

RSVP



RSVP of King County Volunteer Handbook



Experience in Action!

Contact RSVP:

206.694.6785 or 206.694.6786

RSVP is a program of...



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Welcome to RSVP!

On behalf of RSVP of King County, it is our pleasure to welcome you as a new member. RSVP (Retired & Senior Volunteer Program) is a national organization dedicated to meeting community needs by encouraging and supporting volunteerism for people in the second half of their lives.

As an RSVP volunteer, you are strengthening the positive impact people 55 and older have in our communities! You will also meet nice people, have fun and feel good about your contribution. Your family will be proud of you and others will respect and admire you as a role model. As an RSVP member, you also gain access to key benefits and services designed to help you make the most out of your volunteer experience.

We hope that you will find your volunteer experience challenging and rewarding, and that you will spread the word. The best inspiration to begin volunteering comes from talking to a successful RSVP volunteer like you. Invite your friends and neighbors to join you in volunteering, and together we can make our communities better, more caring places to live.

This handbook is designed to answer frequently asked questions about volunteering with RSVP. Read through it at your leisure and keep it for future reference.

We are proud of our role in bringing together community agencies in need of help, with the volunteers who can provide that help. We look forward to being of service to you as you give your time and talents in the community.

Thank you,

The Staff & Ambassadors of King County RSVP

What is RSVP?

RSVP stands for Retired & Senior Volunteer Program. RSVP's mission is simple: *To meet community needs by encouraging and supporting volunteering for people 55 and older in King County.* RSVP recognizes and values the experience and wisdom of mature Americans as one of our nation's most important natural resources. We believe that by volunteering, you are helping our community while staying active and healthy. We hope to make volunteering easy and rewarding.

RSVP is funded by Congress through the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS). Today there are more than 500,000 RSVP volunteers in over 750 projects across the nation using their talents and time in service to others.

A program of Solid Ground, King County RSVP has about 1,000 active volunteers serving in 60+ agencies, including schools, food banks, senior centers, homeless shelters and other worksites with volunteer opportunities. Each year RSVP members provide about 250,000 service hours to nonprofits and public agencies in King Co.

RSVP volunteers everywhere share the satisfaction of knowing they are helping to make their community a better place to live. As a volunteer, you will enrich your own life as you enrich the lives of others.

A brief history of RSVP

RSVP resulted from efforts by private groups and government agencies to create opportunities for engagement, activity, acquaintanceship and growth for older Americans. One of the earliest programs was the Community Service Society of New York, launched as a pilot project in 1965 on Staten Island. The project involved a small group of volunteers who were dedicated to serving their communities in a variety of ways. The success of their efforts led to an amendment to the Older Americans Act, creating RSVP

as a nationwide program in 1969. In 1994 the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) was created to bring federal volunteer programs under one agency. The mission of CNCS is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. They administer RSVP nationwide and provide a significant portion of project funding, and also fund AmeriCorps, VISTA, the Senior Companion and the Foster Grandparent programs. Additional RSVP funds come from local government and corporate and foundation grants as well as donations from individuals.

Locally, Seattle RSVP was established and administered by United Way in 1972. In 1973, East King County RSVP began and was sponsored by the City of Bellevue. These two programs merged in 1978 to form King County RSVP, and American Red Cross assumed sponsorship.

Finally, in 1994 Solid Ground (then known as the Fremont Public Association) became King County RSVP's local sponsor. Solid Ground provides office space, accounting, personnel administration and other support services. And, as a program of Solid Ground, RSVP is a part of a regional effort to address racism and end poverty.

Who is King County RSVP?

RSVP staff includes a director and a program coordinator. We are employed by Solid Ground, a nonprofit human service and advocacy agency. Solid Ground works to end poverty and undo racism and other oppressions that are root causes of poverty. Work study students and volunteers support the program and increase our capacity.

Volunteers are the heart of RSVP. Volunteer committees work closely with RSVP staff to provide feedback to program staff, further our mission, and expand the program. Volunteer committees are made up of RSVP members and other interested community members.

RSVP volunteer committees include:

- Newsletter Committee
- Ambassadors
- Ad Hoc Work Committees

These groups help to:

- 1) Create our newsletter.
- 2) Provide feedback to program staff and evaluate program activities.
- 3) Represent RSVP at community events and meetings.
- 4) Recruit members and spread the word about the great work the RSVP volunteers are doing.
- 5) Provide additional program support, including visiting volunteer worksites, doing service projects and helping with volunteer recognition.

