

Incorporating Volunteers into Outreach and Enrollment Work

To make the most of the next open enrollment period, enrollment assister organizations can utilize volunteers to help spread the word and ensure people enroll in coverage. While this open enrollment period brings new and unique challenges, many individuals and organizations are interested in collaborating with assisters to help mitigate the harm. This document provides range of activities assisters can use based on examples being used in the field. Activities can range from short term commitments to support outreach to more substantive use of volunteers that requires more training and supervision. Assisters can also think about partnering with other assister entities in their area to create a volunteer program that can be shared among multiple assister entities.



Help with Outreach and Messaging

Volunteers can help raise awareness about the marketplace open enrollment period, availability of financial assistance, and the value of health coverage. Possible activities include:

- Staffing events such as community fairs, health fairs, school-based convenings, enrollment events, or holiday celebrations. Volunteers can answer basic questions, hand out fliers, refer consumers to local assistance in their area, or collect information from people wanting to be followed up with for more information.
- Sharing outreach materials through personal networks such as local schools, faith-based organizations, recreation centers, neighborhoods, behavioral and community health centers, etc. Assisters can create template language and resources that volunteers can use themselves in bulletins, newsletters, email lists, social media, and more.
- Amplifying proven enrollment messages at critical times, such as messaging on social media and in local press about deadlines to enroll.
- Inviting assisters to give presentations at community meetings that are already scheduled, such as those in faith-based settings, neighborhoods, schools and local non-profit organizations.

Sharing Resources

Volunteers can also help assister groups by providing in-kind support and raising additional funding. Possible activities:

- Offering low-cost giveaways to use at outreach events, such as keychains, pens, magnets, or candy.
- Providing meals, snacks, and beverages at outreach and enrollment events.
- Helping fund and coordinate activities to promote enrollment events such as making flyers, advertising on the radio, or social media.

Assisting with Work Flow

Volunteers can play many different roles that reduce workload for program staff. Possible activities include:

- Helping to assemble folders and handouts for consumers, such as resources for consumers to take home after their appointments or to be distributed at community events.
- Making copies and scanning consumer documentation.
- Answering phones, routing calls to assistors, and scheduling appointments.
- Calling consumers to remind them about appointments and what they need to bring to their appointment.
- Welcoming and preparing consumers for appointments. This will vary based on needs but can include hanging up signs to direct consumers to the enrolment space, providing and/or assisting consumers with paperwork, and being available for general questions.
- Helping new consumers create marketplace accounts and/or email addresses, and helping returning consumers reset marketplace usernames and passwords.
- Screening consumers for coverage options, including resources for those who fall in the Medicaid coverage gap.
- Providing language assistance. For example, trained translators can help create promotional and educational materials and trained interpreters can help during enrollment appointments.

Aiding in Enrollment

Lastly, some volunteers can help with enrollment itself. Possible activities include:

- Becoming a trained certified application counselor. Initial certification requires several hours and additional organizational training and shadowing will take many more hours. Additionally, some states require all assistors to complete background checks. This is a significant commitment for both volunteers and organizations. Some groups have collaborated with law schools or other graduate schools in their area in order to have students become trained enrollment assistors. Others have reached out to assistors from prior years to help during the shortened open enrollment period.
- Utilizing trained Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) volunteers to provide support and answer tax-related enrollment questions. VITA volunteers can also assist with amended tax returns for individuals who had ACA related tax errors in previous years.

This resource was created as part of the Center on Budget Policy Priorities' Consumer Assistance Coordination Hub project.