

SHIP COUNSELOR RISK & PROGRAM MANAGEMENT MANUAL

MAY 2023



Acknowledgement

This manual was prepared in accordance with grant MIPPA Grant No. 1701ILMISH-01 from the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

The contents of this manual were adapted from existing SHIP Volunteer manuals from Connecticut, South Dakota, ACL and the SHIP National Technical Assistance Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP).

Purpose

This manual is intended to support Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) personnel responsible for SHIP volunteer management and particularly for those responsible for the specific tasks involved to be an effective SHIP Site Coordinator (SSC). SSCs may have a variety of actual job titles, but this term is used to describe the role of the person or persons responsible for the following types of SHIP volunteer program management tasks: overall volunteer program management, recruitment, placement, training, supervision, recognition, and more.

SHIP directors may also find this manual useful. Volunteer Risk and Program Management requires a team effort and may need assistance and support from the staff or partners who perform the role of SSC.

Some of the items within this document are not appropriate for use with SHIP paid staff or in-kind volunteers and should not be applied to these team members.

Additional Resources Other SHIP volunteer program management tools are available to SHIP staff in the SHIP Resource Library at www.shiptacenter.org (password-protected).

Periodic webinar training about volunteer program management is also provided by the SHIP National Technical Assistance Center and then archived at www.shiptacenter.org.

For assistance with accessing volunteer program management materials and training, contact the Center at info@shiptacenter.org or 1(877)839-2675.

The Illinois Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) can be contacted at 1(800)252-8966 or Aging.SHIP@illinois.gov.

Table of Contents

NATIONAL SHIP MISSION, VISION, STRATEGIC THEMES, AND GOALS.....	1
WHAT IS ILLINOIS SHIP?	3
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	5
VOLUNTEER RISK PROGRAM MANAGEMENT (VRPM) POLICY IMPLEMENTATION	6
FEDERAL GUIDELINES FOR VRPM POLICIES SPECIFIC TO VOLUNTEER BEHAVIOR, PERFORMANCE, AND ROLES	8
VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTIONS.....	10
SHIP SCREENING, TRAINING, AND CERTIFICATION.....	12
I. STEP ONE: PRE-SCREENING	12
II. STEP TWO: FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW	15
III. STEP THREE: TRAINING-CERTIFICATION	16
RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	17
VEHICLE INSURANCE.....	21
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT.....	22
RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERS.....	24
COUNSELOR SEPARATION	25
COUNSELORS WITH DISABILITIES	27
APPENDIX A: FEDERAL GUIDELINES ON VRPM POLICIES	28
APPENDIX B: EXPANDED SHIP COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTIONS.....	40
COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION.....	40
COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: ASSISTING WITH ADMINISTRATION	42
COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: STAFFING EXHIBITS	44
COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: MAKING GROUP PRESENTATIONS	46
COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: COUNSELING	48
APPENDIX C: SHIP SCREENING MATRIX & REFERENCE CHECK INFORMATION	50
APPENDIX D: CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS	55
APPENDIX E: INCIDENT REPORT, COMPLAINTS, GRIEVANCES, AND APEALS... 65	
SHIP INCIDENT REPORT FORM.....	67
APPENDIX F: DRIVER’S LICENSE AND INSURANCE COVERAGE CERTIFICATION FORM.....	69

APPENDIX G: COMPLAINT BY A SHIP COUNSELOR/VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTIONS	71
SHIP COMPLAINT FORM.....	73
SHIP RECONSIDERTION/APPEAL FORM	75
APPENDIX H: SHIP COUNSELOR/VOLUNTEER EXIT SURVEY	76

NATIONAL SHIP MISSION, VISION, STRATEGIC THEMES, AND GOALS

SHIP activities support Administration for Community Living’s (ACL’s) broader goals of promoting increased choice and greater independence among older adults. Program activities also serve to enhance the financial, emotional, physical, and mental well-being of Medicare beneficiaries, older adults, and persons with disabilities; thereby increasing their capacity to maintain security and independence in retirement and to make better financial and health care decisions.

National SHIP Mission: “... is to empower, educate, and assist Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers through objective outreach, counseling, and training to make informed health insurance decisions that optimize access to care and benefits.”

Vision: “We are the known and trusted community resource for Medicare information.”

Strategic Themes and Goals: The national SHIP goals, objectives, and initiatives fall under four overarching themes:

Strategic Theme	Goals
Service Excellence	1. Consistently and confidentially provide accurate, objective, and comprehensive information and assistance. 2. Promote awareness, knowledge, and visibility of the program.
Capacity Building	3. Recruit, train and retain a diverse, sufficient, and effective workforce at all levels.
Operational Excellence	4. Develop and strengthen the program structure and organization, including policies, processes, and procedures, to enable effective and efficient operations.
Innovation	5. Promote adaptable and sustainable processes and activities to position SHIP for changes in the programmatic landscape.

SHIPs operate in all 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. At the state and local levels, SHIPs rely on hundreds of partnerships with

host organizations that include Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and other aging and disability organizations, to help achieve the program's goals.

Volunteers serve as invaluable assets to ACL's goals by:

- Serving a wider audience, especially with ever increasing budget restrictions;
- Representing a cross section of their communities, which helps to reach targeted and hard-to-reach populations; and
- Offering technical skills not already available to the program.

MANUAL REFERENCE

NOTE: [Chapter 4 \(page 16\)](#) of the SHIP Volunteer Program Management Manual delves further into the theory behind volunteer recruitment and how to get the message out to attract prospective volunteers.

WHAT IS ILLINOIS SHIP?

The Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) was initiated in July of 1988 within the Illinois Department of Insurance. SHIP is a free statewide health insurance counseling service for Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers.

Illinois SHIP Mission Statement:

To educate the citizens of Illinois about Medicare Parts A, B, C, and D employer plans, Medicaid, and the medical savings plans. Individuals receive this information through public forums, presentations to various community organizations, senior centers, radio, television, various publications, and social media.

To provide accurate objective counseling, assistance and advocacy relating to Medicare, other public benefits, private health insurance, and related health coverage plans. Counseling of the individual client focuses on specific information or assistance provided in one-on-one confidential sessions with certified counselors. Individual counseling sessions provide an effective way to compare and enroll in health plans and seek information on money saving benefits.

Program Accomplishments:

- In 1997, SHIP received the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services national award for “sustained achievement and excellence in providing insurance counseling and assistance to the citizens of Illinois.”
- In 2006, SHIP received Congressional recognition for the implementation of Part D (Medicare Drug Coverage).
- In 2012, SHIP received a “Teamwork” award from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).
- In April 2013, SHIP transferred from the Illinois Department of Insurance to the Illinois Department on Aging pursuant to Executive Order 13-1. SHIP activities align with the Illinois Department on Aging’s mission to help older individuals maintain their health and independence while remaining in their homes and communities.

SHIP Outreach:

SHIP outreach includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Production and distribution of Medicare Supplement Premium Comparison Guides, an annual comparison of Medicare Supplement Plans and Premiums;

- Performs Medicare PlanFinder comparisons on Medicare.gov for Part C and D plans, and enroll beneficiaries into Part C or D plans of their choice;
- Conducts outreach to Medicare beneficiaries and beneficiary caregivers by participating in health fairs, senior fairs, and the Illinois State Fair; and
- Provides in-person and virtual educational workshops for coordinators and counselors year around.

SHIP currently has over 230 offices throughout the state staffed by over 1,000 counselors. All offices utilize volunteers, in-kind, and paid counselors who are certified through an Illinois SHIP training program. Host organizations support SHIP by offering unbiased counseling at no cost.

SHIP counselors are trained to:

- Educate consumers and answer questions about Medicare Parts A, B, C, D, and Medicare Supplement policies.
- Perform PlanFinder comparisons on Medicare.gov for Part C and D plans and enroll beneficiaries in the Part C and D plan of their choice; and
- Counsel people, who are new to Medicare, on their health plan choices and money savings options; and
- Screen and help beneficiaries apply for the Medicare Saving Program (MSP) which provides cost savings on Medicare premiums, deductibles, and co-pays; and the Extra Help program which helps to lower prescription drug coverage (Part D) costs.

SHIP counseling is performed in multiple languages including Spanish, Polish, Korean, Chinese, Mandarin, and Hindi. SHIP host organizations work closely with their community to bring resources to the local citizens.

SHIP provides a toll-free helpline, is not affiliated with any insurance company, and counselors do not sell or solicit any type of insurance.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACL: The Administration for Community Living, an operating division within the federal Department of Health and Human Services with headquarters in Washington, D.C., and regional offices in 10 cities. ACL is the administrator of all SHIP grants.

AoA: The Administration on Aging, an agency within the ACL, which administers all programs funded by the Older Americans Act.

AAA: An Area Agency on Aging is responsible for planning and delivery of services under the Older Americans Act for a specific geographic region within a state.

CMS: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) administers the Medicare program and oversees state administration of the Medicaid programs. CMS is also responsible for overseeing the Medicare Advantage (Part C) and Medicare Prescription Drug (Part D) programs. CMS is managed by an Administrator appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).

HHS: The Department of Health & Human Services is one of two departments within the executive branch of the federal government responsible for administering the Health Care Fraud & Abuse Control (HCFAC) program of which the Medicare Integrity Program (MIP) is a part. ACL, CMS and the HHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) are units within HHS. The Secretary of HHS holds a cabinet-level position.

SHIP: The State Health Insurance Program provides outreach, education, and counseling services to Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers. SHIP assists with applying for assistance programs, comparing and choosing health and drug plans, and appealing claim denials.

VRPM: The Volunteer Risk and Program Management program was developed to manage SHIP volunteers more safely, effectively, and productively for both volunteers and SHIP clients.

VOLUNTEER RISK PROGRAM MANAGEMENT (VRPM) POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

A comprehensive set of Volunteer Risk and Program Management policies guide the operation of SHIP. The policies resulted from a nation-wide project that began in 2010 to assess and identify the risks involved in the operation of SHIP, and to provide guidance and resources to program managers to help them manage the identified risks. The Volunteer Risk and Program Management (VRPM) project's implementation was completed for SHIP at the end of 2014. In 2016, ACL added a requirement for all SHIP agencies to implement VRPM policies by April 1, 2019. The Administration on Aging (AoA) and the Administration for Community Living (ACL) initiated the VRPM project with these factors in mind:

- Growth of SHIPs;
- Increased awareness about risks related to counselor involvement, for example, with counselors who have access to sensitive personal information;
- The need to adapt to a changing environment for volunteering in which volunteers assume responsibility for challenging and responsible tasks;
- Expectations in the courts and public opinion for higher standards and greater accountability in counselor programs; and
- Concern of safety for both counselors and the clients, many who are vulnerable seniors, who benefit from SHIP services.

The VRPM program also promotes effectiveness by setting a high standard of care in counseling services. The creation of national standards for this important area of program operations will enhance the program's results.

VRPM policies apply to all state and local organizations, also called SHIP Sites, that recruit and manage volunteers to perform SHIP duties, and to all SHIP team members. The policies were created with true volunteers in mind, meaning those volunteers that do not receive regular compensation for their time and effort. ACL expects that SHIP will ensure proper training, screening, and supervision is provided to all team members. This includes holding all team members accountable for the work that they do.

NOTE: Throughout this handbook the terms “counselor” and “volunteer” are used interchangeably. The difference between the two is counselors could be paid staff doing SHIP duties, while volunteers are unpaid staff and may have other duties within the SHIP Site outside of SHIP counseling.

As a SHIP team member, the counselor has an obligation to know and understand the policies, and how the policies affect them personally. The SHIP Site Coordinator will refer to the policies as they manage volunteers in the program. The policies address:

- Definitions of key terms
- Volunteer role classifications and position descriptions
- Risk management and insurance requirements
- Incident reporting and response procedures
- Volunteer rights and responsibilities
- SHIP Site Coordinator's role
- Screening procedures
- Orientation and training
- Performance management
- Boundaries and ethics, including relationships with beneficiaries
- Confidentiality
- Grievances and complaints
- Recognition
- Information and data security

NOTE: ACL reserves the exclusive right to change any aspect of these volunteer policies at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy by SHIP, SHIP team members, and partners who serve SHIP. In some cases, host organizations may have other policies in place in addition to the VRPM policies. If a counselor finds that the different policies are in conflict or are causing confusion, they should discuss the problem with their SHIP Site Coordinator.

