

Volunteer Policies and Procedures Manual Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry



February 2020

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1. Our Mission

Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry Mission Statement:

The goal of the Parks Department is to achieve overall excellence in providing recreational and educational activities for Genesee County residents, as well as preserving the natural resources that both the County Parks have to offer. Also, facilitate a greater sense of cooperation between the County and the various localities to improve the County-wide recreational opportunities available to all its citizens.

Genesee County Park and Forest Interpretive Center Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Genesee County Parks Interpretive Center is to serve as an asset to promote and facilitate educational programs that showcase the unique natural resources and environmental management practices of the Genesee County Park and Forest and to educate the public of the natural resources of the Genesee County Region.



2. Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to provide Genesee County Parks volunteers with important information about working conditions and some of the policies affecting their service. It is intended to provide broad internal guidelines and is not to be construed as a contract or other legal document. All Park volunteers and staff are considered to serve “at will”, which means that either the Volunteer or the Park may end the relationship at any time, with or without notice, and with or without articulating a reason.

No volunteer manual can anticipate every circumstance or question that may arise. Genesee County Parks Recreation and Forestry reserves the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policy or portion of this manual as it deems appropriate. These changes will be communicated to you verbally or in writing and via future revisions to the manual.

3. Placement Policies

Genesee County is an equal opportunity employer for staff and volunteers.

The Genesee County Parks Volunteer program recognizes diversity as an asset, because each person's different points of view offer new ideas that can improve services to visitors, increase productivity, and save money.

Decisions affecting applicants and volunteers will not be based upon race, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship status, military/veteran status, criminal conviction status, predisposing genetic characteristics, participation in lawful activities outside the workplace, pregnancy, domestic violence victim status, or any other category protected by law. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of volunteering. The County expressly prohibits any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship status, military/veteran status, criminal conviction status, predisposing genetic characteristics, participation in lawful activities outside the workplace, pregnancy, domestic violence victim status, or any other category protected by law. Interference with the ability of county employees and volunteers to perform their expected job duties is absolutely not tolerated. We will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with known disabilities, unless making the accommodation would result in an undue hardship to the County.

Genesee County takes all complaints of discrimination, harassment and misconduct seriously. You will not be punished or retaliated against for asking questions or expressing concerns about these issues. If you have a question or concern about any type of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, please discuss it with the Deputy Superintendent Facilities, Parks, Recreation & Forestry Paul Osborn 585-344-8508 or at posborn@co.genesee.ny.us.

4. Steps to Becoming a Volunteer

1. Complete application forms and return them to the Volunteer Coordinator.
2. Discuss your volunteer interests with the Volunteer Coordinator (Vol. Coordinator will contact you).
3. Complete background check forms.
 1. All potential active status volunteers over the age of 17 who serve on a regular basis will undergo a basic background check. Volunteers must complete and sign the background check authorization form (Appendix A), Office of the Sheriff Authorization for Release of Information form (Appendix B), address list, and personal references form.
 2. Volunteers in direct contact with vulnerable populations will undergo an extensive criminal background check. These include volunteers who serve as Interpretive Educators and Photographers. Volunteers must complete and sign the background check authorization form, personal references form, and submit their information to NCSI Background Screening Solutions through their secure online form.
4. Volunteers who are under the age of 17 or for whom background check results are pending will be accompanied during any contact with vulnerable populations. Accompaniment is defined as being in the physical presence of a person cleared for access to the vulnerable population: (1) an authorized park staff or volunteer who has completed the background check process; (2) a family member or legal guardian of the vulnerable individual; or (3) an individual authorized by the nature of his or her profession to have recurring access to the vulnerable individual, such as an education or medical professional.
5. Complete Volunteer Orientation.
6. Complete and sign volunteer forms:
 1. Volunteer Photo Release form. (Appendix C)
 2. Volunteer Waiver form. (Appendix D)
 3. Copyright release form for photographer volunteers. (Appendix E)
7. Complete Volunteer Trainings that apply to your volunteer duties (Volunteer Orientation Manual, p. 23).

