



UNITED WAY OF EAST CENTRAL IOWA  
**VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT**

Day of Caring - Agency Leader Guide



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# Introduction/Overview

Thank you for participating in United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI)'s Day of Caring! Your partnership with UWECI helps create a cohesive community where volunteers get the most out of their work, and you get the best volunteers for your project. To ensure this partnership is effective in giving you the best volunteers, we created this toolkit of best practices for working with volunteers in an episodic capacity.

Day of Caring is an event where volunteers from around the region join local nonprofit agencies to work on one-time service projects. Participating nonprofit agencies host volunteers from local companies who choose to give their time and services to impact our community's needs. Day of Caring is a unique opportunity to market your services to the community, establish relationships with local businesses, and strengthen awareness of your mission.

Again, thank you for your commitment to volunteerism and our community needs in East Central Iowa.

## Participants

**Agencies:** All participating nonprofit agencies must be located in one of the counties UWECI serves: Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Jones, or Linn County. Agencies must register, or agree to register, as an agency with UWECI's Volunteer Now site at [uweci.org/volunteernow](http://uweci.org/volunteernow).

**Volunteers:** UWECI will recruit volunteers from local companies and provide a volunteer project leader to lead each volunteer team.

# General Information

## Contact Information

For questions regarding Day of Caring, please contact:

Sue Driscoll  
Senior Manager, Volunteer Engagement  
United Way of East Central Iowa  
317 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE, Suite 401  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401  
Phone: 319-398-5372 ext. 822  
Fax: 319-398-5381  
[sue.driscoll@uweci.org](mailto:sue.driscoll@uweci.org)

## Mission Statement

Day of Caring (DOC) is an event supporting UWECI's Volunteer Engagement mission to mobilize resources to address the community's most pressing needs. Specifically, DOC is a day when local businesses partner with nonprofit agencies to make a difference in our communities.

## Responsibilities of UWECI

- Fundraising/Sponsorships for DOC
- Planning, administration, and evaluation function for DOC
- Training agencies, company coordinators, and volunteers
- Recruiting companies and volunteers
- Providing best practices and other resources

## Requirements for Participating Nonprofit Agencies

- Agencies must register, or agree to register, as an agency with UWECI's Volunteer Now site at [uweci.org/volunteernow](http://uweci.org/volunteernow)
- Submit agency volunteer projects online and ensure descriptions accurately reflect the projects
- Provide snacks and water to volunteers when possible
- Provide necessary materials needed to complete project(s)
- Meet with volunteer Project Leader(s) prior to the event
- Obtain liability and photo releases from all volunteers (if not completed online)
- Submit volunteer hours report
- Provide proof of insurance for your organization by contacting your insurance provider and asking for the "Certificate of Insurance" or "Addendum" to your policy for DOC
- Review safety checklist in this document
- Report all injuries to Sue Driscoll at [sue.driscoll@uweci.org](mailto:sue.driscoll@uweci.org) or 319-398-5372 ext. 822

## Requirements for DOC Volunteers

- Designate a project leader(s)
- Project leader should meet with agency representative prior to the event
- **Volunteers must be older than age 18**
- Volunteers accepted at the sole discretion of UWECI

## Half-Day Projects

Typical shifts are 8 a.m.–12 p.m. or 1–4 p.m. Agencies will need to ensure a project is truly half-day and provide necessary materials. Lunch is optional, but you should discuss with the company's project lead.

## Project Approval

Projects are accepted at the sole discretion of UWECI. UWECI reserves the right to exclude a project.

## Projects at Client Homes

As a general practice, projects at client homes will be considered for inclusion in Day of Caring if an agency provides an onsite staff leader during the project.

## Waivers & Hours Reporting

New this year: **companies will be responsible for securing signed liability and photo waivers** if the individual volunteer did not register or complete the form online.

As part of the sign in process on Day of Caring, we ask all volunteers sign in/sign out on a provided Volunteer Hours sheet. **Leaders must email copies to [unitedway.volunteer@uweci.org](mailto:unitedway.volunteer@uweci.org) or fax to 319-398-5381, attn. Sue Driscoll.**

## Inclement Weather Plans

Each agency is responsible for making its own plans in case of inclement weather on DOC. If possible, agencies that are planning outdoor projects are encouraged to plan an alternate indoor project(s) in case of inclement weather (e.g. cleaning, rearranging heavy furniture, straightening out storage rooms, etc.). Agency representatives will have the opportunity to stipulate their bad weather plans when registering their projects online. It is imperative you communicate your bad weather plans to volunteers ahead of time. On DOC, it is the responsibility of the agency representative and volunteer team leader(s) to communicate directly with each other regarding any changes in plans.

