

**Gulf Specimen Marine Lab's  
VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION MANUAL  
2020**

---

**How to Reach  
Gulf Specimen Marine Lab**

---

222 Clark Dr.  
Panacea, FL 32346  
(850) 984-5297  
[gspecimen@sprintmail.com](mailto:gspecimen@sprintmail.com)  
[brelandl@gulfspecimen.org](mailto:brelandl@gulfspecimen.org)

---

**Contact People**

---

Some names and phone numbers that might be useful to you:

Cypress Rudloe,.	Executive Director	850-445-8618
Leslie Breland	Volunteer and Intern Coordinator	
Debbie Clifford	Office Manager	850-984-5297
	Education & Outreach	850-
	Physical Plant Water Quality	
	Aquarist Collection	

---

**Program Holidays**

---

**Holidays and Closure Days:**

New Years Day	Jan 1
Independence Day	July 4
Thanksgiving	4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday in November
Christmas Day	December 25

In the event of program closure due to weather or other circumstance, you will be notified by 7AM on the day of the closure.

---

**Program Hours**

---

Monday - Friday      9:00 A.M. - 5:00pm  
Saturday & Sunday   10:00 A.M. - 5:00 pm



# Welcome

---

Citizens who volunteer their time and talents are valuable assets Gulf Specimen Marine Lab. We encourage constructive participation of groups and individuals in our volunteer programs, to perform appropriate tasks under the direction, training, and supervision of our volunteer coordinator. Some community volunteers (i.e., advisory committee members) do not work under the direct supervision of staff. However, they work closely with staff to ensure communication and cooperation with all GSML activities. The leadership believes that community volunteers enrich our program, promote a positive environment, and improve our community relations.

The Gulf Specimen Marine Lab and Aquarium welcomes you as a volunteer member of the GSML staff and hopes your association with us will be a satisfying experience. This handbook has been designed to acquaint you with Gulf Specimen and to serve as a guide to the operation and procedures of the volunteer program.

As a volunteer, your help and dedicated support enable us to reach a diverse population of visitors with different backgrounds and often limited time, but a very real desire to learn about our local ocean inhabitants. Your presence allows us to meet their needs and help the sea reveal its secrets.

This information will help explain the background and purpose of our program, answer some frequently asked questions, and describe what you might encounter as a volunteer. Also included are the responsibilities that go beyond volunteering. Feel free to discuss program concerns with the staff. We hope that you will benefit from your volunteer experience. We welcome you as a member of the growing community of individuals whose lives have been enriched by their efforts to help others.

GSML encourages maximum involvement of volunteers. This involvement promotes community relations and allows us to enhance our client programs. As a volunteer, you can share your increasing knowledge of the ocean with the community. As a volunteer in the program you can provide individual and small group assistance to visitors.

This handbook will provide information to help you get started in our volunteer program. Most services provided by volunteers do not require special skills; and a staff member will provide training, guidance, and answer your questions.

You are joining the ranks of the many who have dreamed and worked to found and establish the Gulf Specimen Marine Lab and Aquarium. We need our volunteers not only to supplement our paid staff but to bring a creativity and vitality that is necessary for the growth of our organization. As you serve with your talent, time, and energy, we hope you will know that this all-important gift will permanently benefit the needs of the entire community. Your service, your smile and your contributions of hours of volunteerism are valuable assets and we thank you.

This manual explains our policies and procedures. It will help you understand how to carry out your duties and give the best service to GSML. This manual is also designed to help you in answering any questions you have regarding the operations of the facility.

Thank you for serving!

# Mission Statement

To further through study, research, publication, teaching and public display, the knowledge of marine biology; to promote protection of marine life and the marine environment; to collect, classify and disseminate marine biological specimens.

