

CITY OF HURST
VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK





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VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

For the past several decades, the City of Hurst Volunteers in Action program has played a pivotal role in the operations of our local government. It is the first municipal volunteer program recognized by the state of Texas. Our citywide volunteer force is an invaluable asset, offering departments a sustainable solution to future staffing needs.

Since its inception in 1979, VIA volunteers have generously contributed hundreds of thousands of hours, saving the Hurst community millions in costs. Over 100 active volunteers extend their services across various departments, with dedicated groups spearheading special projects throughout the year.

The program upholds three core objectives:

1. Empowering the citizens of Hurst to make meaningful contributions towards the enhancement of services and the overall quality of life.
2. Serving as a cost-effective alternative for the City in place of additional personnel funding.
3. Alleviating the burden of escalating workloads on existing staff, thereby fostering a sustainable work environment.

The VIA Handbook

This handbook addresses the general information that applies to all City volunteering. It is a "living document" subject to change as needed. Depending on your assignment, a department-specific handbook may be available. Departmental handbooks provide the specific application of this material and are not a replacement for this handbook.

The VIA Handbook focuses on the guidelines for individuals affiliated with a VIA program or a VIA-promoted program (e.g., COPS, RACES, CERT).

OUR MISSION AND VISION

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION PROGRAM

MISSION

Our mission is to harness the power of volunteerism to strengthen the fabric of the Hurst community by providing opportunities for residents to actively participate in initiatives that enhance services, enrich community life, and alleviate burdens on municipal resources. Through collaboration, innovation, and dedication, we aim to create a resilient and thriving community where every individual's contribution is valued and celebrated.



VISION

To cultivate a community built on connection, where every resident is empowered to actively engage in shaping the future of Hurst through volunteerism. By embodying the Hurst Way, we strive to foster a vibrant and inclusive environment where collaboration thrives and collective contributions enhance the well-being of all.

CODE OF IDEALS

The Code of Ideals will serve as the philosophical cornerstone to guide employee and volunteer interactions with anyone who lives, works, shops, or plays in our City or relies on our services. It is the heart of those characteristics that we all agree comprise the best in an organization and ourselves.

HONESTY – We will be fair and honest in our relations with customers, striving to achieve the highest level of integrity and trustworthiness.

RESPECT – We will be respectful, courteous, and understanding of our customers' needs and will always treat them as we would want to be treated.

DEDICATION – We will hold ourselves accountable to ensure that services are provided to the best of our ability in a responsible, dependable, and timely manner.

TEAMWORK – We are part of a Team on many levels. Employees of the City of Hurst are motivated, cooperative, and dedicated Team players. We assume a sense of responsibility for our actions to ensure our success as individuals, as Departments, and as a City.

PROFESSIONALISM – We will strive to demonstrate competency, knowledge, and efficiency in our jobs that exceed the expectations of our customers.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE – We are willing to demonstrate a spirit of friendly customer service by providing helpful and responsive assistance in a caring and considerate manner.

WORK ENVIRONMENT – We are committed to safety as the foundation of a clean, secure work environment that is conducive to an enjoyable work experience. We will continually work to improve ourselves and the delivery of our services through training, innovation, and a commitment to excellence.

We hold the Code of Ideals as the key that unlocks our potential for exemplary customer service, for satisfaction in a job well done, and for pride in ourselves and our organization. Our leaders have empowered us to deliver quality service, and we will work together to achieve this goal.

VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

As a volunteer, you can expect:

- Assignment to a position aligned with your interests.
- Valuable and respectful treatment throughout your volunteering journey.
- Recognition for your contributions to the program.
- Access to accurate information regarding your tasks and responsibilities.
- The opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification when needed.
- Additional training provided as necessary to support your role.
- A fulfilling and beneficial volunteer experience.

Volunteer Benefits

- Reduced stress levels through meaningful engagement.
- Feelings of appreciation for contributing to community well-being.
- A sense of purpose derived from making a positive impact.
- Increased and regular social interaction, fostering connections.
- Meeting new people from diverse backgrounds and expanding social networks.
- Learning and honing skills through hands-on experience.
- Career development opportunities and valuable experience.
- Strengthened community ties and engagement with local government.

Benefits for Teens and Young Adults

- Preparation for the workplace by developing essential skills.
- Practice of responsibility and accountability in real-world settings.
- Establishment of a lifelong habit of civic engagement and service.
- Building professional relationships and securing future references.
- Fulfilling required service hours for high school, certificate programs, and degrees.