5. Volunteer Contacts

1. All volunteers report to the Conservation Education Program Coordinator when arriving for duty at the Parks.

Contacts:

1. Conservation Education Program Coordinator:
Claudia Nusstein
(585) 344-1122
Claudia.Nusstein@geneseeny.gov
Genesee County Park & Forest
11095 Bethany Center Rd
East Bethany, NY 14054
2. Deputy Commissioner Public Works:
Paul Osborn
(585) 344-8508
paul.osborn@geneseeny.gov
Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry
153 Cedar St. Batavia NY 14020

6. Standards of Conduct

1. Attendance – Timesheets: The Park and community members attending events rely on you. Please be on time and present for volunteer commitments that you have signed up for while keeping yourself and others safe and healthy.
 1. Please record ALL your volunteer hours as you work them to ensure that you don't miss any. Reporting your hours not only helps us recognize your hard work, but helps us to calculate the annual hours donated by volunteers which is valuable from a Park management standpoint!
 2. Fill out volunteer hours using the ACORNS google docs spreadsheet or the timesheet in your green volunteer folder. Volunteer folders are kept under the front desk and are filed in alphabetical order. If you are an ACORNS member, the google docs spreadsheet is preferred.
 3. Record the appropriate date, project you worked on and the number of hours you volunteered. Example: (1/2/2020, Center Sitting, 4 hours.)
2. Volunteer breaks (safety practices): Volunteers can take breaks as needed, if a scheduled break is required please arrange this with the Volunteer Coordinator or Conservation Education Program Coordinator.
3. Dress code: All volunteers are expected to dress and groom in a professional and appropriate manner, particularly if the job involves dealing with citizens in person. Dress for the elements when going outside and be prepared. A neat, tasteful appearance contributes to the positive impression you make on our visitors and keeps our work environment free from safety hazards. You are expected to be suitably attired and groomed for volunteering or when representing Genesee County Parks.
4. Substances/smoking policy: Smoking is not allowed on the grounds of the Interpretive Nature Center.
5. Gifts and gratuities policy: Do not accept tips. If necessary, suggest the tip be deposited in the donation box located at the front desk of the Interpretive Nature Center. All donations will be used to benefit the Genesee County Parks.
6. Solicitation policy: The County prohibits the solicitation, distribution, and posting of materials on or at county property by any volunteer during volunteering time, except as may be permitted by this policy. Exceptions are charitable and community activities sponsored by the County and county-sponsored programs related to our services. Bulletin boards are located in the Interpretive Nature Center. These boards will be used only for the posting of park events, programs, community activities and pertinent information for park volunteers and staff as authorized by the Deputy Superintendent Facilities, Parks, Recreation & Forestry. If you have any questions about this policy, please contact the Conservation Education Program Coordinator.
7. Confidentiality: Confidentiality is to be taken seriously. Donor information, employee information, volunteer records/information, and Park business will not be discussed or shared under any circumstances. Confidentiality breaches will be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

8. Dealing with the media: All media inquiries regarding the County must be referred to the Deputy Superintendent Facilities, Parks, Recreation & Forestry, unless such inquiries seek employee input that arises out of concerted activity related to working conditions as defined by the National Labor Relations Act or employment law. Only the County Manager is authorized to make or approve public statements on behalf of the County, or a Department Head regarding a particular department. No volunteers or employees are authorized to represent the County unless specifically authorized by the County Manager or Department Head.
9. Controversial issues: Educate, don't advocate. Avoid controversial topics while volunteering and do not share your personal opinion; share facts.
10. Harassment/violence policy: The Park prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment against employees, volunteers and visitors based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship status, military or veteran status, criminal conviction status, predisposing genetic characteristics or genetic information, pregnancy, domestic violence victim status, or any other category protected by law. Harassment, bullying, sexual harassment, violence, or the threat of violence has no place at any of the Genesee County Parks and will not be tolerated in any form under any circumstances. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action. All threats are to be taken seriously and reported to a Park Staff immediately. All reports will be investigated confidentially. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, any unwelcome sexual advance or request for sexual favors, sexual innuendo, jokes of a sexual nature, and all other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature or which is based on sex, especially where such conduct interferes with a volunteer's performance, terms or conditions of volunteering, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Each volunteer is responsible for maintaining an atmosphere free of discrimination and harassment, respecting the rights of every employee, volunteer, and the public, and complying with this policy. Conduct prohibited by this policy is unacceptable at the parks and in any park-related setting outside the parks including outreach events, offsite trainings, volunteer and social events.
11. Vehicles/equipment policy: Permission to use motorized or power equipment is given only with the authorization of the Deputy Superintendent Facilities, Parks, Recreation & Forestry.
12. Computer/internet use policy: All volunteers using county computers or laptop are expected to read the Genesee County Employee Handbook for Information Security and comply with all policies included in it, as well as any departmental information technology policies and practices that the Volunteer Coordinator or other Park Staff may make you aware of. The following are the minimum requirements to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of computer resources at the County Parks.

