

## FAQs

*Q: Do I need to have any kind of prior education and/or work experience to become a VMNH Youth Volunteer?*

A: The only restriction is that you must be between 13-18 years old. VMNH provides all the information you will need to become a successful volunteer. We just ask that you have a positive attitude and be open to working hard and learning.

*Q: What does the VMNH Youth Volunteer training consist of?*

A: Each year there will be a VMNH Summer Adventure Camp training in the Spring where we will kick-off summer with a fun, informative meeting about the upcoming camps and give you an opportunity to enjoy a nice day with other bright, hard-working youth volunteers like yourself! There will also be a training in the Fall where we will kick-off a new school year of programs, special events, birthday parties, and sleepovers! You will also be offered CPR/First Aid training on a yearly basis and will be invited to meetings throughout the year where there will always be an opportunity to share ideas and learn more about the museum, the Youth Volunteer program, and the people involved!

*Q: What kind of time commitment must I make to the VMNH Youth Volunteer Program?*

A: At VMNH we believe being an active volunteer is critical to supporting the mission of the museum. We ask our youth volunteers to work, on average, 4 hours/month or 48 hours/year. If you have any questions and/or concerns with this requirement please let us know. We want your volunteer shifts to always be something you are excited about doing, not a stressful obligation.

*Q: I'm 18. I've graduated from high school. What's next for me at VMNH?*

A: The opportunities available to you at VMNH are not over once you have maxed out the age limit or graduated from high school. If during your Youth Volunteer days you achieve VMNH Junior Interpreter level, we invite you to become a VMNH DEPP Intern! It is a wonderful opportunity where you will be given a behind-the-scenes look at what the DEPP does at VMNH. It is a chance to gain valuable work experience and learn from successful educators.

*Q: Can I select my own shifts or am I assigned shifts?*

A: You select the volunteer shifts that work best with your schedule. You will be informed of all youth volunteer opportunities, but you decide which days, times, events, etc. you want to work.

*Q: What do I wear for my volunteer shifts?*

A: Most importantly you should dress to be comfortable. Volunteering is hard work and requires a lot of moving around, so where something you can be comfortable in for your whole shift. We do ask, however, that you remember that you are representing the museum so please dress appropriately. Lastly, when you will be working with the public you are required to wear a volunteer apron.

*Q: What should I do if I'm scheduled to work but can't because I'm sick or a family emergency has come up?*

A: If you cannot make it in for your scheduled shift please contact staff to notify them of your absence as soon as possible. If possible, try to notify staff at least one day in advance, but if something very sudden and unexpected comes up please do your best to notify us before your shift. We understand that things can come up so do not be afraid to tell us you cannot make it in. It is better for us to know than to wonder where you are.

*Q: What do I do if a visitor asks me a question that I do not know the answer to?*

A: It is okay if you do not know the answer to every question that visitors may ask. If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to, be honest, tell the visitor you do not know the answer, but you will find somebody who does. Ask a member of the staff and either have them tell the visitor or bring the information back to the visitor yourself. It is better to be honest about not knowing than to try and guess at an answer.

*Q: What should I do in case of an emergency while I'm working?*

A: One of our security officers will go over VMNH security procedures during training so you will be familiar with what to do in an emergency situation. However, if there is an emergency while you are working and you are unsure what to do you should ask a staff member, security or otherwise, what you should do. There will always be plenty of museum staff present during your volunteer shifts.

*Q: What should I do if I get hurt while I'm working?*

A: If you are injured or become ill while you are working you should immediately notify the staff member you are working with. Do not try to work through it or take care of the injury yourself. Your safety and comfort while you are here is our #1 priority.

### In closing...

We cannot thank you enough for your hard work and the commitment you are making to the museum. We are so excited to work with each of you and look forward to hearing all the ideas you have to offer. We mean it when we say VMNH would not be the same without you!



# Department of Education and Public Programs Youth Volunteer Handbook



# Welcome to the Virginia Museum of Natural History Youth Volunteer program!

As a youth volunteer, you will be joining an active and enthusiastic team, dedicated to helping the museum and the community! You will play an extremely important role in helping the museum meet our mission – interpreting Virginia’s natural heritage in ways that are relevant to all citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. We thank you for your commitment, energy, and enthusiasm!