What VIA expects from you:

- Know your duties and perform them promptly, correctly, and pleasantly.
- Cooperate with City employees and fellow volunteers, maintaining a positive team attitude.
- Represent the City of Hurst positively in all interactions with the public.
- Perform every task to the best of your ability for greater personal satisfaction and improved City services.
- Voice your opinions and contribute suggestions to improve the VIA Program.
- Approach your Volunteer Coordinator with any problems or questions.

BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

How to Join VIA

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility requirements are dependent on the program and position. For adult volunteer programs, applicants must be 18 or older. For VIA Teen positions, youth must be ages 13 to 18.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Application information is available online. Upon application, you'll receive an email from the Program Manager detailing the next steps.

VOLUNTEER REAPPLICATION POLICY

Due to high interest levels for some departments, positions may be at capacity. Open positions are filled based on qualifications and date of application. For positions that are full, onboarding is delayed until a spot is available. The Program Manager will contact the applicant to ask that they reapply at a later date. Applicants can monitor open positions by checking online at hursttx.gov/via.

If an applicant does not meet the eligibility requirements or does not reply to multiple offers for an available position, VIA deletes the application. Deleted applicants can reapply at any time.



EQUAL VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITY

The VIA Program provides equal volunteering opportunities for everyone, regardless of age, sex, color, creed, national origin, religion, marital status, political belief, sexual orientation, or disability that does not prohibit the performance of essential job functions. All volunteering decisions are based on the ability to perform the job, as well as dependability and reliability, once appointed.

SCREENING & SELECTION

Anyone interested in volunteering for the City of Hurst must undergo a criminal background and reference check as part of the application process. Compliance with this requirement is mandatory for all prospective volunteers. If you do not agree to a criminal background check, then you will not be considered as a volunteer. VIA uses various methods to screen and select potential volunteers, such as reviewing details provided in the initial application, interviews (if necessary), and background checks. Thorough screening ensures the individual's interests, skills, and availability align with the department's needs. Once a good fit is determined, staff will contact the volunteer for orientation, training, and start date.

Minors must obtain parental/guardian authorization to undergo a background check.

MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING

Before volunteering, you must review and agree to comply with the terms in a Memo of Understanding. This agreement affirms your willingness and ability to carry out assigned duties and responsibilities, adhere to a schedule, engage with volunteerism in a reliable and consistent manner, and follow policies and procedures. Additionally, your decision is entirely voluntary. **You enter into the agreement knowing you will not receive monetary compensation and that being a volunteer is not equivalent to being a City employee.**

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

Depending on the position, there is a formal volunteer orientation, training, and/or on-the-job training. Orientations allow departments to address their specific implementation of procedures (dress code, scheduling, etc.). Training refers to the hands-on skills needed to perform a specific role.

Standards of Excellence and Behavior

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Volunteers must uphold the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information encountered during their service, whether involving City employees, fellow volunteers, or businesses affiliated with the City of Hurst. Your agreement to volunteer with the VIA Program includes a commitment to maintain confidentiality. This policy means refraining from sharing confidential information with family, friends, or acquaintances.

All volunteers must sign the aforementioned Memo of Understanding, which covers compliance with confidentiality as a condition of program participation. While City of Hurst business is generally open to public disclosure, confidentiality remains paramount. Please refrain from discussing departmental matters with individuals not directly involved in related transactions, as even casual remarks can be misconstrued and spread.

If approached by someone outside the City or your department seeking information you deem inappropriate to disclose, politely refer them to your Volunteer Coordinator. No one is permitted to remove or duplicate any VIA Program or City of Hurst records, reports, or documents without prior authorization.

Please note: Disclosure of confidential information is a serious offense and may result in immediate dismissal from the program.





ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

VIA expects volunteers to demonstrate reliability and punctuality in fulfilling their volunteer duties. Prompt and consistent attendance is crucial to the success of our volunteer program.

Volunteers must promptly notify their Volunteer Coordinator if they are unable to report for duty or if they anticipate tardiness. Providing advance notice allows time for arrangements to be made to cover their position until their arrival.

City departments and/or VIA-promoted programs track volunteer hours to accurately document volunteers' contributions to various projects and initiatives. Volunteers can consult with their Volunteer Coordinator to gain insight into how each department records volunteer hours, ensuring alignment with departmental procedures and facilitating seamless tracking of volunteer contributions. Keeping detailed records ensures proper recognition and evaluation of our volunteer program's impact.