As a reminder, volunteers do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in any communication or activity while using electronic equipment and/or internet access provided by Genesee County. That includes using county-provided internet services on a personal computer or other device provided by the county to access the internet. If you have any questions regarding information security, please contact the Deputy Superintendent Facilities, Parks, Recreation & Forestry 585-344-8508 or

posborn@co.genesee.ny.us. Failure to abide by the terms of this policy may subject a volunteer to disciplinary action, up to and including separation from service.

- a. County information is an asset and should be protected from its creation through its useful life, and to its authorized disposal. All data storage, backup and disposal are the responsibility of Park Staff and are conducted only with authorization of Park Staff.
 - b. Volunteers should only access information assets to which they are authorized.
 - c. All information, regardless of the form or format which is created, acquired or used in support of Genesee County business activities, should only be used for County business.
 - d. Computing systems and resources provided by Genesee County are owned by the County and are therefore its property.
 - e. External drives, USB devices, SD cards, thumb drives, and CDs provided by Genesee County are not to be removed from the premises and are to be used only with other equipment owned by Genesee County.
 - f. External drives, USB devices, SD cards, thumb drives, and CDs are not to be used with County computers and other devices. Only those provided by Genesee County are to be used with County property.
 - g. No software shall be installed or used with Genesee County computers without authorization from Park Staff.
 - h. Passwords to County computers must be kept confidential.
 - i. Park information should not be stored on cloud storage such as DropBox or GoogleDocs.
 - j. Park volunteers are encouraged to use the internet as a resource to further the goals and objectives of Genesee County. All access to the internet is monitored and logged to ensure compliance with Genesee County Information Technology Governance and Employee Handbook for Information Security. Usage reports are distributed to Departments.
 - k. Social media may be used by volunteers to promote the parks according to authorization of Park Staff.
 - l. As a volunteer, you represent Genesee County Parks. Keep in mind that social media is not private and be sure to make it clear that your statements and opinions posted on social media do not reflect those of Genesee County.
 - m. Printers and copiers are to be used for County business only. Printing/copying for personal use is prohibited. Printer and copier use is monitored and usage reports are distributed to Departments.
 - n. Telephone and fax services are the property of Genesee County and should be used for business purposes only.
- 13. Park closings/inclement weather policy (Stay home, stay safe):** Inclement weather and emergency closings are rare, but whenever necessary staff and volunteers scheduled for that day or night will be notified via phone and or email. If conditions prevent you from traveling, or you have concerns about the safety of travel, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator or Conservation Education Program Coordinator and let them know that you will not be volunteering. The safety of our volunteers is top priority even when the Park remains open.

If you have questions call 585-344-1122 to reach Volunteer Coordinator or Conservation Education Program Coordinator.

14. Conduct Rules:

We expect you to follow certain county rules and conduct yourself in ways that protect the interests and safety of all volunteers and staff and the County. All volunteers are expected to be familiar with and comply with all of the rules that govern their volunteer duties. While it is impossible to list every action that is unacceptable conduct, the following is a list of examples. Volunteers who break conduct rules such as these may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate separation from service.

