator.

MNs must adhere to the Illinois Pesticide Act requirements when applying herbicide including having a license to apply herbicide on public lands and following pesticide and herbicide labels. See the Pesticide Safety Education Program licensing webpage for more information.

Volunteers who will be operating a chain saw in the Master Naturalist program must provide proof of participation in a safety class **before** using a chain saw and reporting volunteer hours.

Community Science Efforts

Community science programs cover a wide range of natural resource interests. Most of these efforts include natural resource observation, logging data, and information sharing which is used formally and informally by teachers and researchers. Many, but not all of these projects require training to participate. The training to learn the data collection methods are considered continuing education activities. The actual data collection qualifies as a volunteer activity.

These projects are typically run by a larger organization. Projects through University of Illinois researchers and programs are highly encouraged. Outside, non-state, or federal organizations must have a non-discrimination form on file to qualify for Master Naturalist volunteer work. Independent projects through iNaturalist, Zooniverse, or similar platforms are approved to the discretion of the local coordinator and can have limitations on number of hours spent.

Educational Efforts

Educational efforts are activities or programs in which the MN educates the public. This includes developing and providing presentations to relevant audiences or at project demonstration

sites, facilitating a resource table at an event or site, providing natural resource training to other volunteers, and developing environmental interpretative materials, programs, and signage. Work to construct or develop a site used for educational programming, such as a native plant pollinator garden, qualifies as educational efforts.

Educational efforts include the time spent planning, implementing, and reporting on educational efforts. As a rule-of-thumb in determining which activities are appropriate educational programming, use the questions: "Is the program educational in nature?" and "Does this activity contribute to the goals and mission of the Master Naturalist Program?"

GENERATIVE AI POLICY

MNs are allowed to use AI platforms in a variety of ways, with two exceptions:

- Due to copyright issues, MNs are not allowed to use AI-generated images and graphics in educational materials.
- MNs are not allowed to use AI-generated .pptx (PowerPoint and similar) files. To comply with visual accessibility laws, all slide decks created by MNs must use the standard Master Naturalist Extension PowerPoint template.

All educational materials, whether human- or AI-generated, must be reviewed by University of Illinois Extension staff (or someone delegated by Extension staff) prior to distribution. It is highly discouraged to utilize AI as a resource for answering natural resource questions from the public. Use reputable direct sources to research questions from the public.

Administrative Efforts

Administrative volunteer efforts that count toward volunteer time include working on a Master Naturalist newsletter, serving on a local or state Master Naturalist Advisory Committee, providing content for MN publications and web media, planning conferences or workshops, and any other activities that help maintain and sustain the MN Program.

Additional "winter work" activities that can fall under administrative efforts include cataloging of biofacts, books, or natural items and quantitative or qualitative assessments of sites.

Continuing Education

Approved continuing education includes such things as the State Master Naturalist Conference, local and state MN webinars/seminars, and University of Illinois Extension-sponsored webinars and short courses. Non-Extension courses, seminars, and webinars by the University of Illinois or other universities or government entities may be eligible as approved by the local coordinator.

Time spent in training, educational conferences, or other settings that qualify as continuing education should not be counted as volunteer time. Instances where the Master Naturalist is the recipient of information or training, rather than the presenter of information, count as continuing education as approved by the local coordinator.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL MEETINGS/PROGRAMS

Many local Master Naturalist groups plan periodic informational meetings and education programs for active Master Naturalists and interns. These also apply toward continuing education credits.

STATE MASTER NATURALIST CONFERENCE

The State Master Naturalist Conference will be held, either in-person or virtually, with a goal of annually but may vary depending on resources. Program content for the conference is coordinated by the State Master Naturalist coordinator and local hosting unit. Attending classes and workshops at the State Master Naturalist Conference can help fulfill the continuing education requirement.

Reporting Volunteer Activities

Master Naturalists will report their volunteer and continuing education hours using GivePulse go.illinois.edu/Givepulse. The volunteer conducting the activity must report the activity for themselves. Exceptions can be made at a local level for staff to enter hours for individual volunteers if the volunteer has limited or lack of access to internet and/or a computer.

The two types of hours (volunteer and continuing education) must be reported separately. Volunteers must also record the number of people impacted by the activity if they are assigned by their local coordinator as the demographic reporter.

Travel time to a volunteer activity can be reported as volunteer hours as determined by the local coordinator. Travel to attend a continuing education event does not count towards the required continuing education hours and should not be reported. The information from the reporting system is needed to re-certify the Master Naturalists for the following year. Master Naturalists for whom annual report summaries and Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct and Master Naturalist Volunteer Agreements are not received will be removed as active Master Naturalist.

Master Naturalist Transfers

Master Naturalists who have completed their classroom training and internship in Illinois and received a positive recommendation from their local Master Naturalist coordinator prior to moving to another part of the state, are eligible to become volunteers in the locale of their new residency. However, they may be required to take additional course work also required of all local Master Naturalists in the new locality and will be subject to the guidelines of the new locale.

Applicants are permitted to train in an adjacent Master Naturalist chapter and return to their local chapter (chapter where they intend to volunteer) for their internship. Local coordinators for all involved chapters in the applicant's pathway to volunteering must be notified and aware of the volunteer's training and volunteer plan. Applicants must be accepted by both local chapters to take the training and volunteer in the local chapters they wish to participate in.