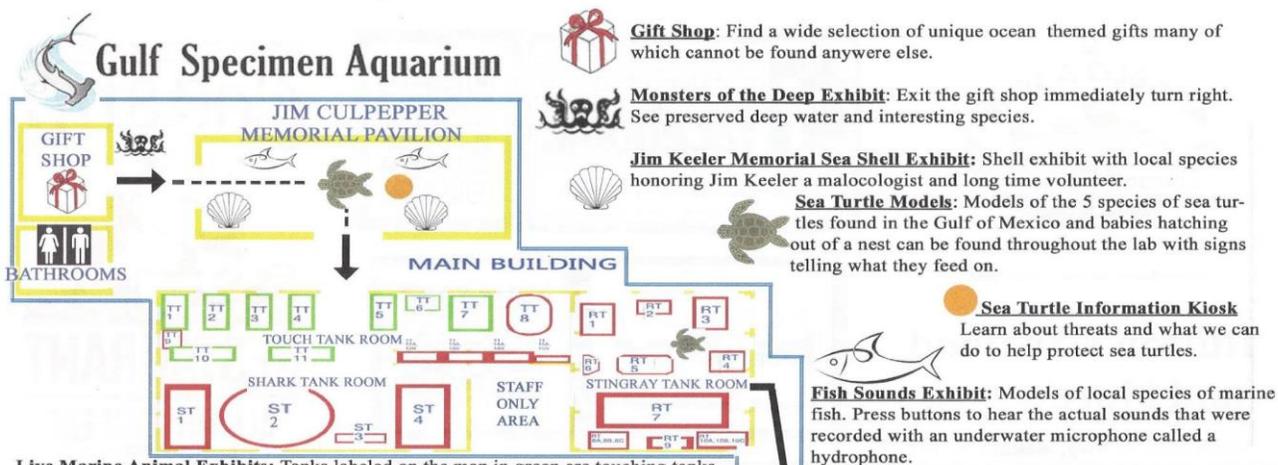
# Program Procedures

The weekly volunteer schedule is posted on the volunteer bulletin board in the pickle building and in the front office. It will also be posted on the MyImpact page of the online volunteer portal.

Training schedules are also posted on the volunteer bulletin board in the pickling building. They will also be announced on the Volunteer MyImpact page.

The dates of quarterly volunteer meetings is posted on the volunteer bulletin board. These will also be announced via the MyImpact page.

# Site Layout



**Live Marine Animal Exhibits:** Tanks labeled on the map in green are touching tanks. All tanks labeled on the map in red are looking only tanks. Look for signs on each tank that identify the tank number and identify if it is touching or looking.

**Touch Tank Room**

This room contains assorted invertebrates. Behind the yellow lines on the floor in tanks labeled for touching visitors can hold starfish, conchs, clams, sea urchins and much more!

**Shark Tank Room**

This room is strictly looking only. See sharks, grouper, sheeps head, black sea bass, sponges, gorgonians and check out sea horses in the sea horse central tank..

**Stingray Tank Room**

This room is strictly looking only. See stingrays, upside down jellyfish, sea anemones and a lesser electric ray.

**Mother Ocean Room**

This room is strictly looking only. See assorted species of tropical fish including: clownfish, damselfish, triggers and tangs. In the large center tank MO5 during certain times of year many octopus will be on display.

**Crab World**

In this section touching is allowed in the Fiddler Crab Building and the Horseshoe Crab Building all others are looking only. See fiddler crabs, blue crabs, stone crabs, spider crabs and horseshoe crabs.

**Urchin Tank White Tent**

This room is strictly looking only. See sea turtles, sea urchins and cobia fish.

**Phone: (850) 984-5297**

**Web: <http://www.gulfspecimen.org>**

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/GulfSpecimenMarineLab](http://www.facebook.com/GulfSpecimenMarineLab)**

**Instagram: [#gulfspecimen](https://www.instagram.com/gulfspecimen)**

**Twitter: [@gulfspecimen1](https://twitter.com/gulfspecimen1)**

---

### **Bulletin Boards**

Information of importance to volunteers is posted on the volunteers' bulletin board in the pickling building. Volunteers should make it a habit to glance at the bulletin board whenever they are on campus and read any new material posted there. Any volunteer wishing to put material on this board must have it approved by the volunteer coordinator.