# Responsibilities: Volunteer Coordinator

As the volunteer coordinator for your project, you are responsible for communication with your volunteers. All project details will come through you. To transfer information to your volunteers and ensure volunteers receive information, you must keep them informed, interested, and invested:

- Informed
  - Information is the basic premise of communication. People need to know when and where the volunteer project is, as well as other basic pieces of information.
  - Never assume your volunteers know the details about the project. Reminding someone one extra time is better than not knowing where to go or what to do.
- Interested
  - Everything goes more smoothly when you engage people.
  - Give people information that will excite them about the project so they are interested in what you are sharing with them.
- Invested
  - Once people are excited, make sure everyone is included in meaningful projects and work.
  - Make your volunteers feel useful by explaining the impact of your agency and the meaningful outcomes their project will have on the community. This can turn even the most menial, but necessary, volunteer project into an opportunity for growth. For example:
    - When sorting canned goods at a food bank, specify how many packages of food they sorted and how many meals that will make. Explain how families will have meals because of their volunteerism
    - When painting a fence for a local daycare, explain how bright colors can help stimulate young minds and tell volunteers how many kids they have helped. Perhaps explain how beautifying an area increases morale for children and teachers.

You are responsible for communication with the rest of the agency. You are your agency's connection to the volunteers and the volunteer program. This means everything the agency knows about your volunteers comes through you. To ensure the project runs smoothly, both you and the company coordinator are responsible for the project. This means:

- Staying current with your responsibilities and those of company volunteers'.
  - Do not rely on the fact that the volunteer will eventually tell you how many people they are bringing, when they will arrive, what they will bring, etc.
  - Instead, proactively discuss these topics with volunteers and work together to have a project that will run efficiently and give both the agency and the volunteers the greatest impact.
- You are responsible for knowing what volunteers will do and where they will go during the project.
  - Do not arrive the day of the project assuming the volunteers know where to park, where to go, and what to do.
  - Maintain communication with the company and confirm details of the project before the day of the project.

Please contact the company coordinator or project lead well in advance of the project with the information provided above. It is your responsibility as a volunteer coordinator to make the first contact with the volunteers. **If emails do not work, call them.** Ensure communication occurs well before the day of the project.

# Guidelines

Day of Caring is an incredible opportunity to tackle large and small projects at your agency that otherwise may not happen. Given the unique service opportunity, try to plan creative, worthwhile projects volunteers will enjoy and that will make an impact on services you provide.

Below are some guidelines to help you plan. Your answers to these questions will help you assess the appropriateness and scale of your DOC projects and will help volunteers respond to your needs.

## Project Assessment Criteria

1. Can the project be substantially completed in the allotted working time with non-professional workers, allowing time for set up, break down, agency briefing, and lunch?
2. Is the size and complexity of the project appropriate, considering the volunteers' skills and allotted time?
3. What is the labor requirement, taking into account space limitations?
4. Does the project require specific skill levels? For example, would you need an electrician or skilled carpenter?
5. What is the need vs. availability of tools and equipment including those provided by the agency and volunteers? What tools can you provide, and what tools do you need volunteers to bring?
6. Is the project too hazardous for the volunteers? Does the work require climbing a tall ladder? Is an outdoor work area close to a heavily trafficked street without protective barriers? Is there a potential fire hazard, like the use of propane torch? (Consider potential liability exposure)
7. Will agency clients be present? Are young children or elderly persons likely to be around the work area while the work is in progress? Does the performance of work need to be coordinated with clients' schedules?
8. Will the agency provide someone to organize and/or oversee the work? (It is essential each agency designate a point of contact that is available throughout the day, even if the designated person does not work with the volunteers all the time.)
9. Does the agency have the ability to accomplish the necessary preparatory work in advance of Day of Caring (e.g., purchasing necessary materials, installing foundations for a new structure, obtaining municipal permits, etc.)?
10. Are there smaller projects volunteers can work on if they finish the main project early?
11. What plans do you have in case of inclement weather?