FEDERAL GUIDELINES FOR VRPM POLICIES SPECIFIC TO VOLUNTEER BEHAVIOR, PERFORMANCE, AND ROLES

- 3.1** SHIP VRPM policies apply equally to all SHIP volunteers, and compliance with these policies is a condition of continued involvement in SHIP.
- 3.87** Questions regarding interpretation of these policies should be addressed to the appropriate SHIP staff for clarification. Not understanding a policy is not acceptable grounds for failure to comply.
- 3.88** Volunteers are to be objective, timely, conscientious, and act in conformity with the code of conduct consistent with their training.
- 3.89** Volunteers are to know and respect the boundaries of their role.
- 3.90** Volunteers are to provide service without regard to the beneficiary's background or characteristics. Volunteers do not recommend or endorse specific services, providers, or products to beneficiaries.
- 3.91** Volunteers represent SHIP, but they do not represent themselves as spokespersons of SHIP. Volunteers use their nametag only when undertaking official and authorized SHIP duties. SHIP provides volunteers a list of prohibited actions in this regard.
- 3.93** Volunteers do not use their SHIP affiliation to endorse any issue or business or to promote any religious or political belief, perspective, or practice.
- 3.94** Volunteers are required to maintain strict confidentiality of all protected information.
- 3.96** Volunteers are required to record and submit their data, hours, and activities within an appropriate timeframe.
- 3.97** SHIP expects volunteers to be reliable and punctual. When expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, volunteers are to inform their SHIP Site Coordinator as far in advance as possible so alternate arrangements may be made.

- 3.98** Action is taken on all complaints of harassment, whether made formally or informally.
- 3.99** SHIP does not tolerate the use of alcohol or illegal drugs in its work environment.
- 3.100** SHIP volunteers do not accept gifts from beneficiaries, their families, or representatives. Any such offerings are respectfully and tactfully declined.
- 3.101** It is not appropriate for SHIP volunteers to benefit materially from their SHIP duties.
- 3.103** Volunteers have access to SHIP materials and equipment necessary to fulfill their duties and use such only when directly required for the volunteer task.
- 3.104** Volunteers are to maintain boundaries in their relationships with beneficiaries; personal invitations are declined.
- 3.105** SHIP volunteers do not enter into any financial transactions with beneficiaries, their family members, or caregivers.
- 3.106** Volunteers do not engage in political activities, campaigning, or lobbying during volunteer hours.
- 3.107** Volunteers are to demonstrate a respect for the cultures of beneficiaries with whom they work and are sensitive to others' beliefs, traditions, and lifestyles.
- 3.108** SHIP is respectful of the paid staff in facilities where SHIP performs services. If labor actions are occurring at these facilities, SHIP will determine whether volunteers should continue to provide services at this venue.

NOTE: A complete list of Federal guidelines for VRPM policies and policy language, both required and recommended, has been included in [Appendix A](#). A summary, which includes the full language and rationale of each of the guidelines, can be found on the SHIP National Technical Center: www.shiptacenter.org, info@shiptacenter.org, 1(877)839-2675.

VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

The following is a list of suggested volunteer roles. Additional roles may be created to meet specific volunteer and community needs. Information about the roles and the responsibilities connected with them are set forth in the following position descriptions:

<p>Distribute information: This role involves transporting and disseminating SHIP informational materials to sites and events and may include presenting prepared copies or performing scripted activities for small groups. Volunteers who work in this role do not engage in discussions with others about personal information or situations. <i>This role is not considered to be a position of trust.</i></p>
<p>Assist with administration: This role involves such work as copying, filing, data entry, scheduling appointments, and placing phone calls in support of SHIP activities. Volunteers who work in this role do not field questions from the public. <i>This role is not considered to be a position of trust.</i></p>
<p>Staff exhibits: This role involves staffing information kiosks or exhibits at events such as health fairs. Volunteers who staff exhibits provide general information about SHIP to the public and answer simple inquiries. <i>This role is considered a position of trust.</i></p>
<p>Make group presentations: This role involves giving substantive presentations on SHIP topics to either small and/or large groups, with the opportunity for interaction with the audience during time set aside for a questions and answers (Q&A) and discussion. <i>This role is considered a position of trust.</i></p>
<p>Counsel: This role involves direct discussion with beneficiaries about their individual situations and may include review of personal information such as Medicare Summary Notices, billing statements, and other related financial and health documents <i>This role is considered a position of trust.</i></p>
<p>Additional Role Options: SHIP Site Coordinators can assign volunteers to other roles suitable for their region's needs. Those roles can include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor • Counseling Site Coordinator • Special Projects • Volunteer Focus Groups <p><i>The function of the role would determine if it is considered a position of trust.</i></p>

SHIP considers staffing exhibits, making group presentations, counseling, and handling complex issues and referrals to be “positions of trust.” This means that these roles involve access to beneficiaries’ or other vulnerable people’s personal or confidential information, or to bank accounts, financial statements, or other valuables.

Positions of trust are to be subjected to more rigorous screening procedures than the roles involving administration and information distribution. (Please note that counselors and volunteers who are in a position of trust are to undergo background checks.)

SHIP volunteers are to confine their activities to those tasks and responsibilities described in the position description for their specific role(s). Each volunteer role has responsibilities as well as limits to those responsibilities.

NOTE: More detailed role description samples have been included in [Appendix B](#).

MANUAL REFERENCE

NOTE: [Chapter 5 \(page 27\)](#) of the SHIP Volunteer Program Management Manual describes procedures on matching volunteers to appropriate roles. Also included in this chapter are suggestions on how to prepare for the interview, interview questions, closing the interview, and rejecting a potential volunteer. Matching is important to ensure tasks are completed effectively, AND to keep the person motivated to continue volunteering.

SHIP SCREENING, TRAINING, AND CERTIFICATION

SHIP has established minimum training and certification requirements for new and existing team members. SHIP Counselors are required to regularly attend SHIP training offerings held virtually and in-person throughout the year.

I. STEP ONE: PRE-SCREENING

At a minimum, the process requires a completed application form. The screening process may also include a minimum of two reference checks, a criminal records check, driving records check, and checks on education and employment background for those volunteers applying for a position of trust.

SHIP Reference Checking Tips:

Many people dismiss the reference check as a not-very-useful source of screening information. In fact, when done well, the reference check may be the most important tool SHIP Site Coordinators have to make the acceptance decision. Below is a list of suggestions that could be integrated into a SHIP organization's current reference check procedures.

Two key principles should guide all reference checking procedures:

1. The substance of the conversation should be job-related. Do not ask about history, attributes, or personal circumstances unless the SHIP Site Coordinator is certain those things are clearly related to the job the applicant has applied to do.
2. Second, the questions should be consistent for all candidates. Certainly, it is permissible to pursue the specific details of each candidate's background, and to clarify anything that catches the SHIP Site Coordinator's attention, but the conversation should stay within the boundaries of what the position or role description calls for, and a general uniformity of questions helps to create a fair process.

The SHIP Site Coordinator is the person responsible for making the final acceptance decision, thus shall be the person who performs the reference checks.

Plan thoroughly and listen carefully to references' input. Employers are increasingly wary of lawsuits and reference providers are more cautious than ever about saying anything directly negative. The SHIP Site Coordinator should structure all questions carefully and listen equally to what is not being said.

When checking a work or counselor reference, design questions that elicit observations and personal assessments of the applicant's work behaviors. If a reference is unavailable within a suitable time frame, or unwilling to provide sufficient details, ask the applicant to provide an acceptable substitute. Refusal to provide a reference (even the scantest of details) may be a red flag to investigate further. Try to find the reason for the refusal.

Conducting the Reference Check Phone Call

The SHIP Site Coordinator should introduce themselves immediately, identify their position with the program, and state the purpose of the call. They should also;

- Provide enough information about the counselor role for which the applicant has applied to ensure that the reference knows this is important work. Some people are dismissive when they hear that the call is about counselor work.
- Determine whether the person is free to discuss the situation currently and offer to call back at a more convenient time, if necessary, be persistent.
- Let the reference know that written permission was received from the applicant to contact the reference.
- Try, wherever possible, not to promise confidentiality, and never reveal to a reference information provided by another reference.
- Verify employment terms (dates, position, responsibilities, and reason for leaving). Be sure to ask the reference if employment was continuous throughout the term of employment to ensure that there were no unaccounted time periods.

Sample Questions and Answers

- Begin with general questions such as: “How do you think the applicant would fit into our organization or this role?” After these questions move on to more specific questions.
- Ask open-ended questions and avoid leading questions.
- Let the reference talk freely for as long as they wish, without interruption; often a comment or question from you at the wrong time will shut off further information.
- Follow up and probe when you feel the reference is reluctant to discuss certain areas. Explain why you are pursuing specific items, while reiterating how they connect to your assessment of the applicant’s ability to fulfil position responsibilities.
- Listen for cues in the reference’s responses such as pauses, hesitancy, overly cautious language; these may be signals to probe further or find another way to ask the question.
- Ambiguous answers are not uncommon. Probe as much as possible and reflect to the reference what you think you have heard by asking whether you have fully understood what they have been trying to communicate.
- Be sure to thank the reference for their help and time.

Other Tips for Successful Reference Checks

- Be consistent. If you check references for some candidates, you must check references for all candidates of same position vacancy. Do not accept a different candidate without checking references.
- Ask the same basic set of questions about all candidates for each position. Do not omit some of your questions on the second or third reference check because of what you heard in the first one or two.
- Never lower your standards. Be aware, however, that repeating the same questions over and over with no variation or probing of the specifics for individual candidates may lull you into expecting formula answers and lead you to rush through the list of questions. Remember that each reference is as important as all the others and you never know when a reference may reveal something critical to your decision making.
- If a reference named by the applicant refuses to provide more than the name and title, the applicant can be asked either to call that reference to encourage release of information, or to provide the name of another reference who can provide sufficient information on past performance to facilitate the current acceptance decision. Remember to obtain written permission to contact additional references.
- If, in the end, you simply cannot elicit enough information from an applicant's references to be certain about your decision, e.g., they are not forthcoming, they are reluctant to comment, they seem not to know the applicant well enough to provide solid information, etc., contact the applicant, explain the situation, and ask if they can supply other references. If not, then remember that it is the applicant's responsibility to provide reliable references for purposes of employment and failure to do so could mean a deferral from the SHIP Site. If the reference checking process produces insufficient information, be very cautious about accepting the applicant as a counselor. References are a critical part of screening procedures, and the absence of reference information can skew or misdirect a critical acceptance decision.

NOTE: A sample SHIP Screening Matrix form, instructions and Check List can be found in [Appendix C](#).

NOTE: [Appendix D](#) provides information as to different types of Criminal Background Checks, a tip sheet for interpreting the criminal background check results, and guidance on possible disqualifying criminal offences.

Why are there so many questions asked for a volunteer position?

SHIP takes the safety of the program's beneficiaries and volunteers seriously. Many of the people who use the program's services are in a vulnerable position due to illness, infirmity, and dependence. A thorough screening process enables the program to maintain a safe and productive community service program with trustworthy and reliable counselors who do not present a risk of harm to themselves or others.

Why are applicants asked about conflicts of interest on the application form?

The program strives to provide objective and unbiased information and services involving Medicare and other health insurance programs. Objectivity is important for building trust with individuals and a reputation of trustworthiness in the community. To build a counselor workforce that provides objective information and services, SHIP asks applicants to declare if they have a financial, personal, or philosophical interest that may present a conflict with the program's interest in maintaining its reputation for objectivity, such as a licensed health insurance agent.

II. STEP TWO: FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW

Once the SHIP Site Coordinator approves an application, including its reference checks, an interview is conducted to gather more information from the applicant. The interview may include reviewing the applicant's interest in being a volunteer, their current knowledge of Medicare and Medicaid, and explaining the program expectations to determine if the applicant is suited for any volunteer openings currently available. If the applicant is requesting to work in a "position of trust" the SHIP Site Coordinator will request permission from the applicant to conduct a criminal background check.

Why are reference checks and background and criminal records checks conducted?

Many SHIP counselor roles are deemed "positions of trust," meaning they involve access to a beneficiary's personal information. A minimum of two personal and/or work reference checks are performed as they provide relevant information for the SHIP Site Coordinator who makes the acceptance and placement decisions. Background checks and criminal records searches are completed to ensure the safety of SHIP clients, as well as the general SHIP work area.

How long does the screening process take?

The length of time may vary depending on SHIP's ability to schedule an interview, the availability of references to take calls and answer questions, and the response time of authorities who conduct background checks, driving records checks, and criminal records checks. The process could take a few weeks.

What is done with the sensitive personal information that is provided by the applicant?

SHIP will respect and protect any information given in confidence. SHIP will share the information only with people who have a need to know it.

III. STEP THREE: TRAINING-CERTIFICATION

Applicants who have passed step I and II of the screening process are notified that they have been accepted as a potential SHIP counselor and given information for upcoming mandatory SHIP New Counselor training conducted by the Illinois Department on Aging SHIP.