### **Lockers**

Locker assignments are available through the volunteer coordinator.

### **Parking Information**

Parking is available in the public parking lot on Palmdale or in back of the lab on Mississippi. GSML Decals should be placed in the upper right corner of your rear window.

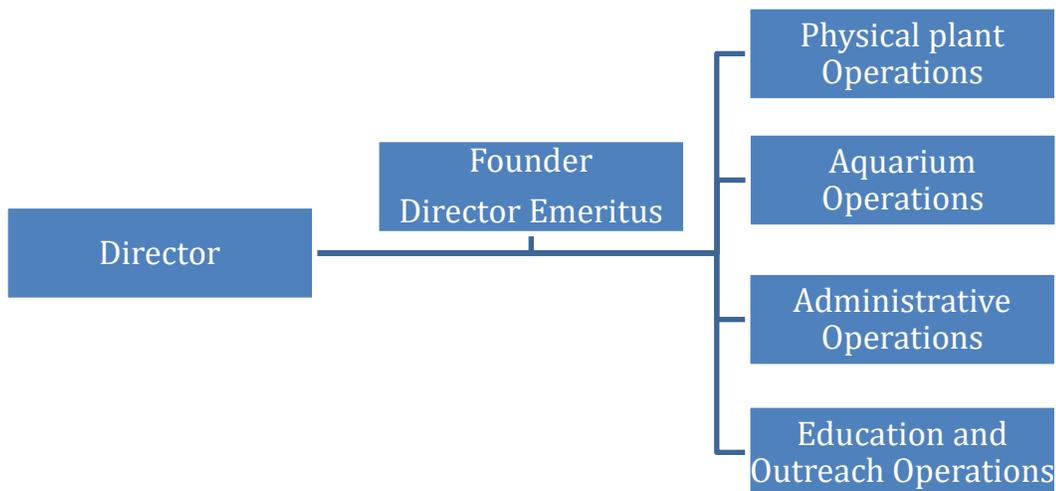
### **Restrooms**

The restroom is directly behind the gift shop to the right as you come down gift shop stairs.

### **Personal Belongings**

Lockers for storage of personal property such as purses, shoes, and wallets are located in the pickling building.

## **Organizational Chart**



# Program History

**Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory** (GSML) is an independent not-for-profit marine research and education organization and public aquarium.

## History

---

The laboratory has its origins in Gulf Specimen Marine Company, which was founded by writer and naturalist Jack Rudloe in 1963 as a marine specimen company primarily supplying scientists. John Steinbeck was an important mentor to the company. The present location in Panacea, Florida, was purchased in 1964.

In 1971 Rudloe married marine biologist Anne Eidemiller. She had already earned her bachelors and master's degree, researching local habitats and organisms. She received a PhD in Marine Biology in 1978 working with William F. Hernkind at Florida State University for *Some ecologically significant aspects of the behavior of the horseshoe crab Limulus polyphemus*. She trained at the United States Naval base in Panama City in underwater research and diving techniques in the "Scientists in the Sea" program and was the first woman to complete the program. Additionally, she was an FSU adjunct professor of biological science. Anne Rudloe founded the *Panacea Institute of Marine Science* in 1980. In 1980 this became a registered non-profit as Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratories, Inc., with Jack and Anne Rudloe as cofounders. Anne passed away in 2012, but her education and expertise contributed to the validity and stature of the Lab and her influence is apparent in every aspect of GSML. In 2010 Jack and Anne's son, Cypress Rudloe, took over as general manager.

## Books and Publications

Jack Rudloe was heavily influenced early in his life by the works of John Steinbeck and in particular the Sea of Cortez. He corresponded with John Steinbeck until the famous author's death and Steinbeck always encouraged him to combine his love of writing with his passion for collecting marine life. Mr. Rudloe has authored a number of both non-fiction and fiction works almost always celebrating the marine environments and organisms that have been his lifelong passion. Jack Rudloe has authored or co-authored with his wife at least 12 books. These books include: Time of the Turtle (1979), The Erotic Ocean (1984), The Living Dock (1988), The Sea Brings Forth (1989), The Search for the Great Turtle Mother (2003) The Wilderness Coast, The Adventures of a Gulf Coast Naturalist (2004), Potluck (2003), Chicken Wars (2011), and Shrimp, the Endless Quest for Pink Gold (2009).

