**Summary of Volunteer Risk and Program Management Policies (VRPM) for the**

**Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) & State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)**

1. **Introductory Policies**

The purpose of these volunteer policies is to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and safety of SMP/SHIP services through the provision of guidance and direction to SMP/SHIP staff and volunteers. The volunteer policies are intended to support internal management. They do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. The volunteer policies are consistent with, and support the mission of, the SMP/SHIP, fostering the ethical, productive, and rewarding engagement of volunteers in SMP/SHIP services.

**1.1** TheSMP/SHIP accept and encourage 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 the SMP/SHIP are subject to the provisions of these volunteer policies.

**1.3** Volunteers are made aware of all SMP/SHIP volunteer policies; compliance with all policies is a minimum expectation of SMP/SHIP volunteers.

**1.4** There are defined roles for SMP/SHIP volunteers within which they serve; volunteers may be qualified to serve in one or more roles.

**1.5** Alterations to or exceptions from the national SMP/SHIP volunteer policies may only be granted by ACL and must be requested in advance and in writing.

**2.0 Risk Management and Health and Safety**

The safety of SMP/SHIP personnel is paramount. The SMP/SHIP strives to operate a health- and safety-conscious workplace and deliver safe and reliable services to its beneficiaries. Risk management is an orientation to the whole of the volunteer program at the SMP. It is, for example, a dimension of effective and safe role development, appropriately thorough volunteer screening and placement, comprehensive volunteer orientation, training and certification, and ongoing volunteer supervision and support. The consideration of risks and their control underlies the development of these volunteer policies that govern both the management of the volunteer program and the behavior and performance of volunteers.

**2.1** TheSMP/SHIP conduct a risk assessment every 3 years on the roles, work, and activities of volunteers.

**2.2** TheSMP/SHIP evaluate insurance needs annually and ensure that its insurance providers are well aware and up to date on the work done by volunteers at the SMP/SHIP.

**2.3** SMP/SHIP volunteers who drive their own vehicle for volunteer work purposes carry liability coverage on any vehicle so used.The SMP, SHIP and their volunteers comply with all relevant federal, state, or local laws and regulations regarding public health and safety**.**

**2.4** Training for volunteers includes discussion of safe work practices.Volunteers are trained and equipped in methods to deal with all identified hazardous conditions and risks.The SMP/SHIP have established measures and procedures to assess and control identified risks likely to expose any of its personnel-paid or unpaid-to physical injury resulting from violence in the workplace.

**2.5** SMP/SHIP volunteers who witness instances of abuse of consumers while performing their assigned duties must report this to their Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisor.

**2.6** Face-to-face work with beneficiaries takes place at SMP/SHIP offices or in an appropriately private location. Volunteers conduct interviews with beneficiaries that involve the discussion of confidential information only in venues that prevent others from over hearing or viewing the information under discussion.

**2.7** Home visits by SMP/SHIP volunteers to a beneficiary’s residence are prohibited. To protect the safety of the SMP/SHIP volunteers, volunteers do not work alone in offices in the absence of at least one Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisor or paid staff.

**2.8** Any accident or injury to or by a volunteer is reported immediately to the Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisor, the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator, the DEA SMP Project Director, or the DEA SHIP Director. An incident reporting form and response protocol exist.

**2.9** In response to a reported incident involving SMP and/or SHIP volunteers, the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator oversees steps necessary to respond to and resolve the incident.

**2.10** The SMP/SHIP have emergency contact information on all of its volunteers and a procedure that enables volunteers to communicate with SMP/SHIP supervisory personnel at any time volunteers may be on duty.

**3.0 Volunteer Program Management**

**A. Infrastructure**

**3.1** SMP/SHIP policies guiding volunteer program management apply equally to all SMP/SHIP volunteers, and compliance is a condition of continued involvement in the program.

**3.2** The SMP/SHIP strives to develop a volunteer population that mirrors the diversity of the community in which it operates.

**3.3** Relatives of beneficiaries may serve as SMP and/or SHIP volunteers but are not assigned to counsel members of their family who are receiving services.

**3.4** The SMP/SHIP accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the SMP/SHIP. The SMP/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 his or her volunteer service with the SMP and/or SHIP.

**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** The SMP/SHIP ensure that an infrastructure is in place to support volunteer involvement and volunteer program management.