1. Fighting, provoking a fight or disorderly conduct of any kind, specifically including, but not limited to, striking a citizen or co-worker;
2. Drinking or possessing alcoholic beverages or narcotic substances (other than medical prescriptions) on County premises, or volunteering under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
3. Smoking on County premises other than in designated smoking areas;
4. Immoral conduct including: deceitfulness, theft, bribery, fraud, discrimination;
5. Harassment, bullying, sexual harassment, violence, or the threat of violence, as outlined in the harassment/violence policy (g).
6. Conviction of a crime or engaging in unlawful or improper conduct which affects the volunteer's ability to provide services; or harms the County's reputation or the public trust;
7. Using abusive, profane, or threatening language to a supervisor, Park Staff, or a fellow volunteer, or otherwise threatening, intimidating, or coercing any other volunteer, Park Staff, or member of the public;
8. Willful or deliberate violation of safety rules and practices that could endanger you, or any coworker, volunteer or any member of the public;
9. Insubordination or failure to follow the reasonable direction or order of a supervisor;
10. Deliberately restricting work output, or in any way interfering with the work performed by your department or work unit, or another person;
11. Destruction, deliberate misuse of, or theft of property, tools, or equipment belonging to the County or to any other employee or person;
12. Unauthorized use and/or removal of county property, records, or any other materials from County premises;
13. Repeated and excessive failure to report for volunteering without notice.
14. Unauthorized possession of firearms, weapons, or explosives either on County premises;
15. Gambling on County premises;
16. Soliciting or accepting any financial or non-financial reward in return for special consideration in the purchase or provision of goods or services or awarding of any contract;
17. Selling articles or services for personal gain during volunteer hours, on County premises; and soliciting political contributions on County premises.
18. Discourteous treatment of the public;
19. Failure to report any work related injury/accident to the proper supervisor;



20. Inappropriate dress.

15. Expectations of a Volunteer:

1. Follow through on commitments:
 - Volunteers commit to activities as needed and as their schedules permit. Be sure to attend the training session and programs you signed up for. If you are unable to lead a program that you have signed up for, or will be late, please call the Interpretive Nature Center at (585) 344-1122.
2. Be responsible:
 - Make responsible decisions that will have a positive impact on the park and persons around you.
3. Be a role model:
 - Show that you care about the natural world.
 - Set an example through your behavior toward other people, animals, and all living things.
 - Exhibit a positive attitude.
 - Put your fears aside. Speak with the Volunteer Coordinator about qualms, fears or things that make you uncomfortable about the outdoors. Make the effort not to transfer fears to the public or negatively impact their experience at the Park.
4. Be willing to learn:
 - Take time to learn about the natural environment. Use field guides & books, other volunteers, and staff as resources to further your own knowledge about the environment. If you have questions about something, ask! Also, attend volunteer training sessions and workshops.

5. Follow all Park rules:

- Park speed limit is 15 mph.
- Motor bicycles, motor scooters & ATVS prohibited.
- Weapons: ALL types prohibited
- Fires prohibited- except in a stove oven or fire circle.
- Fireworks prohibited.
- Littering is strictly prohibited. Carry in carry out.
- Follow leave no trace principles.
- All pets must be on a leash at all times at Genesee County Park & Forest. Pets are not allowed at DeWitt Recreation Area.
- Hunting & Trapping prohibited.
- Fishing only in designated areas.
- Bathing & swimming prohibited.
- Gambling and solicitation prohibited.
- All alcoholic beverages other than wine and beer are prohibited, and consumption of wine and beer requires a permit and is only allowed in designated areas.

7. Safety Policies and Considerations

Safety at the park is top priority and we want this to be a safe and healthy place for Park Staff, volunteers, and visitors. In order to accomplish this, a successful safety program depends on everyone being alert and committed to safety. To ensure this all safety standards must be followed at all times. All unsafe conditions are to be reported to park staff immediately for everyone's safety. If you violate one or more county safety standards, you may be subject to disciplinary action including separation from service. Some of the best safety improvements come from volunteers and employees. If you have an idea, concern, or suggestion to improve safety here at the park please contact the Volunteer Coordinator or Conservation Education Program Coordinator. We welcome your suggestions and input to improve the experience for everyone involved.

