

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



## Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Extension Volunteer Standards Rules & Guidelines 2024-2025

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## Purpose

Extension Volunteer Standards is committed to providing a safe environment for everyone involved in AgriLife Extension programs including our youth and adult clientele, our volunteers, our employees, and the agency as a whole.

*Note. The Extension Volunteer Standards (EVS) was previously known as Youth Protection Standards (YPS). This rebranding was introduced in August 2022. Youth safety still remains a high priority, however our screening process is broader than only youth safety. We include all Extension volunteers, even those who do not work with youth. This rebranding more accurately reflects all AgriLife Extension volunteers.*

## General Guidelines

### Volunteers That Require Training/Screening

1. All direct volunteers, Master Volunteers, volunteers with full supervisory responsibilities of youth at an Extension program, and volunteers who handle Extension support group finances (including, but not limited to Leadership Advisory Boards (LAB), Program Area Committees (PAC), Texas Extension Education Association (TEEA), task forces, coalitions, etc.) must be screened through the Extension Volunteer Standards (EVS) Program. Screening through the EVS program includes an application, application fee, training, and background check.
  - a. For clarification, this does NOT mean that all of your LAB, PAC, TEEA, task force, or coalition members must be screened. This means any volunteers who meet the definition of a direct volunteer or those who are handling funds should be screened.
  - b. Indirect and episodic volunteers are not required to be screened through EVS. See Attachment A for additional details.
2. Initial screening of a volunteer is conducted when he/she applies for a volunteer role with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Volunteers must be screened, pay the application fee, complete required trainings, and approved by the county program prior to fulfilling any volunteer roles.
3. Re-screening and training of all Extension volunteers is conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening. Note:
  - a. 4-H Volunteers: Screening is determined on a 4-H program year basis. For example, a volunteer screened any time during the 2024-2025 4-H year (between September 1, 2024, and August 31, 2025, also considered "4-H Year 2025") needs to be re-screened at the beginning of 4-H Year 2028 (September 1, 2027 through August 31, 2028). 4-H volunteers must re-apply annually through 4HOnline and complete all required steps including the application fee and trainings.
  - b. Non-4-H Volunteers: Screening is determined on an actual, calendar year basis. Training and screening is valid from the date of screening for three years.
4. **NEW!** Background checks for AgriLife Extension volunteers are to be conducted only by the Extension Volunteer Standards office. Employees, local county offices, and/or volunteers should not be conducting their own background checks.

### Types of Volunteers

### **1. Direct Volunteer**

- a. A direct volunteer is any adult who meets all the following criteria:
- Provides unpaid support for Extension through face-to-face contact.
  - Provides a learning experience for adults or youth within Extension.
  - Has an individual volunteer application on file with the appropriate program area.
  - Has a position description. General descriptions are acceptable.
  - Has passed a criminal background check within the past three years.
  - Has completed the required trainings to be an AgriLife Extension volunteer.
  - Pays the volunteer application fee.
    1. 4-H volunteers submit an annual application fee of \$10 through 4HOnline during re-enrollment.
    2. Non-4-H Volunteers submit an application fee of \$12 through the AgriLife Learn platform prior to completing their training and criminal background check.
- b. Master volunteers are considered direct volunteers.
- c. Direct volunteers must pass their criminal background check, complete necessary training, pay their application fee, and have their application approved at the county level before fulfilling any volunteer duties for AgriLife Extension.

### **2. Indirect Volunteer**

- a. An indirect volunteer is any adult who meets the following criteria:
- Provides unpaid support for Extension programming without having direct contact with Extension clientele (youth or adults).
  - Does not have face-to-face contact with youth or adult clientele.
  - Does not provide learning experiences for youth or adult clientele.
  - Examples of indirect volunteers may include but are not limited to a board member or committee member, a livestock show board member, or a parent accompanying their own child(ren) to an event who does not serve in a volunteer capacity, or a donor/sponsor.
- b. Indirect volunteers are not direct volunteers and are not required to pass a criminal background check to be an indirect volunteer.

### **3. Episodic Volunteer**

- a. An episodic volunteer is any adult who meets the following criteria:
- Provides unpaid support for Extension programming for a single event.
  - Does not have supervisory duties of youth at an Extension program.
  - Assists with an Extension program while direct volunteers and/or employees are present.
  - Has a specific task to perform for a specific event or program.
  - Examples of episodic volunteers may include but are not limited to an interview judge at a 4-H event, guest speaker at a meeting or event, or assistant at a 4-H contest.
- b. Episodic volunteers are not direct volunteers and are not required to pass a criminal background check to be an episodic volunteer.

