



Preventing Medicare Fraud

SMP Volunteer Handbook

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Welcome and thank you from ACL

On behalf of the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL), we want to welcome you to the SMP volunteer program and thank you for volunteering in the effort to empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse.

In recent years, ACL's partners in this effort—the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the HHS Office of the Inspector General, and the Department of Justice, including the FBI—have created the resources needed—including sophisticated technology and skilled local investigative and enforcement teams—to identify and prosecute criminals who steal hundreds of millions of dollars each year from Medicare and related health insurance programs. That is important work.

But in the end, we can't forget that no law or technology is as effective at preventing fraud as educated and informed consumers. Tips from Medicare beneficiaries helped take down a fraud scheme in Miami involving false claims for community mental health services. The investigation ultimately led to a judgment of \$3.8 million and a recovery of \$1.6 million against the defendants, including one who was sentenced to 3 years in prison and 3 years' probation.

Those tips likely would never have been made without the extensive outreach and educational efforts of the Florida Senior Medicare Patrol – the same outreach and educational work that you and other SMP volunteers in your state are being trained to do or to support. Preventing fraud takes a lot of time, preparation and hard work. It's people like you who bear a heavy part of that load – without always seeing the most direct or obvious rewards.

Sometimes your efforts may result in a big takedown, but more often than not, you will be preventing fraud before it ever takes place. That can be a hard thing to measure, but the benefits for Medicare and America's seniors and people with disabilities are enormous. Since 1965, Medicare has been one of our country's greatest success stories. We have a responsibility to keep it strong for generations to come. And we can't do that without you. Thank you for volunteering with the SMP.

Sincerely,

Administration for Community Living

History of the SMP Program

In 1995, the Administration on Aging (AoA) became a partner in a government-led effort to fight fraud, errors, and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid programs through a groundbreaking demonstration project called Operation Restore Trust (ORT). ORT's purpose was to coordinate and target federal, state, local, and private resources on those areas most plagued by abuse. Operation Restore Trust was announced at the 1995 White House Conference on Aging. The initiative focused on five states where fraud and abuse were most prevalent: California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas.

ORT brought together several agencies within the federal Department of Health and Human Services, including the Health Care Financing Administration (now the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services or CMS), the Office of Inspector General and the Administration on Aging, to fight health care fraud, waste, and abuse. These agencies also worked with partners in law enforcement such as the federal Department of Justice and state and local authorities.

In 1996, Congress enacted the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 (P.L. 104-191). Although HIPAA is best known for rules that protect patient confidentiality, the law also created the Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control (HCFAC) program and authorized funding for AoA to support the effective training and mobilization of senior volunteers who provide consumer education to beneficiaries.

Another law enacted in that same session of Congress—the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of 1997 (P.L. 104-208)—affirmed AoA's role as a key partner in the fight against health care fraud by establishing the program that would come to be called the Senior Medicare Patrol program in 12 local demonstration projects. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) offered legislative language that directed the AoA to form projects that would recruit and train retired doctors, nurses, and other professionals to identify and report errors, fraud, and abuse.

A Senate Report explained the rationale for the newly created program by saying, “senior citizens are our best front-line defense against these losses [from health care fraud and abuse], but they don't have the information and experience needed” to recognize and accurately report cases of errors, fraud, and abuse. The Senior Medicare Patrol would address this problem through volunteers who provide *consumer education* which is, along with provider education, one of the five primary purposes that the HIPAA lists as an authorized use of HCFAC funding.

As a result of this Congressional action, SMP volunteers are now at work in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. They teach their peers to protect themselves against fraud, safeguard Medicare numbers, and examine Medicare Summary Notices and other documents to detect discrepancies and report suspicious activity. Allocations through the Older Americans Act and the HCFAC program help fund SMP program operations.