# Determine Needs and Requirements

## Project Types and Volunteers Needed

To determine the number of volunteers to request, you will need to decide what type(s) of project(s) you have to offer. By determining the type of project, you will be able to assess the number of volunteers needed. Once you determine the type of project and the number of volunteers needed for each project, you will submit **each** project online. Therefore, some agencies may have more than one Day of Caring project listed online. You are encouraged to submit multiple projects.

### Type 1: One Basic Category/Project, No Special Skills Needed

- Sample Headline: Bring Our Playground Back to Life!
- Project Description: Volunteers will spend the day raking, mulching, weeding, planting, and painting the playground and shed. We will also sort, clean, and organize outdoor toys in the shed.
- Total Volunteers: 8

### Type 2: Variety of Small Unrelated Projects, No Special Skills Needed

- Sample Headline: Sort, Clean, Tag, Paint, Organize, and Garden at the Thrift Shop!
- Project Description: There are many small projects to do at the thrift shop that support our program. Take turns sorting, organizing, and pricing items. Spend a little time outside raking or making our windows sparkle. Paint some shutters or do a little filing. Need a break? How about doing a little data entry? Plenty of general projects for your group!
- Total Volunteers: 6

### Type 3: Special Skill Project(s), Special Skills Needed

- Sample Headline: Design and Build Picnic Tables for Our Camp!
- Project Description: We do not have blueprints, so we are looking for a team with design and building skills. We have a need for four picnic tables at our site. We need the volunteer team leader to meet with us ahead of time to let us know what materials you will need, and we will obtain the materials in time for the project.
- Skills Needed for this Project: Woodwork design and carpentry. Moderate finish quality.
- Total Volunteers: 6

## Determine Permit Requirements

1. Some of your best project ideas may require a permit from the city, state, or town.
2. **New construction and renovation work often requires the issuance of a building permit.**
3. You should check with your local inspection department or code official to help determine your permit need.
4. In addition to your local code official, some board members, skilled staff, current volunteers, and licensed professionals are knowledgeable resources who can help you evaluate project needs and scope.



# Project Ideas

## Outdoor Maintenance and Preservation

- Paint murals on inside and outside walls of an organization
- Plant a garden
- Construct/paint picnic tables or park benches
- Repair and clean a camp/play area
- Clean and paint fences
- Remove litter from a river and its banks
- Build a deck or patio
- Plan a yard cleanup: weeding, planting, raking, mulching, pruning shrubs
- Spruce up a playground
- Develop a nature trail

## Restoration/Repair Work

- Paint inside or outside of a building
- Repair a porch/roof
- Wash windows, carpets, walls, toys
- Clean and tune up transport vans or buses
- Wallpaper a room
- Construct a play gym for children
- Build a coat rack at a shelter/childcare center
- Build a storage shed for recreational equipment
- Rehabilitate a group home
- Construct an accessibility ramp
- Sort/repair organization toys and equipment

## Special Events for Organization Clients

- Plan and accompany clients on a field trip
- Organize a mini Olympics for clients
- Put on a talent or slide show for clients at a senior center
- Play games or read stories with children at a childcare center
- Plan and staff a cookout, picnic, theme party, or ice cream social for clients
- Help clients with classes in needlepoint, crocheting, pottery, or other crafts
- Accompany a youth group on a day hike/outdoor field trip
- Assist clients with grocery shopping
- Visit and deliver meals to homebound clients
- Help teach independent living skills such as cooking and shopping to mentally challenged clients
- Help conduct a training session for clients in teamwork or problem solving
- Organize a flea market for clients in a residential facility
- Present a puppet show to children
- Work at a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter
- Computer network organization locations
- Do library or internet research for grant sources
- Fold, stuff and address organization bulk mailing
- Distribute organization brochures to various locations
- Inventory organization educational supplies
- Assist with website development
- Organize storage closets
- Do data entry
- Change batteries in emergency response units
- Wash and clean CPR mannequins
- Plan a fun day for residents at a nursing home: games, singing, fingernail painting, hair styling, etc.
- Develop a videotape or slide show presentation of the organization to promote its mission and services
- Catalog/sort books in a library
- Prepare emergency medical kits for clients
- Conduct a telephone survey
- Walk and feed animals and clean cages at the local humane society
- Hold a car wash to benefit an organization
- Create an art room for a youth center
- Design a brochure

## Projects to Avoid

The following are examples of projects usually not suitable for Day of Caring:

- Projects that need technical designs, unless the agency or a volunteer leader can provide designs. Design-as-you-go approach often wastes time and materials and results in less than satisfactory products.
- Projects that may be unsafe for volunteers (e.g., having to work on tall ladders, close proximity of vehicular traffic, lift very heavy objects, etc.).
- Projects that require complex or time-consuming preparatory work such as obtaining multiple permits, building concrete foundations, scraping old paint, clearing a field, etc. (unless such preparatory work is the Day of Caring project).
- Projects that cost more to make than it would to purchase.