During your time at the county parks, it's possible that you will encounter a variety of working environments and potential emergency situations. While we cannot possibly cover every situation or answer all questions about what you may encounter while volunteering, the following safety procedures apply to the conditions and emergencies that may potentially arise while working for the parks. As safety policies are updated and improved over time, we ask that you as a volunteer provide us with acknowledgement of receipt and understanding of new policies to follow that keeps all park staff, volunteers and visitors safe.

A. Prevention – Keep Yourself Safe

Prevention is key to keeping yourself safe and healthy while volunteering. Following basic safety rules goes a long way in preventing injuries.

B. Safety Basics

- Dress appropriately for your position, including proper footwear
- Familiarize yourself with the facility exits
- Practice safe lifting, pushing and moving strategies
- Stay current on safety updates given to you by park staff
- Use appropriate equipment for the task
- Do not perform tasks or use equipment you are not trained for
- Notify staff of any safety issues you see
- Notify staff of any injuries that occur on the job and fill out an incident report
- **When in doubt, ask!** Not trained? Not sure how to do something? Never used that tool before?

C. Drug Policy

We are committed to making Genesee County a safe, efficient, and productive work environment for all volunteers. There can be serious safety and health risks if an employee uses or is under the influence of drugs or alcohol on the job. A safe and productive drug-free workplace is achieved when everyone cooperates. Any volunteer whose ability to perform their job duties is impaired due to on- or off-duty alcohol or drug use places everyone in potential danger. If you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs you are prohibited from volunteering. If volunteer or staff member believes a co-worker or other individual in the workplace is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, they should report the situation to their supervisor or park staff immediately.

It is the policy of Genesee County that the public has the absolute right to expect persons volunteering at the county parks to be free from the effects of drugs and alcohol. The county has

the right to expect its volunteers to report for work fit and able for duty and to set a positive example for the community. This applies during all volunteer hours, whenever conducting park business or representing the County Parks, or on County Property. It is a violation of our drug-free workplace policy to use, possess, sell, trade, and/or sell alcohol, illegal drugs or intoxicants on County premises. Illegal or unauthorized use and intentional misuse and/or abuse of prescription medications also violate this policy.

You may use legally prescribed, or over-the-counter drugs on the job only if they are taken in the prescribed or recommended dosages and do not impair your ability to perform the essential functions of your volunteer duties effectively and safely and without endangering yourself or others. Any volunteer taking prescribed or over-the-counter medications will be responsible for consulting the appropriate medical or pharmacy professional to determine if the medication may interfere with safe performance of his/her duties. If the use of a medication could compromise the safety of the volunteer, co-workers, citizens, or the public, it is the volunteer's responsibility to avoid unsafe workplace situations.

Subject to applicable federal and state laws, entering county property constitutes consent to searches and inspections. If an individual is suspected of violating the drug-free workplace policy, he or she may be asked to submit to a search or inspection at any time. Searches can be conducted of pockets and clothing, wallets, purses, briefcases and lunchboxes, desks and work stations, lockers, vehicles, and equipment.

We strongly encourage volunteers to voluntarily seek help with drug and alcohol problems, utilize the services of qualified professionals in the community to assess the seriousness of suspected drug or alcohol problems and identify appropriate sources of help; and seek help if they are concerned that they or their family members may have a drug and/or alcohol problem.

D. Incident Reporting Policy

An Incident Report Form is required to be completed and submitted to the Volunteer Coordinator and/or the Conservation Education Program Coordinator immediately following any accident or incident, though you should not delay seeking immediate treatment if necessary. Notify the Volunteer Coordinator or other Park Staff immediately about any accident that causes an injury, no matter how minor it may seem at the time. Reporting accidents quickly allows the park to address any unsafe situation promptly.

E. Emergency Procedures:

While true emergencies are rare, it is important to provide an overview of the procedures in the case that they do arise.

The County Parks has staff trained in First Aid/CPR, in handling animal emergencies, and in basic emergency response specific to the parks. In the event of an emergency, volunteers are asked to follow the Emergency Response Procedures while waiting for assignments from the responding staff. It is the responsibility of volunteers to notify park staff of emergencies, and the responsibility of park staff to respond to emergencies.