## **Overnight Chaperones**

1. Individuals who are driving youth or chaperoning youth for overnight events (must be at least 21 years of age) are considered direct volunteers with full supervisory responsibilities and must be screened and cleared through the Extension Volunteer Standards Program prior to serving as a volunteer. They must also complete required trainings, submit the application fee, and have final approval by their local County Extension Agent(s).
2. Examples: Texas 4-H Roundup Chaperone, a driver to Texas 4-H Teen Retreat, helping lead a workshop at Texas 4-H camp, 4-H Club Manager, Livestock Mentor, 4-H project leader, Master Volunteer, or Shooting Sports Leader.
3. The guidelines below are best practices and should be followed to the fullest extent possible.
  - a. There should be at least two adults aged 21 or older, with at least one adult representing the gender of the participants, if possible.
  - b. The adult to youth ratio should be at least 1 adult per 8 youth.
  - c. There should be no one-to-one contact of adults and youth, unless in full view of other youth or adult participants.
  - d. Plan ahead.
    - i. Inform participants and parents/guardians regarding the type of lodging (hotel, dorm, etc.).
    - ii. Make rooming assignments before leaving for the event.
    - iii. Share rooming assignments with every participant and parent/guardian before leaving.
    - iv. Seek consensus and resolve any concerns about rooming assignments prior to departure.
    - v. No participant will be required to sleep on the floor.
    - vi. For an adult to stay in the same room with a non-family member youth participant, there must be a minimum of three persons in the room.
    - vii. No youth and adult may share a bed, unless there is a familial relationship.
    - viii. Adult volunteers or chaperones must respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require.
    - ix. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.
  - e. Make a contingency plan. Pre-departure plans can change for many reasons including changes in previously reserved or provided amenities or conflict between 4-H members. If the situation changes upon arrival at the lodging facility, encourage the youth participants to provide input on the new plan. Call, text, or attempt to notify parent/guardian of changes. Below are some possible solutions when rooming plans change:
    - i. Ask 4-H members to voluntarily change room assignments. [CAUTION: Be sure new rooming arrangements are not made or perceived to be made on a prohibited basis].
    - ii. Ask the hotel for a rollaway bed.
    - iii. Ask the hotel for a suite with a pull-out couch.
    - iv. Ask the hotel for adjoining rooms.
    - v. Find a different hotel that can meet your needs.
  - f. It is the responsibility of the overnight chaperones to supervise all aspects of youth rooming assignments including discipline, curfew, clean-up, and other guidelines established during the event.
  - g. Room checks should be conducted each night. It is the responsibility of the overnight chaperone and the staff to ensure that all youth are in their assigned rooms.

- h. When transporting youth to and from planned 4-H sponsored events, individuals must meet at designated departure time(s) and location(s) as planned by the adult chaperone. If you cannot provide two adults for each vehicle, the minimum requirement is one adult and two or more youth members.
- i. When appropriate, maintain communication with parents.

### Background Check Vendor & Required Information

1. Background checks are conducted by Sterling Volunteers, a national leader in background checks for both employment and volunteer work. Volunteers will need to create a free account with Sterling Volunteers to be able to submit their information for the background check.
2. Extension Volunteer Standards has contracted with Sterling Volunteers for the Basic Criminal History Record Locator Search. It ONLY includes Government Watch List Search (OFAC), DOJ Sex Offender Search, and National Criminal History Search. It also includes monthly monitoring for a year of the national criminal history search and sex offender registry.
  - a. Note. A volunteer must agree to the consent form before the background check can be conducted. There is a standard consent that Sterling Volunteers uses for all background check packages. The consent indicates that the report *may* include credit reports, educational information, and additional background information. AgriLife Extension Volunteer Standards DOES NOT see that type of information. Only the searches listed above in the Basic Criminal History Record Locator Search are shared with Extension Volunteer Standards.
  - b. Volunteers are able to log into their Sterling Volunteers' account at any time to see their information. The Extension Volunteer Standards office is provided the same report that a volunteer can view on their profile by clicking on the "badge" located in the My Organizations section on their Sterling Volunteers account profile.
3. Sterling Volunteers' online form will collect the private, personal information for the background check. It will not be stored in 4HOnline, the Extension Volunteer Standards database, or in any AgriLife Extension records. Screening will begin immediately once the form is submitted.
4. The information required for the background check includes: first, middle, and last names; suffix; date of birth; social security number; gender; phone number; email address; address and how long the applicant has lived at that address; and the consent.
5. If a volunteer has previously had a background check conducted by Sterling Volunteers because of their volunteer work through another organization that is still valid, the volunteer may "share" their background check with AgriLife Extension through the Sterling Volunteers platform.
6. Go to the website: <https://app.sterlingvolunteers.com>
  - a. Login with your existing Sterling Volunteer credentials.
  - b. In the bottom right corner, under the My Screening Checklist, click the orange text, "Find organizations and share my background check."
  - c. In the Filter section, type the zip code 77845 (College Station).
  - d. In the Organization Name section, type Texas Master Volunteers or Texas A&M AgriLife 4-H.
  - e. Click the orange Search button.

