

## Do Not Rework



The text in this article has been uploaded from the attached pdf file. It has been uploaded to the wiki in this form so that it may be easily read, searched, and referenced or linked-to from other areas of the wiki. However, the content is **not intended** to be reworked. Unlike a [Legacy Article](#) where the content is intended to be **broken out**, this content is to remain a complete and verbatim copy of the attached pdf.

([Further definition found here.](#))

Volunteer policies ensure that AFS-USA provides all AFS-USA volunteers with a reasonable and uniform system of administration. These policies help to inform AFS-USA volunteers on how they should perform their duties in their volunteering role. They provide a shared understanding of relationships between AFS-USA and its volunteers and assist with meeting volunteer expectations.

Volunteer policies provide AFS-USA volunteers with:

- clarity of understanding and direction on the role of volunteering for AFS-USA
- confidence that they are volunteering for a reputable organization of high standards
- stated boundaries to their volunteering on what is acceptable and what are the limits
- a framework to promote volunteering with AFS-USA.

AFS-USA volunteer policies apply to all registered AFS-USA volunteers.

## Contents

- [1 AFS-USA volunteer policies](#)
  - ◆ [1.1 Volunteering](#)
  - ◆ [1.2 AFSONline](#)
  - ◆ [1.3 Code of Conduct](#)
  - ◆ [1.4 Communication](#)
  - ◆ [1.5 Complying with the AFS-USA national standards](#)
  - ◆ [1.6 Confidentiality](#)
  - ◆ [1.7 Conflict of Interest](#)
  - ◆ [1.8 Contracts](#)
  - ◆ [1.9 Customer service standards](#)
  - ◆ [1.10 Duty of Care](#)
  - ◆ [1.11 Equal opportunity](#)
  - ◆ [1.12 Finances](#)
  - ◆ [1.13 Grievance and disputes](#)
  - ◆ [1.14 Harassment](#)
  - ◆ [1.15 Health and safety](#)
  - ◆ [1.16 Health and Well-Being of Program Participants](#)
  - ◆ [1.17 Policy Governance](#)
  - ◆ [1.18 Reimbursement](#)
  - ◆ [1.19 Rewards and recognition](#)
  - ◆ [1.20 Termination](#)

- ◆ 1.21 Volunteer insurance
- ◆ 1.22 Volunteer relationships with staff
- ◆ 1.23 Volunteer training
- 2 Other rules relating to AFS-USA's business operations
- 3 Continuous improvement
- 4 Reference Material

## AFS-USA volunteer policies

The AFS-USA volunteer policies have been listed in alphabetical order, with the exception of the first.

### Volunteering

Volunteers are central to the mission and values of AFS-USA. To enhance the volunteering experience, meet regulatory requirements and to discharge its duty of care for volunteers, AFS-USA, Inc. will:

- recruit, screen and register volunteers in accordance within AFS-USA standards and in accordance with equal opportunity and non-discrimination
- acknowledge the rights of volunteers
- define volunteer roles and develop clear role descriptions
- provide appropriate levels of support and management for volunteers
- provide volunteers with orientation, training and development opportunities
- treat volunteers with respect and acknowledge their value
- encourage volunteers to participate in organizational decision making through the appropriate channels
- provide adequate insurance coverage
- ensure that volunteers have access to information on policies relating to grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures
- comply with AFS-USA policies on volunteering
- recognize and acknowledge the contributions of volunteers.

### AFSOnline

AFSOnline is available to all AFS-USA registered volunteers. Proper use of all information that is available from AFSOnline is required by all AFS-USA volunteers.

### Code of Conduct

AFS-USA is committed to the safety, welfare, and well-being of all young people participating on our programs. This is our highest value. We support the rights of our young people and will act without hesitation to promote a safe environment at all times.

In volunteering for AFS-USA, all volunteers will demonstrate appropriate behavior and understand what is considered to be inappropriate behavior and policies.