1. Fire

1. Move all visitors toward exits
2. Notify Park Staff or pull fire alarm

3. Exit the building with visitors as safely and quickly as possible
 4. Lead all visitors to the corner of the front parking lot, away from smoke near the OLC water tank.
 5. Assist in accounting for all visitors and keeping everyone as comfortable and calm as possible.
2. Shooter --Your safety is your first priority
1. Run to a safe place away from the violence if you are able to
 2. Hide if you can't run away
 3. Fight the shooter if you have to.
- Training video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VcSwejU2D0&feature=youtu.be>
-Your own safety is your first priority. Call for help when/if you safely can.
3. Missing Person
1. Notify Park Staff of the missing person.
 2. Bring the missing visitor's companion to the front desk and keep them calm. Park staff will search for missing person.
4. Visitor Injury
1. Notify Park Staff
 2. Park Staff will get help for the visitor, apply First Aid if appropriate and fill out incident report.
5. Volunteer Injury
1. Notify Park Staff
 2. Apply First Aid treatment as appropriate and fill out incident report.
 3. **All volunteers must fill out an incident report for all injuries.
6. Angry Visitor
1. Notify the Conservation Education Program Coordinator and refer the visitor to them. The Conservation Education Program Coordinator will deal with all complaints and incidents. No matter how small or large the incident or complaint, always feel that you can ask the Conservation Education Program Coordinator for assistance.

7. County Vehicles/Equipment Use

1. Use of county vehicles, tools, motorized and power equipment by volunteers is strictly prohibited without authorization by the Deputy Superintendent Facilities, Parks, Recreation & Forestry or other Park Staff. All safety rules are to be followed and any and all incidents of damage or injury reported immediately.

F. Violence in the Workplace

1. Harassment

1. Notify Park Staff immediately
2. Staff will fill out an incident report and all reports will be investigated confidentially

G. Inclement Weather

The safety of our volunteers is top priority even when the Park remains open.

1. Stay home, stay safe
2. If you have concerns about the safety of travel, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator or Conservation Education Program Coordinator and let them know that you will not be volunteering. Call 585-344-1122 to reach Volunteer Coordinator or Conservation Education Program Coordinator.

8. Visitor Services Policies

A. Good practices

1. Smile at visitors.
2. Ask pleasantly if you can be of service to visitors.
3. Make yourself a storehouse of information for visitors, and cheerfully share your knowledge with them.
4. Do not bluff or attempt to deceive when asked a question to which you do not know the answer. It is ok to say “I don’t know”. Offer to help them find the answer or have staff share the info with them later via email.
5. Answer the same question each time with a smile, even if you have answered it a hundred times that day.
6. Be neat and clean. It shows respect for your visitors.
7. Be as prompt as possible when greeting and serving visitors.
8. Happy children mean happy parents. Practice skills working with people of all ages.
9. Encourage visitors to stay and enjoy themselves at the Interpretive Center and the Park as a whole.

B. Practices for difficult visitors: Direct visitor to park staff in a calm and professional matter.

C. Educate, don’t advocate: Keep personal opinions to yourself. Avoid controversial issues and simply share facts.



9. Volunteer Benefits

1. Program discounts:
 1. If you are volunteering for an event, you attend for free. Signups are limited based on the program needs.
 2. If you are attending an event, program fee for ACORNS members is discounted (unless otherwise mentioned)
2. Experiences: Gain personal experience and nature-based knowledge working within a park and the community.
3. Friendships/social interaction/outings: Meet people with similar interests and participate in park events and volunteer outings!



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I have reviewed and understand the Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry Park Volunteer Policies and Procedures Manual and was offered a copy to keep as a reference.

Name

Date

Please return to the Conservation Education Program Coordinator.



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Appendix A – Volunteer Background Check Notification and Authorization Form

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Appendix B - Office of the Sheriff Background Check Authorization Form

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Appendix C – Photo Release Form

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Appendix D – Volunteer Waiver Form

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Appendix E – Photograph Copyright Release Form

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