

**COVID-19 Volunteerism Messaging**  
**Updated: March 20, 2020**

The State of Illinois and its community partners are working to ensure the health of our citizens. To do that, we need your help. The spirit of volunteerism and community service are alive and well during COVID-19. Those that considering volunteering have options, both in-person options as well as virtual efforts.

**In Person Volunteerism/Community Service Options**

**Personal Preparedness for Volunteers:** *If you are feeling sick, or displaying any symptoms of illness, please stay home.* Volunteers can get the job done, but we need you to be healthy and operating at 100% to make that happen! Please do not put yourself or anyone else at risk by coming to volunteer when sick. If you are displaying signs of illness while you volunteer, you will be asked by the group you are volunteering with to return home.

Each organization that is accepting volunteers are to ensure that groups are being capped at fewer people at least less than 10 people than traditional groups to best accommodate social distancing. Additional restrictions such as limiting volunteers to best protect vulnerable populations may be appropriate.

**Volunteer Opportunities:** Below is a listing of localized volunteer opportunities. If you do not see an opportunity in your area, and are interested in volunteering but you do not currently have an organization to work with, please complete a profile at the following two organizations and someone will contact you as needed.

- American Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer.html>
- Salvation Army: <http://disaster.salvationarmyusa.org/>
- If you have medical expertise, please register with Medical Reserve Corps at Illinois HELPS: <https://www.illinoishelps.net/index.php>.

**Known localized volunteer opportunities:** The State of Illinois does not endorse or recommend any particular volunteer opportunities. Volunteers are needed to help several nonprofit organizations, especially those organizations that focus on homelessness, meal delivery and senior citizens. Nonprofit organizations are looking for extra help. This is simply a clearinghouse for what is known to us. If your organization and its volunteer opportunity would like to be listed, please submit a request at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ILVolRequest>

The Serve Illinois Commission, the Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, is collecting these requests and will be updating them daily on [www.serve.illinois.gov](http://www.serve.illinois.gov)

1. **Donate blood:** The American Red Cross is experiencing a severe shortage of blood donations. Additional health screenings, sanitation measures and social distancing guidelines have been implemented to ensure donor and staff safety. Learn more about where to donate at <https://redcrossblood.org>
2. Due to the suspension of group services and increased one-on-one in-home services that are being provided by the **Aging Network**, we are in need of more volunteers to assist with the normal functions of our Aging Network. Specifically, the Area Agencies on Aging need assistance in the form of non face-to-face contact with our older adults; including the delivery of meals and telephone reassurance programs. Both programs provide relief and assistance to our older

adults who are practicing social distancing, but who are also at risk of being socially isolated. No experience is necessary for volunteers. Your local Area Agencies on Aging will provide you with instructions and stand ready to accept your help. We encourage anyone to volunteer by looking up your local [Area Agency on Aging by county](#), emailing [aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov](mailto:aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov), or calling our Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966.

3. The **DuPage Senior Citizens Council** is looking for volunteers to help deliver meals to seniors in the county. To volunteer, call Cathy Jordan, volunteer services director, at 630-746-0909.
4. The **Northern Illinois Food Bank** is looking for more than 500 volunteers to fill current gaps. To help, contact Shannon Thompson, volunteer services director at [sthompson@northernilfoodbank.org](mailto:sthompson@northernilfoodbank.org) or [volunteer@northernilfoodbank.org](mailto:volunteer@northernilfoodbank.org) or call 630-443-6910, Ext. 125.
5. **Senior Home Sharing**, which serves senior citizens, needs help with grocery store trips, pharmacy pickups and meal donations. To volunteer, contact Courtney Simek, executive director, at [csimek@seniorhomesharing.org](mailto:csimek@seniorhomesharing.org) or call 630-201-7080.
6. **United Way of Decatur and Macon County**. We have some immediate volunteer needs in its community. If you are healthy and not high-risk, please consider helping these organizations:
  - Catholic Charities Food Pantry - volunteers needed to pack food boxes. Call 217-428-6772
  - Northeast Community Fund - UPDATE: volunteers needed every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9a-2p
  - Good Samaritan Inn - 4-6 volunteers needed to pack food boxes each day 9-11a, 11a-1p (see new United Way post). Email [director@goodsamaritaninn.org](mailto:director@goodsamaritaninn.org)

### **Virtual Volunteerism/Community Service Options**

There are important ways to care for your community right from your own home and neighborhood.

**Donate.** The long-term impact of COVID-19 on the nonprofit sector has the potential to be severe. Your support of front-line organizations caring for vulnerable populations is urgently needed now, while donations are also needed in the long-term to all social impact organizations to weather the long-term consequences of this crisis and our collective recovery.

**Complete the census.** The census is now available online. Census data directs billions of dollars of funding into communities each year, and Illinois is at risk of losing significant funding and other impacts. Do your part while you're at home and be counted!

**Check in on your neighbors.** As more and more people experience isolation, we encourage you to call and check in on your neighbors, especially those who may not have support networks or adequate resources. It's easy to feel overwhelmed right now but building connections and empathy can go a long way in reducing stress. Calling and texting is a good example of responsible social distancing. "CAPP" is a great way to remember your neighbors:

- C – Check on your neighbors
- A – Assess and Assist
- P – Protect Self and Neighbors

P – Provide needed resources

**Connect with your children.** In times of crisis, it's common for youth to be curious and seek more attachment from parents, guardians, and caregivers. Answer their questions about COVID-19 with honest and age-appropriate information to ease their anxiety.