SMP Program Milestones

- 1995 – Operation Restore Trust (ORT) brings together the Administration on Aging and other federal agencies in a coordinated effort to fight Medicare and Medicaid fraud, waste, and abuse.
- 1997 – Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act establishes 12 demonstration projects to “utilize the skills and expertise of retired professionals in identifying and reporting errors, fraud, and abuse.” HIPAA provides Health Care Fraud & Abuse Control program funding to AoA for consumer education.
- 1998 - In the program’s first year, more than 3,600 volunteers delivered 1,300 education and counseling sessions that reached 41,000 people. AoA increases the number of cooperative agreements for the program from 12 to 18.
- 2002 - AoA convenes its first National Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control Program Conference in Washington, D.C. Its purpose is to share successful practices, strengthen collaboration between federal, state, and local partners, and honor outstanding senior volunteers. 51 Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) projects, located in 45 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, are in operation.
- 2003 – AoA convenes three regional Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control Program Conferences in the DC area, Dallas, and Seattle. The SMP program has projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
- 2004 – SMP projects refer 1,700 cases to Medicare contractors for follow-up.
- 2007 – SMART FACTS reporting system launches and AoA introduces a national SMP logo and outreach materials.
- 2008 – Together with the National Hispanic Council on Aging, AoA establishes the National Hispanic SMP project to focus education and outreach efforts on Spanish speaking communities in south Florida and Texas.
- 2010 – The Department of Health & Human Services, through AoA, launches a national public awareness campaign about Senior Medicare Patrol with Fraud Prevention Public Service Announcements (PSAs), fact sheets, and other information resources. AoA provides media toolkits, training, and support to the SMPs to ensure effective placement and response to the PSAs. Also, SMPs receive special capacity building grants enabling many to hire Coordinators of Volunteers.

- 2011 – Working with volunteer management consultant Linda Graff and Associates, AoA and the SMP Resource Center disseminate a comprehensive set of new volunteer risk and program management policies that will take effect in stages over three years, beginning in June 2013.
- 2012 – April 16, 2012 – the Administration on Aging (AoA), the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD), and the HHS Office on Disability come together to become the Administration on Community Living (ACL).

What is the SMP program?

The Senior Medicare Patrols empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse through outreach, counseling, and education.

What do SMPs do? The SMP program, also known as Senior Medicare Patrol program, helps Medicare and dually eligible Medicare-Medicaid beneficiaries avoid, detect, and prevent health care fraud. In doing so, they help protect older persons and promote integrity in the Medicare program. Because this work often requires face-to-face contact to be most effective, SMPs recruit-volunteers nationwide to support this effort. SMP volunteers serve in many ways, including outreach, education, and one-on-one counseling. Most are Medicare beneficiaries themselves and are thus well-positioned to assist their peers.

SMP staff, including paid staff and volunteers, conduct outreach to Medicare beneficiaries in their communities through group presentations, exhibiting at community events, answering calls to SMP helplines, and meeting individually with clients. Their main goal is to teach Medicare beneficiaries how to:

- Protect their personal identity
- Identify and report errors on their health care bills, and
- Identify deceptive health care practices, such as illegal marketing, providing unnecessary or inappropriate services, and charging for services that were never provided.

In some cases, SMPs do more than educate. When Medicare beneficiaries cannot act on their own behalf to address these problems, the SMPs work with beneficiaries, family caregivers, and others to address the problems, and if necessary, make referrals to outside organizations that can intervene.

How do SMPs Work? The Administration for Community Living (ACL) provides funding through the Older Americans Act for the SMP projects.

SMP projects operate in all fifty states, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. At the state and local levels, SMPs rely on hundreds of partnerships with host organizations that include Area Agencies on Aging, faith-based organizations, and State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs), to help achieve the program's goals. Paid staff members at host organizations sometimes are responsible for recruiting and supervising SMP volunteers. SMP projects receive technical assistance and training from the Senior Medicare Patrol National Resource Center (The Center) based in Waterloo, Iowa. An additional \$3.312 million in HCFAC funds supported infrastructure and other support and capacity building activities for the SMP projects, including the SMP Resource Center.

SMP activities support ACL's broader goals of promoting increased choice and greater independence among older adults. The activities of the SMP program also serve to enhance the financial, emotional, physical and mental well-being of older adults -- thereby increasing their capacity to maintain security and independence in retirement and to make better financial and health care choices.

