



2026

Volunteer

Handbook



Our Mission

To be the Nation's leader for food and agriculture education, events and engagement.

Our Vision

Is a world where food and agriculture are celebrated, and all generations are committed to its future.

Our Purpose

We exist to champion food and agriculture.

About the American Royal

A Kansas City tradition since 1899, the American Royal is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization whose mission is to be the nation's leader for food and agriculture education, events, and engagement. The American Royal provides opportunities for nearly half a million youth and adults from around the world to engage in high-quality events and experiences, including nationally competitive livestock shows, the world's largest barbecue competition, regional and national equine shows, youth and professional rodeos, and elementary and secondary education outreach. Support from partners, members, and volunteers help the American Royal achieve its vision of a world where food and agriculture are celebrated, and all generations are committed to its future.

Affiliate Group and Event Manager

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How to Volunteer for an American Royal Event

- Step 1:** Visit the American Royal Volunteer page on our website www.arvolunteers.com.
- Step 2:** Scroll down to Volunteer Opportunities.
- Step 3:** Select an event signup sheet and fill in the appropriate information. You will receive an email confirmation of your volunteer commitment. Volunteer positions are posted three to six weeks prior to the event. An email will be sent to past volunteers when a new event is posted.

Keys to Successful Volunteering:

- Be friendly first - Our guest's first impression is a lasting one.
- Smile and say "Hello."
- Introduce yourself - let your guest know we are their hosts.
- Listen to your guest carefully and let them know you are here to help.
- Be helpful – even if you do not have an answer to your guest's question, contact a staff member who can help.
- Someone is always watching us – be an excellent representative of the American Royal in all that you say and do.
- Be kind and courteous to each guest.
- Remember to have fun!

In Appreciation

As our way of saying thank you to our volunteers, all volunteers will receive an invitation to our Volunteer Appreciation event annually. Volunteers who donate 200 or more hours will receive special recognition and a custom token of our appreciation.



American Royal Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Introduction

Enthusiastic, knowledgeable, professional volunteers are crucial to furthering the mission of the American Royal. The purpose of these policies is to provide guidance both to volunteers and those who manage them. They do not constitute a binding contractual or personnel agreement. The American Royal reserves the right to revise the volunteer policies and procedures.

These policies apply to volunteers working events both at the American Royal complex or offsite.

Assignments

Volunteer assignments vary by event. Many volunteer assignments include working near horses, livestock, and pets. Volunteers should be comfortable working around animals. In addition, many assignments include working in indoor and outdoor situations that involve elements of weather and dust. **Please check the job description and requirements of each position carefully to ensure that you volunteer for jobs that you are comfortable performing.**

Background Screening

The American Royal Association, Inc. (American Royal) seeks to provide a safe environment for all persons who are associated with the American Royal, including staff, volunteers, and guests. The American Royal shall conduct criminal background checks of all volunteers for American Royal youth events or for those who have direct contact with children participating in our programs. The American Royal will carry out this requirement in a fair, consistent and non-discriminatory manner, complying with applicable state and federal laws and guidelines, including but not limited to the Fair Credit Reporting Act and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. Please see Appendix A for the full policy.

Canceling your Volunteer Assignment

Notify the volunteer coordinator, event manager, or lead volunteer immediately if you are unable to make your volunteer assignment on a given day.



Comments

If a volunteer has a comment, suggestion, complaint, or concern regarding the American Royal or the area in which they are volunteering, please let the Affiliate Group and Event Manager know.

Conduct

American Royal volunteers are the heart of the American Royal Association and are a vital part of each event that we offer. As an American Royal volunteer, you are representing one of Kansas City's greatest traditions. We pride ourselves on being Kansas City's friendliest, most helpful, and hardest working volunteers.

Disclaimer

The American Royal reserves the right to change event schedules or to cancel events due to unforeseen circumstances.

Dress Code

Volunteers should dress comfortably, but in a manner appropriate for the activity. For most events, volunteers wear volunteer t-shirts, jeans or slacks, and comfortable shoes. Some volunteer positions require slacks or khakis and a shirt with a collar. Sandals or open-toed shoes are not allowed. Volunteers are also not allowed to wear clothing with logos on them, excluding American Royal Merchandise.

Food/Beverages

Bottled water and snacks may be provided for volunteers.