- f. In your search results, you should find Texas Master Volunteers or Texas A&M AgriLife 4-H with the email address of [lhuebinger@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:lhuebinger@ag.tamu.edu), phone number of 254-974-9027, and the city of College Station.
- g. Click the Share Screening button. You will only be able to share your background check if it is still current.
- h. See this video for a screen recording and instructions about the process of sharing your existing background check report through Sterling Volunteers:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv8TuXrrhdI>
- i. Note. At the 39-second mark, this video shows how to share your background check with the Texas 4-H program. If you need to share your background check with AgriLife Extension as a Master Volunteer or committee volunteers, instead of typing in Texas A&M AgriLife 4-H, type Texas Master Volunteers.

### Screening Timeline & Processing

1. Initial screening of a volunteer is conducted when he/she applies for a volunteer role with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Volunteers must be screened, pay the application fee, complete required trainings, and approved by the county program prior to fulfilling any volunteer roles.
2. Re-screening through the EVS program is conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening. See note above about 4-H volunteers following the 4-H program year on page 2.
3. No grandfathering of volunteers is allowed in the EVS program.
4. The background check begins as soon as the volunteer confirms their information and submits the background check form within the Sterling Volunteers platform.
  - a. Note. The vast majority of background check reports are returned within 48 hours. However, there have been instances where the background checks have taken two weeks or even more than two months. The Extension Volunteer Standards office has no control over how long it takes for the background check report to be completed. Please allow plenty of time for your background check report to be returned.

### Screening from Other Entities

1. Screening conducted by other entities will not be accepted by AgriLife Extension. All volunteers must be screened according to the Extension Volunteer Standards guidelines. Master Naturalists and EFNEP volunteers follow the procedure outlined by their respective program areas and our partner agencies.
2. Any volunteers who were approved by the Extension Volunteer Standards office with documentation from another entity within the last three years will be approved until the existing screening timeline has expired.

### Confidentiality

1. Sterling Volunteers' online form will collect the private, personal information for the background check. It will not be stored in 4HOnline, the Extension Volunteer Standards database, or in any AgriLife Extension records.
2. Background check reports are reviewed and processed by two employees who oversee the EVS program. These individuals have been screened for security sensitive purposes and to handle confidential information.

3. Copies of the results cannot be shared with anyone. Volunteers may access their own copy of the background check report through their login with Sterling Volunteers.
4. County Extension Agents, District 4-H Specialists, District Extension Administrators, and/or Regional Program Leaders are not informed of the details of the criminal history record.
5. Information collected from the reports may be referred to legal counsel or appropriate AgriLife Extension officials for review only when needed. Information is never shared with County Extension Agents.
6. Information obtained through the volunteer application and screening is held in the highest confidence.
7. All electronic files are password protected at multiple levels.

#### **Volunteer Status Determination Process**

1. Criminal records are reviewed when a charge or conviction appears on the background check report.
2. A volunteer's status is based on the charge or conviction, frequency of offense(s), and the amount of time passed since the occurrence of the offense.
3. All volunteer records are reviewed and handled on an individual basis.
4. Although criminal records are comprehensive over an individual's lifetime, the EVS program focuses on the most recent ten (10) years of the summary. Convictions in the dismissed section below are the exception to the 10-year focus.
5. Volunteer applicants are identified with one of the following Screening status categories:
  - a. **Approved:** Approved to fulfill all duties of the volunteer role for which the volunteer is applying.
  - b. **Restricted:** Restrictions may be imposed based on the charges or conviction records. Example: A conviction of numerous hot checks would result in a restriction of not handling or managing any group funds. Example: A DWI conviction in the last ten years would result in a restriction of not driving youth other than the volunteer's own legal children.
  - c. **Pending – Review:** This determination is based on an incomplete criminal history report, no disposition of a case, or a question related to a charge. Additional information may be requested from a volunteer. Any follow-up information is sent by the volunteer directly to the EVS office. Details regarding records are not shared with county or other program faculty.
  - d. **Pending – Background Check:** This status is given while the background check is processing with Sterling Volunteers. This means the report has not been completed and provided to EVS yet.
  - e. **Dismissed/Denied:** A volunteer is dismissed/denied based on certain convictions of the Texas Penal Code and/or other questionable situations at an Extension event. Automatic dismissals result from indecency with a child, injury to a child, sexual assault, murder, or felony drug convictions. A volunteer may also be denied if he/she does not respond to requests for more information on a charge(s). Examples: A conviction of embezzlement or mishandling Extension group funds would result in dismissal. A registered sex offender would result in a denial.
6. No person may serve with youth or children who has ever been convicted of any disqualifying offense, been on probation or received deferred adjudication for any disqualifying offense or has presently pending any criminal charges of any disqualifying

offense before a determination of guilt is made including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. Disqualifying offenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against a person or family.
- A felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against public order or indecency.
- A felony or misdemeanor violation of any law intended to control the possession or distribution of any substance included as a controlled substance in the Texas Controlled Substances Act.

