

Office of Community Engagement Guidelines for Community Engaged Learning and Volunteerism During the COVID-19 Mitigation Period

SECTION 1: Introduction

The Office of Community Engagement supports community engaged learning, service learning, and volunteerism for students, faculty and staff using the [South Serves Volunteerism and Service Learning Management System](#), in partnership with the United Way of Southwest Alabama (UWSWA) whose hub site ([Volunteer Connect](#)) links to and shares community postings with South Serves (the system). Community agencies in the system are vetted through the UWSWA process and maintain control over the postings for their organizations. The OCE and UWSWA offer ongoing training for the use of the system for faculty, students, staff, and community organizations.

Beginning in mid-March 2020 the OCE and UWSWA developed a Virtual Volunteerism section of South Serves to support the community in continuing to receive assistance and to support South Serves/Volunteer Connect users in continuing to serve, while avoiding potential exposure to COVID-19 during their service. Currently, the OCE promotes **Virtual Volunteerism** as the most appropriate format of service during the active COVID-19 mitigation period. The OCE team continues to work to expand these types of opportunities by working closely with community groups to identify ways that remote volunteerism can support their needs. Community agencies who choose to post in-person service needs in the system are encouraged to provide the details of their COVID-19 health and safety protocols within their posting in the system.

This document pertains to community engagement for the University of South Alabama faculty, students and staff, and is based on **The USA Reopening Plan** and **The Statewide Recommendations for Community Engagement** released July 25, 2020, by the *Alabama Postsecondary Alliance for Community Engagement(PACE)* developed by the Ad Hoc Subcommittee of PACE which the USA OCE Director is a member.

SECTION 2: Definition of Terms

The following is a list of definitions provided to promote a better understanding of the community engagement recommendations presented in this document.

ADPH: The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is the primary state health agency for the state of Alabama.

CDC: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) forms the nation's health protection agency. The CDC saves lives and protects people from health, safety, and security threats.

Community Engagement: The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. [Community engagement] is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions to mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices (Centers for Disease Control, 1997).

MOU: A Memorandum of Understanding is an agreement between post-secondary institutions and community partners.

PPE: (Personal Protective Equipment) is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious injuries and illnesses.

Vulnerable Populations: Vulnerable populations and people who are at higher risk of severe illness should take extra precautions to avoid illness. Click the link below for more information from the Centers for Disease Control regarding who is considered vulnerable:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html>

Direct Contact Service: This is service in which there is face to face interactions between volunteers/participants and the clients/consumers of the community organization.

This type of service can include, but is not limited to:

- Mentoring at local elementary schools
- Adult literacy program
- Serving Meals at Community Centers
- Classes with seniors

Low Contact Service: This is service in which there is only limited interaction between participants and the employees of the community organization. There is no direct face to face contact with clients/consumers.

This type of service can include, but is not limited to:

- Preparing meal boxes for distribution at food bank
- Voter registration
- Beautification efforts outside of local schools or community centers
- Working in local community gardens
- Roadway, park, beach, and river cleanups
- Work with local animal rescue

No Contact Service: This is a service in which there is no face to face interaction between

participants and other human clients or community partners. All instructions and interactions will occur virtually.

This type of service can include, but is not limited to:

- All virtual service opportunities
- Awareness Campaigns
- Advocacy Campaigns
- Philanthropy

SECTION 3: General Guidance

A. Guidance for required Service Learning and Community-Engaged Experiences

The Office of Community Engagement (OCE staff) encourages faculty members choosing to include service learning and community engagement experiences in their course design to assign no contact (virtual) opportunities whenever feasible. (see **definitions section** above for examples)

For faculty who choose to require in-person low contact and direct contact service experiences for their students

1. Faculty must review the service/service learning opportunity posted in [South Serves](#) to ensure that it complies with the USA Reopening plan guidelines, PPE requirements, and ADPH/CDC guidance. The OCE volunteer coordinator (OCE coordinator) supports faculty who request assistance in gathering additional information needed to make a determination about specific postings/organization protocols before faculty choose to require a specific opportunity. Faculty can email communityengagement@southalabama.edu to request assistance.
2. For faculty requiring an in-person service opportunity NOT posted in [South Serves](#), the faculty member must ensure the opportunity is in compliance with all [USA reopening plan guidelines](#). Faculty members must receive pre-approval from the OCE Director indicating that the opportunity is in compliance. The OCE coordinator is available to assist faculty in gathering additional information necessary to make this assessment and any changes to the service activity to ensure compliance. Faculty can email the OCE coordinator at communityengagement@southalabama.edu for assistance with the process or call the OCE office at 251-460-6116.
3. Faculty requiring in-person service learning and/or community engaged experiences must provide training to students regarding the expectations for compliance with these guidelines while participating in community-based service. The OCE staff offers assistance with the development and provision of such training. Faculty can email the OCE coordinator at communityengagement@southalabama.edu to request assistance.
4. Faculty must require that students, faculty, and/or staff participating in direct contact and low contact service opportunities comply with the community organization's COVID-19 Protocols AND the [USA Reopening Plan Guidelines](#).