## Volunteer\_Policy

AFS-USA volunteers will undertake to demonstrate the following appropriate behavior:

- at all times conducting oneself in a manner consistent with one's volunteer role and as a representative of AFS-USA
- following AFS-USA policies and guidelines for the safety of program participants
- when dealing with issues of potential risk ensure that another volunteer or a staff member is involved
- treat all program participants, families, fellow volunteers and staff with respect
- raise any concerns or issues with the appropriate volunteers or staff
- take the appropriate steps when any allegation or suspicion of any type of abuse (this includes verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual) is acted upon and communicated to the appropriate support staff
- give care and respect to participants concerning any information that may be viewed as sensitive and should be treated confidentially

AFS-USA volunteers will undertake to ensure that they will not demonstrate the following inappropriate behavior:

- engaging in games that threaten or intimidate the program participant
- forcing participants into any activity which makes them feel significantly uncomfortable
- holding or touching in an inappropriate manner
- making lewd or sexually suggestive comments, even as a joke
- discriminating on issues that relate to gender, ability, race, religion, class, age, national origin, marital status, or sexual orientation.

AFS-USA volunteers will understand that while touching can be appropriate or essential for a child or young person's self esteem, it should be:

- in response to the need of the child or young person and not the need of the adult
- done with the child or young person's permission ? resistance should be respected
- respectful, avoiding breasts, buttocks, or groin;
- open and non-secretive.

Any touching or physical contact should be governed by the age of the child or young person. For example, sitting in an adult's lap may be appropriate for a 3 year-old but is not appropriate for a 16 year-old.

AFS-USA supports the rights and well-being of our host families, natural families, volunteers, and staff and encourages their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all participants.

## Communication

AFS-USA believes that, in order to support volunteers in their roles and so that we can continue to improve our volunteer practices, we should seek volunteers' feedback and suggestions.

The AFS National and Regional Service Centers seek to maintain connected with volunteers through regular contact. This includes the use of email, newsletters, AFSONline, phone contact, mail and face-to-face meetings.

Volunteer feedback is welcome and encouraged.

### **Complying with the AFS-USA national standards**

AFS-USA is a volunteer-based and volunteer-led organization. As such it relies on the good will, commitment and dedication of volunteers throughout the U.S.. Without volunteer support, AFS would not be able to successfully deliver our intercultural exchange programs.

The AFS-USA national standards for volunteer operations are the foundation of AFS-USA volunteer involvement ensuring that we operate with consistency.

In volunteering for AFS-USA it is important that all volunteers comply with the national standards for our operations. This means that volunteers are willing to work with the same standards, policies and procedures across the AFS-USA network. In doing so this means, that AFS-USA is:

- providing all volunteers with guidance on operational requirements
- connecting volunteers to the organization
- giving reasonable structure and scope to manage volunteers
- recognizing the value, importance and purpose of volunteers
- clarifying responsibilities, defining communication and accountability
- ensuring compliance with U.S. statutory requirements and the standards of the international AFS Network
- providing guidance to assist in managing the potential risks to the organization
- allowing for AFS-USA to minimize risk.

### **Confidentiality**

The people with whom AFS-USA deals most directly (program participants, members of their families, and AFS volunteers) all have a right to privacy. In the course of their work, some AFS-USA volunteers or staff will come into possession of information that will be confidential. AFS-USA volunteers and staff owe a duty of confidentiality to the people to whom such information relates.

Occasionally, volunteers will be required to exercise their best judgment when made aware of an issue which seems to require immediate action. In such circumstances, volunteers should at the earliest possible opportunity inform your approved Volunteer leader/coordinator, who will provide guidance and seek support from the Regional Service Center.

Some volunteers have roles which lead them to receive from the Regional or National Service Centre information concerned with issues of participant support. That information is provided solely to assist those volunteers in performing their roles. Volunteers receiving such information are not to divulge that information. If volunteers receiving such information have any doubt as to discharging their duty of confidentiality, they should immediately refer for guidance to their approved Volunteer leader/coordinator who may seek support from the Regional Service Center.

No one is permitted to remove, make copies or disclose any AFS records, reports or documents which relate to any person's circumstances without prior approval given from the Regional Service Center.

Disclosing information relating to any person's circumstances without prior approval to make such disclosure can result in dismissal from your volunteer role. It may also result in legal proceedings.

## Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest, or an apparent conflict of interest, arises where you or an associate (that is, someone closely related to you ? for example, a spouse, child, other relative, business partner) can expect to receive or suffer a direct or indirect benefit or detriment as the result of a decision or action which you take.

This can apply to a financial or non-financial benefit or detriment.