### **Reassignment of Volunteer Status**

1. The following conditions may warrant review of a volunteer's status:
  - Questionable situation
  - Violation of volunteer code of conduct
  - A written complaint against a volunteer
  - Knowledge of a volunteer being charged or arrested
  - Knowledge of a volunteer making an improper advancement toward a youth
2. County Extension Agents should communicate with their respective District Extension Administrator immediately upon learning of an incident or questionable situation.
3. Copies of correspondence sent to the volunteer (i.e., dismissal letter) should be sent to the EVS office and the appropriate program director (4-H, Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, Master Wellness, etc.) so it may be filed with the volunteer's record.

### **Grievance Procedure**

1. The following is the procedure if a volunteer chooses to dispute a decision made by AgriLife Extension during the application process or at any time during the volunteer's appointment with Extension.
  - a. The volunteer submits concern in writing to the Extension Volunteer Standards office, with a copy to the District Extension Administrator, and County Extension Agent. Letters should be sent to the following address:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
Extension Volunteer Standards  
Laura A. Huebinger  
2473 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-2473
  - b. The appeal is reviewed, and the volunteer receives a written statement from the EVS office regarding the decision made within a reasonable amount of time.
  - c. This grievance procedure pertains only to decision(s) made by Extension personnel. If a concern is raised about the information obtained through a criminal background check, the volunteer should be given the following information.
2. The following is the procedure if a volunteer chooses to dispute the information contained on the criminal history record as provided by Sterling Volunteers.
  - a. The volunteer will need to contact Sterling Volunteers directly to dispute any information that is incorrect. The volunteer will need to call The Advocates (part of Sterling Volunteers) at 855-326-1860, Option 3.
  - b. The Advocates will walk the volunteer through the Adverse Action process. If there is a valid error, The Advocates can help them clear up the incorrect record.



## 4-H Volunteer Screening Procedures

### Volunteer Online Forms

1. All 4-H volunteers must enroll online via 4HOnline. If a volunteer does not have access to the internet, he/she may complete and submit a Texas 4-H Adult Volunteer Application (downloaded from the Texas 4-H Website: [texas4-h.tamu.edu](https://texas4-h.tamu.edu)). The County Extension Office must then input the volunteer's information into 4HOnline.
  - a. Please note the training must be completed by the volunteer through their Family login. A Manager may not complete the trainings for the volunteer.
2. Since 4-H volunteer screening is processed through 4HOnline, 4-H volunteer forms do NOT have to be mailed in to process for screening. However, payment must be received in order for the volunteer application process to be completed.
3. 4-H volunteer applicants must complete the required online trainings during the enrollment process. Trainings must be completed, screening must be approved, payment received, and approved by county prior to serving in any volunteer roles.
4. It is recommended that all volunteers for the current year submit their profiles no later than August 1. There is no guarantee screening can be conducted and applications approved prior to the close of the 4-H year on 4HOnline as preparations begin for the new 4-H year.
5. Visit the 4HOnline Resources page on the Texas 4-H website at <https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/4honline> for more specific details and instructions regarding the online screening process.

### Re-activating 4HOnline Profiles

1. When volunteers enroll for the new 4-H year, it is important they re-activate their existing profile on 4HOnline and not create a new profile. If a new profile is created, the volunteer screening information will not transfer to the new profile. Therefore, the system will indicate the volunteer needs to be screened. There is not a way to undo the screening and associated fees.
2. Visit the 4HOnline Resources page on the Texas 4-H website at <https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/4honline> for more specific details and instructions regarding the online screening process.

### AgriLife Extension Employee Profiles

1. The following applies to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service employees. This includes County Extension Agents, Specialists, Associates, Assistants, district/state administrative assistants, administration, or any other employee whose position is funded by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and who have been screened through AgriLife Extension Human Resources. It does not apply to county employees.
2. When AgriLife Extension employees create or re-activate a profile, there is an option on the Volunteer Types screen to indicate him/herself as an AgriLife Extension employee. Select the "Program Volunteer" Volunteer Type and then "Add" the "AgriLife Extension Employee" option. Selecting this option will bypass the screening requirement.
3. The employee will still need to submit a payment method. If submitted properly, the profile will be reviewed by the EVS office, the volunteer application fee will be waived, and the Child Protection Training will be marked as completed. **The employee will need to complete the Volunteer Orientation Training.**

4. Once an employee's Screening is approved at the state level and the employee completes the Volunteer Orientation Training, it will then be ready for approval at the county level.
5. Visit the 4HOnline Resources page on the Texas 4-H website at <https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/4honline> for more specific details and instructions regarding the online screening process.