**3.7** The DEA SMP Project Director and the DEA SHIP Director monitor the overall effectiveness of the volunteer programs typically via regularly scheduled meetings between the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator and the Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisors. Staff and budgetary allocations are made to ensure that the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator position is appropriately remunerated and staffed to a level sufficient to ensure effective management of the program. The productive engagement of volunteers requires a planned and organized effort. The DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator assists staff and host organizations in identifying productive and creative volunteer roles, for recruiting suitable volunteers: and for tracking and evaluating the contribution of volunteers to the SMP/SHIP.

**3.8** The SMP/SHIP volunteer program management budget provides for space, financial resources, and support staff to operate the SMP/SHIP volunteer programs 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 DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator, volunteers may examine the contents of their own personnel file.

**3.11** The DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator conducts an annual evaluation of both, volunteer involvement and the infrastructure in place to support volunteer involvement in SMP/SHIP.The DEA SMP/SHIP Project director monitors the overall effectiveness of the volunteer program via regularly scheduled meetings between the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator and the Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisors.

**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 do not infringe on the work of paid employees and they do not take any roles that might displace paid employees. 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. Volunteers have a right to know the standards that apply to the work that 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** Requests from paid staff for volunteer assistance are submitted in writing to the coordinator of volunteers by interested staff. An outline of the volunteer role and suggested time frame accompany each request. It is understood that the recruitment and satisfaction of volunteers are enhanced by creative and interesting roles and since volunteers are not always easy to locate and require screening, orientation, and perhaps training, advance notice of the need for volunteer assistance is provided to the coordinator of volunteers well ahead of role start date. The coordinator of volunteers recruits and places volunteers only in settings where staff are clearly supportive of volunteer involvement and willing to work together with, and provide support for, volunteer participation

**3.18** The SMP/SHIP have a protocol for evaluating the appropriateness and safety of all worksites used by volunteers, including venues for presentations to the public. Worksites are safe and have the facilities, equipment, and space necessary for volunteers to perform their duties.

**3.19** All volunteer roles have a set term of service. Terms ideally are of one year duration or less, with an option for renewal at the discretion of both parties. Volunteers sign an agreement to a defined term of work. This agreement is mandatory where extensive training is required.

**3.20** 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 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** Volunteer roles that may be open through SMP/SHIP to the engagement of minors have clearly prescribed responsibilities well-suited to young persons, occur in a supervised and nonhazardous environment, and comply with all child labor laws.

**3.24** Opportunities to volunteer are publicized broadly and through a variety of methods to ensure no group of people is excluded because of limited distribution information.

**3.25** A response protocol exists to prevent undue delay and ensure that prospective volunteers receive a welcoming and effective recruitment message. It is made clear to prospective volunteers from the beginning of their connection with the SMP/SHIP that volunteers undertake important work in the program. The responsibilities of the SMP/SHIP volunteer roles and high standards of performance and conduct expected of volunteers are not downplayed.

**3.26** Seniors are the primary recruitment target of SMP, but volunteer roles are open to community members of all ages above the age of majority regardless of gender, disability, race or other condition. The sole qualification for volunteer acceptance is suitability to perform a task on behalf of the SMP.

**D. Screening**

**3.27** The SMP/SHIP apply a formal selection process to all prospective volunteers. This process varies according to the nature of the work to be done.The SMP/SHIP screening and acceptance processes comply with standards set by the Administration for community Living (ACL).The decision to accept (or not) each volunteer applicant is based on careful consideration of all pertinent information gathered in the screening process.

**3.28** Screening and acceptance decisions are made by authorized SMP/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** The SMP/SHIP reserve the right not to accept applicants based on an objective and equitable assessment of their suitability.

**3.31** The SMP/SHIP are 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 the SMP and/or SHIP to complete their screening inquiries. A written offer of acceptance is provided to all new volunteers.

**3.32** A standardized application form is completed by all prospective SMP/SHIP volunteers.

**3.33** All prospective volunteers are interviewed by Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisors and the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator.

**3.34** In cases where the interview does not uncover a suitable placement for a prospective volunteer or where the SMP and/or SHIP cannot meet his or her interests, needs, or availability, the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator recommends that volunteers seek placement elsewhere.

**3.35** No person who has a conflict of interest in connection with the work they will do at the SMP and/or SHIP, whether personal, philosophical, financial or active insurance agents may serve as a volunteer. Volunteers do not promote any personal or business interest while undertaking their SMP/SHIP assignment.