SHIP New Counselor Training topics include, but are not limited to, Medicare, Medicaid, Medicare Supplement (Medigap), Medicare Savings Program, Medicare Low Income Subsidy/Extra Help, Medicare Plan Finder, Long Term Care Insurance, and other benefit programs that help Medicare beneficiaries.

After completion of the training, participants have two weeks to take and pass the SHIP Certification exam (passing grade is a minimum of 80%) and sign the SHIP Volunteer Acknowledgement Form.

Depending on the position, new SHIP Counselors may initially shadow an experienced counselor. Additional on-the-job training may be provided through supervision, coaching, guidance, and feedback. The SHIP Site Coordinator should also routinely notify team members about upcoming SHIP and Medicare-related trainings, recertifications, and updates to empower all counselors to build skills while serving with SHIP.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ACL sees volunteers as a valuable resource to the program and the communities it serves. Because of this, they developed a list of volunteers' rights. Examples of rights of each volunteer include the right to meaningful work, support, and recognition for the work they do.

At the same time, SHIP expects all team members to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, to comply with the program's volunteer policies, and to remain loyal to the program's values, goals, and procedures. Team members serve at the sole discretion of SHIP and agree that SHIP may decide to end a volunteer's relationship with the program or to change the nature of the volunteer's assignment when appropriate.

SHIP volunteer team members have a right to:

- Meaningful work assignments
- A role description
- Recognition for work-related contributions
- Treatment as an equal among team members/co-workers
- A safe work environment
- A respectful work environment
- Freedom from discrimination
- Freedom from harassment
- Orientation and training
- Effective supervision
- Constructive, regular feedback about work performance
- A copy of personal background and criminal record check reports, upon request
- File grievances and appeal-resulting decisions
- Receive all the pertinent information needed to perform work assignments
- Know the standards of performance that apply to work assignments.
- Refuse any tasks or work assignments, especially when the assignment requires something for which the volunteer's team member has not been trained
- Receive clear information about what TO DO as well as what NOT TO DO, so that the volunteer team member knows the boundaries for the corresponding role
- Secure and confidential records in personnel file
- Full access to personnel file, upon request
- Resign from service at any time
- Provide the program with feedback about personal experiences at any time, including, but not limited to, retirement from service with the program
- Notify the SHIP Site Coordinator if contact information has changed

SHIP volunteer team members have the responsibility to:

- Adhere to VRPM policies
- Maintain SHIP certification
- Complete required training programs, including continuing education programs
- Pass the SHIP Certification examination
- Report SHIP performance activities into the SHIP Tracking and Reporting System (STARS)
- Provide services responsibly and objectively, regardless of the background or characteristics of the beneficiaries served
- Represent the program only to the extent that the volunteer team members' role specifically authorizes
- Work within the parameters and boundaries set by the program
- Not present as a spokesperson for the program unless specifically authorized by the SHIP Site Coordinator to do so
- Not promote religious or political beliefs or personal business dealings during work hours
- Not promote specific services, providers, plans, or products while conducting program work
- Inform the SHIP Site Coordinator of any conflicts of interest that may arise after position placement
- Report any abuse (physical, emotional, exploitation, neglect, and self-neglect) that may be witnessed involving the program's beneficiaries or clients
- Report accidents, injuries, and errors that the volunteer team member became involved in or witnessed while conducting program work
- Be on time or give advance notice if volunteer team member must be absent
- Protect the confidentiality of the program's beneficiaries and/or clients
- Follow procedures to ensure the security of clients' electronic and hard copy data
- Tell the SHIP Site Coordinator about changes in health that might adversely affect the volunteer team members' work

Below are some examples that help clarify these responsibilities.

Representing SHIP

Volunteers who are trained to make group presentations are authorized to discuss and answer questions about SHIP. In that limited capacity, they are free to identify themselves as being affiliated with SHIP. They should not, however, identify themselves as public spokespersons for the program in connection with media inquiries or questions related to official policy positions.

As a representative of the programs, volunteers are expected to maintain professional standards in all things, including appearance, use of appropriate language, and conduct.

Internet Protocol

Volunteers are expected to use the Internet responsibly and productively.

E-mails sent as part of SHIP work may not contain content that is deemed to be offensive; this includes, but is not restricted to, content that could be deemed vulgar or harassing, discriminatory, or threatening.

Confidential client information may not be transmitted by unsecure e-mail. More secure transmission may be achieved by:

- Encryption on email content,
- Fax machines or postal mail, or
- Obscuring or deleting identifying information (redaction)

Use of wireless devices for Internet access should be limited to secure networks. Unknown “Wi-fi” hotspot access should not be considered secure for beneficiary counseling.

Volunteers who use their own computer or device and/or work from home should follow the same procedures safeguarding protected client information as on-site computer use.

SHIP believes social media, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support, and a sense of community. Social media should be used by volunteers responsibly. The same principles and policies that apply to any volunteer role apply to all activities online especially regarding the privacy of beneficiaries.

A volunteer’s failure to utilize Internet protocol may lead to disciplinary action as deemed appropriate by the SHIP Site Coordinator and/or the SHIP Director.

Boundaries and Ethics

Volunteers in SHIP come in contact with beneficiaries’ personal and confidential information frequently, especially volunteers in “positions of trust.” It is the volunteer’s responsibility to perform all SHIP duties in secure locations with beneficiaries. SHIP has

strict confidentiality policies that volunteers are required to follow. To protect beneficiaries, volunteers agree to appropriate screening procedures as outlined in their role descriptions, following the screening matrix. Screenings are repeated at regular intervals and all information obtained in the screening process is strictly confidential.

Some volunteers may have special certifications or licenses that make them able to provide other services or information to beneficiaries outside the scope of SHIP. Discuss these situations with the SHIP Site Coordinator. A copy of these certifications or licenses need to be filed with the SHIP Site Coordinator as well. This does not apply to any license to sell insurance products as this would be a conflict of interest.

Reporting

Conflicts of Interest

One concern for SHIP is the appearance of an implied endorsement for a volunteer who is known to the community for business and/or political interests. After discussing the circumstances with the volunteer, a SHIP Site Coordinator may decide that the person who is engaged in healthcare sales, or who is running for a seat on the city council, is unsuited for SHIP because of the danger of blurring the lines between the person's volunteer activity and their business or personal interest.

Volunteers are to bring any business, political, or personal activity that arises, that may conflict with the mission and goals of SHIP, to the SHIP Site Coordinator's attention. It is the responsibility of the SHIP Site Coordinator to report any conflicts of interest to the SHIP Director.

Incidents

If the volunteer is involved in an accident, suffers an injury, experiences harassment, or witnesses abuse of a beneficiary while on duty, they have a responsibility to report the incident to their supervisor or SHIP Site Coordinator as soon as possible.

Lost or Stolen Information

Upon discovering confidential beneficiary information has been stolen or lost, a volunteer is to immediately notify the SHIP Site Coordinator.

These volunteers' procedures are the same if their personal computer or device is used for SHIP purposes and its security is compromised.

NOTE: [Appendix E](#) provides more guidance on reporting and responding to incidents. A sample SHIP Incident Report form is also included.

VEHICLE INSURANCE

Counselors Who Drive

If the volunteer's position involves driving a motor vehicle on behalf of SHIP, the counselor has additional responsibilities including:

- During SHIP duties, abide by traffic laws, such as speed limit, seat belt, and cell phone laws
- Carry liability insurance on their vehicle
- Notify the SHIP Site Coordinator if counselors' insurance coverage lapses
- Notify the SHIP Site Coordinator if their driver's license expires or if they receive restrictions that limit their ability to carry out their duties

NOTE: [Appendix F](#) provides a sample SHIP Driver's License and Insurance Coverage Certification form.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

SHIP's success is measured in terms of outcomes related to public education about fraud, errors, and abuse in Medicare, and to assisting individual beneficiaries in identifying and reporting instances of suspected health care fraud, errors, and abuse. A key expectation in the SHIP counselor program management is that program managers will provide the support counselors need to successfully achieve the program's education and assistance goals. A constructive and success-oriented performance management system is in place to guide SHIP Site Coordinators as they work to encourage productive and satisfying counselor involvement in SHIP.

SHIP Performance Management System: The performance management system has three components: supervision, performance evaluation, and corrective action. Each component includes a range of techniques that SHIP Site Coordinators can use to promote high performance. The guiding principle of performance management is to match the type and extent of supervisory intervention to the nature of a counselor's responsibilities and capacity. It provides several avenues to demonstrate support and to acknowledge excellence. Here are some key points about the system's three components:

Supervision: The SHIP Site Coordinator has an obligation to provide supervision and support for the program's counselors. This means that coordinators have a responsibility to manage the work that counselors do, and to determine the kind of guidance and support that each counselor needs. The supervision that is received as a SHIP counselor should reflect the principle of positive, constructive, and success-oriented guidance that underpins the SHIP counselor performance management system. Counselors should expect to receive feedback, consultation, information, and meaningful assignments from the coordinator.

Performance Evaluation: Counselors in SHIP receive periodic evaluations of their work. This is a more formal process than one finds in a SHIP Site Coordinator's day-to-day feedback and provides a more detailed assessment of each counselor's performance, on-the-job behavior, achievements, and areas for improvement. This process gives the counselor and the coordinator an opportunity to exchange feedback, ideas, and suggestions. The coordinator will also use the performance evaluation process to update the counselors' personnel file, including changes in the counselor role, contact information, and other similar information. The SHIP Site Coordinator will document the substance of the performance evaluation and any improvement plans mutually agreed upon and place them in the counselor's file.

Corrective Action: The SHIP Site Coordinator may take corrective action when a counselor's behavior is serious enough to require intervention, and when its continuation or repetition is unacceptable. The SHIP corrective action process is progressive in that it is oriented toward success rather than focused on failure, and that the degree of intervention matches the nature of the performance or

behavior issue, becoming more serious as the unacceptability of the behavior increases or the counselor's inability to resolve the problem continues.

SHIP's corrective action process includes a range of interventions that aim to help counselors make needed improvements when performance and/or behavior do not meet expectations. Interventions may include additional training, coaching, adjustment of counselor duties, or reassignment to a different role. In more serious cases, interventions may involve formal disciplinary actions such as warnings, suspensions, and dismissal. More information about SHIP's corrective action protocol can be obtained from the SHIP Site Coordinator. For information on dismissals, see the [Counselor Separation](#) section of this document.

Grievances and Appeals

A counselor who has a complaint about, or grievance with, staff, other counselors, beneficiaries, or partner organizations should communicate their concern to the SHIP Site Coordinator. If the complaint or grievance involves the counselor's own coordinator, the counselor should convey the concern to the next person in SHIP's chain of command.

SHIP also has an appeals procedure through which a counselor can request review of a formal corrective action decision, including dismissal. Any questions regarding complaints or grievances can be directed to the SHIP Site Coordinator.

MANUAL REFERENCE

NOTE: [Chapter 7 \(page 50\)](#) of the SHIP Volunteer Program Management Manual provides step by step information on Performance Management, from setting standards, work delegation, supervisory controls, evaluation systems, positive corrective action approach, and release from services.

NOTE: [Appendix G](#) provides more steps for handling complaints filed by a SHIP Counselor. A sample SHIP Complaint form is also included.

RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERS

SHIP greatly appreciates the many and varied contributions of its volunteers to the program's success. SHIP Site Coordinators should recognize and reward volunteer service both formally and informally. Informal recognition may take place in many ways, such as feedback on the results of a volunteer's work, a thank you note, a birthday card, or an invitation to participate in the decision-making for a project or activity. A formal recognition may entail an annual appreciation ceremony.

SHIP strives to recognize volunteers for all types of productive service, and not simply for the number of hours they work. We also encourage volunteers to identify and nominate other volunteers who may deserve special recognition or awards.

MANUAL REFERENCE

NOTE: [Chapter 8 \(page 89\)](#) of the SHIP Volunteer Program Management Manual covers counselor retention – why it is important, counselor growth plans, and ideas on how to provide recognition.

COUNSELOR SEPARATION

(Note these policies apply to all SHIP team members)

Resignation

Counselors may resign voluntarily from their service with SHIP at any time. Notice of resignations should be directed to the SHIP Site Coordinator as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the coordinator to report team member separations immediately to the SHIP Director.

Discipline and Dismissal

SHIP accepts counselors with the understanding that the counselors serve at the sole discretion of SHIP. Counselors who do not follow the rules, policies, and procedures of SHIP, or who repeatedly fail to perform an assignment satisfactorily despite supervisory support and appropriate interventions, are subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. Involuntary dismissal is typically a last resort, used only when other appropriate steps have been taken. Ideally, the supervisory staff will discuss with a counselor in advance the reasons for a possible dismissal if other corrective actions do not resolve the problem within a reasonable time frame.