Our volunteers are an extension of our American Royal team members. *Please note that American Royal staff and volunteers are not allowed to consume alcoholic beverages at any time during their shift while on the grounds of the American Royal complex or an event location.*

Hours

Volunteer hours will be tracked and recorded through iVolunteer.com. In most cases, the sign-in sheet is the first source of tracking hours. Information on the sign-in sheets are then loaded into iVolunteer.com. Volunteers are responsible for keeping track of hours worked and ensuring that the hours are properly recorded. They should respect the privacy of staff workspaces and the confidentiality of documents and records.



Job Descriptions

Volunteers should be provided complete descriptions of the duties they are expected to perform. On occasion, it may become necessary to request that a volunteer perform a different job from his or her original assignment. Most volunteer positions will include a job description that specifies the tasks and duties required for the position.

Media Requests

All inquiries from members of the media should be referred to the Director of Communications, Allyssa King, and/or the President and CEO, Jackie McClaskey. Please do not attempt to answer any media questions.

New Volunteers

Whenever possible, new volunteers will work with a seasoned volunteer to learn their new position.

Orientation & Training

Orientation or training sessions may be held prior to the American Royal season and certain events like the World Series of Barbecue. Attendance is encouraged, and may be required, in some instances. Some volunteer activities require additional job-specific training or direction which will be provided by lead volunteers, event managers, or the volunteer coordinator as needed.

Parking

During most of the American Royal season, volunteers are asked to park in Lot B, which is located just east of Hy-Vee Arena. This is for events held at the American Royal Complex. If there is an attendant there, inform him you are a volunteer or present your AR volunteer credential.

Payment for Services or Tips

Volunteers shall not accept payment of any kind for services rendered as part of volunteer service.

Recognition

An annual appreciation event will be held to honor volunteers. Other forms of recognition will be given during the American Royal season. Staff members and lead volunteers are encouraged to continually show appreciation for the efforts of our volunteers.



Recruitment

Volunteers shall be recruited on a pro-active basis to expand the involvement of the community in the American Royal. They shall be recruited without regard to gender, sexual orientation, handicap, age, race, or other conditions. The sole qualification shall be suitability to perform a task on behalf of the American Royal.

Minors (under 18 years old) must have a letter of consent signed by their parent or guardian before they volunteer. Additionally, the parent or guardian must remain onsite during the minor's volunteer hours, and the parent is responsible for the minor at all times.

Resignation

Volunteers may resign at any time. They are asked to give advance notice of departure and a reason for their decision.

Safety and Liability

1. Volunteers are covered under the American Royal's liability insurance policy.
2. In case of injury, volunteers should notify a lead volunteer or staff member immediately. Safety is of the utmost importance.
3. Volunteers over the age of 18 may use equipment or vehicles such as gators or golf carts only with prior authorization. They must provide a valid driver's license and proof of insurance.
4. Specific safety clothing may need to be worn for certain events. The American Royal will advise you when this is required.
5. The American Royal is not responsible for lost or stolen personal property.

Supervision

1. Each event will have a clearly identified lead volunteer, event manager, or volunteer coordinator who is responsible for direct management of that volunteer. A volunteer may act as lead of other volunteers. Volunteers and staff are considered partners in implementing the mission of the American Royal. It is essential that each partner understand and respect the needs and abilities of the other.
2. Staff members are encouraged to consider ways in which volunteers might be of service. Staff should be involved in evaluation and assignments of volunteers with whom they work.
3. If expecting to be absent from scheduled duty, volunteers should inform the volunteer coordinator, lead volunteer, or event manager as soon as possible so that alternate arrangements may be made.
4. You may not volunteer at an event in which you and/or family members are competing.



5. It is recommended that volunteers do not bring children (unless they are volunteering with the parent), family members, or friends with them unless they have signed up to volunteer during that time period.
6. Volunteers may not bring pets to the American Royal complex during their volunteer assignment. Service animals will need to be discussed in advance to ensure health and safety policies are not in jeopardy.
7. Volunteers are requested to remain at their assigned area or duty unless released or re-assigned by the volunteer coordinator, staff, or lead volunteer.

Use of Alcohol and Tobacco

The American Royal complex is a smoke-free environment. Please remember, as representatives of the Royal, and especially when interacting with youth, to be appropriate in the use of tobacco products, and only outside of the buildings.