**3.36** At least three personal and/or professional references are checked by the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator for prospective volunteers who may be placed in a position of trust at the SMP.

**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 with the SMP/SHIP are subjected to a federal level criminal records check.

**3.39** Current and prospective volunteers whose volunteer responsibilities at the SMP/SHIP involve operation of a motor vehicle are subjected to driver’s license and driving record checks.

**3.40** Any volunteer who, after acceptance and assignment by the SMP and/or SHIP, enters a course of treatment that might adversely impact upon the performance of their volunteer duties must consult with the DEA SMP Volunteer Coordinator.

**3.41** All new volunteers are placed on probation for 3 months after training is completed. Adjustments may be made to better suit the volunteer. If involvement in the work of SMP/SHIP is not appropriate termination can be immediate and without prior notice or reason by either party.

**3.42** The SMP/SHIP have 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. We will retain applications for 6 months for individuals who were denied. We will retain files for 7 years for volunteers following termination/separation. We will destroy social security numbers once the screening process is completed.

**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 SMP/SHIP volunteers, regardless of length of tenure, are subject to the provisions of all volunteer policies. 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** **The SMP/SHIP have a policy on how often various record checks will be repeated. The volunteer agreement, confidentiality and conflict of interest statements and the code of ethics will be reviewed and updated annually. Driver’s license and vehicle insurance will be updated upon expiration. Background screening will be updated every 5 years for volunteers in positions of trust.**

**3.47** Screening protocol is adjusted (up-screening) as roles change and/or as standards of care and due diligence recommend.

**3.48** Re-acceptance of previous SMP/SHIP volunteers who return after an absence of more than one year is based on past performance and the results of any updated or additional screening inquiries undertaken in connection with the role for which the person is applying.

**3.49** Screening protocol is adjusted as roles change and/or as standards of care and due diligence recommend.

**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 the SMP and/or SHIP.

**3.51** Wherever possible, paid staff who will be working with the volunteer participate in the interview process.

**3.52** Volunteer service begins only after official notice of acceptance, completion of necessary enrollment paperwork, and completion of required training. A written offer of acceptance is provided to all new volunteers.

**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.

**3.58** Following training, volunteers are tested on their knowledge and abilities for certain SMP/SHIP roles

and must demonstrate minimum levels of comprehension and skill. For such roles, volunteers are not assigned duties until their qualification for the role is certified, using the criteria and process required by the SMP/SHIP.

**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. The DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator assists where needed and ensures that all necessary training is provided.

**3.62** As with paid staff, improvement of volunteer skill levels during their terms of service is encouraged. Additional training and educational opportunities are made available to volunteers wherever possible and appropriate.

**3.63** Volunteers are encouraged to attend conferences and meetings that are relevant to their volunteer assignments, including those run by the SMP, SHIP and other Organizations.

**G. Performance Management**

**3.64** A constructive, positive, and success-oriented performance management system is in place at the SMP/SHIP. Its three primary components are supervision, performance evaluation, and corrective action.

**3.65** Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisors 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 any other evaluation instruments**.**

**3.67** The SMP/SHIP have 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 of volunteers is essential to ensure consistent quality of services as well as volunteer satisfaction.

**3.69**  Volunteers have an identified Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisor and accept supervision; not following direction can bring disciplinary action.

**3.70** Each volunteer who is accepted to an SMP and/or SHIP role has an identified Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisor who is responsible for direct, day-to-day supervision and support of that volunteer.

**3.72** Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisors 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 DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator 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. The SMP/SHIP have a written protocol for corrective action. Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisors 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 the SMP and/or 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. Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisors, the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator, the DEA SMP Project Director and/or the DEA SHIP Director will use discretion and good judgment in all decisions regarding possible volunteer dismissal.

**3.78** The SMP/SHIP has established measures and procedures to assess and control identified risks likely to expose any of its personnel-paid or unpaid-to physical injury resulting from violence in the workplace. 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.There is a sample list of grounds for immediate dismissal, which includes serious illegal acts, breach of confidentiality, or violence in the workplace.

**3.79** When a volunteer departs for any reason, program management sends written notice to all affected SMP and/or SHIP personnel.

**3.80** When a volunteer is dismissed, all SMP and/or SHIP connections cease. Any active work relationships with beneficiaries or open cases are immediately reassigned; affected beneficiaries are notified in writing of the reassignment of their cases.