DRESS CODE

Volunteers are representatives of the City and are responsible for presenting a professional image to the community. Dress appropriately for the conditions and tasks involved. Clothing (hats, shirts, etc.) with inappropriate or offensive logos, writing, and designs should not be worn when volunteering.

If issued a uniform (i.e., shirt, hat, badge, jacket), it is mandatory to wear it during your assigned shift. Do not wear the uniform provided outside of volunteering. See Appendix A for more details.

ONGOING FEEDBACK

You'll receive feedback from onsite Volunteer Coordinators as needed. Feedback may be positive or constructive. If feedback is not proactively given, feel free to ask. Onsite Volunteer Coordinators may document feedback using the volunteer management system or send it to the VIA Program Manager.

EVALUATIONS

Formal evaluations are another method for receiving feedback. When appropriate, VIA will contact you and the onsite Volunteer Coordinator with instructions on completing an evaluation. You will evaluate your assignment and overall satisfaction. The onsite Volunteer Coordinator will evaluate the volunteer. VIA uses the evaluations to identify areas of improvement for themselves and Volunteer Coordinators, specific concerns that need to be addressed, and the program's overall success.

RECOGNITION

Throughout the year, the City invites volunteers to various functions and events to mingle with fellow volunteers and be honored for service milestones. The City hosts the annual VIA Appreciation event during National Volunteer Week, where volunteers gather to be celebrated for their service. Volunteers who have reached 200 hours are honored at a Blue Jacket ceremony during a City Council meeting in the spring. These gestures are just some ways we thank our volunteers for their dedication to giving back to the community.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

VIA has procedures to maintain harmonious cooperation and working relationships between employees and volunteers. You are urged to discuss any problems, difficulties, misunderstandings, suggestions, or concerns with your onsite Volunteer Coordinator. If this does not resolve the matter satisfactorily or if you cannot discuss matters with the onsite Volunteer Coordinator for any reason, please contact the VIA Program Manager for assistance.

RETENTION

Retention is vital to creating a healthy, sustainable volunteer program. Our policies and procedures are designed to ensure you feel welcome, supported, and valued in your role. If you experience burnout or feel unfulfilled, reach out to VIA. We'll do our best to find a way to make it work by addressing any concerns about your current role, transitioning you into a new role, or simply staying in touch while you take a break from volunteering.

ENDING YOUR INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to stop volunteering, notify your onsite Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. All City property, if applicable, must be turned in at that time.



VOLUNTEER DISMISSAL

All volunteer services are accepted with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the City. At any time and for whatever reason, the City may decide to dismiss a volunteer.

While this is not an exhaustive list, volunteers may be dismissed for the following reasons:

- Inability to fulfill the requirements and expectations for the position
- Inability to attend scheduled shifts
- Being disruptive, aggressive, or combative toward employees, volunteers, or the public
- Arriving late to shifts consistently
- Violating the Volunteer Handbook

Depending on the situation, individuals may be able to continue volunteering in a different position.

WORKPLACE FREE OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Everyone is responsible for conducting themselves in a manner that is respectful of others and worthy of respect from all. To maintain this standard, VIA prohibits bullying and harassment.

Allegations of bullying and/or harassment will be taken seriously and addressed appropriately. Everyone is responsible for engaging in and promoting workplace behaviors that create and maintain an environment of respect. (Continued on next page.)

Bullying is the repeated mistreatment of one or more people by one or more perpetrators. It is abusive conduct that humiliates, intimidates, threatens, and/or interferes with or prevents work from being done. These behaviors may take different forms, such as:

- Verbal. Slandering, ridiculing, or maligning a person or their family; persistent name-calling that is hurtful, insulting, or humiliating; using a person as the butt of jokes; abusive and offensive remarks.
- Physical. Pushing, shoving, kicking, poking, tripping, assault or threat of physical assault, damage to a person's work area or property.
- Nonverbal. Gestures that can convey threatening or offensive messages. Distribution or display of offensive written or graphic material.

Actions associated with bullying rise to the level of harassment when the behavior is directed at someone who belongs to a protected class. Protected classes include a person's race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sexual orientation, age, sex, gender identity, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. This includes physical (e.g., touching, pushing), verbal (e.g., slurs, microaggressions, epithets), or nonverbal (e.g., discriminatory caricatures, gestures) abusive behaviors.

