



Steps to Successful Community Engagement

Community Service-Learning | James Madison University | Student Success Center, 2100 | jmu.edu/csl | 540-568-6366

Engaging in the community provides you with an outstanding learning opportunity, and it also comes with a great deal of responsibility. You have the potential to make an important contribution, especially if you prepare for and reflect on the experience. This document outlines key steps for you to take to be successful. Before you can be connected with a community partner, you must acknowledge that you understand and agree to these steps.

CS-L works to develop more just and sustainable communities through building relationships and learning from one another. As we address the dual pandemics of racism and COVID-19, CS-L strengthens our resolve to learning, advocating, and acting to develop a more just and equitable society. JMU students engaging with our programs and partners are expected to treat people with dignity and respect as well as to take the actions outlined below.

Step 1: Commit to Being a Responsible and Ethical Community Citizen

Set a high standard:

- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Attend all training for my engagement experience.
- Carry out all assigned tasks.
- Be drug and alcohol free prior to and during my community project.
- Be knowledgeable of and act in accordance with agency rules, policies, protocols, emergency procedures, and expectations.

Learn:

- Understand that I am not only working with the community, but the community is working with me by investing valuable resources in my learning.
- Be sensitive to how my thoughts and actions affect others.
- Be dedicated to learning, engaged and ready to serve whenever I am on site.
- Be honest, show respect for individuals and their property, suspend assumptions and keep an open mind.

Be Timely:

- Notify my supervisor (and client, if appropriate) as soon as possible if an emergency prevents me from meeting an obligation.
- Be on time and maintain a regular schedule with my community partner, and stick to it (clients may benefit less or even be negatively affected if I am inconsistent in my participation).
- Discuss my schedule with my supervisor during breaks and holidays (I am not expected to participate in activities during official school breaks).

Maintain Confidential and Ethical Storytelling:

- Keep all identifying information about the client(s) private and confidential outside of the community agency. This includes names, addresses, phone numbers, personal or family matters, places of employment, living habits, and other items that clients may discuss with or in front of me. I will use pseudonyms/generalizations if referring to the people I have connected with in course assignments, presentations, or discussions.
- I will avoid taking photos that will reveal the identity of clients and/or potentially exploit the communities I am serving.
- I will not share any stories I do not have explicit permission from those involved to share.

Step 2: Be Your Best

- Dress neatly, clean, and positive. I will avoid wearing tank tops, torn jeans, short-shorts, hats, t-shirts with inappropriate print or lettering, or clothes that are low cut or expose my midriff. I will be considerate about what I wear and display (i.e., clothes, jewelry, tattoos, shoes, and piercing) to be sensitive to agency safety precautions, values, and appropriateness.
- Plan my route and confirm the address.
- Consider my motivations for serving.
- Reflect on and check my assumptions about the community I am serving.

Step 3: Practice Effective Communication

- Introduce myself and share relevant skills and interests.
- Describe what type of project I intend to do.
- Describe how much time I will commit and when I am available. I acknowledge that it is not helpful for me to just send a screenshot of my schedule without outlining travel time and additional information about my actual availability.

Step 4: Take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19

- Comply with all JMU and Community Partner policies and procedures pertaining to safety including vaccination requirements, indoor face masking obligations, and updates on the [JMU Stop the Spread site](#) (as of 8-12-2021 the CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised).
- Wash my hands thoroughly and often.
- To the fullest extent possible, maintain physical distance of at least 3 feet from other individuals and avoid physical contact, such as handshakes and embraces.
- Abide by other applicable rules, regulations, or directives from appropriate authorities with respect to the protection of public health.
- If you are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or believe you have been exposed—even if you have been vaccinated—you should stay at home and determine if you need to be tested and care by visiting this [web site](#).

Addressing Concerns

If I encounter difficult or uncomfortable situations—including those associated with inadequate COVID-19 safety precautions and/or issues of racism and discrimination—or should a problem arise between the agency and myself, I will notify my community partner supervisor, CS-L staff, and/or my faculty as soon as possible.

Commitment to social justice, addressing structural inequality, and anti-racism

CS-L prepares students to create more just, equitable, and sustainable communities. We do that through facilitating direct community engagement, enhancing capacity of community organizations and advocating for positive change. Racism undermines our efforts for a fair and just community at every level of society.

CS-L pledges to:

- Critically examine the roles we—as individuals, our office and the field of Service-Learning have played in perpetuating racial inequities.
- Prioritize the personal and professional growth of our team, students, colleagues, and partners as social justice and inclusion agents of change.
- Actively work to expand our partnerships with socially just and inclusive organizations and stakeholders.

Additional resources can be found on [CS-L's website](#).

If we can help you or offer support in your own commitment to building more just and equitable communities, please let us know.

If I refuse to comply with these expectations and requirements, I understand that JMU, CS-L, and/or the Partner Site may end my engagement experience immediately and, depending on the extent of my actions, I may have a case referred to the [Office of Student Accountability and Restorative Practices](#).

Information Sharing Consent

I give consent for Community Service-Learning to share my name and JMU email address with representatives from the [United Way of Harrisonburg & Rockingham's Get Connected](#) and the nonprofit organization in which I am registering. I understand that if I choose to include additional optional personal information in my Galaxy Digital profile that may also be shared with representatives from the United Way of Harrisonburg/Rockingham and the nonprofit organization in which I am registering.

Acknowledgement Statement

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have carefully read and understand this statement. I agree to uphold it to the best of my ability and recognize that my actions and attitude reflect directly upon James Madison University. I also acknowledge that I have been informed of the general nature of the risks involved in this activity, including, but not limited to, contracting diseases such as COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus disease and acknowledge that JMU does not control activity at the partner site. I hereby agree that I am responsible for any resulting personal injury or illness which may occur as a result of my participation or arising from my participation in this program, unless any such personal injury or illness is directly due to the negligence of the university and/or the facility.