### Screening Cost and Payment Options

1. 4-H volunteers are assessed a volunteer application fee in the amount of \$10. This fee is assessed annually when a 4-H volunteer creates or re-activates his/her profile in 4HOnline. The application fee will cover the cost of volunteer screening as well as insurance coverage.
2. Payment of the 4-H volunteer application fee can be made by club/county check or by the volunteer's personal credit card.
  - a. **Check Payments:** The County Extension Office will create an invoice, secure a check, and mail both invoice and check to the Texas 4-H Office. Once received, the invoice and check will be processed and credited against the 4-H volunteer's profile. Once this entire process is completed, the county may give final approval of the volunteer's profile, which will then become "Approved." Please note that the check payment process is much slower than payment made by credit card since profiles cannot be approved at the county level until payment is received and processed in the Texas 4-H Office.
3. Each county, club and/or association is responsible for determining how to cover the cost of volunteer application fees.
4. Note: Volunteer application fees paid by check will not become eligible for approval at the county level until the payment has been received and processed by the Texas 4-H Office. Once approved by the county, the payment method cannot be changed.

### Creating an Invoice for Payments by Check

1. When paying the volunteer application fees by club/county check, a volunteer screening invoice generated from 4HOnline must accompany the payment. For additional details, see the 4HOnline Resources page at <https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/4honline/>. See the 4HOnline County Office Manager Guides for instructions on how to send payments by check.
2. Mail the invoice, along with the check payment, to the Texas 4-H Office.
  - a. Checks should be made payable to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and mailed to the following address:
 

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
Texas 4HOnline Payments  
2473 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-2473

RUSH DELIVERY (Overnight USPS, FedEx, UPS, or Lonestar)  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
Texas 4HOnline Payments  
Texas A&M University  
1470 William D. Fitch Parkway  
College Station, TX 77845
  - b. Check payments for volunteer application fees must be paid separately and not combined with youth enrollment or event registration fees.

3. Note: Volunteer application fees paid by check will not become eligible for approval at the county level until the payment has been received and processed by the Texas 4-H Office.

#### **Final Approval of 4-H Volunteer Applications**

1. Note that screening of volunteers is conducted after the volunteer has submitted his/her application. The County Extension Office gives final approval on volunteer applications.
2. Once the county approves the volunteer profile, the payment method cannot be changed.
3. If paying by credit card, the card will be charged when the volunteer profile is approved at the county level. When paying by check, the profile cannot be approved until the check payment has been received by the Texas 4-H Office and payment has been marked as received in 4HOnline.

#### **Follow Up to Screening**

1. Volunteer Status. Upon completion of screening, a 4-H volunteer's Screening status will be updated in 4HOnline. The status will be designated as one of the following: Approved, Restricted from handling funds, Restricted from driving youth other than own children, Restricted with other specifications, or Rejected.
2. Correspondence.
  - a. An automatic email is sent by 4HOnline (RegMax) to the volunteer stating their volunteer profile has been approved.
  - b. If a volunteer is Restricted or Rejected, a letter will be sent directly to the volunteer from the EVS office, with a copy of the letter emailed to the appropriate County Extension Agent(s), District 4-H Specialist, and District Extension Administrator. Details regarding criminal background records are not shared with county or other program faculty.

#### **Screening Summary Reports**

1. Extension professionals and local support staff who have County Manager accounts within 4HOnline may also view Screening Summary Reports and/or listings of Screening Statuses within 4HOnline.
  - a. View a Custom Report from 4HOnline. See the Programs for Minors page (<https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/minors/>) under the Background Screenings section for instructions on how to generate a volunteer screening report through 4HOnline.
    - i. This report will provide a list of all 4-H volunteers in your county that have a 4HOnline profile, their screening status, and last year approved through EVS.
  - b. View the report from the Screening menu in 4HOnline.
    - i. Log into 4HOnline with your County Manager account.
    - ii. Click Screenings in the left navigation pane.
    - iii. Click Clear Filters
    - iv. You can search by name, filter by program year, etc. (Level 1 means a "regular" volunteer. Level 2 means an AgriLife Extension employee.)
    - v. With this search, you can see your volunteers and their screening status.