Please note that American Royal staff members and volunteers are not allowed to consume alcoholic beverages at any time while on the grounds of the American Royal complex.

Volunteer Check-In: General

The Affiliate Group and Event Manager Manager or lead volunteer for each event will provide check-in information and procedures. Be sure to sign in and out each time you volunteer so we have an accurate record of hours worked.

Volunteer Check-In: Tack Taxi

Tack taxi drivers must fill out the tack taxi information form before the start of their shift, as well as the Vehicle Use Agreement waiver yearly. (A copy of the Vehicle Use Agreement form will be maintained by the Affiliate Group and Event Manager.) Please report to the volunteer check-in location for each event at least 15 minutes in advance to pick up your keys, vest, and gator. You must be at least 18 years of age to drive a gator or golf cart and must provide a valid driver's license. Turn in keys at the end of your shift. Wear appropriate clothing, gloves, and no open-toed shoes.

Volunteer Dismissal

1. The Affiliate Group and Event Manager, lead volunteer, event manager, or volunteer coordinator must be notified if you cannot make your assignment. Please remember that we are counting on you. After two (2) unexcused absences, your name will be removed from the volunteer roster, and you will be ineligible to volunteer for the American Royal.
2. Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules of the American Royal or who fail to perform their assignment satisfactorily are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated



until given an opportunity to discuss the reasons with the Affiliate Group and Event Manager.

3. If a problem arises, the responsible lead volunteer, event manager, or volunteer coordinator will first address the issue with the volunteer, providing a verbal warning. If the problem continues, the lead volunteer will notify the Affiliate Group and Event Manager, who will then meet with the volunteer. The overall purpose of these discussions is to clearly address performance and/or conduct, and to help the volunteer understand that their actions do not meet American Royal standards. Actions to remedy the problem should be identified and consequences of inaction explained. In most cases, it is in the best interest of both the American Royal and the volunteer to resolve the issue. If there is no resolution, the volunteer will be terminated.
4. Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, disruptive behavior, sexual harassment of any kind, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft of property, misuse of equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of staff, co-workers, animals or exhibitors, failure to abide by American Royal policies and procedures, and failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties.

We are seeking volunteers who ensure each event is the best that it can be. Please join us as we present another wonderful season full of excitement, education, and entertainment.

For More Information:

Email volunteer@americanroyal.com or visit our website at www.americanroyal.com



Appendix A: Background Screening

The American Royal Association, Inc. (American Royal) seeks to provide a safe environment for all persons who are associated with the American Royal including staff, volunteers, and guests. The American Royal shall conduct criminal background checks of all volunteers for American Royal youth events or who have direct contact with children participating in our programs. The American Royal will carry out this requirement in a fair, consistent and non-discriminatory manner, complying with applicable state and federal laws and guidelines, including but not limited to the Fair Credit Reporting Act and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission.

The American Royal utilizes name-based and Social Security number-based systems to obtain data for individual background checks, but at a minimum each individual background check shall include: (a) Social Security number trace, (b) a national search of sex offender registries and (c) a national search of criminal records. Background checks shall be conducted prior to employment or volunteer service and renewed every seven (7) years.

Background check findings shall be reviewed in a fair, impartial, and confidential manner. Because the American Royal's priority is the safety of the staff, volunteers and guests, certain actions and convictions for certain crimes serve to automatically disqualify applicants for volunteer service at the American Royal in any position that involves working with children. A person will be ineligible for volunteer service if the person:

- (1) refuses to consent to a criminal background check,
- (2) makes a false statement in connection with such criminal background check,
- (3) is registered, or required to be registered on any sex offender registry,
- (4) has been convicted of a violent felony,
- (5) or has been convicted within the past 7 years of a non-violent felony or misdemeanor involving:
 - (a) physical assault or battery,
 - (b) drugs or controlled substances, or
 - (c) cruelty to animals.

With respect to convictions for crimes not listed above, any applicant with such a conviction shall be evaluated on an individual basis to determine whether they should be excluded from consideration based on the conviction. In so doing, the American Royal shall consider the following factors:

- the nature and gravity of the offense
- the time that has passed since the offense or completion of sentence
- the nature of the job sought or held



- the facts and circumstances surrounding the offense or conduct
- the number of offenses for which the individual was convicted
- the age of the individual at the time of conviction or release
- evidence that the individual performed the same type of work, post-conviction, with the same or a different employer with no known incidents of criminal conduct; the length and consistency of employment history before and after the offense or conduct
- rehabilitation efforts, e.g., education and/or training
- employment or character references and any other information regarding fitness for the particular position, and
- whether the individual is bonded under a federal, state, or local bonding program.