## Activities

---

GSML's provides three major services to the public. It collects a wide variety of marine specimens, providing and shipping live organisms for other scientists, and instructors. In 1990 the Gulf Specimen Marine Aquarium opened to the public; it has over 15,000 visitors annually, provides field trips to school and civic groups. Finally, GSML also rescues and rehabilitates marine organisms, especially sea turtles. Norman Griggs, DVM of Shepherd Spring Animal Hospital, is the GSML veterinarian. He provides sea turtle care *pro bono* and in 2015 allowed GSML to expand the hospital facilities to include a sea turtle tank. The GSML staff also publishes both peer-reviewed scientific works and popular articles, and is involved in environmental activism, particularly in regards to coastal wetlands preservation. Finally, GSML provides internships to FSU and other college students.

## Sea Turtle Rescue

---

Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory staff began tagging sea turtles under the guidance of Archie Carr and were the third sea turtle rescue organization in Florida. GSML is one of 23 state-permitted captive sea turtle facilities and the northernmost in Florida. In addition to short-term rescue such as cold stunning<sup>1</sup> and fish hook removal the lab provides long-term rehabilitation. The lab lacks specialized laser treatment surgical equipment for sea turtles and must transfer them from the Panhandle region to facilities such as Clearwater Marine Aquarium if they require laser treatment for fibro papillomatosis. However, Dr. Griggs have been successful in complex surgical procedures such as reconstructive surgery or partial amputations. In 2015 GSML joined the Responsible Pier Initiative as a partner with The Loggerhead Marinelife Center. This resulted in a 600% increase in the number of Kemp's Ridleys they rescued (from an average of 1-3/year to 17 in 2015) and they started a second social media campaign to expand their turtle rehabilitation facilities. In March 2016, GSML opened a "turtle hospital" in a renovated kitchen to give Dr. Griggs and GSML staff a suitable place to treat the turtles at the lab and decrease transport stress on animals.

## Marine Science Education

Gulf Specimen Marine Lab staff and volunteers use experiential learning approaches to teach marine science and environmental awareness. GSML has several "touch tanks" of various sizes where visitors are encouraged to handle marine organisms "to overcome fear and increase curiosity and thereby learning"<sup>2</sup> as well as guided marsh walks and visits to the GSML dock. The laboratory is visited by an average of 12,000 children in 400 school groups each year. In 2011 GSML added the Sea Mobile, a mobile version of the touch tank display, to provide the experience to groups unable to travel to the aquarium.<sup>4</sup> GSML also provides internship opportunities to university students.

## Contributions to research

---

Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory provides marine specimens to scientists worldwide, including some that were the first specimen known to science, such as *Chiropsella rudloei*, a box jelly from Madagascar. GSML has provided organisms sent to space by NASA. In addition GSML has supported direct research; for example, the laboratory assisted with an update to the 1957 Winston Menzel Annotated Check-list of the Marine Fauna and Flora of the region and provided the National Geographic Society-supported "Photo Ark" project with several specimens. In 1968 GSML provided the first specimens of the bryozoan *Bugula neritina* used by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to develop the bryostatin family of drugs used for treatment of cancer, HIV, Alzheimer's disease and strokes. Authors associated with GSML and its predecessor the Panacea Institute of Marine Science have published more than 40 peer-reviewed scientific articles on horseshoe crabs, electric rays, mysid shrimp, sea turtles, and algae fuel.