## General Safety Guidelines

We recognize the potential for serious injury and liability problems associated with Day of Caring, as we do each time any volunteer offers his/her services. To help avoid the potential pitfalls and hazards that can occur during an event of this nature, please take the time to review the safety guidelines below to ensure the Day of Caring is both a rewarding and safe experience for everyone involved.

Below are some actions if an accident does happen:

- Stay calm. Have other volunteers stop working if there is any reason to believe the work is unsafe, or if the volunteers simply cannot focus sufficiently on the project's task. Be sensitive to the mood and needs of volunteers.
- Designate someone else to oversee volunteers so you can focus on the injured volunteer.
- Try to determine the seriousness of the accident. See if there is a volunteer trained to assist the injured individual (e.g., a doctor, nurse, or EMT).
- If the person has a serious injury, call 911 immediately. Then, call a friend or family member of the injured person, if appropriate, and UWECE's office at 319-398-5372.
- If the person has a minor cut or scrape, administer first aid, fill out an accident report for more serious injuries, and notify UWECE's office.
- Ensure all appropriate agency representatives are aware of the injury.

# Simple Safety Suggestions

Be prepared. To help avoid safety incidents, the below chart suggests safety plans that you may want to communicate to your volunteers prior to Day of Caring.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Potential Hazards</b>	<b>Safety Plan</b>
<b>Landscaping</b>	Feet (cuts, abrasions)	Boots, closed shoes
	Hands (cuts, abrasions)	Work gloves
	Legs (cuts, abrasions)	Long pants
	Sunburn	Wear sunscreen
	Bug bites	Bring bug spray
<b>Clearing Trails</b>	*Chainsaws	Hard-toed boots Ear plugs or muffs Chaps for legs Gloves, long sleeves Safety glasses, goggles
<b>Painting (Interior or Exterior)</b>	Eyes	Safety glasses
	Hands	Gloves (latex or work)
	Ladders (use scaffolding when necessary)	Waist never above top of ladder Never reach past arm length
<b>Carpentry/Renovation</b>	Eyes	Safety glasses, goggles
	Feet	Hard-toed boot
	Hands	Gloves
	Falls	Approved ladders or scaffolding
	*Power tools	All guards in place Extension cords with GFCI's

*\*Volunteers should not operate power tools unless trained to do so.*

# Risk Assessment Checklist

The following risk assessment checklist will ensure your Day of Caring project, staff, and volunteers will be as safe as possible. You should complete the checklist for each project and/or project site.

## Overall Safety

- Adequate beverages are available to volunteers to ensure proper hydration to eliminate heat stress exposure.
- Adequate breaks will be part of any projects, especially in very warm conditions.
- Fully stocked first aid kit is available and readily accessible at all project sites.
- Agency personnel and volunteers know the location(s) of first aid kit.
- List of emergency numbers is available and readily accessible at each work site.
- Working phone is available at each work site.
- Personal protective equipment is available for each task, as applicable (e.g., safety glasses, hearing protection, gloves, hard hats, respirators, etc.).
- Staff will ensure volunteers are dressed properly for the task prior to the start of activities.

# Project Description Tips and Tricks

When writing a description for a volunteer project, it is important to both sell the **benefits** and share the **features** of the project. Think about the potential volunteer reading your project description. Does it give them a clear picture of what the project involves? Is there anything in the description that would entice a volunteer to select your project? It is easy to focus on details of a project from the organization's perspective (e.g., we need walls painted, floors cleaned, windows washed) while forgetting who your audience is: the volunteer! Below are some examples of project descriptions that will sell and some that will not sell as well.