An actual or apparent conflict of interest may arise if a volunteer, or an associate of a volunteer:

- competes, directly or indirectly, with the interests or services of AFS-USA
- has, directly or indirectly, a financial interest or any position in any concern with which AFS-USA does business or which provides services in competition with AFS-USA
- provides services to any outside concern that does business or competes with AFS-USA
- accepts gifts, entertainment, or other favors from any concern that does, or seeks to do, business with, or in competition with AFS-USA
- uses to advantage information gained in the course of performing AFS-USA duties. It is improper to disclose, or to use to advantage, confidential or proprietary information relating to AFS-USA?s business.

If a volunteer suspects or believes that they may have a conflict of interest, then in the interests of fairness and in the volunteer?s own best interests, the volunteer should seek to avoid the conflict. The volunteer should withdraw from any related discussion and activity and should abstain from any related voting.

It is as important to avoid apparent conflicts of interest as it is to avoid actual conflicts of interest.

Where there is an actual or apparent conflict of interest, volunteers can reduce opportunities for criticism of their actions by:

- declaring the potential conflict as soon as the volunteer realizes that there is, or may be seen to be, such a conflict
- declaring the potential conflict before being involved in any discussion related to the matter giving rise to the conflict, and avoiding involvement in any such discussion
- leaving the vicinity of any activity or discussion related to the potential conflict and returning only after the activity or discussion has been concluded.

If in relation to a possible conflict of interest and a volunteer is in any doubt as to the course of action to be taken, the volunteer should seek guidance from their approved volunteer manager or from the Regional Service Center.

## Contracts

Volunteers are not authorized to enter into any binding written or verbal agreements in the name of AFS-USA, Inc. unless authorized by the AFS-USA Board of Directors.

Contracts for an AFS activity (with the exception of day-use only permits with no Hold Harmless clause or those required in order to lease a vehicle) shall be forwarded to the Regional Service Center for review and approval, at least two weeks prior to the event.

## Customer service standards

AFS-USA believes that, in the course of our daily work and working together as volunteers and staff, we should provide service that is:

- respectful
- reliable
- responsive
- empathetic.

AFS-USA volunteers can contribute to achieving this by careful attention to:

- understanding individual customer's expectations and needs
- developing product knowledge
- communicating effectively
- following up promptly
- problem solving efficiently
- taking care to say, "Thanks" - an attitude of gratitude.

AFS-USA believes a service culture is one in which each person in the organization feels and acts in a manner which demonstrates that they are accountable for creating satisfied customers.

## Duty of Care

AFS-USA has a duty of care to protect, to its utmost ability:

- those taking part in its programs, and members of their families
- volunteers
- staff

Volunteers implement their duty of care by ensuring that they:

- act in good faith for the interests of AFS-USA
- understand the purpose of AFS-USA and are familiar with its goals and activities
- adhere to AFS-USA customer standards
- prepare for, attend and participate in meetings or other agreed commitments
- do not to misuse any authority or discretion which they have been given
- do not to misuse any information acquired through their position
- avoid actual and apparent conflicts of interest.

## Equal opportunity

Equal opportunity has been, and will continue to be, a fundamental principle of AFS-USA in providing equal volunteering opportunities for everyone without discrimination, because of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or any other protected characteristic as established by law, which do not preclude performance

## Volunteer\_Policy

of the essential volunteering role.

Our goal, which reflects the ideals of AFS-USA and the desire of the AFS-USA Board and management, is to foster a diverse volunteer workforce which reflects a broad spectrum of society and maintain an organization free from unlawful discrimination towards any volunteer or volunteer applicant. Full commitment to this policy is required to produce a volunteering environment in which we can take pride.

AFS-USA's provision of all volunteering opportunities is based upon the individual volunteer's assessed ability to perform the role and comply with AFS-USA volunteer policies in a dependable and reliable manner.

## Finances

All funds raised in the name of AFS must be used solely for the purpose of the support of AFS programs and participants.

Each AFS Chapter and Area shall maintain accurate records of income and expenses and must submit required reports as outlined by the AFS-USA Accounting Department in published guidebooks.

## Grievance and disputes

For AFS-USA to be an efficient and successful organization, satisfied volunteers are essential. From time to time, volunteers have grievances. Such grievances are of concern to AFS-USA.

A grievance arises when a volunteer believes that any rule, practice or event has undermined the volunteer's rights or has resulted in the volunteer being treated unfairly or unjustly. A grievance may also arise from an attitude shown, a statement made or an opinion expressed by a volunteer or staff member.