Master Naturalists who have not completed their internship prior to moving will be required to complete their internship with their new unit before becoming Certified Master Naturalists. See Master Naturalists moving from out-of-state as well as returning Master Naturalists (i.e., someone who trained in Illinois, moved away, and is returning to Illinois) may be required to complete the entire Master Naturalist training prior to volunteering in Illinois, depending on their demonstrated knowledge and skills in this geographic area. For those Master Naturalist transfers or inactive former Master Naturalists away from the program for two years or more, retraining is required. A Master Naturalist volunteer may be required to complete a new background screening for periods of time in inactive volunteer status or any pause in volunteering.

Master Naturalists from other states are treated on a case-by-case basis. Local coordinators will consult the state coordinator when determining training needs and admission into the Illinois Master Naturalist Program.

Volunteer Performance and Renewal of Active Status Procedure

Volunteer performance will be a continuous assessment process to ensure the goals, objectives, and mission of the Master Naturalist program are being met to best serve the needs of the University of Illinois and the Master Naturalist program. The review process may include oral and written feedback on volunteer performance and can be used to invite the Master Naturalist back for the following year.

Grounds for Dismissal of a Master Naturalist Volunteer

A University of Illinois Extension volunteer can be relieved of the title and privileges at any time, at the discretion of the local Extension staff coordinating the Extension program. Reasons for dismissal may include a volunteer who demonstrates actions that conflict with the mission, purpose, and objectives of University of Illinois Extension. Examples of conflict include, but are not limited to, failure to comply with University of Illinois volunteer policies or Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct, misuse of the Extension program title, and disrespecting the authority of Extension staff. At the time of dismissal, the volunteer will be required to turn in their name badge and other Extension property to the local Extension staff coordinating the program.

Procedure for Dismissal

The unit, region, and Workforce Development offices will make all dismissal decisions. All dismissals must be pre-approved by University Legal Counsel. A dismissal letter will be created with the guidance of the Volunteer Relations Associate and Extension Workforce Development. Extension staff will hold a copy of the letter in the volunteer's file. This file will be kept indefinitely.

Incident/Accident Reporting

Whenever an incident or accident causes harm or injury to a youth, volunteer, or staff member, an Incident/Accident Investigation form must be completed and shared with the county director, associate director for region, program specialist, and associate director of workforce development.

Bus Coverage

Extension units and Master Naturalists must follow university policies for bus charters with approved insurance. University guidelines for making charter bus arrangements can be found in section 6, 6.1.3 'Select Bus Charters with Approved Insurance' of the Business and Finance policies and procedures website, busfin.uillinois.edu/bfpp.

Agreements and Contracts

State statutes prohibit volunteers of the University of Illinois Master Naturalist program from signing agreements that contain harmless or similar clauses. If the lessor will not waive the hold harmless or similar clauses, the event must be changed to another location.

Program Compliance

See University of Illinois Extension Volunteer Handbook at go.illinois.edu/OnlineVolunteerHandbook.

- Equal Opportunity Statement
- Affirmative Action
- Americans with Disabilities Act

Information Management

Keeping accurate and updated records is vital to a successful volunteer program. This includes record retention as well as adequately maintaining filing systems. It is important to remember that the University of Illinois sets forth policies and guidelines for these areas. Please review the Campus Administration Manual or CAM at cam.illinois.edu.

Policies On Volunteer Record Retention & Filing Systems

VOLUNTEER MAILING LISTS AND DIRECTORIES

Email/mailing lists and volunteer directories shall not be furnished directly or indirectly to any other person, firm, association, or government agency. Volunteers may share their personal contact information with fellow volunteers at any time. Extension will not share or organize volunteer contact information in a volunteer directory without the written consent of the volunteer to be included.

Email/Mailing lists and volunteer directories are not federal records and are not subject to the provisions of the Federal Freedom of Information Act.

GIVEPULSE AND GATEWAY PRIVACY POLICY

Volunteer data in GivePulse and the Volunteer Gateway is for the sole use of Extension personnel and shall not be furnished directly or indirectly to any other person, firm, association, or federal government agency. Volunteer data is compiled for official use only and is confidential. Volunteer data is not federal record and is not subject to the provisions of the Federal Freedom of Information Act.

WEB PRIVACY POLICY INFORMATION

Extension volunteer programs follow all web privacy policies outlined by the University of Illinois Privacy Statement at go.illinois.edu/PrivacyStatement.

Setting and Amending Master Naturalist Policies

The state specialist has final authority in setting and amending statewide MN policies. Official notification of state MN policy changes will be communicated from the state specialist through the local coordinators. Additionally, all unit directors will be notified of any policy changes directly via email or direct mailing.

Recommendations for policy changes are directed through the State Master Naturalist Advisory Committee.

Local chapters may adopt additional policies and procedures to support their operations and address community-specific needs. However, all local policies must remain consistent with the statewide Master Naturalist Program policies. Local policies may be more restrictive than statewide policies, but they may not override, weaken, or conflict with statewide requirements. In the event of any discrepancy, the statewide policy will take precedence.



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