Sexual Harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination involving unsolicited and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This type of harassment includes physical (e.g., unwelcome, unwanted physical contact, assault), verbal (e.g., innuendoes, repeated requests for dates), or nonverbal (e.g., written or graphic materials of a sexual nature, leering, sexual gestures) abusive behaviors.

PUBLICITY

All media inquiries regarding the City and its operations must be referred to your onsite Volunteer Coordinator or the VIA Program Manager. Unless specifically designated, no volunteer is authorized to make public statements on behalf of the City, its departments, programs, etc.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Professional and volunteer photographers, videographers, and other media outlets may be present at City events and programs. Please be aware that you may be photographed as a member of the public. For posed photos, volunteers can decline to be featured at the time the photographer is present.

ADVERSE ACTION

Out of respect, it is best practice to discuss circumstances surrounding a potential adverse action (e.g., volunteer dismissal, application disqualification) before a final decision is made. Prior to action, VIA may request additional information from the individual. If the individual refuses to provide it or if the information supports the adverse action, VIA reserves the right to disqualify the applicant, offer alternative volunteer roles, or dismiss the volunteer.



SAFETY

The City promotes a safe work environment for volunteers, staff, and citizens. This includes but is not limited to using background checks as needed, access to relevant handbooks, orientation and training, and ongoing education to mitigate risk. Remember, safety is everyone's responsibility. You will receive access to relevant handbooks, orientation, training, and ongoing education to ensure your safety. You should receive training before using equipment that is new to you. Additionally, applicants are screened before placement and, dependent on the assignment, are subject to a background check.



WORKPLACE INJURY

In the case of physical injury while completing duties, you must report it to the onsite Volunteer Coordinator within 24 hours. If the onsite Volunteer Coordinator is unavailable, report it to VIA by emailing the VIA Program Manager at hdtigen@hursttx.gov. You are required to complete an incident report regardless of your intent to seek medical attention.

The City is self-insured. Registered volunteers are covered under our Workers' Compensation program for any injuries that occur while volunteering within the scope of their assignment.

THEFT

VIA maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards theft in any form. Theft is defined as the unauthorized use of City services or facilities or the appropriation of City property for personal use. While this list is not exhaustive, it provides examples of unacceptable activities:

- Unauthorized use of City copy machines for personal purposes. The office copiers are intended solely for business use and are not provided as a free service to volunteers.
- Unauthorized use of City computers. City-owned computers, including those provided for volunteer use, will be utilized exclusively for business purposes.
- Removal of City property. Volunteers should only remove items purchased by the City or the VIA Program from City premises with explicit authorization from the Volunteer Coordinator. The Coordinator is empowered to grant permission to borrow City equipment under specific circumstances.



PERSONAL SAFETY

Threats of violence or any violent acts within the workplace are in no way permitted. All threats or acts of violence will be taken seriously and acted upon. Your safety is of paramount importance. We never want to put volunteers in harm's way. If you feel the situation is unsafe in any way, remove yourself from danger.

FIREARMS

Volunteers licensed by the State of Texas to carry a concealed weapon may have a permitted weapon only in the City parking lot if it is locked in the volunteer's vehicle. Volunteers are prohibited from carrying a weapon while volunteering and/or on City property (including City vehicles) or at any time while engaging in City-related business. Prohibited weapons include firearms, clubs, explosive devices, knives with blades exceeding 5½ inches, switchblades, etc.

TOBACCO USE

The City recognizes the hazards to health and the environment created by the use of tobacco products. Out of concerns for the health, safety, and well-being of employees, volunteers, and the general public, the City's goal is to maintain a tobacco-free environment in all municipal facilities. Smoking, vaping, and the use of smokeless tobacco products are prohibited within any municipal facility and City vehicles.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Volunteers cannot be under the influence of or consume prohibited substances while on the job. On the job is defined as being present at any place or location during volunteer hours to conduct volunteer business or functions. This restriction includes a City-owned/City-leased or privately-owned vehicle currently being used for City business.

Prohibited substances include illegal inhalants, illicit drugs, and legal substances such as alcohol. Illicit drugs include cannabinoids (THC), amphetamines, opiates, benzodiazepines, methadone, cocaine, barbiturates, propoxyphene, methaqualone, and phencyclidine (PCP).

VIA understands some of the illicit drugs listed above can be legally prescribed. If using the medication as prescribed, this does not constitute substance abuse. If you are taking a new prescription medication that may affect your work, please take care and self-monitor your ability to complete tasks safely. All prescription medication should be left at home unless needed in an emergency.



