



## What is a Michigan State University Extension volunteer?

A person who freely offers their time and talents to represent or perform service on behalf of MSU Extension. MSU Extension volunteers play a vital role in the growth and development of the Michigan residents we serve through a multitude of programs.

### DEFINITIONS

**Youth:** Individuals from birth to age 19.

**Vulnerable population:** Persons with disabilities, limited English-language skills or physical, mental or cognitive limitations that may make them vulnerable to manipulation. Keep in mind that people's lived experiences and power differentials may also make them vulnerable at any time.

**MSU Extension volunteer:** Adults age 18 and older who are not enrolled as a 4-H member and provide leadership or support to MSU Extension programs, offices and events.

**VSP:** MSU Extension's volunteer selection process, the means through which MSU Extension volunteers are screened. Includes application, background checks, reference checks, an interview and completion of learning modules.

**Youth leaders:** 4-H members age 19 and under who work on behalf of 4-H to lead certain aspects of the organization.

### GOLD VOLUNTEERS (FULL VSP)

These individuals interact with youth and/or adults in meaningful ways on behalf of MSU Extension. This includes providing training, education, leadership or support to MSU Extension offices, programs, events or sub-organizations such as a 4-H club, an Extension Master Gardener class or association. This includes anyone who:

- Serves as a chaperone or counselor.
- Interns with MSU in an unpaid position.
- Handles finances on behalf of MSU Extension programs.
- Forms relationships with youth and/or adults on behalf of MSU Extension.
- Holds MSU Extension-sponsored events, activities or programs at their home, farm or property.
  - Business partners or field-trip locations are excluded from these criteria. However, note that Gold volunteers and/or staff members must be present during events occurring at such locations.

### Examples of Gold Volunteers

- Individuals representing MSU Extension programs at outreach events, such as an informational table at a farmers market, activity table at a school event, or demonstrations at a community event.
- 4-H club and project leaders of any capacity who have regular, direct contact with participants.
  - Parents and guardians may only work with their own youth without completing VSP.
- Event chaperones.

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- Unsupervised instructors/presenters at activities such as 4-H Exploration Days, camp programs and one-time educational events.
- Unpaid positions that supervise other volunteers, youth or adults.
- County and state 4-H council and committee members.
- Proud Equestrians Program (PEP) volunteers, regardless of the role they play at the program site.

### SILVER VOLUNTEERS (APPLICATION, CRIMINAL HISTORY AND SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY CHECK)

These individuals have no direct interaction with youth or vulnerable populations and no to low opportunity to form relationships with youth or vulnerable populations on behalf of MSU Extension. Exempt from this rule are those with minimal interaction, such as parking attendants or people handing out ribbons or opening gates (see roles not requiring screening section below). Silver volunteers also have no access to personal information such as phone numbers, birthdates, addresses, Social Security numbers, email addresses and similar information. Note that a Gold volunteer or MSU Extension employee must be present anytime youth and adults are interacting together and accessible to Silver volunteers at events.

#### Examples of Silver Volunteers

- Individuals working at a registration table.
- Individuals working in a food booth at a youth or adult event with at least one Gold volunteer or MSU Extension employee present.
- Advisory boards and councils that meet more than once as representatives of MSU Extension and are not youth focused.

### PARENTS, PARTNERS OR FRIENDS (NO BACKGROUND CHECK OR INTERVIEW)

Oftentimes, there are needs at an event or program that arise quickly or are not anticipated. We recognize that parents, partners and friends of the program will step in at times to provide support in the moment. Screening is not required if the following conditions are met; however, staff should work with a person to obtain Silver status if that person frequently/regularly assists in this way. This includes individuals who:

- Do not represent MSU Extension but may represent a partner organization.
- Have minimal interactions with participants and no meaningful conversations.
- Help in a public area with other screened volunteers or MSU Extension staff members (if youth are involved).

#### Examples of Roles Not Requiring Screening

- A partner award honoree.
- A guest speaker, including someone giving a demonstration, when MSU Extension staff or Gold volunteer invited them and is present.
- Employees of an event site. For example, camp personnel at facilities where MSU Extension rents or uses the facility. However, MSU Extension staff members should encourage facility managers to conduct a background check, at a minimum.
- Parking attendants.
- People offering impromptu cleanup or setup help at an event.
- Citizen scientists.
- Gate attendants.