By working closely with these committees, the RSVP staff expand their capacity to serve you and also gain a deeper understanding of the needs and interests of their members and community. You don't have to join a committee to be an RSVP member, but all committees are always looking for fresh ideas and energy.

What are the RSVP member benefits?

In addition to the many wonderful personal benefits you will receive from volunteering, RSVP offers many great services:

- 1) We connect you to meaningful volunteer opportunities which match your talents, interests and schedule.
- 2) You become a member of a national organization which demonstrates the impact of senior volunteers on our communities.
- 3) You receive personal service and ongoing support from dedicated staff as you volunteer.
- 4) While on the job and traveling to and from your RSVP assignment, you will be covered by supplemental personal and auto liability insurance beyond your own coverage, at no cost to you.

- 5) You'll receive RSVP's free newsletter, "Experience in Action," with program news, volunteer opportunities and articles by and about volunteers.
- 6) Recognition of your work is vital to RSVP's mission. Each year we celebrate volunteers and recognize your service.

Who is eligible for RSVP membership?

Any person 55 years or older may join RSVP. There are no other requirements for eligibility. Eligibility to be an RSVP member is not restricted on the basis of race, color, national origin (including individuals with limited English proficiency), sex, age, political affiliation, religion or disability. RSVP strives to be supportive of the needs of each RSVP member and to make reasonable physical accommodations for all volunteers.

What do I need to do to join?

To become a member, you must complete the registration form. It's that simple! After you return the completed registration form, RSVP staff will work with you to find a suitable and exciting volunteer placement based on your needs and interests. In order to remain an active member, RSVP must receive your volunteer hours from your site or directly from you every month.

Where do RSVP members volunteer?

Volunteer worksites – public and nonprofit agencies – partner with RSVP based on a written *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*. This agreement outlines program requirements and working relationships between RSVP and the worksite, and helps ensure that RSVP members will have positive and productive volunteer experiences. RSVP may refer volunteers to serve at the worksite and the worksite may enroll eligible volunteers with RSVP.

How RSVP interacts with worksite partners

A worksite is a location where an RSVP volunteer serves.

Worksites must sign an MOU with RSVP. The MOU outlines the responsibilities of each party. These agreements are valid for three years with the opportunity to renew.

Worksites provide orientation, in-service instruction, and special training for RSVP members as needed. RSVP welcomes conversations with local organizations that are interested in becoming RSVP worksites. Worksites will be approved based on program goals, funding guidelines and community needs.

For volunteer worksite organizations, RSVP support and benefits include:

- Listing of volunteer opportunities in our publication, “Experience in Action,” with a circulation of 3,500 in King County.
- Publicity for the program through articles and announcements in “Experience in Action.”
- Referral of potential volunteers to help fulfill agency volunteer needs.
- Opportunities to network with other RSVP site partners.

We ask that worksite staff submit their volunteers’ monthly time reports to us by the 5th of each month.

What kinds of work do members do?

RSVP volunteers support community needs in the following strategic areas: healthy futures, school readiness, K-12 success, economic opportunity and capacity building. Examples of volunteer jobs include delivering food to older adults, providing transportation services and companionship, supporting food bank clients, teaching families about nutrition, reading to children, tutoring and mentoring, assisting families in transitioning into home ownership, managing and training volunteers, and supporting blood drives.

RSVP members may choose from a list of agencies in King County that have a signed agreement with the RSVP office. Volunteer assignments are made according to volunteers' skills and interests and the needs of the worksites. It is important to note that volunteers do not take away the jobs of paid employees. Rather they supplement existing staff and enrich and enhance the organization's services in the community. RSVP receives numerous requests from organizations that need volunteers. We will work closely with you to find the best assignment possible and will help you find another job if you are dissatisfied with your current placement.

In-home assignments

When RSVP members enter a person's home for volunteer service, a Letter of Agreement needs to be signed by the volunteer, the person being visited, the volunteer's supervisor and an RSVP staff person. This document will be provided by the agency where you are serving. It includes your training plan, supervision, and dates and times you will be entering the person's home. This document will be kept on file in the RSVP office.

Who makes my schedule?

Each volunteer position has different time requirements. RSVP strives to help you find opportunities that match your scheduling needs, including short-term and one-time opportunities as well as opportunities with flexible scheduling. You will work out your schedule directly with your worksite supervisor. This will include time for orientation and training.