5. In general, students, faculty, and staff should not engage in direct service with populations considered the most vulnerable as determined by the CDC. These populations include but are not limited to: the elderly, those experiencing homelessness, children fighting pediatric illness, and immuno-compromised individuals. Exceptions to this specific guidance will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will require review by the OCE director and include additional review by the USA COVID-19 supervisor and the USA Reopening Committee. Faculty, staff, or students should contact the OCE director at sshelley-tremblay@southalabama.edu for assistance with the evaluation process.
6. Faculty must inform participants that in addition to any requirements of their community organization service sites, all students who participate in in-person service will complete a health screening form before attending on-campus classes or other activities, and will be referred for testing if the screening indicates issues or concerns. Health screening will be completed through the [Jag Healthcheck](#) program. "[Jag Healthcheck](#)" can be accessed directly at jaghealthcheck.southalabama.edu or by downloading the recommended [GuideSafe™](#) exposure notification app.
7. If a student experiences symptoms of COVID-19 after participating in a required service learning opportunity or becomes aware that they have been exposed to COVID-19
 - a. they must stay home, indicate this information on [Jag Healthcheck](#), and contact Student Health.
 - b. they are required to immediately report confirmed cases of COVID-19 to USA's contact tracing team at ReportCovid@SouthAlabama.edu. Instructions on how to report are contained on [USA's Human Resources website](#) and the student section of the University's [reopening website](#).
 - c. they must report a probable or confirmed case to their instructor who will then email the director of the Office of Community Engagement (OCE Director) at sshelley-tremblay@southalabama.edu. The OCE director will consult with the USA Contact Tracing Supervisor who will determine if the student was in close contact with others at the site and provide information regarding quarantine period and further steps required.
 - d. based on the guidance provided by the USA Contact Tracing supervisor, the OCE director may contact the community organization site supervisor.
8. If a faculty or staff member experiences symptoms of COVID-19 after participating in a service learning related activity or becomes aware that they have been exposed to COVID-19 during a service learning activity
 - a. they must stay home, indicate this information on [Jag Healthcheck](#), and contact Employee Health and Wellness.
 - b. they are required to report confirmed cases of COVID-19 to USA's contact tracing team at ReportCovid@SouthAlabama.edu. Instructions on how to report are contained on [USA's Human Resources website](#).
 - c. they must report a probable or confirmed to the OCE director at sshelley-tremblay@southalabama.edu. The OCE director will consult with the USA Contact Tracing Supervisor who will determine if the individual was in close

- contact with others at the site and provide information regarding quarantine period and further steps required.
- d. based on the guidance provided by the USA Contact Tracing supervisor, the OCE director may contact the community organization site supervisor.
9. Any faculty or staff member notified by a student who has recently participated in a required service learning experience that he/she has tested/is positive for COVID-19 must send an email to their Department Chair/Director AND to the Director of the Office of Community Engagement(OCE Director) at sshelley-tremblay@southalabama.edu, in addition to immediately reporting the case to USA's Contact Tracing team at ReportCovid@SouthAlabama.edu following the instructions on the University's reopening website
- a. The OCE director will consult with the USA Contact Tracing supervisor who will determine if the student was in close contact with individuals at the site and provide information regarding the quarantine period if applicable.
 - b. The OCE director may notify the community organization site supervisor based upon guidance provided by USA Contact Tracing supervisor.
 - c. The Department Chair/faculty supervisor will pause the service learning experience to ensure completion of contact tracing in compliance with the University policy.
 - d. The student may not return to the community organization site until they receive clearance from the USA Contact Tracing team or from. Student Health. The student should report their clearance to their faculty supervisor to receive approval for their return to the community.
 - e. After receiving clearance from USA Contact Tracing and their faculty supervisor, the student should comply with all requirements of the community organization site before returning to the site.
10. All USA students and/or staff participating in direct contact and low contact service must follow the USA face-mask and social distancing requirements while serving and ensure that
- a. face masks are worn by all individuals in all indoor public areas of buildings and facilities, except when alone in a private office.
 - b. face masks are worn in outdoor areas when individuals are within six (6) feet of one another.
 - c. individuals are able and expected to maintain 6 ft. of social distance from others.
11. If a faculty member is requiring service that is a part of a pre-existing or newly developed MOU with a community organization, the faculty member (in consultation with the USA Office of General Counsel, their supervisor and their community partner) must amend the MOU to ensure it includes
- a. requirements for mask wearing (see number 10 above)
 - b. requirements that individuals maintain social distancing by remaining 6 feet apart
 - c. the expectation that indoor gatherings of more than 10 people are not permitted
 - d. frequent handwashing/hand sanitization
 - e. all other applicable [USA Reopening Plan Guidelines](#)

- f. reviewing the host organizations COVID-19 guidelines to ensure that they are in harmony with the [USA Reopening Plan Guidelines](#).
12. All students, faculty, and staff will be alerted via a statement posted on [South Serves](#) and an email message through [South Serves](#) that if they become COVID-19 positive after providing direct or low contact service that the community organization may be informed of their status by USA Contact Tracing or the Office of Community Engagement staff if the USA Contact Tracing Team that the volunteer has been in close contact with individuals at the community site.
13. Service experiences that might include vulnerable populations (see definition above) must receive additional evaluation for appropriateness. The OCE staff is available to assist with the evaluation process. Please email communityengagement@southalabama.edu to request assistance.
14. Students who are members of a vulnerable population must be provided alternative methods for meeting the course requirement that allow them to serve without risking exposure.
15. USA Faculty and staff must not provide for or arrange group transportation to off-site service locations.