## Non-4-H Volunteer Screening Procedures

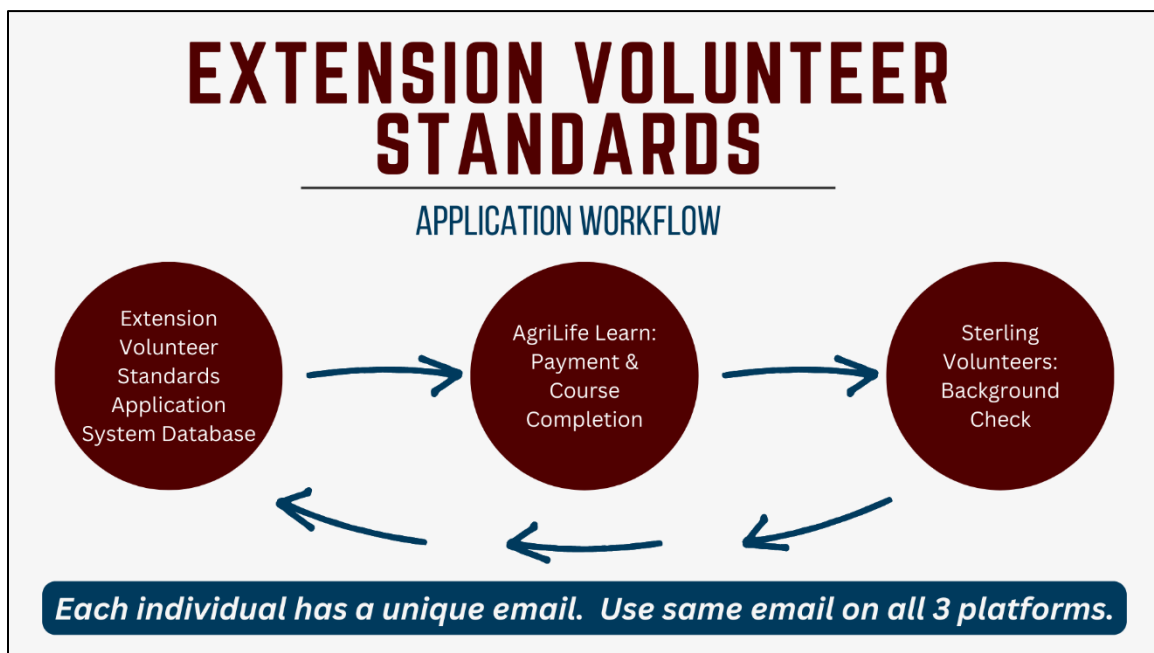
### Volunteer Applications – General Overview

This section is a general overview of the new process. Detailed instructions including screenshot can be found in the **NEW! Extension Volunteer Standards (EVS) Non-4-H Volunteers Detailed Instructions Manual**.

This process was launched in August 2023 and was fully launched on September 1, 2023 which includes an online application in the EVS database, the application fee, required online training, and the background check. Older forms and processes are no longer valid.

#### **Very important notes about email addresses!**

- Each volunteer must use their own unique email address. (For example, not shared with a spouse.)
- That same email address is used in all platforms of the Screening and Training process: EVS database, AgriLife Learn, and Sterling Volunteers.



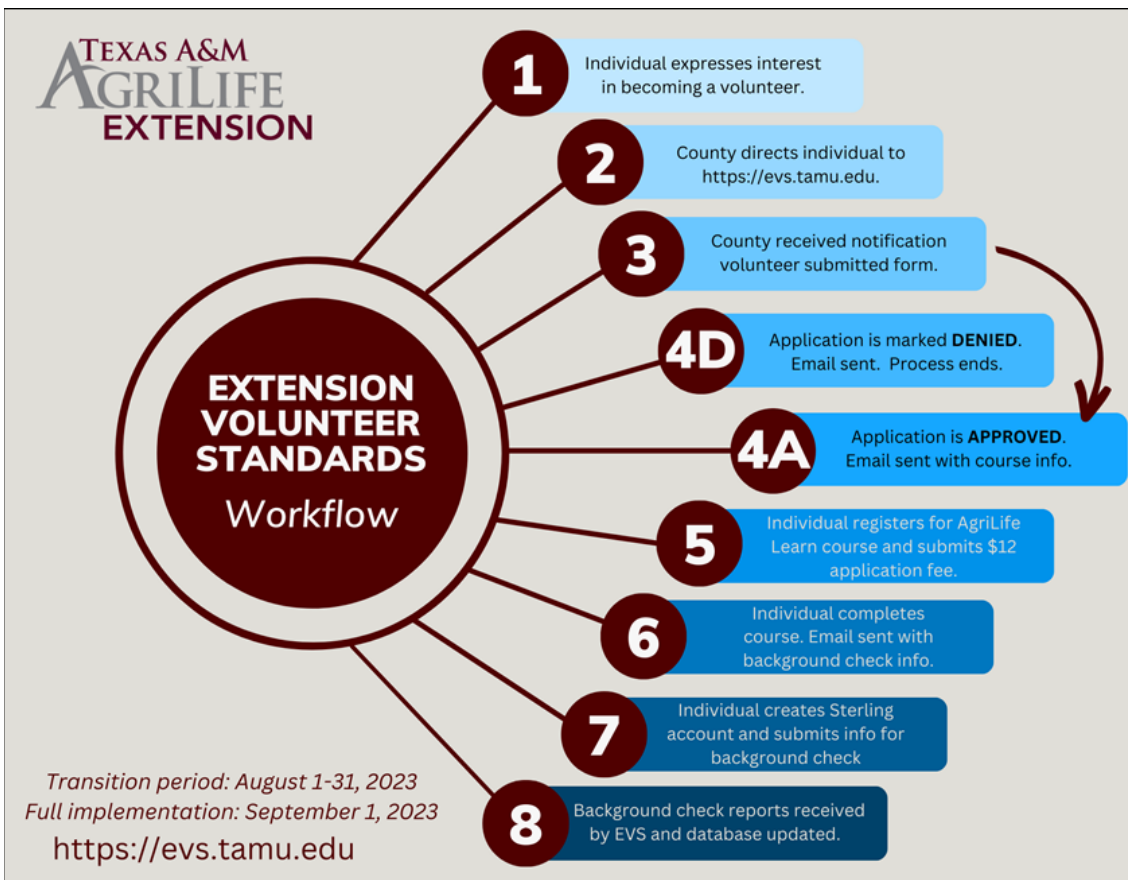
The process includes three main steps:

1. **Application.** Volunteer completes application form on Extension Volunteer Standards (EVS) Application System database.
2. **Application Fee & Training.** Volunteer submits application fee and completes online training course in AgriLife Learn.
3. **Background Check.** Volunteer submits information in Sterling Volunteers for background check.

Below is a summary of the entire process.

1. **Volunteer Interest & Application.** Once the potential volunteer expresses interest in becoming a volunteer, the County Extension Agent or local staff directs the potential volunteer to the online Extension Volunteer Standards application form at <https://evs.tamu.edu/>.
  - a. Please note this is only an online form. The volunteer does not create an account with EVS.
  - b. Volunteers in need of their re-screening at the three-year interval, will need to reapply through this online form.
2. **County Review.** Once the online application is submitted, the County Extension Agent will receive a notification email and/or can view the submitted applications through the EVS database. The county office will review the application and will either deny or approve the application.
  - a. If denied, an automated email is sent to the volunteer and the process ends.
  - b. If approved, the process continues.
  - c. Note. If county staff needs to request a Manager account to review applications, submit a "Request an Account" form on the EVS page under the Login tab.
3. **Approval Notification.** If approved, an automated email will be sent to the potential volunteer which will include details regarding the volunteer training course information through the AgriLife Learn platform.
4. **AgriLife Learn & Payment.** The volunteer will use the link from the automated approval email to get to the online volunteer course in the AgriLife Learn platform. The volunteer will either login or create a new profile. The same email address used for the EVS application should be used with AgriLife Learn. (Please note this is separate from a VMS login for reporting hours.)
  - a. Note. If your county is purchasing seats for the group, stop here before submitting your individual payment. Contact your county for the course information.
  - b. Note. If you are trying to bulk purchase the course for your county, see the FAQ page for the information about the bulk purchase of the course.
  - c. Note. Payment must be received and processed and received through the AgriLife Learn platform before the volunteer may begin the course.
5. **Course Completion.** Once the course is completed, an automated email from AgriLife Learn is sent to the volunteer with information regarding how to complete the background check through Sterling Volunteers. The information is also displayed on the screen within the course.

6. **Sterling Volunteers.** Using the instructions and GOOD DEED code provided in the course completion email, the volunteer goes to the Sterling Volunteers website from the provided link, creates an account, and submits their information. The same email address used for the EVS application and AgriLife Learn should be used with Sterling Volunteers.
7. **Background Check Completed.** Once completed, the background check reports are sent to the EVS office for review. The volunteer will also receive notification from Sterling Volunteers of the completion of the background check.
8. **Database Update.** The EVS database is updated to reflect the volunteer’s screening status. County Extension Agents and local staff can login to the EVS database to access volunteer applications and screening status. If county staff needs to request a Manager account, submit a “Request an Account” form on the EVS page under the Login tab.



Two additional notes to add:

- Make sure volunteers use the same email address through each step of the process.
- Step 1 (EVS form) is just an online form. No login required. Steps 2 & 3 (AgriLife Learn and Sterling) do require logins.

## Appendices

- A. Links to Instructional Videos: Extension Volunteer Standards Database Application Process
- B. Who Should Be Screened: Roles of Volunteers
- C. Sample Letter: Volunteer Acceptance Screened through EVS
- D. Sample Letter: Time for Rescreening

## Appendix A

### Links to Instructional Videos:

#### Extension Volunteer Standards Database Application Process

1. Extension Volunteer Standards Database:
  - All videos listed in playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy87pije2azU8MqZRMINdWUnlqn6np1B3>
  - Or each video individually:
    - i. General Overview: <https://youtu.be/5JyGHdhzQ7Q> (2:10)
    - ii. Volunteer Application: [https://youtu.be/dst\\_iniRQyU](https://youtu.be/dst_iniRQyU) (3:26)
    - iii. County Login: <https://youtu.be/OlqgpXQ04mc> (1:05)
    - iv. Application Denial & Approval: <https://youtu.be/75YVdyRGpww> (3:00)
    - v. Agent Reports: <https://youtu.be/OWOY3vdTxNM> (5:13)
    - vi. Agent Wrap-Up: <https://youtu.be/ZoVZebffRB0> (0:48)
2. AgriLife Learn: Course Payments & Bulk Purchases
  - <https://youtu.be/wECY47MyzfU> (2:37)
3. Sterling Volunteers: GOOD DEED Code
  - <https://youtu.be/ltamXyqRBJw> (2:29)
4. Sterling Volunteers: Sharing background check report through Sterling
  - <https://youtu.be/Mv8TuXrrhdl> (2:13)
  - *See page 5 for additional details.*