Possible grounds for dismissal are listed below. The list illustrates the range of reasons for dismissal and is not intended to be comprehensive. Grounds for dismissal may include:

- Gross misconduct
- Serious misjudgment that may undermine trust in the counselor or cause harm to others
- Insubordination, including failure or unwillingness to perform essential responsibilities in the counselor's role or to accept direction from supervisory staff
- Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on counselor duty or representing SHIP
- Loss of a license (i.e., driver's license) required to carry out assignments
- Unauthorized use or misuse of SHIP equipment or materials
- Harm, abuse, or mistreatment of beneficiaries, co-workers, or other persons
- Serious and repeated failure to follow SHIP policies and procedures
- Inability to meet physical, cognitive, or emotional standards of performance
- Repeated failure to perform assigned duties satisfactorily
- Unresolvable conflict of interest

- Serious breach of boundaries

Immediate Dismissal and Suspension

Some behaviors may, upon verification, constitute grounds for immediate dismissal. If a question exists about the unacceptable behavior, SHIP will temporarily suspend the counselor from service pending the results of an investigation.

Possible grounds for immediate dismissal include:

- Fraud, theft, or abuse in connection with the SHIP counselor service
- Serious illegal act
- Gross negligence causing bodily harm in connection with the SHIP counselor service
- Intentional breach of confidentiality
- Using violence in the workplace

Exit Survey

SHIP counselors have the option of participating in an exit survey. Submissions are encouraged. If the counselor chooses to participate, they are to be requested to answer the questions candidly as the responses will serve to help the SHIP Site Coordinator and the SHIP Director identify program strengths and weaknesses, and to make improvements where needed. A copy of each completed exit survey is to be forwarded to the SHIP Director.

NOTE: [Appendix H](#) provides a sample SHIP Counselor Exit Survey form.

COUNSELORS WITH DISABILITIES

SHIP values the service of counselors with disabilities. SHIP Site Coordinators strive to include counselors with disabilities in all facets of the program to the extent that an individual's capacity allows, and to ensure access to all SHIP facilities. When requested, the program will make reasonable accommodations to meet the special needs of counselors with disabilities. Any accommodation requests are to be submitted to the SHIP Site Coordinator.

APPENDIX A: FEDERAL GUIDELINES ON VRPM POLICIES

Note: Federal guidelines reference “Regional Coordinators.” In Illinois, “Regional Coordinators” are actually “Site Coordinators” as noted throughout the rest of the manual.

1.0 Introductory Policies

- 1.1 SHIP accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers at a range of levels and within all appropriate projects and activities.
- 1.2 All volunteers and their coordination in all programs and projects undertaken by or on behalf of SHIP are subject to the provisions of these volunteer policies.
- 1.3 Volunteers are made aware of all SHIP volunteer policies; compliance with all policies is a minimum expectation of SHIP volunteers.
- 1.4 There are defined roles for SHIP volunteers within which they serve; volunteers may be qualified to serve in one or more roles.
- 1.5 The policies may be altered or customized only by authorized staff.

2.0 Risk Management and Health and Safety

- 2.1 SHIP conducts an annual risk assessment on the roles, work, and activities of SHIP volunteers.
- 2.2 SHIP evaluates its insurance needs annually and ensures that its insurance providers are well aware and up to date on the work done by volunteers of SHIP.
- 2.3 SHIP volunteers who drive their own vehicle for SHIP work purposes carry liability coverage on any vehicle so used.
- 2.4 Training for volunteers includes discussion of safe work environments and practices.
- 2.5 SHIP volunteers who witness instances of abuse of beneficiaries while performing their assigned duties must report this to their SHIP Regional Coordinator.
- 2.6 Face-to-face work with beneficiaries takes place at SHIP offices or in an appropriately private location.
- 2.7 Home visits by SHIP volunteers or staff to a beneficiary’s residence are generally prohibited. Exceptions are made only with advance written permission and by following a strict protocol.
- 2.8 Any accident or injury to or by a volunteer is reported immediately to the SHIP Regional Coordinator. An Incident Reporting Form ([see Appendix E](#)) and response protocol exist.

- 2.9 In response to a reported incident involving SHIP volunteers, the SHIP Regional Coordinator oversees steps necessary to respond to and resolve the incident.
- 2.10 SHIP has emergency contact information on all of its volunteers and a procedure that enables volunteers to communicate with their SHIP Regional Coordinator or the SHIP Director at any time volunteers may be on duty.
- 2.11 In instances when natural disasters including snow and other weather-related conditions occur, SHIP volunteers shall contact their AAA or host organization to determine whether they should report for duty or leave duty.

3.0 Volunteer Program Management

A. Infrastructure

- 3.1 SHIP VRPM policies apply equally to all SHIP volunteers, and compliance with these policies is a condition of continued involvement in SHIP.
- 3.2 SHIP strives to develop a volunteer population that mirrors the diversity of the community in which it operates.
- 3.3 The SHIP relatives of beneficiaries may serve as SHIP volunteers but are not placed in a position of direct services or relationship to members of their family who are receiving services.
- 3.4 SHIP accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of SHIP. SHIP may at any time decide to terminate the relationship or change a volunteer's assignment, and a volunteer may at any time, for any reason, decide to resign from their volunteer service with SHIP. An exit survey is available for volunteers who wish to leave SHIP, and an exit checklist is available to guide Regional Coordinators through the volunteer resignation process.
- 3.5 Volunteers have the right to meaningful assignments and good treatment, and they have the responsibility to do their best, comply with policies, and stay true to the program.
- 3.6 SHIP ensures that an infrastructure is in place to support volunteer involvement and volunteer program management.
- 3.7 SHIP Regional Coordinators manage all facets of volunteer coordination and management. SHIP Regional Coordinators are designated as the primary volunteer supervisors with the guidance and supervision of the SHIP Director.
- 3.8 The SHIP's budget provides for space, financial resources, and support staff to operate the SHIP volunteer program in an effective manner.
- 3.9 A system of records is maintained on each volunteer, with information submitted timely, and kept with the same confidentiality as staff personnel records.

- 3.10 Upon reasonable notice, and while accompanied by the SHIP Regional Coordinator, volunteers may examine the contents of their own personnel file.
- 3.11 The SHIP Director with Regional Coordinators and the SHIP Statewide Volunteer Coordinator conduct an annual evaluation of the infrastructure in place to support volunteer involvement in SHIP.

B. Role Design

- 3.12 Creativity in volunteer role development is encouraged to make participation accessible to a diverse population of volunteers with a wide array of skills.
- 3.13 Volunteers supplement but do not displace paid staff.
- 3.14 Volunteer role descriptions are clear, complete, and current, and are provided to applicants and to new volunteers.
- 3.15 Each volunteer role has a standard of performance that lists the work to be done and the amount of work within an appropriate time frame. Volunteers have a right to know the standards that apply to the work they do.
- 3.16 Volunteers have the right to refuse any assignments, and should refuse to do work for which they are not qualified.
- 3.17 Placement of SHIP volunteers is done by Regional Coordinators. Volunteers are supported in their volunteer role by their Regional Coordinator and other SHIP staff.
- 3.18 Worksites are safe and have the facilities, equipment, and space necessary for volunteers to perform their duties.
- 3.19 All volunteer roles have a minimum of one year term of service. Volunteers sign an agreement to this defined term of work. The agreement is mandatory where extensive training is required.
- 3.20 At the discretion of the Regional Coordinator, leaves of absence are granted to volunteers. Leave does not necessarily alter or extend the previously agreed-upon completion date of the volunteer's term of service. This is negotiated with the volunteer when the leave is arranged.

C. Recruitment

- 3.21 Volunteers fulfill all screening, orientation, and training requirements for the role in which they are interested before being accepted into service. Applicants who are found to be unsuitable are respectfully declined.
- 3.22 Volunteer roles are open to community members of all ages above the age of majority (18) regardless of gender, disability, race, or other condition.

- 3.23** SHIP volunteer roles open to the engagement of minors have clearly prescribed responsibilities well suited to young persons, occur in a supervised and non-hazardous environment, and comply with all child labor laws.
- 3.24** SHIP volunteer opportunities are publicized broadly to ensure no group of people is excluded.
- 3.25** Volunteer opportunity inquiries are handled within a reasonable amount of time.
- 3.26** SHIP New Volunteer training shall be provided at least once per year per Area Agency on Aging partner. It is recommended that the SHIP Regional Coordinator maintain a wait list of interested prospective volunteers if volunteer opportunities and/or initial volunteer trainings are not immediately available.

D. Screening

- 3.27** SHIP applies a formal screening and selection process to all prospective volunteers. This process varies according to the nature of the work to be done. The decision to accept (or not) each volunteer applicant is based on careful consideration of all pertinent information gathered in the screening process. The SHIP screening and acceptance processes comply with standards set by AoA.
- 3.28** Screening and acceptance decisions are made by authorized SHIP personnel only.
- 3.29** Applicants for any given role are screened in the same way as all other applicants for that role.
- 3.30** SHIP reserves the right not to accept applicants based on an objective and equitable assessment of their suitability.
- 3.31** SHIP is committed to upholding applicants' rights to know what the screening process will entail, to privacy for their information, and to a timely response. No screening inquiry is undertaken without the prior knowledge and permission of the applicant. Applicants sign an agreement allowing SHIP to complete their screening inquiries.
- 3.32** A standardized application form is completed by all prospective SHIP volunteers.
- 3.33** All prospective volunteers are interviewed by their SHIP Regional Coordinator.
- 3.34** In cases where the interview does not uncover a suitable placement for a prospective volunteer, or where SHIP cannot meet their interests, needs or availability, the coordinator of volunteers or SHIP Regional Coordinator, as applicable, may recommend that the volunteer seek placement elsewhere.
- 3.35** No person who has a conflict of interest in connection with the work they will do at SHIP, whether personal, philosophical, or financial, may serve as a volunteer.

- 3.36** At least two personal and/or professional references are checked for prospective volunteers who may be placed in a position of trust at SHIP.
- 3.37** Background checks vary according to volunteer role. Social Security numbers of volunteer applicants are destroyed at the time the acceptance decision is made.
- 3.38** All prospective volunteers applying for any position of trust at SHIP are subjected to a federal level criminal records check.
- 3.39** Current and prospective volunteers whose volunteer responsibilities at SHIP involve operation of a motor vehicle are subjected to driver's license and record checks.
- 3.40** Volunteers who have any medical or psychological condition that might affect the safe and effective performance of their volunteer work, or capacities have diminished to a point where quality of service and safety are an issue, are requested to consult with their Regional Coordinator about their ability to perform their assigned duties.
- 3.41** All new volunteers are placed in a mentoring period of three months after their initial training is complete and they have been placed into a role.
- 3.42** SHIP has a screening, documentation creation, and retention process that sets out what documentation is created, for how long it is retained, and when it is to be destroyed.
- 3.43** The confidentiality of information collected during volunteer screening is carefully protected.
- 3.44** Falsification of information at any point during screening is grounds for immediate disqualification from the application process or immediate dismissal if the falsehood is discovered after acceptance.
- 3.45** All SHIP volunteers, regardless of length of tenure, are subject to the provisions of all volunteer policies including those coming into effect during their tenure. Existing volunteers must meet all new screening standards relevant to the role(s) they hold, with the exception of interviews and reference checks.
- 3.46** SHIP has a policy on how often various record checks will be repeated.
- 3.47** Prospective volunteers are screened to the level of intensiveness dictated by the role(s) for which they apply. If a volunteer applies for transfer to another volunteer role for which the initial screening process is more intensive than for the role the volunteer has been occupying, the volunteer is subjected to the additional screening inquiries of the role being applied for.
- 3.48** Re-acceptance of previous SHIP volunteers who return after an absence of more than eighteen months are subject to all application and screening processes.
- 3.49** Screening protocol is adjusted as roles change and/or as standards of care and due diligence recommendations.

E. Placement

- 3.50** Volunteers are placed in roles that suit their interests and capabilities and that are supported by staff. Final placement decisions are made at the discretion of SHIP.
- 3.51** Wherever possible, paid staff who will be working with the volunteer shall participate in the interview and placement process.
- 3.52** Volunteer service begins only after official notice of acceptance, completion of necessary enrollment paperwork, and completion of required training.
- 3.53** 30 days after a volunteer's placement, a second interview with the volunteer is conducted, providing for mutual assessment of the initial placement. At this point either the volunteer or SHIP may request an adjustment to the role, re-assignment to a different role, or determine that the volunteer is unsuitable for the role within SHIP.
- 3.54** Volunteers who are re-assigned to a new role are interviewed for the role and undergo all appropriate up-screening, training, and orientation before they begin work.