B. *Guidance for Volunteerism, Service, and Engagement*

Students, faculty, and staff who choose to, or are required to participate in volunteer activities as a part of a specific program (i.e. the Employee Volunteer Program) or as a required expectation for a program or organization (i.e. Leadership Scholars, Fraternity or Sorority service requirements) are encouraged to choose Virtual Volunteer Opportunities whenever possible. For faculty, staff, and students who choose to volunteer for low contact and direct contact service the following guidelines must be followed:

1. Students, faculty, and staff participating in direct and/or low contact service opportunities posted in [South Serves](#) must review the opportunity to ensure it is in compliance with all [USA Reopening Plan Guidelines](#) AND also comply with the community site COVID-19 Protocols.
2. Individuals participating in direct contact and low contact service must follow the USA COVID-19 guidelines to ensure
 - a. face masks are worn by all individuals in all indoor public areas of buildings and facilities, except when alone in a private office.
 - b. requirements that individuals maintain social distancing by remaining 6 feet apart
 - c. the expectation that indoor gatherings of more than 10 people are not permitted.
 - d. there is frequent handwashing/hand sanitization.
 - e. all other applicable [USA Reopening Plan Guidelines](#) are followed.
 - f. the community organization's COVID-19 guidelines are in harmony with the [USA Reopening Plan Guidelines](#).
3. In general, students, faculty, and staff should not engage in direct service with populations considered the most vulnerable as determined by the CDC. These populations include but are not limited to: the elderly, those experiencing homelessness, children fighting

pediatric illness, and immuno-compromised individuals. Exceptions to this specific guidance will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will require review by the OCE director and

include additional review by the USA COVID-19 supervisor and the USA Reopening Committee. Faculty, staff, or students should contact the OCE director at sshelley-tremblay@southalabama.edu for assistance with the evaluation process.

4. Before returning to campus and before attending on-campus classes, or other activities USA faculty, students, and/or staff who have participated in an in-person direct contact or low contact service activity must complete a health screening form. [Jag Healthcheck](#) can be accessed directly at jaghealthcheck.southalabama.edu or by downloading the recommended [GuideSafe™](#) Exposure Notification App.
5. If a student experiences symptoms of COVID-19 after participating in a service opportunity or becomes aware that they have been exposed to COVID-19 during a service activity
 - a. they must stay home, indicate this information on [Jag Healthcheck](#), and contact Student Health.
 - b. they are required to immediately report confirmed cases of COVID-19 to USA's contact tracing team at ReportCovid@SouthAlabama.edu. Instructions on how to report are contained on student section of the University's [reopening website](#).
 - c. they must report a probable or confirmed case to the director of the Office of Community Engagement (OCE Director) at sshelley-tremblay@southalabama.edu.
6. If a faculty or staff member experiences symptoms of COVID-19 after participating in a service activity or becomes aware that they have been exposed to COVID-19 during a service activity
 - a. they must stay home, indicate this information on [Jag Healthcheck](#), and contact Employee Health and Wellness.
 - b. they are required to report confirmed cases of COVID-19 to USA's Contact Tracing team at ReportCovid@SouthAlabama.edu. Instructions on how to report are contained on [USA's Human Resources website](#).
 - c. they must report a probable or confirmed to the OCE director at sshelley-tremblay@southalabama.edu
7. If the OCE director is notified by a USA student, faculty, or staff volunteer he/she has tested/is positive for COVID-19 after having served in the community
 - a. The OCE director will consult with the USA Contact Tracing supervisor who will determine if the volunteer was in close contact with individuals at the site and provide information regarding the quarantine period if applicable.
 - b. The OCE director may notify the community site supervisor based upon the guidance of the USA Contact Tracing supervisor.
 - a. The OCE Director will pause volunteer experiences at the site to ensure completion of contact tracing in compliance with the University policy.
8. All students, faculty, and staff will be alerted via a statement posted on [South Serves](#) and

an email message through [South Serves](#) that if they become COVID-19 positive after providing direct or low contact service that the community organization may be informed of their status by USA Contact Tracing or the Office of Community Engagement if the USA Contact Tracing Team that the volunteer has been in close contact with individuals at the community site.

9. OCE staff will not coordinate or provide group transportation for USA sponsored volunteerism, service, and engagement activities. Faculty, staff, and students should not participate in group transportation to volunteer sites.
10. OCE staff will assist faculty, staff, and students who are developing USA sponsored service activities in developing or reviewing any plans to ensure compliance with these guidelines.
11. OCE staff encourages faculty, staff and students who are developing USA sponsored service activities to [complete the USA voluntary student campus activity form](#) and submit it to the Vice President of Student Affairs for review of compliance with [the USA Reopening Guidelines](#).