**APPENDIX B****WHO SHOULD BE SCREENED?***See pages 2-3 for definitions of Roles of Volunteers.*

<b>Volunteer Type</b>	<b>Role of Volunteer</b>	<b>Screened?</b>
Achievement Event Judge	Episodic	No
Activity Leader	Direct	Yes
Volunteer/Parent providing transportation to a 4-H event, coordinated by the County Extension Agent or club/group	Direct	Yes
Parent providing transportation for youth to a local 4-H event, NOT coordinated by the County Extension Agent or club/group	Not a volunteer role	No
Speaker, presenter at an Extension event; no one-to-one contact	Episodic	No
Livestock Board Member/Committee Chair	Indirect	No
Validation Committee Member	Indirect	No
4-H Enrichment Curriculum Leader (teacher or volunteer)	Direct	Yes
Overnight chaperone	Direct	Yes
Master Volunteer or Livestock Mentor	Direct	Yes
4-H Club Manager/Assistant Club Manager	Direct	Yes
Volunteer/Parent who fills in for club manager on short notice	Direct	Yes
4-H Clover Kids Project Leader	Direct	Yes
Day Camp Volunteer	Direct	Yes
Treasurer/Signer on a 4-H affiliated account	Direct	Yes
Shooting Sports Coach	Direct	Yes
Project Leader	Direct	Yes
4-H Team Coach	Direct	Yes
Ag Day/Farm Safety Day Event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event Coordinator(s)</li> <li>• Group Leader</li> <li>• Resource Person/Speaker</li> </ul>	Direct Direct Episodic	Yes Yes No
Assistant at 4-H contest	Episodic	No
Donor	Indirect	No
LAB/Program Area Committee Member	Indirect/Direct	No/Yes
Parent accompanying own child to event, but not serving in volunteer role (observer)	Not a volunteer role	No
Teen or Junior Leader	Youth	No
Public event sponsored by another organization and an Extension volunteer is a resource person/speaker	Episodic	No
Youth event sponsored by another organization, but Extension is responsible for portion of the day	Direct	Yes

## Sample Letter Volunteer Acceptance Screened Through EVS

We are pleased to welcome you as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service \_\_\_\_\_  
(*program area*) program volunteer in \_\_\_\_\_ County. We believe that you will be a  
valuable addition to the \_\_\_\_\_ (*county or Extension*) program.

This letter is to notify you that you have been screened through the Extension Volunteer Standards Program with Sterling Volunteers, a national leader in background checks for both employment and volunteer work, and passed. You are fully qualified to serve in the volunteer position for which you applied, including working with and supervising youth.

As a new AgriLife Extension program volunteer, you will have the opportunity to participate in many training programs on the county, district, regional, and state levels that are designed to strengthen your subject matter skills, provide organizational and management ideas, and support you in your volunteer role. These trainings are scheduled throughout the year, and you will be notified by (*the county newsletter, a personal letter, a phone call, at leaders' meetings, etc.*).

Enclosed is a volunteer certificate for your files. Once again, welcome to the AgriLife Extension Program. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions. Thank you for your interest in AgriLife Extension.

Sincerely,

(*Name*)

(*Title*)

(*Program Area*)

## Sample Letter Time for Re-Screening

Thank you for your interest in serving as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service \_\_\_\_\_  
(*program area*) program volunteer in \_\_\_\_\_ County. We believe that you have been a  
valuable addition to the \_\_\_\_\_ (*county or Extension*) program.

This letter is to notify you that you need to be screened through the Extension Volunteer Standards Program. Your current screening expires on \_\_\_\_\_ (*date*). Re-screening of all Extension volunteers is conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening. The volunteer background checks are conducted through Sterling Volunteers, a national leader in background checks for both employment and volunteer work.

In order to begin the screening process, please begin the re-application process on the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Volunteer Standards (EVS) Application System database at <https://evs.tamu.edu/>. This process will include the online application on EVS's website, followed by submission of the application fee and training course in AgriLife Learn, and the background check with Sterling Volunteers. Please note that volunteers may not fulfill their duties until the criminal background check has been conducted and you have been approved as an AgriLife Extension volunteer.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions. Thank you for your interest in AgriLife Extension.

Sincerely,

(*Name*)  
(*Title*)  
(*Program Area*)