About Texas SMP

In the great state of Texas, the Senior Medicare Patrol grant is a program of the Better Business Bureau (BBB) Education Foundation. The BBB Education Foundation is a 501(c)3 charitable foundation of the Better Business Bureau of Greater Houston. In 2002, the BBB Education Foundation was awarded the SMP grant to cover the Greater Houston area. In 2008, this grant was expanded to cover the whole state of Texas. The Texas SMP covers the state through partnerships with organizations such as: Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Texas AgriLife Extension, and Area Agencies on Aging.

Organizational Structure

Texas SMP Staff

- Program Director: Diane Nguyen – dnguyen@bbbhou.org; (713) 341-6185
- Sr. Project Coordinator: Lilly Chu – Lchu@bbbhou.org; (713) 341-6144
- Sr. Project Coordinator (S. TX): Robert Obregon – robregon@bbbhou.org; (956) 969-1804
- Outreach Specialist: Angel Hanzik – ahanzik@bbbhou.org; (713) 341-6188
- Outreach Specialist: Veronica Alegria – valegria@bbbhou.org; (956) 332-3360
- **Coordinator of Volunteers: Dorian Dotson – ddotson@bbbhou.org; (713) 341-6141**

General Information

Texas SMP/BBB Education Foundation: 1333 West Loop South, Ste. 1200, Houston, TX 77027

- Hours:
 - M-Th 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
 - F – 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Texas SMP South Texas: 609 South International Blvd., Weslaco, Texas 78596

- Hours:
 - M-Th 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
 - F- 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Texas SMP Hotline: 888-341.6187

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- ACL:** The Administration for Community Living, an operating division within the federal Department of Health and Human Services with headquarters in Washington, DC and regional offices in ten cities.
- AoA:** The Administration on Aging, an agency within the Administration for Community Living, administers all programs funded by the Older Americans Act, including SMP.
- AAA:** An Area Agency on Aging is responsible for planning and delivery of services under the Older Americans Act for a geographic region within a state.
- CMS:** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) administers the Medicare program and oversees state administration of the Medicaid programs. The Center for Program Integrity (CPI) is a bureau within CMS that works with various contractors to identify potential fraud, waste and abuse in the original, fee-for-service Medicare program. The Center for Medicare is responsible for overseeing the Medicare Advantage (Part C) and Medicare Prescription Drug (Part D) programs. An Administrator appointed by the Secretary of HHS heads CMS.
- HHS:** The Department of Health & Human Services is one of two departments within the executive branch of the federal government responsible for administering the Health Care Fraud & Abuse Control (HCFA) program of which the Medicare Integrity Program (MIP) is a part. The Administration for Community Living (ACL), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the HHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) are units within HHS. The Secretary of HHS holds a cabinet-level position.
- DoJ:** The Department of Justice is the other federal department that administers the HCFA program. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, an agency within the DoJ, works with the HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) to investigate health care fraud and apprehend alleged perpetrators. The DoJ's U.S. Attorney offices throughout the country prosecute criminal health care fraud cases.
- OIG:** The HHS Office of Inspector General investigates Medicare and Medicaid fraud, and refers criminal cases for prosecution to the U.S. Attorney offices. The OIG has authority to issue civil monetary penalties and exclude providers from the Medicare and Medicaid programs.
- SHIP:** The State Health Insurance Assistance Programs provide counseling services to Medicare beneficiaries and assist them in applying for assistance programs, comparing and choosing health and drug plans, and appealing claims denials.

SMP Volunteer Risk and Program Management Policies

A comprehensive set of risk and program management policies guide the operation of the SMP volunteer program. The policies resulted from a project that began in 2010 to assess and identify the risks involved in the operation of the SMP volunteer program, and to provide guidance and resources to program managers to help them manage the identified risks. The Volunteer Risk and Program Management (VRPM) project's implementation was completed at the end of 2014. The Administration on Aging (AoA) initiated the VRPM project with these factors in mind:

- Growth of the SMP programs
- Increased awareness about risks related to volunteer involvement, for example, with volunteers who have access to sensitive personal information
- The need to adapt to a changing environment for volunteering in which volunteers assume responsibility for challenging and responsible tasks
- The SMP program's higher profile in the media
- Expectations in the courts and public opinion for high standards and greater accountability in volunteer programs

The primary purpose for the VRPM project, and the development of a comprehensive set of risk and program management policies, is to enable SMP programs to manage their volunteer programs more safely, effectively, and productively. Safety is a concern for both volunteers and the people—many of who are vulnerable seniors—who benefit from the SMP program's services. The VRPM project also promotes effectiveness by setting a high standard of care in regard to volunteer services. The creation of national standards for this important area of program operations will enhance the program's results.