F. Orientation and Training

- 3.55** All volunteers receive orientation to the program mission and to their role.
- 3.56** Volunteers fulfill all mandatory training before any work is assigned.
- 3.57** At the discretion of SHIP, credit may be given for training received from another organization that overlaps with the training provided by SHIP.
- 3.58** Volunteers are tested following training and are not assigned until they qualify.
- 3.59** Volunteers receive specific on-the-job training.
- 3.60** Paid staff members with responsibility for service delivery have an active role in the design and delivery of both orientation and training of volunteers.
- 3.61** The participation of experienced volunteers is invited in the design and delivery of volunteer orientation and training.
- 3.62** At the discretion of the SHIP Director, updated training and/or recertification training is required for some volunteer roles.
- 3.63** SHIP Regional Coordinators provide volunteers with information about conferences, webinars, and meetings that are relevant to their volunteer assignments.

G. Performance Management

- 3.64** A constructive, positive, and success-oriented performance management system is in place at SHIP. Its three primary components are supervision, performance evaluation, and corrective action.
- 3.65** Regional Coordinators follow performance management policies and procedures in their day-to-day work with volunteers.
- 3.66** New volunteers are told during screening and orientation that there is a volunteer performance system. They are provided a Volunteer Handbook and other evaluation instruments some of which are listed in the appendix of this handbook.
- 3.67** SHIP has the right and the obligation to supervise, support and manage the work done by volunteers, and to determine the nature and extent of this supervisory guidance.
- 3.68** Supervision and support reflect the principle of positive, constructive, and success-oriented guidance that underpins the SHIP volunteer performance management system. Volunteers can expect day-to-day feedback that helps them understand expectations and standards and guidance on how to achieve them.
- 3.69** Upon acceptance into service with SHIP, volunteers agree to accept supervision and support from the appropriate Regional Coordinator.
- 3.70** Each volunteer who is accepted to a SHIP role has an identified Regional Coordinator who is responsible for direct, day-to-day supervision and support of that volunteer.
- 3.71** Experienced and qualified volunteers may be assigned volunteer supervision and support responsibilities provided that they are, themselves, under the direct supervision of a paid staff member.
- 3.72** Regional Coordinators make sure volunteers receive all necessary information pertinent to their work assignments.
- 3.73** Volunteers receive periodic evaluation of their work, and their records are kept current.
- 3.74** Evaluations are documented and put in volunteer's file. Plans for improvement have follow-up dates and procedures.
- 3.75** The SHIP Director is informed immediately of any substantial change in the work or status of a volunteer and is consulted in advance before any corrective action is taken.
- 3.76** Corrective action, when necessary, is success-oriented and has a range of techniques to help volunteers meet performance and behavior expectations. SHIP has a written protocol for corrective action. Regional Coordinators are trained in the constructive and respectful application of the corrective action

process. Corrective action has a range of interventions from informal to formal, and in the absence of success of other methods, includes potential dismissal of a volunteer. The seriousness of corrective action intervention is matched to the nature of the performance issue and becomes more serious with either the unacceptability of the transgression or repeated failure of the volunteer to meet expectations.

- 3.77** Volunteers who fail to perform assignments or to comply with SHIP rules or procedures despite supervisory support and corrective action are, as a last resort and with the opportunity to discuss the reasons and the process, subject to dismissal. SHIP has established a list of specific grounds for dismissal. They are listed in the Volunteer Handbook.
- 3.78** Some volunteer behaviors can be so unacceptable that they trigger immediate dismissal. If there is some question about the unacceptable behavior, the volunteer is immediately suspended until an investigation is complete. Grounds for immediate dismissal, includes, but is not limited to, serious illegal acts, breach of confidentiality, or violence in the workplace.
- 3.79** When a volunteer departs for any reason, SHIP Regional Coordinators send written notice to all affected SHIP personnel.
- 3.80** When a volunteer is dismissed, all SHIP connections cease. Any active work relationships with beneficiaries or open cases are immediately reassigned; affected beneficiaries are notified of the reassignment of their cases.
- 3.81** Serious formal corrective decisions are reviewed by the SHIP Director. Complaint instructions and sample form are included in [Appendix G](#).
- 3.82** A grievance process is in place and volunteers are aware of the procedures. Volunteers who have complaints take them to their SHIP Regional Coordinator. If the grievance is about the coordinator, the complaint goes to the SHIP Director. Complaint instructions and the appeal process are outlined in [Appendix G](#).
- 3.83** SHIP has a process for investigating and resolving complaints from beneficiaries and other outside parties against volunteers. See SHIP Complaint Form in [Appendix G](#).
- 3.84** Volunteers may resign from their volunteer service with SHIP at any time.
- 3.85** The commitment of SHIP volunteers occasionally leads to volunteers who attempt to continue providing services even when their capacities have diminished to a point where quality of service and safety becomes an issue.
- 3.86** An exit survey (see [Appendix H](#)) is made available to departing volunteers.

H. Volunteer Behavior, Performance and Roles

- 3.87** Questions regarding interpretation of these policies should be addressed to the appropriate SHIP staff for clarification. Not understanding a policy is not acceptable grounds for failure to comply.
- 3.88** Volunteers are objective, timely, conscientious, and act in conformity with the code of conduct and consistent with their training.
- 3.89** Volunteers know and respect the boundaries of their role.
- 3.90** Volunteers provide service without regard to the beneficiary's background or characteristics. Volunteers do not recommend or endorse specific services, providers, or products to beneficiaries.
- 3.91** Volunteers represent SHIP, but they do not represent themselves as spokespersons of SHIP. Volunteers use their nametag only when undertaking official and authorized SHIP duties. SHIP provides volunteers a list of prohibited actions in this regard.
- 3.92** SHIP volunteers are provided identification that establishes their affiliation with SHIP. Volunteers carry with them their SHIP identification while engaged in the business of SHIP. Volunteers use the identification only when undertaking official and authorized SHIP duties.
- 3.93** Volunteers do not use their SHIP affiliation to endorse any issue or business or to promote any religious or political belief, perspective, or practice.
- 3.94** Volunteers are required to maintain strict confidentiality of all protected information.
- 3.95** As representatives of SHIP, volunteers, like staff, are responsible for presenting a good image to beneficiaries and to the community. Volunteers dress appropriately for the conditions and the nature of their voluntary duties, maintaining a high standard of personal appearance, hygiene and grooming at all times.
- 3.96** Volunteers are required to record and submit their data, hours, and activities within an appropriate timeframe.
- 3.97** SHIP expects volunteers are reliable and punctual. When expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, volunteers inform their Regional Coordinator as far in advance as possible so alternate arrangements may be made.
- 3.98** Action is taken on all complaints of harassment, whether made formally or informally.
- 3.99** SHIP does not tolerate the use of alcohol or illegal drugs in its work environment.
- 3.100** SHIP volunteers do not accept gifts from beneficiaries, their families or representatives. Any such offerings are respectfully and tactfully declined.

- 3.101** It is not appropriate for SHIP volunteers to benefit materially from their SHIP duties.
- 3.102** Volunteers may be eligible for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking volunteer work for SHIP.
- 3.103** Volunteers have access to SHIP materials and equipment necessary to fulfill their duties, and use such only when directly required for the volunteer task.
- 3.104** Volunteers maintain boundaries in their relationships with beneficiaries; personal invitations are declined.
- 3.105** SHIP volunteers do not enter into any financial transactions with beneficiaries, their family members or caregivers.
- 3.106** Volunteers do not engage in political activities, campaigning, or lobbying during volunteer hours.
- 3.107** Volunteers demonstrate a respect for the cultures of beneficiaries with whom they work and are sensitive to others' beliefs, traditions, and lifestyles.
- 3.108** SHIP is respectful of the paid staff in facilities where SHIP performs services. If labor actions are occurring at these facilities, SHIP will determine whether volunteers should continue to provide services at this venue.

I. Retention and Recognition

- 3.109** SHIP has a system for recognizing and rewarding the work done by volunteers, both individually and collectively.
- 3.110** SHIP staff and volunteers responsible for volunteer supervision provide recognition of volunteer service on a regular and frequent day-to-day basis.
- 3.111** Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while serving with SHIP.
- 3.112** Whenever possible, SHIP volunteers are provided feedback on the results of their work.
- 3.113** SHIP recognition systems reward paid staff who work effectively with volunteers, and the coordinators of volunteers consults with volunteers and paid staff supervisors to identify supervisory personnel deserving of special recognition and awards for successful efforts in support of volunteers.

J. Volunteer/Paid Staff Relationships

- 3.114** Volunteers and paid staff are equal partners in implementing the missions and programs of SHIP.

- 3.115** Paid staff who have responsibility for supervising volunteers have this responsibility clearly identified in their role description, including how such responsibility is to be evaluated in their own performance assessment.
- 3.116** Where a paid staff role includes responsibility for working with volunteers, previous experience in working with volunteers is a key consideration in hiring into that role.
- 3.117** Regional Coordinators supervise volunteers and provide day-to-day management of all volunteers under the guidance of the SHIP Director using the Regional Coordinator Handbook as a guide to the volunteer management processes of SHIP.
- 3.118** Paid staff who supervise volunteers are accorded the same status and privileges as those who supervise paid employees. This includes the ability to participate in training to improve their supervisory and volunteer program management skills.
- 3.119** Volunteers are not assigned to work with a paid staff person without the latter's consent.
- 3.120** All SHIP paid staff will be given orientation by their supervisor as to the structure and organization of SHIP, including the volunteer management system.
- 3.121** Paid staff that work closely with or supervise volunteers have those functions assessed as part of their performance evaluation. Volunteer input is invited into this process.
- 3.122** Where volunteers and paid staff work together, individuals are evaluated on their own performance as well as on their ability to develop effective working relationships with other team members.

4.0 Information Technology

- 4.1** SHIP has in place an information management protocol that outlines volunteer access to beneficiary information and the safe operation of computers used to collect and store confidential information.
- 4.2** SHIP has a protocol for use of the internet covering email use and appropriate access to websites.
- 4.3** If data is misplaced or stolen, volunteers immediately notify their Regional Coordinator so that appropriate notification can be made to affected beneficiaries and authorities, and future safeguards are instituted as appropriate.
- 4.4** SHIP has a web-based software program and processes in place for reporting program outcomes. Volunteers who are given their own user accounts do not share them with other staff or volunteers.

- 4.5** Social media should be used responsibly by volunteers. The same principles and policies that apply to volunteer behavior in any volunteer role also apply to all activities online.

APPENDIX B: EXPANDED SHIP COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION

Purpose

This role involves transporting and disseminating SHIP information materials to sites and events and may include presenting prepared copy or performing scripted activities for small groups. Counselors who work in this role do not engage in discussions with others about personal information or situations.

Suggested Activities

Deliver and disseminate SHIP hard copy education and information materials through:

- Senior residential facilities, including senior apartment buildings and residential care facilities
- Senior centers and community centers
- Health care providers, including hospitals and clinics
- Agencies that serve Medicare and related insurance benefits to beneficiaries and their caregivers
- Health fair and senior fair booths or kiosks
- Libraries

Read or present prepared information materials, or perform scripted activities, to inform and educate Medicare and related insurance benefits to Medicaid beneficiaries, their caregivers, and others at meetings and other events, as appropriate.

Identify other locations that will accept and display SHIP education and information materials.

Limitations

Counselors whose role is solely to distribute information do not engage beneficiaries in individual discussions about personal information or situations. Instead, they defer questions about specific cases to SHIP counselors who are qualified to handle simple inquiries or provide counseling services.

Performance Measures and Standards

This activity will be measured by the number of SHIP education and information materials (i.e., brochures and fact sheets) taken from the dissemination locations, and, when applicable, by the number of presentations or performances and the number of people in the audience. The SHIP Site Coordinator confers with the counselor at the beginning of the assignment and at periodic check-in meetings and annual reviews to determine a standard number of materials and presentations delivered.

Qualifications

- Ability to transport and carry SHIP education and information materials to designated locations
- Valid driver's license (where applicable)
- Automobile insurance (where applicable)
- Good oral communication skills (only applicable if presenting or performing scripted information)
- Ability and willingness to distribute scripted information related to Medicare and related insurance benefits to groups

Time Commitment

Counselor schedules are flexible. The local SHIP Site Coordinator works with each counselor who distributes information to determine the number of hours the counselor works each month, and to schedule assignments accordingly. Because of the training SHIP counselors receive, they are asked to make a minimum commitment of one year.

Location

Counselors who distribute information work in their vehicles and at sites throughout the local community.