Can I change where I volunteer?

RSVP offers a wide variety of volunteer opportunities at a wide range of worksites. If at any time you would like to change your assignment or take on a new challenge, let us know. We will be happy to help

you find a new position. Our website lists available opportunities and as long as you remain an active RSVP volunteer, you will be mailed our publication, “Experience in Action.” It contains listings of available worksite opportunities and other information of interest to volunteers.

How do I remain an active member?

RSVP must receive a monthly report of your volunteer hours, either from your volunteer worksite or from you. It is okay if you take a break from volunteering. To remain active with RSVP, members must complete and submit at least one volunteer hour every 24 months. It is our policy that volunteers be placed on the inactive list after 24 months of inactivity. If you or your volunteer worksite have not submitted hours to the RSVP office for 24 months, you will automatically be placed on the inactive list.

Why do I need to report my hours?

Monthly reports of hours are important for you, the community and for RSVP. For you, they maintain your active member status, guarantee coverage under our insurance policy while you are volunteering, and ensure that you receive the volunteer newsletter and annual recognition for your service. Beginning with the month in which you sign up with RSVP, a cumulative record of time contributed to all approved RSVP worksites and projects is kept on file in our office. RSVP uses information from the monthly report to educate the community about the contributions volunteers make. It is important for the people of King County to understand and appreciate the time, skills and experience senior volunteers contribute to the betterment of our area.

Finally, federal and state funders require RSVP to track all time spent volunteering as a means of assessing program performance. Volunteer hours help to demonstrate the value of RSVP.

How to report your hours

Arrangements for recording volunteer hours vary between worksites. Be sure to find out the sign-in requirements when you begin a new assignment. In most cases, you will submit your hours to the volunteer coordinator at your site for the hours you volunteered each month. The coordinator at your site sends your hours for the month to the RSVP office by the 5th of the next month.

If you are submitting your own hours to RSVP, please send them in to the RSVP office by the 5th of the month following your service. A timesheet for your use is included in your welcome packet. Please make sure that you record each volunteer day and activity. Don't forget to sign your timesheet and have your supervisor sign as well. For accountability purposes, both you and your supervisor or worksite representative must sign your timesheet before RSVP can approve it.

There are multiple ways to submit your timesheet to the RSVP office:

- Mail the form to RSVP at 1501 N 45th St, Seattle WA 98103.
- Email the completed form to RSVP@solid-ground.org.
- Fax the completed form to RSVP at 206.694.6777.

In special cases, hours may be reported to an RSVP staff member over the phone or on the RSVP website. Contact RSVP staff for more information.

How do I know my work is appreciated?

An important part of life centers on celebrating our accomplishments. We all need a pat on the back, a smile and genuine words of appreciation once in a while. RSVP volunteers individually and collectively have a great deal to celebrate. A very important part of RSVP's work is the visible acknowledgment and appreciation of volunteers' gifts of service to the community.

RSVP encourages worksites to provide recognition for their volunteers. We often assist by helping plan appreciation events and by sending an RSVP Ambassador to award RSVP service certificates. In addition to participating in worksite-sponsored recognition activities, RSVP has celebrated and honored volunteer service in a variety of different ways over the years, including recognition events, certificates, pins and other tokens of appreciation.

What are my rights as a volunteer?

As an RSVP member, you have the right to:

- Assignments that utilize and develop your skills.
- Information and training needed to carry out your assignment.
- Be told about the organization, its policies and its programs as they relate to your work.
- Guidance and supervision from a willing, experienced staff person.
- A written job description, a designated place to work, and materials or equipment needed to do your job.
- Feel free to discuss problems, ask questions and make suggestions.
- Recognition for a job well done.

What are my responsibilities?

As an RSVP member, we expect you to:

- Be sure of your assignment. Do not accept an assignment if you do not feel comfortable. If your volunteer assignment turns out to be unsuitable for you, let RSVP know so we can find a better fit.
- Notify RSVP of all volunteer assignments so that we can make sure you are credited for your volunteer work with RSVP partner organizations.
- Tell all of your volunteer agencies that you are affiliated with RSVP.
- Be on time and keep the schedule you have agreed upon. Inform your worksite as far ahead as possible if you will be absent.
- Be willing to learn and ask questions. Training and supervision are essential to any job well done.