As an SMP volunteer, you have an obligation to know and understand the policies and how they affect you. Your supervisor and other SMP staff will refer to the policies as they manage you and the other volunteers in the program. The policies address:

- Definitions of key terms
- Volunteer role classifications and position descriptions
- Risk management and insurance requirements
- Incident reporting and response procedures
- Volunteer rights and responsibilities

- Coordinator of volunteers role
- Screening procedures
- Orientation and training
- Performance management
- Boundaries and ethics, including relationships with beneficiaries
- Confidentiality
- Grievances and complaints
- Recognition
- Information and data security, and
- Much more

This handbook contains information, below, on some of the policies that most interest volunteers such as roles, rights and responsibilities, orientation and training, screening, dismissal, and complaints and grievances. If you would like to see the complete set of SMP VRPM policies, ask your supervisor or coordinator of volunteers.

One thing to keep in mind is that the SMP volunteer risk and program management policies apply to all state and local organizations, also called “host organizations,” that recruit and retain volunteers to perform SMP duties, and to all the SMP volunteers who work under them. In some cases, host organizations may have volunteer policies in place in addition to the SMP policies. If you find that the different policies are in conflict or are causing confusion, please discuss the problem with your supervisor and/or the SMP coordinator of volunteers.

Volunteer Roles

The Texas SMP program operates with three standard volunteer roles. Information about the roles and the responsibilities connected with them are set forth in position descriptions (see Appendix). SMPs may create position descriptions that combine elements of the standard roles. SMP program managers should give you a copy of a position description that describes the purpose, duties, and qualifications for the role(s) in which you have agreed to serve.

The Texas SMP volunteer roles are:

- **All Star Presenters:** Outgoing volunteers who want to give presentations about TX SMP to the community.
- **Blue Bag Champions:** Enthusiastic volunteers who help assemble TX SMP bags for distribution.
- **Distribution Defenders:** Energetic volunteers who want to help distribute SMP materials to the public
- **Health Fair Heroes:** Excited volunteers who want to staff TX SMP booths at health fairs and other public events

The SMP considers these roles to be “positions of trust” which means the roles involve access to beneficiaries or other vulnerable people, personal or confidential information, or to money or other valuables. Please keep in mind you may be required to undergo an intensive screening process to qualify for placement.

The SMP asks volunteers to confine their activities to those tasks and responsibilities described in the position description for their specific role(s). Each volunteer role has responsibilities as well as limits to those responsibilities.

For more details about the scopes of responsibility in these volunteer roles, see the role descriptions in the Appendix.

Rights and Responsibilities

SMP program volunteers have certain rights and responsibilities that are good to keep in mind during the course of your volunteer service. Because the program's leadership sees volunteers as a valuable resource to the program and the communities it serves, volunteers have rights, for example, to meaningful work, support, and recognition for the work they do.

At the same time, the SMP program expects volunteers to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, to comply with the program's volunteer policies, and to remain loyal to the program's values, goals, and procedures. Volunteers serve at the sole discretion of the SMP program, and agree that the SMP may decide to end a volunteer's relationship with the SMP or to change the nature of the volunteer's assignment when appropriate.