AFS respects the rights of each individual volunteer reflected in the fundamental values of the organization. This grievance policy is based upon those same values and on ensuring fairness. By implementing this policy, AFS-USA seeks to enable volunteers to share their problems and to provide avenues for resolving grievances.

AFS-USA is committed to resolving grievances and disputes quickly and sensitively.

The full grievance and dispute policy has been included in the passport to volunteering guide.

## Harassment

AFS-USA believes that our volunteer environment should be free from intimidation, hostility or offensive behavior which might interfere with volunteer performance.

Harassment of any sort ? verbal, physical or visual - cannot be tolerated. If a volunteer or staff member believes that s/he is being harassed, then the individual should seek to resolve the issue directly with the person they deem to be harassing them or lodge a grievance.

## Health and safety

AFS-USA is committed to the occupational health and safety of volunteers and staff. AFS-USA has a duty of care to help avoid exposing volunteers to unacceptable risks which affect their health or safety. AFS-USA welcomes volunteers' feedback on this important matter.

Volunteers are encouraged, and obliged, to assist AFS-USA by reporting unsafe working conditions, potential hazards or unsafe behavior, within their volunteer working environment. AFS-USA is committed to acting on such information by investigating and attempting to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Issues of health and safety should be reported to the Regional Service Center.

## Health and Well-Being of Program Participants

AFS volunteers should report any concerns about the health and well-being of AFS participants to the appropriate support contact person and, where appropriate, advise AFS-USA staff. AFS volunteers must at all times adhere to state laws requiring that any reasonable belief that abuse or unlawful harassment of an AFS participant is occurring be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Emergency procedures as outlined by AFS-USA shall be followed.

## Policy Governance

The Board of AFS-USA, Inc. operates under Policy Governance as the framework for the governance and leadership of the organization. Policy Governance was adopted by the AFS International Board of Trustees and a large number of AFS partners.

Policy Governance is seen as an effective framework, in that it:

- reinforces that the Board's representation of, and accountability to, the organization's "moral owners"
- obliges the Board to speak with one clear voice ? or not at all
- ensures that the Board's decisions are predominantly policy decisions
- requires the Board, in considering any issue, to commence from the biggest picture perspective possible and to descend into degrees of detail only to the extent that it is necessary for a governance, as distinct from a management, decision to be made
- thrusts the Board into defining and delegating rather than being reactive requires the Board at the same time to hold the President to account in a systematic and rigorous way for implementation of the Board's policies
- enables the Board to focus primarily on a key governance task: setting and refining the Ends of AFS-USA, seeking constantly to clarify what benefits AFS is seeking to give which people and what value we attach to those benefits
- provides means for the Board to monitor its own performance

While the Board is accountable for ensuring the effectiveness of the organization, it is not involved in day-to-day AFS operations. The Board's link to those operations is through President and the Vice Presidents.

## Reimbursement

In the course of performing roles, volunteers may incur out-of-pocket expenses. Volunteers are entitled to seek reimbursement for budgeted and pre-approved expenses, which may include costs of:

- mileage
- meals
- postage
- copying and duplicating

Area Teams have established bank accounts and procedures for reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses. Volunteers should seek further advice and clarification from their Area Team Treasurer.

Volunteers in roles coordinated from the Regional Centre receive reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses from Regional Service Centre staff. To receive reimbursement, such volunteers need to support their claims with receipts showing the expenditure incurred.

## Rewards and recognition

Reflecting its commitment to recognize volunteer contributions, AFS-USA has established the National Council Recognition Committee. Formed by the National Council to provide recognition of volunteers at the national level and support recognition efforts at the regional, area and local level.

The aim of this program is to:

- value and appreciate our most valuable resource ? volunteers
- assist in recruiting new volunteers
- provide a standardized clear recognition program.

The recognition program for valuing volunteers is a range of national and local programs.

## Termination

*Note: This section is superceded by the Volunteer Management Policy.*

The volunteer workforce of AFS-USA represents AFS in area teams, units, chapters and the wider community and thus represents the organization to the public. AFS-USA volunteers are required to uphold AFS-USA policies and adhere to AFS-USA's standards and procedures. Failure to do so can leave a volunteer open to having their services as an AFS-USA volunteer terminated.

Volunteers may be relieved of their responsibilities for violations of AFS-USA policies or standards of conduct. AFS-USA has the sole discretion to terminate a volunteer in order to protect the organization and safety of its participants. Decisions to terminate a person's voluntary AFS-USA services are made at the Regional Service Center.