**Benefit:** What volunteering does for the volunteers such as teaching them a skill, having fun, meeting people, etc.

**Feature:** Descriptive elements of the project such as when, where, doing what with whom, etc.

## Examples of Projects That Sell:

- *Clean Sweep for Children*  
A lot of heart and a little muscle go a long way to help children thrive. We invite you to help us spruce up our youth residential care facility with yard cleanup, planting bulbs, pulling weeds, and reconstructing the compost and recycle bin areas. The variety of tasks will meet all your diverse interests, talents, and abilities. Your tasks, in turn, will make a positive impression on resident youth and their family and/or visitors, staff, and the neighbors!
- *Ante Up: Help with Casino Day for Elders*  
Bring joy and fun to elders and people with disabilities while having a great time with your colleagues. Our annual Casino Day with Day of Caring volunteers is one of the highlights of the year for participants at our adult day health center. Who needs Vegas when we can have our own casino with poker, blackjack, and craps right here? If you have any special talent in addition to staffing game tables, you could also provide entertainment. We are looking for people with caring hearts who are open to people with disabilities who love to have fun.

## Project Descriptions That Don't Sell as Well:

- *Carpet Cleaning/Pressure Washing*  
We need two classroom carpets cleaned and a four-car parking area to be pressure washed. Pressure washer will be supplied and one carpet cleaner. If you could bring a carpet cleaner so two could work at a time, that would be great.
- *Chill Is in the Air*  
The trees have dropped their leaves, the drains are filling with debris, the tree roots are getting thirsty, door handles are getting ready to collect germs, and the chill is in the air. Come and help us prevent the spread of germs, make sure our trees don't die this winter, and our drains are kept clear.
- *Day of Caring*  
Help in removing the window awnings at the Community Center. No training required. Need some muscles and ability to climb a ladder.

# Checklists

## Prior to DOC

- Set up meeting with company to discuss project details
  - Confirm location of project sites and times
  - Confirm the number of volunteers and arrival time
  - Confirm who will provide needed supplies/materials
  - Confirm what tools volunteers should bring
  - Confirm how volunteers should dress
  - Discuss lunch, water, and snacks
  - Discuss other items volunteers should bring: repellent, sunscreen, safety glasses, etc.
- Purchase or line up all project materials and tools
- Contact insurance provider and request a Certificate of Insurance for DOC
- Email certificate of insurance to [unitedway.volunteer@uweci.org](mailto:unitedway.volunteer@uweci.org)
- Meet with your staff to go through DOC details
  - Confirm staff leads for each project
- Plan and coordinate snacks, lunch, water, etc.

## Day of Checklist

- Verify all materials and tasks are ready prior to volunteers arriving
- Welcome and register volunteers
- Have volunteers sign in on volunteer hours log
- Have nametags for staff and volunteers
- Give brief orientation about organization and project overview
- Explain how United Way is connected to your organization. I.e. funded partner or promotes and connects volunteers to your organization
- Motivate and manage volunteers to complete tasks
- Halfway point: ask volunteers if there is too much or not enough to do
  - Prioritize tasks; complete most important tasks first
  - Have backup projects available for extra work
- Monitor safety
- Be available to answer questions and troubleshoot issues that arise
- Set aside time for volunteers to clean up project site and themselves
- Have volunteers fill sign out on volunteer hours log
- Give volunteers time to reflect on their service to help them understand the impact and how the work helps meet the mission of your organization
- Thank volunteers and inform them of future volunteer opportunities
- Mail or email copies of volunteer hours sheet form to Sue Driscoll
  - United Way of East Central Iowa  
Attn: Sue Driscoll  
317 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE, Suite 401  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
  - Email: [unitedway.volunteer@uweci.org](mailto:unitedway.volunteer@uweci.org)





## Dates to Remember

By March 15	Agency submit project form
March 20	Agency final project review
March 26	Company registration opens up
May 1	Company deadline to register for projects
By May 1	Site visits
May 10	Day of Caring
By May 18	Submit volunteer hours

## Day of Caring Notes



**For questions regarding Day of Caring, contact:**

Sue Driscoll

Senior Manager, Volunteer Engagement

United Way of East Central Iowa

317 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE, Suite 401

Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

319-398-5372 ext. 822

[sue.driscoll@uweci.org](mailto:sue.driscoll@uweci.org)

*Information in this guide taken in part from United Way of the Greater Seacoast ([uwgs.org](http://uwgs.org))*



**United Way  
of East Central Iowa**