As an SMP volunteer, you have a right to:

- Receive meaningful work assignments
- Treatment as an equal co-worker
- A safe work environment
- A respectful work environment free of harassment
- Receive orientation and training
- Receive effective supervision
- Receive constructive feedback on a regular basis
- Receive informal and formal recognition
- Receive clear information about the boundaries for the work you are to do and not to do (see the position description for your volunteer role)
- Receive all the pertinent information you need to perform your work assignments
- Refuse any tasks or work assignments, especially when the assignment requires you to do something for which you have not been trained
- Security and confidentiality for the records in your personnel file
- Examine the contents of your personnel file
- Make complaints and file grievances
- Resign from your volunteer service at any time

As an SMP Volunteer, you have a responsibility to:

- Provide SMP services responsibly and objectively, without regard to the background or characteristics of the beneficiaries or clients or with favoritism to specific services, providers, or products
- Represent the SMP program only to the extent that your position description and role specifically authorize, and not to present yourself as a spokesperson for the SMP program in a formal sense
- Use your affiliation only in the interests of the SMP program, and not to promote religious or political beliefs or personal business dealings
- Inform your supervisor of any conflicts of interest that may arise after placement in your volunteer position
- Report any abuse that you may witness involving the program's beneficiaries or clients
- Report incidents such as accidents, injuries, errors, and the like to your supervisor
- Report on your volunteer activities on a timely basis
- Protect the confidentiality of the program's beneficiaries and/or clients
- Follow procedures to ensure the security of clients' electronic and hard copy data
- Report changes in your health status or medical treatment that might adversely affect your performance to your supervisor
- Notify your supervisor of absences that will prevent you from performing an assigned task
- Complete required training programs, including continuing education programs

The list above shows many, but not all, of the rights and responsibilities for SMP program volunteers. For the specific policy language on these and other rights and responsibilities, see the volunteer rights and responsibilities in the Appendix.

Here are some examples that we hope will help clarify some of these responsibilities.

Representing the SMP Volunteers who are trained to make group presentations are authorized to discuss, and answer questions about, approved SMP education programs. In that limited capacity, they are free to identify themselves as being affiliated with the SMP. They should not, however, hold themselves out as public spokespersons for the program in connection with media inquiries or questions related to official policy positions.

As a representative of the SMP, you are expected to maintain professional standards in all things, including appearance, use of appropriate language, and conduct

Reporting Conflicts of Interest One concern for SMP program managers is the appearance of an implied endorsement for a volunteer who is known to the community for his or her business and/or political interests. After discussing the circumstances with a volunteer, a program manager may decide that a person who is engaged in health care sales, or who is running for a seat on the city council, is unsuited for making SMP group presentations because of the danger of blurring the lines between the person's volunteer activity and his or her business or personal interest. Please bring any business, political, or personal activity that arises, that may conflict with the mission and goals of the SMP program, to your supervisor's attention.

Reporting Incidents If you are involved in an accident, suffer an injury, experience harassment, or witness abuse of a beneficiary while you are on duty as an SMP volunteer, you have a responsibility to report the incident to your supervisor or the coordinator of volunteers. Complete and submit an incident reporting form (see Appendix) as soon as possible.

Volunteers Who Drive If your volunteer position involves driving a motor vehicle on behalf of the SMP program, you have additional responsibilities to:

- Abide by traffic laws, such as speed limit, seat belt, and cell phone laws, as you carry out your volunteer duties
- Carry liability insurance on your vehicle
- Notify your supervisor or coordinator of volunteers if your insurance coverage lapses
- Notify your supervisor or coordinator of volunteers if your driver's license expires or receives restrictions that limit your ability to carry out your volunteer duties

For more information, see the Insurance section of this document.

Orientation and Training

Orientation and training are essential to developing the knowledge and skills that SMP volunteers need to serve the people of their communities effectively. Orientation takes place shortly after the SMP accepts a volunteer into service. Its aim is to explain, among other topics, the:

- Purpose and values of the SMP
- Nature and operation of the program or activity in which the volunteer will participate
- Purpose, duties, and requirements of the role the volunteer is accepting

Training Programs The SMP has established minimum training requirements and programs for the various volunteer roles. Volunteers must complete the training required for their roles and demonstrate through testing that they have attained minimum levels of comprehension and skill, before program managers give them work assignments.

The SMP Resource Center and state SMP programs make these training programs available in the SMP Resource Library (www.smpresource.org/resourcelibrary).

SMP Foundations Training: This training provides SMP volunteers and staff with a foundation of knowledge in three main content areas including the SMP program, Medicare basics, and Medicare fraud and abuse. Both classroom and online training options are available. Participants should allow 4 to 6 hours to complete the entire online course.