Supervision

SHIP counselors report to the local SHIP Site Coordinator and, when appropriate, to the statewide SHIP Director.

Benefits

SHIP counselors who distribute information have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and the general public about Medicare and related insurance benefits.

COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: ASSISTING WITH ADMINISTRATION

Purpose

To provide administrative support to the work of SHIP paid and counselor staff in their mission to educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers.

Suggested Activities

SHIP counselors who assist with administration handle tasks such as copying, general filing, and making phone calls in support of SHIP activities, i.e., to locate and reserve training space, confirm participant attendance, etc. Counselors who assist with administration may perform other tasks as mutually agreed, including:

- Word processing
- Data entry
- Scheduling presentations, appointments, and other outreach activities
- Collating
- Internet searches
- Fulfilling requests for information and materials
- Handling mail and correspondence

Limitations

Counselors who assist with administration do not field questions from the public. Instead, they defer requests for information and assistance to paid staff or counselors who are qualified to handle simple inquiries and/or provide one-on-one counseling.

Performance Measures and Standards

This activity is measured by timely and accurate completion of assigned tasks. The SHIP Site Coordinator confers with the counselor at the beginning of the assignment and at periodic check-in meetings and annual reviews to determine a standard number of work hours.

- Qualifications
- Good oral and written communication skills
- Computer literacy, including familiarity with internet
- Ability to operate office equipment
- Ability to work and get along well with others from diverse backgrounds

Time Commitment

Counselor schedules are flexible. The SHIP Site Coordinator works with each counselor who assists with administration to determine the number of hours the counselor works

each month, and to schedule the work accordingly. Because of the training SHIP counselors receive, they are asked to commit to a minimum of one year.

Location

SHIP counselors assist with administration work at the offices of the SHIP Site Coordinator or other assigned location.

Supervision

SHIP counselors report to the local SHIP Site Coordinator and, when appropriate, to the statewide SHIP Director.

Benefits

SHIP counselors receive training on the basics of Medicare and related insurance benefits. Counselors who assist with administration receive additional training on office procedures and the safe use of equipment. All SHIP counselors have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and the general public about Medicare and related insurance benefits.

COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: STAFFING EXHIBITS

Purpose

To empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and the general public on Medicare by providing outreach through staffing of information kiosks or exhibits at events.

Suggested Activities

Provide general information about SHIP, Medicare, and related insurance benefits at events by:

- Transporting kiosk materials and supplies to events
- Distributing written information about SHIP and its services
- Distributing written information about Medicare and related insurance benefits
- Answering general questions about SHIP and its services
- Responding to simple inquiries

Limitations

Counselors who staff exhibits are limited to providing general information about SHIP, Medicare, and Medicaid. They do not engage in discussions of personal information or situations. They defer requests for counseling to staff or counselors who are qualified to counsel beneficiaries and/or caregivers.

Performance Measures and Standards

This activity is measured by the number of exhibits the counselor staffs, the number of people who visit the exhibit, and the number of SHIP education and information materials (i.e., brochures and fact sheets) taken by those attending the event. The SHIP Site Coordinator has frequent contact with the counselor to determine the number of exhibits or outreach events the counselor staffs to help the SHIP Site Coordinator fulfill their scope of work.

- Qualifications
- Good oral communication skills
- Ability to transport and carry SHIP education and information materials to outreach events
- Valid driver's license
- Automobile insurance
- Ability and willingness to learn and share information related to Medicare and related insurance benefits

Time Commitment

Counselor schedules are flexible. The local SHIP Site Coordinator works with each counselor who distributes information to determine the number of hours the counselor works each month, and to schedule assignments accordingly. Because of the training SHIP counselors receive, they are asked to make a minimum commitment of one year.

Location

SHIP counselors staff exhibits work at sites throughout the local community.

Supervision

SHIP counselors report to the local SHIP Site Coordinator and, when appropriate, to the statewide SHIP Director.

Benefits

SHIP counselors receive training on the basics of Medicare benefits. They have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and the general public about Medicare and related insurance benefits.

COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: MAKING GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Purpose

To empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers on Medicare by educating them on SHIP topics through substantive presentations to groups in the community.

Suggested Activities

Make presentations using SHIP approved materials and scripts to audiences that consist of Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and/or other members of the public who want to gain awareness of SHIP, information on Medicare and related insurance benefits, and the national effort to prevent, detect, and report fraud, error, and abuse in the health care system. These presentations may take place at:

- Senior centers and community centers
- Health fairs and senior fairs
- Educational events
- Meetings of civic or faith-based organizations
- Meetings of health care providers
- Meetings of local law enforcement officials
- Libraries
- Universities and colleges
- Identify other audiences and locations where in-depth presentations may be appropriate

Limitations

Counselors who make group presentations are limited to providing general information about SHIP, Medicare and related insurance benefits, and related topics. They do not engage beneficiaries in individual discussions about personal information or situations other than to answer simple inquiries. They defer requests for counseling to SHIP counselors who are qualified to provide one-on-one counseling.

Performance Measures and Standards

This activity is measured by presentations delivered, attendance numbers and an evaluation of the presenter's effectiveness in conveying information about SHIP topics and program goals. The SHIP Site Coordinator has frequent contact with the counselor to determine the number of presentations or outreach events the counselor staffs to help the SHIP Site Coordinator fulfill their scope of work.

- Good oral communication and public-speaking skills
- Ability and willingness to learn and share information related to Medicare and related insurance benefits

- Ability to work and get along well with others from diverse backgrounds
- Ability to operate audiovisual equipment (i.e., PowerPoint program, laptop, and projector)
- Ability to travel to presentation sites throughout the community
- Valid driver's license (where applicable)
- Automobile (or other vehicle) insurance (where applicable)

Time Commitment

Counselor schedules are flexible. The local SHIP Site Coordinator works with each counselor to determine the number of hours the counselor works each month, and to schedule assignments accordingly. Because of the training counselors who make group presentations receive, they are asked to commit to a minimum of one year.

Location

Counselors who make group presentations work at locations throughout the community.

Supervision

SHIP counselors report to the local SHIP Site Coordinator and, when appropriate, to the statewide SHIP Director.

Benefits

SHIP counselors receive training on the basics of Medicare and related insurance benefits. Counselors who make group presentations receive additional training on presentation skills. They have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and the general public about Medicare, Medicaid, and other related topics.

COUNSELOR ROLE DESCRIPTION: COUNSELING

Purpose

To empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers on Medicare, Medicaid and other related topics by educating them in individual counseling sessions.

Suggested Activities

SHIP counselors discuss individual situations with beneficiaries and/or their caregivers and may compare Medicare plans available, review Medicare Summary Notices (MSN), billing statements, medical records, and other related financial and health documents. Counselors also educate beneficiaries about Medicare, Medicaid, and other related topics. Counselors may be required to assist beneficiaries in applying for Medicare prescription drug plans, Medicare Advantage plans, assistance programs such as Extra Help and/or Medicaid. Counselors listen carefully to the beneficiary's or caregiver's account of a situation and determine whether to:

- Share information with, or provide an explanation to, the beneficiary or caregiver
- Send the beneficiary or caregiver to a SHIP staff person
- Send the beneficiary to another more applicable organization for assistance (such as the Department of Human Services, Social Security Administration, 1-800-Medicare, etc.)

When a SHIP counselor decides to refer a beneficiary's case to a SHIP staff person who handles complex issues, the counselor may receive and confidentially transmit the beneficiary's documents to that person with SHIP's confidentiality and data security procedures in mind. Counselors provide their services in person or by telephone. Counseling may take place at locations such as senior centers, SHIP or Medicare education events, and libraries, provided the conversation is conducted in privacy so the beneficiary's information cannot be viewed or overheard by unauthorized persons.

Limitations

Counselors may receive and hold confidential beneficiary documents such as Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) and medical records only when referring a case to a staff person or counselor that handles complex issues unless the counselor is also designated as a complex issues counselor.

Performance Measures and Standards

This activity is measured by the number of counseling sessions and, if available, any client or counselor feedback. The SHIP Site Coordinator has frequent contact with the counselor to determine the number of counseling sessions or outreach events the counselor staffs to help the SHIP Site Coordinator fulfill their scope of work.

- Good oral communication skills
- Active listening skills

- Ability and willingness to learn and share information related to Medicare, Medicaid, and other related topics
- Ability to explain Medicare coverage and program integrity rules and procedures in terms that beneficiaries can understand
- Ability to work and get along well with others from diverse backgrounds
- Ability to request assistance as needed, for example, knowing when to refer complex issues and/or when the answer to a question is not known by the counselor

Time Commitment

Counselor schedules are flexible. The local SHIP Site Coordinator works with each counselor to determine the number of hours the counselor works each month, and to schedule assignments accordingly. Because of the training SHIP Counselors receive, they are asked to commit to a minimum of one year.

Location

SHIP counselors work at the offices of the local SHIP host organization and at sites in their community where SHIP activities such as presentations and information dissemination take place.

Supervision

SHIP counselors report to the local SHIP Site Coordinator and, when appropriate, to the statewide SHIP Director.

Benefits

SHIP counselors receive training on the basics of Medicare, Medicaid, and other related topics. SHIP counselors receive additional training on counseling skills, available local service providers and triage procedures. All SHIP counselors have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and the general public about Medicare and related insurance benefits.

**APPENDIX C: SHIP SCREENING MATRIX & REFERENCE
CHECK INFORMATION**

SHIP Screening Application Matrix

Name of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

SHIP Agency Name: _____

The VRPM screening policies require screenings to verify that each prospective Counselor/Volunteer can be considered for the SHIP program. Descriptions of VRPM screening tools are provided on the following pages.

Screening Tools

Roles	Application Form	Interview(s)	Reference Checks	Background Checks				Drivers License Check (as needed)	Complex Issues & Referrals	Proof of Auto Insurance (as	Criminal Record Check (SSN)
				Identity Check	Counselor History	Employment History	Education				
1. Distributing Information											
2. Assisting with Administration											
3. Staffing Exhibits											
4. Group Presentations											
5. Counseling											
6. Complex Issues & Referrals											

SHIP Screening Matrix Tool Descriptions

Here are descriptions of key tools that are utilized in counselor/volunteer screening, as outlined in the matrix above.

Application Form

The application form is the initial submission of information by applicants, providing information on the background, basic qualifications, and interests of the prospective applicant. It should be completed by all prospective applicants, preferably before an in-person discussion so that the interviewer can review the information and begin the process of finding a good fit for the prospective counselor/volunteer.

Interview(s)

The interview(s) is usually the first two-way exchange of information about applicant involvement with SHIP. Usually done face-to-face, it may also be done by telephone. A second interview may be done where the role is demanding enough to warrant it, where questions remain about a candidate's suitability for the role, or where information surfaces in other screening inquiries (such as a criminal record or a report from one or more references) that needs to be checked further with the applicant. Interviews can be quite short and straight-forward or they can be long and probing. The nature and extent of the interview should match the nature of the role in question.

Reference Checks

Reference checks are an extremely useful screening device that many dismiss as useless. In fact, when taken seriously and conducted by a skilled reference checker, this device may produce the most productive information in the screener's arsenal. There are three types of reference checks:

Personal/Character Reference

This kind of reference knows the candidate on a personal level and can speak to his or her character, personal characteristics that are relevant to the role, reliability, trustworthiness, and so on. Typical personal references might include the candidate's friend, faith leader, counselor, coach, colleague, teacher, or fellow counselor.

Work Reference

This kind of reference knows the candidate in a work setting (either paid work or volunteer work) and can speak to work habits, dependability, trustworthiness, work-related skills, qualifications, communication skills, personality, and so on.

Family Reference

Many believe a family reference to be, by definition, unreliable. However, in fact, family members are in a position to know things about applicants that others cannot. If they understand the importance of being candid because the candidate would be placed in a position of trust from which they could do harm, this mechanism can be a valuable addition to other information collected in the screening process.

Background Checks

Background checks can involve a range of information:

- Identity check – verification of identity via photo identification
- Counselor/Volunteer history and experience – verification of information supplied on application form and/or in interview, confirmed in interview and possibly during reference checks
- Employment history and experience – verification of information supplied on application form and/or in interview, confirmed in interview and possibly during reference checks
- Education – verification of information supplied on application form and/or in interview, confirmed in interview and possibly during reference checks

Driver's License and Proof of Automobile Insurance

It is the counselors'/volunteers' own insurance that will cover them in the event of an accident while driving their own vehicles, so it is critical that SHIP verifies that counselors/volunteers are carrying insurance on their vehicles and have a current, valid driver's license. Prior to each 3-year term of service, the SHIP Site Coordinator, the counselor, and the volunteer sign the SHIP Driver's License and Insurance Coverage Certification Form as proof. This form is retained in their personnel file.