**3.81** The SMP/SHIP has a corrective action review and appeals procedure in place. Volunteers are made aware of the appeals procedure upon acceptance into volunteer service.

**3.82** A grievance process is in place and volunteers are aware of the procedures. Volunteers who have complaints take them to their Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisor, or to the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator. If the grievance is about the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator, the complaint goes to the DEA SMP Project Director and/or the DEA SHIP Director.

**3.83** The SMP/SHIP have a process for investigating and resolving complaints from beneficiaries and other outside parties against volunteers.

**3.84**  Volunteers may resign from their volunteer service with the SMP and/or SHIP at any time.

**3.85** Exit interviews, where possible, are conducted with volunteers who are leaving their roles. This is done by the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator.

**3.86** TheDEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator will conduct an exit interview with departing volunteers, preferably face to face.

**H. Volunteer Behavior, Performance and Roles**

**3.87** Questions regarding interpretation of the policies should be addressed to the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator. 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. They at all times act in a knowledgeable manner, consistent with their training.

**3.89** Volunteers know and respect the boundaries of their role.

**3.90** Volunteers provide service without regard to the client’s background or characteristics. Volunteers do not recommend or endorse specific services, providers or products to beneficiaries.

**3.91** Volunteers represent the SMP/SHIP while serving, but they do not represent themselves as spokespersons of the SMP or SHIP.

**3.92**  Volunteers are provided identification that establishes their affiliation with SMP and/or SHIP. Volunteers carry with them their identification while engaged in the business of SMP and/or SHIP. The identification is returned to the SMP and/or SHIP when the volunteer’s service terminates whether voluntary or involuntary.

**3.93** Volunteers do not use their SMP and/or 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 established timeframes.

**3.97** Because their work is so vital to the achievement of the SMP/SHIP mission, dependability is important among volunteers. When expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, volunteers inform their Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisor as far in advance as possible so that alternate arrangements may be made. It is neither the responsibility nor the right of volunteers to find or assign an alternate person to perform their work.

**3.98** Action is taken on all complaints of harassment, whether made formally or informally.

Volunteers report to their Regional Partner Volunteer Supervisor immediately if they are made to feel uncomfortable on the job through any behaviors or comments of beneficiaries, staff or other volunteers.

**3.99** The SMP/SHIP do not tolerate the use of alcohol or illegal drugs in its work environment.

**3.100** SMP/SHIP volunteers do not accept gifts from beneficiaries, their families, caregivers, or other representatives.

**3.101** Honoraria offered to SMP/SHIP are respectfully & tactfully declined.

**3.103** Volunteers have access to SMP/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. This policy applies for 12 months after the end of volunteer service.

**3.105** 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** When a worksite is affected by a labor dispute, the Coordinator of Volunteers, in consultation with SMP/SHIP Management, determines whether it is appropriate for volunteers to continue their duties at the SMP/SHIP worksite.

**I. Retention and Recognition**

**3.109** The SMP/SHIP have a system for recognizing and rewarding the work done by volunteers, both individually and collectively.The recognition system is broadly constructed so as to allow recognition of all forms of volunteer contribution and achievement, not just the quantity of volunteer time donated.

**3.110** Paid staff responsible for volunteer supervision provide recognition of volunteer service on a regular basis. Informal recognition can be as simple a “thank you”.

**3.112** When possible, volunteers are provided feedback on results of their work.

**J. Volunteer/Paid Staff Relationships**

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

**3.115** Volunteers are assigned to individual paid staff or projects only by mutual consent of the staff member and the volunteer, and at the discretion of the DEA SMP/SHIP Volunteer Coordinator.

**3.117** Staff who supervise volunteers provide oversight similar to that provided to paid employees, and make themselves available to volunteers for consultation and assistance.

**3.120** An orientation to working with volunteers is provided to all paid staff @ the SMP/SHIP.

**4.0 Information Technology**

**4.1** The SMP/SHIP have 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**  The SMP/SHIP have a protocol for use of the Internet covering email use and appropriate access to websites.

**4.3** There is a security breach protocol for reporting stolen or lost consumer information. If data is misplaced or stolen, volunteers immediately notify their SMP/SHIP supervisor so that appropriate notification can be made to affected beneficiaries and authorities, and future safeguards are instituted as appropriate.

**4.4** The SMP/SHIP have web-based software programs 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.