Some of the grounds upon which such decisions are made are:

- willful violation of AFS-USA policy or procedures or policy applicable to AFS-USA

## Volunteer\_Policy

- endangering the health, well-being or safety of a program participant, a fellow volunteer or a member of staff
- behavior demonstrating disrespect to volunteer colleagues, AFS staff or the wider community
- inappropriate behavior, including forming inappropriate relationships, which place the well-being of AFS program participants at risk
- failure to perform volunteer duties or responsibilities
- failure to abide by the direction established by AFS-USA
- unfair discrimination relating to race, color, age, creed, gender, disability, national origin, marital status or sexual orientation
- theft, fraud or other forms of dishonesty, including false statements on the Volunteer Registration Form
- misconduct that adversely affects the reputation of AFS, its volunteers, staff, Board or program participants.

Volunteers will be advised in writing when such termination takes place.

### **Volunteer insurance**

AFS-USA has a responsibility to insure volunteers while they are undertaking AFS-USA business. Under the AFS corporate liability insurance, AFS-USA registered volunteers are named as Additional Insured's.

Additional Insured status allows AFS's corporate insurance protection to be extended to AFS-USA's volunteers should they be named in a covered claim regarding activities related to their volunteering work for AFS. This protects AFS should it be named regarding the activities of a volunteer. AFS corporate insurance does not cover every eventuality and AFS cannot extend protection to volunteers beyond the limits of its insurance.

Any person who will be transporting participants or people involved in AFS-USA activities in their motor vehicles must meet the following qualifications:

- a valid driver's license appropriate to the vehicle
- automobile insurance which satisfies the requirements of their state
- no more than two moving violations and one at-fault accident in the last five years
- no drunken or reckless driving convictions at any time.
- use of seat belts for all passengers
- at least 21 years of age

Volunteers who cannot meet these qualifications are welcomed at AFS in capacities that do not involve driving for the organization.

### **Volunteer relationships with staff**

In acknowledging the central role of volunteers, AFS-USA makes every effort to ensure that staff at all levels of the organization is informed about the roles, rights and responsibilities of its volunteers.

AFS-USA encourages good working relationships based upon mutual respect and understanding between volunteers and staff. As such:

- the roles of volunteers and staff will be complementary and mutually supportive
- appropriate training, support and resources will be provide for all staff who work with volunteers

## Volunteer\_Policy

- volunteers will be provided with clear information about the responsibilities and role of staff
- appropriate staff appointments are made for volunteer management, who provide supervision, support and resources.

AFS-USA encourages mutual cooperation between all staff and volunteers in supporting and delivering the mission of AFS.

### **Volunteer training**

AFS-USA undertakes to ensure that as an AFS-USA volunteer you will be prepared and trained for your specific role before you assume your volunteer responsibilities. AFS-USA is committed to creating a community of skilled volunteers who support the high quality of our exchange programs.

AFS-USA volunteer training is designed to equip our volunteers with the skills and knowledge to undertake their specialist roles. It is essential that AFS-USA volunteers avail themselves of all relevant volunteer training activities to ensure that they are maintaining AFS-USA's most current practices.

### **Other rules relating to AFS-USA's business operations**

AFS-USA also has policies or rules that relate to specific areas of our operations. These may include:

- travel, support and preparation of program participants
- local volunteer operations, elections and financial administration
- promotion of AFS, including the branding and the communications of the organization.

AFS-USA's volunteers are to support the business operations of the organization and are not empowered to make their own rules or interpretations. It is important to understand that AFS-USA operates in a highly regulated environment, and are regulated by the U.S. Department of State and CSJET. Volunteers who choose to apply their own interpretation of rules or operations may undermine the management of AFS-USA and put AFS-USA's reputation and good standing at risk.

### **Continuous improvement**

AFS-USA continually reviews its volunteer management, support and training programs in order to ensure AFS volunteers have a meaningful and rewarding experience.

From time to time volunteers' feedback will be sought in a more formal manner by evaluation forms and surveys. We encourage volunteers to respond. With limited resources mean staff are unable to meet every volunteer personally, but volunteers' feedback and ideas are welcome by phone, email or mail at any time.

Volunteers will be kept up to date with any changes to policies and procedures and with news of AFS-USA. This will be done through local group and regional leaders and with regular email newsletters.

## Reference Material

[Media:VolunteerPolicyDocument.pdf](#)