Counselors/Volunteers must immediately notify their SHIP Site Coordinator if their automobile insurance coverage or driver's license lapses or changes during the period between signed verification statements.

Criminal Records Check

The criminal records check has become a standard screening device for positions of trust in most non-profits and public service organizations. There are different levels of criminal records checks. VRPM policies specify that the SHIPs and SHIP Sites must employ the federal-level check in their screening processes.

Keep in mind that an absence of a criminal record is not a guarantee of either suitability or harmlessness. The existence of a criminal record is not necessarily an automatic disqualifier. Each SHIP Site Coordinator, ideally in cooperation with their immediate supervisor, will determine what kinds of offenses disqualify candidates as a SHIP counselor. A copy of the counselor's/volunteer's criminal records check shall be placed in their personnel file.

Determining the Screening Procedures for a Particular Counselor Role

Whenever a new counselor role is developed or when a new array of duties has been assigned to current counselors, a determination must be made of what screening would be appropriate to these new duties. This is basically a miniature risk assessment process in which takes into consideration about the dangers associated with the new duties to be performed by counselors and the new screening safety measures that need to be instituted.

Here are some additional considerations for determining how much and what kind of screening is appropriate for counselor roles:

- If the role involves work with the public, then inquiries about presentation style, communication skills, good judgment, and so on would be important to ask about. Some information can be obtained from the counselor's application form regarding past work or counselor history and other information can be obtained from reference check inquiries about communication skills and style.
- If the role involves access to beneficiary information, previous experience in a position of trust would be the perfect line for deep inquiry during a reference check; questions or hypothetical scenarios in the interview might test a candidate's ability to stay within role limits and their good judgment to identify why even a well-intended breach of confidentiality can have disastrous consequences. Any offenses in a criminal background check related to abuse of others would be highly significant.
- If the role involves the provision of expertise and advice, you will want to check the applicant's qualifications and perhaps seek input via a reference check on their style of work, related experience, and other characteristics such as reliability and professionalism.

APPENDIX D: CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS

A. Criminal Record Check Options

There are the different types of criminal record check options. Listed below are clarification to the most common types.

- UCIA fingerprint application (non-ORI) provides a snapshot of the applicants' background at that point in time – for Illinois only. The report reflects convictions only – i.e., will not show arrests or pending cases.
- ORI fingerprint application – State and FBI fingerprint application. Includes arrests and convictions. Initial check covers 50 states. Has a “rap back” feature that reports updated criminal activity for the state of Illinois only.
- BBS - Bushue Background Screening Nationwide Screen – provides 50 state background check. Does not require an ORI account. Includes arrest and conviction information. Includes sexual/Violence Offender registry check.

Regarding obtaining ORI number for the expanded criminal record check:

- ORI numbers are approved through Illinois State Police; can take 8-12 weeks to receive a response; and the approval criteria is strict.
- Criminal record check vendors can work with grantees/SHIP sites who already have an ORI number, help those desiring to apply for one, and offer alternative routes for those who do not have/are ineligible to obtain an ORI.
- Options may vary between vendors.

New requirements were handed down from ACL requiring All SHIP counselors that work in a “position of trust” – meaning if they have contact with clients/confidential information in any form – whether via computer, paper files, over the phone or in-person – is required to have some type of Federal criminal record check (CBC) completed. Criminal record checks are to be completed as part of the hiring process, and every three years after. Documentation of such checks are to be maintained in the counselors' personnel file.

For SHIP sites needing funding assistance to complete this mandate, please contact the State SHIP office.

B. Interpreting Criminal Record Checks Tip Sheet

SHIP counselors are subject to criminal records checks. To meet this standard, SHIP programs must both collect criminal records data and then interpret and apply this data in determining the suitability of prospective counselors. Volunteers, depending on their role, may also be subject to the same checks. This tip sheet is a resource to assist programs in developing their own state-specific process for interpreting data obtained from criminal records checks, for developing a decision-making procedure, and establishing criteria for the acceptance or rejection of prospective counselors based on criminal records check results.

This tip sheet covers the following:

- An overview of criminal records check data
- Difficulties in interpretation posed by the current state of criminal records check data
- Key questions to consider when developing a procedure for interpreting criminal records check data
- Resources to assist in interpreting criminal records checks

Overview of Criminal Records Check Data

Criminal record checks of prospective counselors/volunteers have become a common standard in counselor/volunteer management during the past twenty years.

A 2016 survey by Verified Counselors found that 61% of non-profit organizations planned on doing more background checks on prospective counselors. Checking criminal records began with the realization that many prospective counselors had some sort of criminal offense that might impact their suitability for performing some counselor roles.

Examination of data from counselor programs utilizing criminal records checks has verified this conclusion:

A 2010 examination of data from counselor programs in parks and recreation of their experiences with criminal records checks found that:

- Of 19,495 records checks of prospective counselors, 2,960 were found to have criminal records (15.2%)

- Disqualifying offenses found included: 28 sex offenses, 264 felony offenses, and 455 misdemeanor violence, drug, or alcohol offenses during the previous five years

A study by Lexis/Nexis found that in 2011, 5.3% of checks on prospective counselors revealed criminal records, and of 5.4 million criminal records checks from 2007 to 2011, 22% of these records were for serious offenses. A more recent study by Lexis-Nexis in 2013 in

Australia found that 7 “significant risk” counselor applicants were accepted each year by nonprofits serving children.

While SHIP programs are likely to have a small percentage of revealed criminal offenses (mainly because of the age of most prospective counselors), the need to safeguard beneficiaries led to a VRPM policy requiring criminal records checks for some SHIP counselor/volunteer roles

Difficulties in Interpretation Posed by the Current State of Criminal Records Check Data

Performing a criminal record check on a prospective counselor/volunteer is much easier today than it was twenty years ago when programs first began investigating prospective counselors. SHIPs may obtain criminal records information from a variety of sources, including local or state police authorities, contracts with private data investigation firms, or national criminal records checks vendors.

While obtaining criminal records has become easier, interpreting this data remains troublesome, and each program must understand the limitations of what they are seeing in reports of criminal offenses, whatever the source.

These difficulties include:

1. Problems with nomenclature

Criminal records reports are a shorthand version of large amounts of data. Unfortunately, different jurisdictions (even within the same state) utilize multiple and sometimes confusing abbreviations to represent similar offenses. At first reading, a criminal records report is almost incomprehensible. Fortunately, most state police agencies provide interpretive information on their systems. By analyzing criminal records data, SSCs may begin to learn this new language.

Tip: Ask your state police agency whether they publish a guide to interpreting criminal records in your state. A guide may be found through a simple Internet search. Some police agencies also provide training sessions on interpreting their criminal records reports.

2. Problems in identification

An estimated 1% of the 45 million individuals in the FBI criminal database have used over 100 aliases and false Social Security numbers. SHIP must try to ensure that the person named in the criminal records data is actually the prospective applicant. For individuals with common names this can be quite difficult.

Tip: Verify identification from prospective applicant as outlined in the Screening Matrix. If a problem is uncovered regarding identification, give the prospective applicant an opportunity to establish whether they are the person named in the criminal record or not.

3. Problems with overlapping or multiple offenses

A single criminal offense may show up multiple times in a criminal records report, depending on how it was handled in different jurisdictions, whether it was appealed, and how the original indictment was filed. This has significant implications for SHIPs where one of the considerations for acceptance of an applicant is the number of past offenses.

Tip: When examining a criminal record, begin by recording the date and nature of the original criminal action and then seeing if multiple charges or convictions link back to it. There may actually be fewer charges than the record would seem to indicate at a glance.

4. Problems with missing, incomplete, or incorrect information

The most serious problem in interpreting criminal records data is that it may simply be “wrong” more times than is comfortable. Some examples:

The most complete national database of criminal activity (IAFIS) is maintained by the FBI. However, the FBI does not require states to submit information on low-level misdemeanors (bouncing checks, a DUI which does not result in injury or property damage, etc.) This means that some crimes will not be uncovered by just doing an FBI criminal records check.

About 50% of the records in IAFIS do not contain a disposition. This means a person may see the initial criminal arrest record but not know if charges were dropped, if the individual was found not guilty, or if the individual was convicted but the conviction was later overturned on appeal.

The National Association of Professional Background Screeners found in a 2005 study that in a significant percentage of searches the FBI database returned erroneous or incomplete information, with a large number of missed records and false positives generated.

Although the system of amassing criminal records data is much better than it was 20 years ago it is still the imperfect product of attempting to gather and assimilate massive amounts of data from county and state authorities.

Tips: Allow the prospective applicant to provide additional information regarding any identified offense.

Remember that criminal records checks are only the first stage in screening and safeguarding SHIP against wrongful activity. Screening must always be followed by careful monitoring and supervision.

Despite the difficulties cited above, conducting criminal records checks of prospective applicants who will fill positions of trust still make sense. Studies indicate that such checks do identify unsuitable applicants at least some of the time and that they probably deter some unsuitable persons from applying for counselor/volunteer roles in the first place. In any case, criminal records checks are now an accepted requirement for counselor/ volunteer programs working with potentially at-risk clients.

Key Questions for Developing a Procedure for Interpreting Criminal Records Checks

Once SHIP has obtained information on a prospective applicant's criminal record, it must have a procedure for determining whether the information warrants rejecting the prospective applicant or limiting the type of role in which the applicant may be placed. VRPM standards do not mandate what factors should be utilized, leaving that decision to the discretion of each program.

The following, however, is a list of questions that the SHIP Site Coordinator might consider in developing the criteria that SHIP will utilize:

- 1. What offenses should totally bar a person from being a SHIP counselor/volunteer?**
- 2. What mitigating factors might influence that decision?**
- 3. What are other organizations doing that SHIP might use as a model?**

SHIP programs seeking examples of other organizations' criteria for rejecting applicants might consider those of the National Recreation and Park Association:

- All sex offenses, regardless of amount of time since offense
- All felony violence, regardless of amount of time since offense
- All felony offenses within past ten years
- All misdemeanor violent offenses within past seven years
- All misdemeanor drug and alcohol offenses within the past 5 years, or multiple offenses in the past 10 years
- Any other misdemeanor within the past 5 years that could be considered dangerous to children or is directly related to the functions of the counselor/volunteer

- 4. What internal procedure will the SSC utilize in conducting the review of criminal records for potential SHIP counselors?**

In developing their SHIP's procedure for reviewing criminal records, SSCs should consider the following:

- What is SHIPs current process for reviewing records (i.e., who does it)?
- How will SHIP handle incomplete records?
- Plea bargains or no contest pleas?
- What about open or pending charges?
- What is the SHIPs appeals process?

Resources to Assist in Interpreting Criminal Records Checks

For more information about criminal records checks:

AARP Public Policy Institute, Safe at Home? Developing Effective Criminal Background Checks and Other Screening Policies for Home Care Workers, September 2010, <http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/ppi/lrc/2009-12.pdf>

LexisNexis, 2009, The Importance of Background Screening for Nonprofits: An Updated Briefing, http://www.lexisnexis.com/risk/nonprofit/documents/Background_Screening_Nonprofits.pdf

C. Disqualifying Criminal Offenses

Are there some characteristics of an applicant that would automatically disqualify him or her from involvement in a SHIP program? Some things are obvious: conviction for violent crime, sex-related crime, crimes against dependent adults, financial fraud, particularly against dependent adults, and so on could be considered disqualifiers for most, if not all,

SHIP roles. But what about theft of a minor item more than a decade ago? What about a prank in adolescence that resulted in a criminal record of a minor nature, followed by no further recorded criminal behavior through adulthood? Is a record of driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI) an automatic disqualifier for a role involving driving? What about two DUI offenses?

ACL's Counselor Risk and Program Management (VRPM) polices for SHIPs do not prescribe a list of offenses that disqualify applicants who have criminal records. Instead, the policies instruct each program to establish a procedure for determining which criminal violations render an applicant unsuitable for SHIP assignments. This determination allows SHIP to decide its own ability and willingness to accept risk.

Automatic disqualifiers may include things other than a criminal history. For example, an inability to effectively communicate would be a disqualifier from the group presentation's role. Strong reservations expressed by references about the trustworthiness or hidden agenda of a candidate would certainly be a serious red flag if not an outright disqualifier.