ETHICS

The City strives to offer its citizens the highest quality of service by understanding their expectations and providing timely, efficient, and effective services to meet their needs. Our relationship with citizens is based on honesty, integrity, and trust.

Volunteers are expected to maintain personal integrity, truthfulness, and fairness in carrying out their duties, avoid real or perceived improprieties, and never use their volunteer positions or powers for improper personal or professional gain.

VIA recognizes that it is not always clear what the "right" or ethical choice is. If unsure, the onsite Volunteer Coordinator or their designee should be able to assist.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The City has a legal obligation to operate in the best interest of its citizens. If you have an affiliation or financial interest with an organization that may present a conflict with those interests, you must disclose it to VIA. To avoid conflict of interest, avoid involvement in any decision-making process relating to the other organization. In addition, do not knowingly take action or make any statement intended to influence the conduct of the city in such a way as to confer and financially benefit a person, corporation, or entity in which you have a significant interest or affiliation.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Volunteers must use City technology and communication systems lawfully, ethically, and professionally. The use of the capabilities of City technology is for City business only. For employees and volunteers, there is no expectation of privacy in anything created, stored, sent, or received using the City's computer system. If necessary, your onsite Volunteer Coordinator will further clarify department technology use.

TRANSPORTATION

Should a volunteer use their personal vehicle for a volunteer assignment, there will be no gas and/or mileage reimbursements.



MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING

Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgment

This VIA Handbook serves as a crucial resource to familiarize you with the VIA Program. While it provides guidance for your service to the City, it may not cover all scenarios, and individual circumstances may require personalized attention.

Please review the following statements and sign below to confirm your receipt and acknowledgment of the City of Hurst VIA Program Policies & Procedures Handbook:

- I have received and read a copy of the City of Hurst VIA Program Policies & Procedures Handbook. I understand that the policies, rules, and benefits described therein are subject to change at the discretion of the VIA Program at any time.
- I further understand that my volunteering may be terminated at will, either by myself or the City of Hurst VIA Program, regardless of the duration of my volunteerism.
- I acknowledge that I may encounter confidential information during my volunteerism. I understand I cannot disclose such information within or outside the City's premises or property.
- By signing below, I affirm that I have read and understood the above statements and have received a copy of the City of Hurst VIA Handbook.

Please sign and return to your Volunteer Coordinator. You may request a copy of this signed form for your records.

Volunteer's Signature

Date

Volunteer Coordinator's
Signature

Date

APPENDIX A – DRESS CODE

Volunteers must, at all times, dress appropriately and professionally, presenting a clean and neat appearance while at work and while representing the City or conducting City business. Business casual dress is expected in the workplace year-round, in accordance with this policy.

Professional business attire or a required uniform must be worn for meetings or special events. Suits, dress shirts, and ties for men and suits or dresses for women are proper attire for personnel scheduled for agenda presentations (i.e., City Council meetings, receptions, etc.). Attire at work and work functions must reflect a professional business attitude and presence.

It is recognized that the nature of a workload may require an alternate dress or uniform, and the Volunteer Coordinator will provide additional details accordingly.

STANDARDS FOR WORK ATTIRE

- Monday through Thursday, jeans and athletic shoes are not acceptable. Jeans are acceptable on Friday and must be appropriate for work (not ripped or torn).
- Sweatshirts, sweat pants, or shorts of any type are not acceptable unless a special casual wear or festive occasion is declared by City management or shorts have been approved as part of the standard uniform.
- Dress shoes or sandals with a professional length heel are required. Flip-flop sandals and "Croc" type shoes are not acceptable.
- T-shirts are unacceptable unless worn at a City-sponsored event or as part of an approved uniform.
- Ankle length and mid-calf dress slacks are appropriate work attire; however, shorts are not appropriate attire. Leggings are not acceptable attire when worn as pants. Leggings may be worn with a top no shorter than 4 inches above the top of the knee. Skirts and dresses shall be worn no shorter than 4 inches above the top of the knee.
- No more than two earrings in each ear may be worn, provided the earrings are not unprofessional in appearance.
- Knit shirts with collars, banded collar shirts, short sleeve or dress shirts without a tie are acceptable. All shirts are to be tucked in unless specifically designed to be worn outside pants or skirts.
- Tattoos are addressed by Departmental policy.



THANK YOU