The American Royal shall alert the applicant to the possibility of his or her exclusion due to past criminal conduct and provide the applicant an opportunity to submit an explanation. All personal data, background check data, and adverse action letters shall be treated as confidential and maintained in a secure location for one (1) year and will then be destroyed.



Appendix B: Background Checks: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What do I need to do to complete my background check?

1. Sign-up for a volunteer position on the American Royal website (www.americanroyal.com).
 - a. Select "I have not been screened" in the scroll-down options regarding background checks.
2. You will receive a separate email and/or text message initiating the screening process from our background screening provider (support@backgroundcheckology.com)
 - a. Step by step instructions will be provided in that email/text on how to submit your background check information electronically.
 - b. You can use either link to complete your screening. This is a very quick and easy process.
3. Once you have submitted your information, you can go back to that link at any time to check the status of your screening.

All volunteers will be notified of their results via email, including time slot confirmation for cleared volunteers. A volunteer may wish to wait to sign up for a time slot until their screening has been cleared. In that case, you must contact the American Royal Affiliate Group and Event Manager to initiate the screening process.

2. Which volunteers are required to get background checks?

Currently, all volunteers working at an American Royal youth event (i.e., an event specifically designed for participants under the age of 18) are required to complete a background screening. In time, all volunteers will be screened.

3. What kind of records are searched as part of the background check?

- a) *Criminal Misdemeanor/Felony Search*: in each county of residence, both permanent and temporary, since the age of 18
- b) *National Sex Offender Registry*
- c) *Social Security number Trace*: The Social Security trace is a search based on the Social Security number submitted by the applicant. The search itself returns all the credit header information associated with that SSN. This does not mean a credit check is being run. As consumers and employers are sometimes confused, this bears repeating: credit header information is not the equivalent of a credit report and does not involve credit



scores or credit account information. The information returned on a Social Security trace is focused on *address* history associated with that SSN.

4. Who will have my Social Security number and personal information as a result of this check?

The volunteer's Social Security number is submitted to Top Checked, the American Royal's background screening vendor. This is done either by volunteers themselves through the online Top Checked system or by the American Royal's Affiliate Group and Event Manager under the consent of the volunteer. Any printed copy of the number handled by the American Royal is destroyed after it is submitted.

5. What happens if a discrepancy is found?

If the screening results in a discrepancy, it does not necessarily mean a volunteer cannot be involved. It does mean:

- a) We will look into the discrepancy further with you (this includes sharing the report with the volunteer.)
- b) If the incident(s) are particularly concerning, we may need to place the volunteer on suspension.

We cannot have a volunteer with any of the following types of discrepancies:

- a) Causing or threatening harm of any nature to any child or children
- b) Causing or threatening direct physical harm to any individual
- c) Any sex offense

6. Who has access to the results of the background check?

The American Royal volunteer department retains the background check verification records and only shares them with the appropriate the American Royal staff if necessary.

7. Will the check need to include all my residences since age 18 every year?

No.

8. Who pays for background checks?

The American Royal pays for all volunteer background checks at no cost to the volunteer.



9. How often do background checks get done?

The American Royal policy requires checks every seven (7) years.

10. If I have a background check that has been done by my work employer can that be used for my volunteer background screening?

Background screening done by an employer may be accepted if it meets the American Royal volunteer background check policy. The background check would need to be sent directly from the screening source to the American Royal volunteer coordinator and include an FBI check. For more information, contact the Affiliate Group and Event Manager to discuss this further.

11. Why does the American Royal have a process that includes background checks for American Royal volunteers?

Our volunteer process has been one based on trust and good faith. Thus, it is our responsibility to know more about our volunteers. Background screenings are a normal part of many volunteer-based organizations and should be viewed as a positive step in ensuring the future of the American Royal.

12. What are the benefits of volunteering?

There are many benefits to volunteering at the American Royal, including:

- Getting involved in your community
- Participating in a Kansas City tradition
- Having fun promoting agriculture education and competition through events
- Helping the American Royal fulfill its mission of inspiring and cultivating dreams
- Meeting other amazing volunteers