SMP Group Education Training: This training provides presenters of SMP group education sessions with the necessary skills and resources to deliver the SMP message consistently and effectively to Medicare beneficiaries, caregivers and other interested groups.

In addition to the formal training programs for the various SMP volunteer roles, volunteers may receive on-the-job training through coaching and feedback of a supervisor or a veteran volunteer mentor. The SMP may also require attendance at periodic continuing education training programs to provide informational updates and/or additional skills training. The SMP encourages volunteers to build their skills through training while serving with the SMP.

Insurance

SMP volunteers who drive their own vehicles for SMP business are to carry automobile liability insurance policies at their own expense. In the event of an accident or damage while a volunteer is driving her or his own vehicle for SMP work, the volunteer's own automobile insurance coverage comes into play. We encourage you to consult your own insurance agent about your SMP driving activities and to make sure that your coverage provides adequate protection.

If you accept a volunteer role that involves driving your own vehicle, a program manager will need a copy of your license and automobile insurance which will be added to your personnel file. If your automobile insurance coverage lapses, please notify your supervisor immediately so that she or he can adjust work assignments as needed.

Performance Management

The SMP program's success is measured in terms of outcomes related to public education about fraud, errors, and abuse in Medicare, and to assisting individual beneficiaries in identifying and reporting instances of suspected health care fraud, errors, and abuse. A key expectation in SMP volunteer program management is that program managers will provide the support volunteers need to successfully achieve the program's education and assistance goals. A constructive and success-oriented performance management system is in place to guide supervisors as they work to encourage productive and satisfying volunteer involvement in the SMP program.

SMP Performance Management System The performance management system has three components: supervision, performance evaluation, and corrective action. Each component includes a range of techniques that supervisors can use to promote high performance. The guiding principle of performance management is to match the type and extent of supervisory intervention to the nature of a volunteer's responsibilities and capacity. It provides several avenues to demonstrate support and to acknowledge excellence. Here are some key points about the system's three components:

Supervision The SMP has an obligation to provide supervision and support for the program's volunteers. This means that supervisors have a responsibility to manage the work that volunteers do, and to determine the kind of guidance and support that each volunteer needs. The supervision that you receive as an SMP volunteer should reflect the principle of positive, constructive and success-oriented guidance that underpins the SMP volunteer performance management system. You should expect to receive feedback, consultation, information, and meaningful assignments from your supervisor.

Performance Evaluation Volunteers in the SMP program receive periodic evaluation of their work. This is a more formal process than one finds in a supervisor's day-to-day feedback and provides a more detailed assessment of each volunteer's performance,

on-the-job behavior, achievements, and areas for improvement. This process gives you and your supervisor an opportunity to exchange feedback, ideas, and suggestions. Your supervisor will also use the performance evaluation process to update your personnel file, including changes in your volunteer role, contact information, and the like. She or he will document the substance of the performance evaluation and any improvement plans to which you mutually agree and place them in your file.

Corrective Action SMP program managers may take corrective action when a volunteer's behavior is serious enough to require intervention, and when its continuation or repetition is unacceptable. The SMP corrective action process is progressive in that it is oriented toward success rather than focused on failure, and that the degree of intervention matches the nature of the performance or behavior issue, becoming more serious as the unacceptability of the behavior increases or the volunteer's inability to resolve the problem continues.

Corrective action in the SMP program includes a range of interventions that aim to help volunteers make needed improvements when their performance and/or behavior do not meet expectations. Interventions may include additional training, coaching, adjustment of volunteer duties, or reassignment to a different role. In more serious cases, interventions may involve formal disciplinary actions such as warnings, suspensions, and dismissal. If you would like to learn more about the SMP's corrective action process, ask your supervisor for the program's corrective action protocol. For information on dismissals, see the Volunteer Separation section of this document.

Grievances and Appeals A volunteer who has a complaint about, or grievance with, staff, other volunteers, beneficiaries, or partner organizations should communicate the concern to her or his supervisor. If the complaint or grievance involves the volunteer's own supervisor, she or he should convey the concern to the next person in the SMP program's chain of command. The SMP also has an appeals procedure through which a volunteer can request review of a formal corrective action decision, including dismissal. If you have a complaint or grievance, ask your supervisor for information on filing it.