There are many factors for SHIP Site Coordinators to consider in the wide range of situations that will arise in the screening process. Some decisions will be obvious. Others will be less so, depending on a range of factors such as:

Group 1 (factors related to the offense)

- Whether the crime is a misdemeanor or a felony
- The degree of the offense (first-, second-, or third-degree felony)
- The degree of participation in the offense
- The nature of the crime (assault, property crime, fraud, drug, etc.)
- Age and ability of the victim against whom the crime was committed

Group 2 (factors related to the applicant)

- Extent and nature of the applicant’s past criminal activity (quantity, variety)
- Whether there are multiple convictions that may indicate an ongoing pattern of behavior
- Circumstances surrounding the conviction
- Age of the applicant when the crime was committed
- Amount of time elapsed since the last criminal activity
- Whether any criminal actions are now pending
- Conduct and work activity of the applicant before and after the criminal activity
- Applicant’s current standard of living versus when the crime was committed
 - For example, if the applicant’s crime was shoplifting, were they financially unstable at the time of the crime?
 - Are they financially stable now, in comparison?
 - These are questions you can ask the applicant. You aren’t expected to request proof of income.
- Evidence of rehabilitation

Group 3 (factors related to the counselor position)

- Whether the offenses were disclosed on the consent form
- Degree of unsupervised contact available via the counselor role
- Opportunity to place the counselor in an alternate role
- Relationship between the crime and the proposed counselor role
- Your ability or inability to corroborate a suspicion or allegation

It may not be possible or even advisable to write definitive policies on some of these “grayer” matters, but certain offenses, incapacities, and characteristics will definitely be serious enough to warrant rejection. When needed, SHIP Site Coordinators may discuss their questions and concerns with their immediate supervisor, the SHIP Site Coordinator, and the other SHIP Site Coordinators, to ensure that there is a similar approach being taken across SHIP. SHIP Site Coordinators are strongly urged to look to state statutes, administrative rules, and agency hiring policies for guidance.

Occupational licensing and/or certification laws may be especially informative because licensing standards for some occupations, including nurses, certified nurse assistants, and clinical social workers, sometimes list offenses that automatically disqualify applicants. Some states, for example, prohibit individuals convicted of murder, aggravated sexual assault, elder abuse, and a few other serious crimes from applying for licenses that would enable them to work in nursing homes. Other states disqualify

those whose criminal offenses are “substantially related” to the work they are to do. If SHIP Site Coordinators have questions or are uncertain about how to proceed, they may check with their agency’s legal counsel.

To summarize the steps around disqualifiers:

1. SHIP Site Coordinators establish a list of automatic disqualifiers for each role at their site(s).
2. For cases that may be in the gray-area, talk to your immediate supervisor and decide whether SHIP will accept the applicant. Final decisions may also include the SHIP Site Coordinator and the other SHIP Site Coordinators for consistency across the program.

APPENDIX E: INCIDENT REPORT, COMPLAINTS, GRIEVANCES, AND APEALS

Incident Report Procedures

Overview

This document's purpose is to provide SHIP Site Coordinators, counselors, volunteers, and partner counselor host organizations with guidance on how to report and respond to incidents such as injuries, accidents, harassment, and serious judgment errors or other behavior missteps. This document focuses on counselors/volunteers and their responsibility to report incidents in which they are involved or otherwise witness.

Reporting

Counselors/Volunteers are to report all injuries and accidents in which they are involved or witness, such as injuries to participants at events or counseling sessions.

1. SHIP Site Coordinator should be notified by telephone as quickly as possible when response to the incident involves agencies such as the police, emergency response units, paramedics, or fire department.
2. An **Incident Reporting Form** should be completed to record relevant information for incidents that meet any of the following criteria:
 - The response to the incident involves agencies such as the police, emergency response units, paramedics, or fire department.
 - The counselor, volunteer or program participant receives medical care, or is advised by a staff person affiliated with SHIP to seek medical care.
 - The incident involves, or is likely to involve, an insurance claim.
 - The incident involves an allegation or strong suspicion of physical, sexual, or financial abuse.
 - The incident involves the loss or theft of beneficiary or agency property.
 - The incident involves harassment, a serious error in judgment, or a misstep, including offensive or inappropriate remarks and behavior.
 - The incident involves the violation of a state or federal law.
3. Counselors/Volunteers should report the extent of their involvement in the incident along with information on time and location of the incident, description of the incident, and any other parties involved.
4. Counselors/Volunteers should submit the completed **Incident Reporting Form** to their SHIP Site Coordinator and primary contact of appropriate staff member at the SHIP site, if applicable, as soon as possible.

Staff Response

The SHIP Site Coordinator coordinates staff response to the incident, based upon what immediate steps were or were not already taken at the scene of the incident. Take one or more of the following **immediate** actions as needed:

1. Call 911 in response to medical emergencies
2. Contact police in response to automobile accidents and criminal activity
3. Notify relevant authorities (e.g., police, public health, elder abuse, etc.)
4. Photograph or otherwise document the incident site
5. Notify staff at the counselor worksite

Take one or more of these **follow-up** steps as soon as possible, depending upon the type of incident:

1. Contact affected parties or witnesses
2. Notify appropriate administrative staff member at SHIP Site
3. Notify the SHIP Director and/or SDA staff
4. Notify an insurance carrier
5. Take other steps as needed to resolve the incident

SHIP INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Use this form to report any incident involving a SHIP counselor, including:

- Injury to the counselor, client, volunteer, or program participant
- Accidents, including motor vehicle accidents
- Property damage, including damage to equipment
- Lost possessions, files, or equipment
- Abuse of a beneficiary or other individual
- Harassment and offensive remarks
- Error in judgment

General Information

Agency/Organization Name: _____

SSC/Administrative Staff Member/Volunteer: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Email: _____

Information About the Affected Person or Organization

Check One: Counselor Beneficiary/Client Paid Staff Volunteer Other

Affected Party's Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Email: _____

Information About the Counselor (if not the affected party)

Counselor's Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Email: _____

Information About the Incident

Check All That Apply: Injury Accident Property Damage Lost Possession

Abuse Offensive Remark Harassment Error

Other (please describe) _____

Data of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____

Location of Incident: _____

Describe what happened, how it happened, factors leading up to the incident, what was said or observed (attach separate sheet, if necessary):

Witness Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Address: _____

Witness Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Address: _____

Name of Physician Consulted (if applicable): _____

Name of Hospital or Clinic (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Was incident report to the police? Yes No

Police Contact (if applicable): _____

Incident Reporter Information

Reporter's Name: _____

Reporter's Title (if applicable): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Telephone Number: _____

**APPENDIX F: DRIVER'S LICENSE AND INSURANCE
COVERAGE CERTIFICATION FORM**

SHIP Driver's License and Insurance Coverage Certification Form

I, (print name) _____,

certify that I have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance coverage. In the event that my automobile insurance policy or driver's license lapses or changes, I agree to notify my SHIP Site Coordinator immediately.

Counselor Signature Date

SHIP Site Coordinator Signature Date

(Form to be kept on-site with SHIP Site Coordinator)

APPENDIX G: COMPLAINT BY A SHIP COUNSELOR/VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTIONS

Guiding principles

- Subjects have the right to be accompanied to meetings or to be represented by their nominee at all meetings during this resolution process.
- Complaints shall be kept confidential other than to those directly involved in the complaint resolution procedure.
- If at any time during the process or investigation, SHIP concludes that a counselor/volunteer has filed a claim in bad faith, has refused to cooperate in an investigation of the complaint, or has provided false information regarding the complaint, disciplinary action up to and including termination of the counselor/volunteer may be taken.

Steps to take to file a complaint or grievance

Stage One

If the SHIP counselor/volunteer has a complaint or grievance, they are to respond promptly and thoroughly. Discussion of the complaint or grievance should be directed to the SHIP Site Coordinator. Discussion should include explaining what has happened and what the counselor/volunteer feels needs to be done to resolve the situation.

If the complaint is against the SHIP Site Coordinator, discussion of the issue should be directed

to the SHIP Site Coordinator's immediate supervisor, and/or the SHIP Director.

Fill out the Complaint Form at the end of this document, which includes the following information:

- Counselors'/Volunteers' name and person against whom the complaint is filed;
- The date of the incident precipitating the complaint;
- A concise description of the complaint and any precipitating incidences;
- The identity of anyone with relevant information or an explanation of where additional information can be found;
- Any documentation relevant to the complaint and where it can be found;
- Other information that supports the complaint;
- A description of any previous action taken to resolve the complaint, and
- A listing of all desired outcomes and reasons why such outcomes are appropriate.

The SHIP Site Coordinator will, if necessary, gather more information, determine if the complaint warrants further action and, as appropriate, act to resolve the complaint. This determination will be made within 7 business days, and then will be provided to the counselor/volunteer with an explanation and notification.

Stage Two

If the counselor/volunteer feels that the issue has not been resolved satisfactorily, they can notify the SHIP Site Coordinator that they are not accepting the informal judgment.

The matter will then be referred to the SHIP Site Coordinator's immediate supervisor to resolve the complaint (reconsideration).

The complaint and grievance will be reviewed, and a determination will be made within 14 business days of the receipt of the counselor's/volunteer's decision to not accept the informal judgment.

Notice of the formal reconsideration decision will be sent to all affected parties, along with a description of what next steps might occur based on the decision. Possible next steps might include, depending upon the nature of the complaint:

- Re-assignment to another location or role
- Disciplinary action against a counselor/volunteer, or staff member
- Changes in the support provided the counselor/volunteer
- Additional training for a counselor, volunteer, or staff member
- Adjustment in program procedures

Stage Three

If the counselor/volunteer wishes to appeal the formal reconsideration decision, they can appeal in writing. Appeals are to be submitted within 5 business days to the SHIP Director, who will review the appeal and issue a determination within 14 business days.

An appeal may also be submitted by any other affected party.

Submit written appeals to:

SHIP Director

Illinois Department on Aging

One Natural Resources Way, #100 Springfield, IL 62702-1271

This determination by the SHIP Director will constitute final disposition of the complaint or grievance.

SHIP COMPLAINT FORM

Complaint by a SHIP Counselor/Volunteer

Date: _____

Counselor/Volunteer Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Complaint is against (name and relationship – i.e., client, staff person, another counselor, volunteer, etc.):

Date(s) of Incident: _____, _____, _____

What is the nature of the complaint? Please describe the incident/s that occurred that led up to the complaint or grievance:

Is anyone else involved in the complaint or grievance, such as witnesses, and if so, who are they?

Is there any documentation relevant to the complaint? Yes No

If yes, Where can it be found? _____

Please add any other information that supports the complaint, if any:

What action (if any) has been taken already to resolve the complaint by a counselor and/or volunteer?

Counselor/volunteer recommendations of outcomes of the complaint, and why those recommended outcomes would be appropriate?

[Counselor Internal Use Only]

Outcome of Complaint:

Date: _____

Name and title of person document outcome:

Describe outcome below (or attach a typed summary), including an explanation of how the outcome was communicated to all affected parties, attaching copies of any written communications of the outcome to affected parties:

SHIP RECONSIDERTION/APPEAL FORM

Date: _____

Counselor/Volunteer Name: _____

Subject's Role: _____

SHIP Site Coordinator Name: _____

Counselor/Volunteer Placement Location: _____

I do not agree with the outcome of the corrective action decision _____ (date of decision) and/or the reconsideration decision _____ (date of decision or N/A). I am requesting reconsideration/appeal because:

Mail or fax reconsideration requests to the Illinois Department on Aging where the SSC is located. Submit appeal requests to: SHIP Director

[Counselor Internal Use Only]

Outcome of Reconsideration Request/Appeal: Date: _____

Name and title of person document outcome:

APPENDIX H: SHIP COUNSELOR/VOLUNTEER EXIT SURVEY

SHIP COUNSELOR/VOLUNTEER EXIT SURVEY

(Please be as candid as possible in your responses.)

Name: _____

Position: _____ Date: _____

Approximately how long were you a counselor/volunteer with SHIP? _____

What are main reasons for leaving work with SHIP?

What did you most enjoy about the SHIP position?

What did you least enjoy about the SHIP position?

To what extent did SHIP meet expectations for a successful experience?

How well did the orientation and training prepare the counselor/volunteer to carry out the responsibilities of the SHIP position?

To what extent did the SHIP staff meet expectations for providing supervision, support, and recognition in the work as a counselor/volunteer?

What could SHIP staff have done differently to improve the counselor/volunteer experience?

What was the most rewarding experience as a SHIP counselor/volunteer?

Recommended changes to help improve the SHIP counselor/volunteer program?

Overall rating of experience with SHIP (1 = Needs Improvement, 5 = Excellent)

Needs Improvement

Average

Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Illinois Department on Aging

Senior Health Insurance Program

One Natural Resources Way, Suite 100

Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271

Senior Helpline: 1(800) 252-8966

1(888) 206-1327 (TTY)

AGING.SHIP@Illinois.gov



The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966, 1-888-206-1327 (TTY).