

# Planning A Service Project

## Some Initial Considerations

When beginning to plan a service project, there are a couple of things you need to consider. What kind of service do you want to do? What are the community's needs?

### What kind of service do you want to do?

#### Direct Service:

When most people think of community service or volunteering they are thinking about direct service. Direct service involves interaction between the volunteer and the service recipient. Examples of direct service include tutoring children, visiting residents at a nursing home, and serving meals at a soup kitchen.

You may have also heard the term **service-learning**. Service-learning combines direct service relating to a specific issue or population with academic coursework that examines the same issues that you are encountering at your service site. To bring your direct service experience and the academic content together, reflection activities are used to help you think about the larger social issues present at your service site.

#### Indirect Service:

Indirect service does not include interaction with clients of the community agencies. Instead, indirect service supports the infrastructure of the community agency through activities such as mailings and fundraisers. Supporting organizations by raising money through 5K walks or penny wars are examples of philanthropy events and fall into the indirect service category.

#### Advocacy:

Often associated with activism, advocacy focuses in on specific issues that people and/or communities are currently facing. Volunteers participate in advocacy by sponsoring educational campaigns, lobbying the government, and speaking out to the public to raise awareness. Advocacy work can address topics such as the environment, welfare reform, or HIV/AIDS policies.

All forms of service including direct, indirect, service-learning, and philanthropy are important! The key is to consider what will be most beneficial for the community and how their needs match up with your interests.

### What are the community's needs?

To truly make a difference in the community, your actions must meet a real community need. Often well-meaning volunteers will contact a community agency and tell the agency what they can do for the agency. By telling the community agency what you are willing to provide or how you are willing to help them, you are assuming that you know what they need from their volunteers. In the end your time and efforts may not be well utilized and may actually create more work for the agency. **BE SURE TO ASK WHAT THE COMMUNITY AGENCY NEEDS FROM YOU!** Not only will they appreciate this, but you will ensure that your hard work will make a difference!

## A Step-By-Step Guide

Use this checklist to help plan, implement, and follow up on your next service project.

- Scope of the Service Project
  - Choose your community agency based on your interest in the issue or population (such as the environmental, hunger & homelessness, children & literacy, HIV/AIDS, women's issues, etc).
  - Will the work be direct or indirect service?
  - What is the location where you will be doing your service (service site, address, directions, etc)? Be sure to clarify if you will be doing the service at their main office or at another location.
  - How much time will you commit to this activity? Are you interested in planning a one-time project or would you prefer to volunteer with this organization on an on-going basis?
  - When (date and time) will the project take place?
  - Who will be your contact person at the site?
  - What kind of orientation (or training) will your group receive prior to the service activity? Who will provide the orientation?
- When working with a service agency...
  - What types of services does the agency offer?
  - What types of clients does the agency serve?
  - What confidentiality policies or volunteer restrictions does the agency have?
- Supervision
  - Who do you talk to when you get to the site (this may be a different person than the contact person)?
  - Will an agency person supervise the activity?
  - Will there be a "site leader" from your organization? Is this person knowledgeable about the site? How will this person be trained to lead?
  - Who do you talk to when issues arise?
- Safety and Emergency Concerns
  - Is the work within the students' capabilities?
  - Should you consider any safety precautions?
  - What will you do if there is an emergency?
  - Are there liability concerns for the organization or for Ohio State?
  - Should participants sign a waiver?
- Transportation
  - How will you get students to and from the service site?
  - How will you deal with "stranded" students?
- Supplies
  - What will you need to do the work?
  - Are supplies provided at the site, or are you responsible for bringing them?
  - Might anyone be willing to donate supplies for the service activity?
- Pre-Service Publicity

- How will you get students to participate in the activity? In what ways can students benefit from this particular service activity?
- Do you want to target a specific student organization, residence hall, or academic department?
- How will you recruit student or staff site leaders? In what ways would either one benefit from taking a leadership role?
- What should the timeline be for both of these recruitment efforts?
- Have you submitted the project information to Project Community to be added to their [calendar](#)?
- Reflection
  - Will the reflection be a group discussion, or take some other form?
  - Where will it take place?
  - Will it be formal or informal?
  - How will you use open-ended questions to prompt reflection?
  - Will it be useful to use a service reflection model like the "[What? So What? Now What?](#)" model?
- Post-Event Follow Up
  - Have you thanked the agency supervisor or volunteer coordinator?
  - Have you given all participants (if known) a summary of the event's successes? This might include the number of hours worked, number of volunteers, total money raised, etc.
  - Have you created publicity to inform the campus and community about what you've accomplished?
  - Have you reported your successes to Project Community to be highlighted on the website?