Recognition

The SMP program greatly appreciates the many and varied contributions of its volunteers to the program's success. Program managers recognize and reward volunteer service both formally and informally. Informal recognition may take the form of feedback on the results of a volunteer's work, a thank you note, a birthday card, or an invitation to participate in the decision-making for a project or activity.

The SMP program strives to recognize volunteers for all types of productive service, and not simply for the number of hours they work. We encourage you to identify and nominate other volunteers who may deserve special recognition or awards.

Volunteer Separation

Resignation Volunteers may resign voluntarily from their service with the SMP program at any time. If you intend to resign, please notify your supervisor as soon as possible.

Discipline & Dismissal The SMP accepts volunteers with the understanding that the volunteers serve at the sole discretion of the SMP. Volunteers who do not follow the rules, policies, and procedures of the SMP program, or who repeatedly fail to perform an assignment satisfactorily despite supervisory support and appropriate interventions, are subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. Involuntary dismissal is typically a last resort, used only when other appropriate steps have been taken. Ideally, the supervisory staff will discuss with a volunteer in advance the reasons for a possible dismissal if other corrective actions do not resolve the problem within a reasonable time frame.

Possible grounds for dismissal are listed below. The list illustrates the range of reasons for dismissal and is not intended to be comprehensive. Grounds for dismissal include:

- Gross misconduct
- Serious misjudgment that may undermine trust in the volunteer or cause harm to others
- Insubordination, including failure or unwillingness to perform essential responsibilities in the volunteer's role or to accept direction from supervisory staff
- Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on volunteer duty or representing the SMP
- Theft or other illegal acts
- Loss of a license (e.g., driver's license) required to carry out assignments
- Unauthorized use or misuse of SMP equipment or materials
- Harm, abuse, or mistreatment of beneficiaries, co-workers, or other persons
- Serious and repeated failure to follow SMP policies and procedures
- Inability to meet physical, cognitive, or emotional standards of performance
- Repeated failure to perform assigned duties satisfactorily
- Unresolvable conflict of interest
- Serious breach of boundaries

Immediate Dismissal and Suspension Some behaviors are so unacceptable that, upon verification, they constitute grounds for immediate dismissal. If a question exists about the unacceptable behavior, the SMP will temporarily suspend the volunteer from service pending the results of an investigation.

Grounds for immediate dismissal include:

- Fraud, theft, or abuse in connection with SMP volunteer service
- Serious illegal act
- Gross negligence causing bodily harm in connection with SMP volunteer service
- Breach of confidentiality
- Reporting for volunteer service under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Using violence in the workplace

Exit Interview Some SMP programs conduct exit interviews with outgoing volunteers. If your program conducts exit interviews, please participate and answer the questions candidly. Your responses will help managers identify the SMP volunteer program's strengths and weaknesses, and to make improvements where needed. We encourage your participation.

Volunteers with Disabilities

The SMP program values the service of volunteers with disabilities. Program managers strive to include volunteers with disabilities in all facets of the program to the extent that an individual's physical capacity allows, and to ensure access to all SMP program facilities. When requested, the program will make reasonable accommodations to meet the special needs of volunteers with disabilities.

Appendix

Role Descriptions: Purpose, duties, and qualifications for the role(s) in which you agree to serve.

- **All Star Presenters:** Enthusiastic volunteers provide informative presentations about Texas SMP to the community with the opportunity for interaction with the audience during time set for Q&A. You may be required to drive to a location or present virtually online. Current liability insurance is required.
- **Blue Bag Champions:** Detail-oriented volunteers assemble Texas SMP bags for distribution. This activity is coordinated and performed at individual partner sites.
- **Distribution Defenders:** Energetic volunteers staff information kiosks or exhibits at events such as health fairs to distribute Texas SMP materials to the public and answer simple questions. You may be required to drive to a location. Current liability insurance is required.
- **Health Fair Hero:** Excited volunteers who want to staff TX SMP booths at health fairs and other public events. You may be required to drive to a location. Current liability insurance is required.

NOTE: At this time mileage is not reimbursed.