- Be flexible. Try to meet the needs of your worksite and the people they serve.
- Adhere to your worksite's policies and procedures.
- Respect confidentiality. Keep in strictest confidence any information about your worksite and the people who receive its services.
- Keep an open mind. Do not let preconceptions interfere with your volunteer assignment.
- Be reachable. Be sure to let RSVP know if your address or phone number change.
- Be accountable.
- Report your volunteer hours. Most worksites report your hours for you, but some do not. Check with your supervisor to find out how this is handled. (**Note:** Please *do not* count your travel time as volunteer hours.)

Prohibited volunteer activities

Due to federal grant guidelines, RSVP members cannot perform the following activities as a part of their RSVP service:

- Give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in proselytizing.
- Assist with electoral activities, voter registration, and transportation to polls or efforts to influence legislation.
- Engage in activities that displace paid workers.
- Accept money or donations from their service recipients or relatives and friends of service recipients.

Volunteer separation & appeal process

RSVP or the worksite may separate a volunteer from the program for cause, including but not limited to extensive or unauthorized absences, misconduct, inability to perform assignments, or inability to accept supervision. Separation may also be based on termination of volunteer assignment or when the volunteer assignment is no longer meaningful or satisfying to the RSVP volunteer.

Any appeal of an adverse action affecting an RSVP volunteer must be made in writing to the King County RSVP office. RSVP staff will conduct an investigation with the necessary individuals making the appeal. RSVP will respond in writing to the appealing volunteer within one month and will state that either the office agrees with the findings for termination or disagrees. Should the office disagree with the findings, it will also state what action is to be taken to correct the situation. This procedure applies to volunteer assignment situations only. Other concerns can be directed to RSVP staff.

Rules & procedures for supplemental insurance

At no cost to you, RSVP provides supplemental accident, personal liability and automobile liability insurance while you are volunteering and traveling to and from your RSVP assignment. The insurance is in excess of other insurance you may have. Benefits are payable only if we have a monthly report showing your volunteer activity on the day of the injury or property damage.

You are covered by:

- Accident insurance for personal injury while you are volunteering and traveling between your home and place of RSVP volunteer job, during meal periods while serving as a volunteer, and while attending RSVP-sponsored activities such as recognition, orientation and Ambassador meetings. It does not duplicate expenses covered by Medicare or any other valid and collectable insurance.
- Personal liability insurance provides economic protection for you if you accidentally injure another person or damage another person's property. This coverage is in excess of any other valid and collectable insurance coverage.
- Automobile liability insurance covers bodily injury or property damage claims arising out of the use of your own automobile in connection with your RSVP assignment. It covers RSVP members

who drive their own cars. This coverage is in excess of insurance you carry, or the limits of the state financial responsibility law, whichever is higher. To be eligible for this coverage, you must have your driver's license number on file in the RSVP office. This insurance does not apply to damage to the volunteer's automobile.

What do I do in case of accident?

In case of worksite or auto injuries, your worksite supervisor should take care of your injuries and medical needs as appropriate. You or your worksite supervisor should contact the RSVP office as soon as possible within 48 hours to report the injury and details surrounding the injury, including date, time, place and cause. RSVP staff will submit the initial claim form to CIMA Companies, Inc.

After you have received treatment, copy any medical bills and file the originals through your medical carrier. Then, you must submit copies of bills and Explanation of Benefits (EOBs) to:

CIMA Companies, Inc.
2750 Kilarney Drive, Suite 202
Woodbridge, VA 22192
Attn: Claims Department

Claims are accepted within 52 weeks from the date of the accident. If you do not receive a reply from our insurance company within 45 to 60 days of submitting a claim, please notify the RSVP office. The insurance company does not automatically notify RSVP regarding claims, so we depend on you to let us know if there are any problems.

For insurance coverage details, please visit the CIMA Volunteers Insurance program webpage:

www.cimaworld.com/nonprofits/volunteer-insurance-access-for-insurance-agents

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About Solid Ground:

Each year, more than 55,000 King County residents come to Solid Ground to address urgent food and housing needs, and build skills to overcome poverty and thrive.

Solid Ground works to undo racism and other oppressions to change the institutional practices and policies that perpetuate poverty. Through 40 years of innovation, partnership and action, we have helped create many of our community's most effective anti-poverty programs.

And built on the firsthand experience of people living on low incomes in Washington state, Solid Ground's Advocacy efforts help develop and pass landmark legislation.

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Reasonable accommodations for disabilities made on request.