## So, why should you volunteer at the Virginia Museum of Natural History?

- To meet other students in the area and make new friends.
- You can make a difference! Your service will make the world a better place!
- It feels good to help people!
- Volunteering at the museum is a great opportunity to gain valuable work experience and can add to your resume.
- To learn more about yourself and who you are as a person.
- To be an important part of exciting work that the museum does and to get advanced notice about upcoming events at VMNH.
- Volunteering for the museum can be counted as community service hours towards graduation.



## What are the “musts” to being a VMNH Youth Volunteer?

- Youth volunteers must be 13 – 18 years old.
- Complete the following forms: “VMNH Youth Volunteer Information Form,” “Youth Volunteer Policies/Agreement of Responsibilities,” “Youth Volunteer Program Participant Permission and Release,” “Child Medical Information,” and “Field Trip Permission and Release - Youth Volunteer” (if the volunteer is traveling).
- Being an active volunteer is critical! All new volunteers will participate in a volunteer orientation, and all volunteers are expected to attend periodic meetings and trainings.
- Assist museum education staff with special events such as festivals, birthday parties, and sleepovers, summer camps, exhibit tours, animal care, and preparing for these events.
- Sign in with the box office (at the museum) or with a staff member (out of office) when you arrive for your scheduled shift.
- Wear the volunteer apron at all times when you are working with the public.
- Respond to museum staff requests promptly by e-mail or phone.
- Notify the museum staff member you are working with immediately if you are injured or become ill during your shift.
- Be helpful, friendly, and have a positive attitude!

## Youth Volunteer Training and Service Training

Each volunteer is expected to attend periodic meetings and training days. You will always be given plenty of notice when a meeting or training day is scheduled, but the schedule to prepare for would be:

- Bi-monthly meetings to discuss and learn about new exhibits, upcoming programs and events, animal care, and VMNH Youth Volunteer business.
- Annual spring training day to discuss and learn about upcoming Summer Camps.
- Annual fall training day to discuss and learn about the upcoming school years’ programs and events.
- Time spent at meetings or training days will count towards your total number of service hours per year!

## Service

Youth are encouraged to work as many service hours as possible. The levels described below are based on service hours per year. However, youth may achieve another level based on accumulated length of service (over multiple years) or in recognition of special contributions.

- **VMNH Youth Volunteer** works up to 35 service hours year: Typically new youth volunteers who sign-up for shifts on a by-need basis, primarily one-time events such as birthday parties, sleepovers, or festivals.
- **VMNH Apprentice** works between 36-47 service hours per year: Commit to working fairly regular shifts or several longer shifts that include, but are not limited to festivals, summer camps, and/or DEPP projects on a by-need basis.
- **VMNH Junior Interpreter\*** requires at least 48 service hours: Commit to working regular shifts, such as on a weekly basis, to do animal care, assist the DEPP with preparation for upcoming programs and events, and/or complete other jobs assigned by education staff. Working a week-long, full-day summer camp would also contribute greatly to your hours achieved.  
*\*If Junior Interpreter level is achieved you are invited to continue your work at the museum as an Intern after graduating from high school.*

## Safety

Your safety at VMNH is very important to us. We want you to be well prepared for any situation that may come up while you are at the museum or off-site for a special event. Our security team at VMNH is always here to help and will train you in how to handle and respond in any of the following situations:

- Drills: tornado and fire
- Natural disasters
- Building evacuation
- Location of first aid kits
- Code Adam

If you have questions about any of these situations please ask a staff member. When you are working for VMNH we want you to feel and be both safe and comfortable.

## Contact information

You will be in contact, primarily, with two VMNH Education staff members. You will receive e-mails, updates, and program and event notices from either the Youth Volunteer Coordinator or the DEPP Administrative Assistant. In order to avoid confusion you should respond directly to the person who contacts you. If you are unable to get in contact with either the Youth Volunteer Coordinator or the Administrative Assistant, you can call the museum’s main line and box office staff will give us your message.

## contact/e-mail/phone

*Youth Volunteer Coordinator:*  
Sara Reichert  
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(276) 634-4188

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