

Volunteer Activities in Day Services



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Applies To: Day Services Programs

Policy Number: 6.2.0.07
Law 115 CMR 5.09
Reference: USDOL 14(c) Ch 64

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Volunteering can be a great way to support people to be engaged with their community, to network with other people in the general public who have similar interests, and to build stronger ties within the community. The benefits of volunteerism are well documented, and it is important that people with developmental disabilities are supported to choose and engage in volunteer activities and to reap those benefits.

Volunteering refers to typical unpaid activities and opportunities that are open to the general public and area community, and those activities cannot occur at a for-profit business. In addition, a volunteer activity needs to meet the following criteria;

- The activity is part time
 - Tasks performed are the kind typically associated with volunteer work rather than paid employment
 - The individual is participating in the activity freely and without pressure or coercion
 - Regular employees have not been displaced to accommodate volunteers
 - The individual does not expect to receive any benefit from the organization where they are volunteering
 - The activity or organization was selected by the individual and is documented in an area of interest for this individual
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While volunteering with a group of friends or peers can certainly foster a sense of comradery and companionship among the group, it can also reinforce the stereotype of groups of disabled people going into the community as “special”, rather than a normalizing activity. It is important that people with developmental disabilities are given opportunities to engage one-on-one with members of the general community, and to interact with people as individuals rather than in specialized and segregated groups.