## Awards

2014 Education and Outreach Environmental Law Institute National Wetlands Award  
2004 ChevronTexaco Conservation Award



**Jack and Anne Rudloe**  
**Founders, Authors, Visionaries**

# Benefits For Volunteers

---

## Benefits

Core volunteers get:

Annual Family Membership to the Aquarium with all its benefits

- Free Admission to the Aquarium for family or a guest.
- 10% discount in the Gift Shop
- Volunteer Recognition Event

## 1. Recognition-Small Luncheon

Each year in June a recognition luncheon is provided for all active volunteers. All volunteers who have volunteered and reported their hours to the Gulf Specimen Marine Life office for the past year will be invited.

This is a special time for the GSML community to show its appreciation and support to Gulf Specimen volunteers for their time and service throughout the year.

---

# Volunteer Responsibilities

---

## Volunteer Responsibilities

Your Volunteer Worksite:

- Expects that you have been sincere in your offer of service and believe in the value of the job to be done.
- Assumes that you have been honest in your descriptions of your skills and expertise.
- Expects you to be willing to learn and participate in orientation, training programs, meetings, and to continue to learn on the job.
- Expects you to act professionally which includes respecting all confidences.
- Expects you to take some time to understand the function of the paid staff, maintain a smooth working relationship with them and stay within the bounds of volunteer responsibility.
- Expects you to be punctual and notify your support person of absences as much in advance as possible.
- Expects you to accept the guidance and direction of the staff and other volunteers.
- Assumes you will be alert, sober and drug free while volunteering.
- Expects volunteers to be conscientious about dress and personal hygiene.
- Expects that you will speak up about problems and concerns so that they may be discussed and resolved.
- Expects and encourages you to ask questions about things you don't understand.
- Expects you to inform staff and supervisors of hazards or unsafe conditions.
- Expects you to offer constructive suggestions about matters involving your assignment. Please don't merely criticize.
- Expects you to know that you will be discharged if the work or conduct is unsatisfactory.

## • Starting Out

---

### **Starting Out**

It is the policy of Gulf Specimen Marine Lab to consider applicants for volunteer services based on qualifications for the job and fitness for client service. This will be done without regard to race, religion, national origin, sex, age or disabilities.

The first contact with the GSML is through the volunteer services department where applications for service are accepted and preliminary interviews are conducted. The volunteer coordinator screens applications and gives careful consideration to experience, skill, aptitude, reliability, and character of applicants. The head of the department where the service is needed may participate in the final decision regarding assignment.

After applicants have been accepted for service, the volunteer coordinator schedules attendance at an orientation program. Training for each assignment will follow orientation. If possible, transfers will be made to give volunteers the benefit of promotion, continued service or type of work preferred. A volunteer may request transfer if an opening occurs for which he/she is qualified. Approval of department managers and the volunteer coordinator is required. Eligibility for subsequent transfers will be based on a minimum six months tenure in a volunteer's current position.

## **Record Keeping**

---

### **1. Record Keeping**

A time clock is located in the front office. Punch in and out each time you volunteer. The Volunteer Impact Software also has a way to track hours and what activity you were participating in during those hours. This digital tacking should be fully functional by September of this year. This information is important in planning and accessing operations at the Aquarium. The records are also used for grant applications and reports. It is also important that staff know where to find you in an emergency.

## **Scheduling**

---

### **Volunteer Shifts**

Core Volunteer Shifts: Two four hour shifts per day are available to core volunteers. Mornings from 9am-1pm (10:00am to 1:00pm on weekends) and afternoons from 1:00pm to 5:00pm seven days a week. Our core volunteers are absolutely essential to the day to day functioning of the aquarium.

### **Shift Sharing**

Two or more people may share volunteer shifts at Gulf Specimen Marine Lab by ensuring that the shift is covered and by getting permission from the volunteer coordinator. For instance two people may elect to share the Tuesday Afternoon (1-5pm) slot by having one person come on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday while the other comes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, and they flip a coin if there is a fifth Tuesday. Or in another instance one volunteer can work 9:00 to 11:00 and a second from 11:00 to 1:00.

\* Shift-sharing volunteers are responsible for providing volunteer staff every week during their time slot. If they lose their shift-share partners or their partners can't make their week(s) covering the shift, they should still try to ensure staffing. If they know in advance the volunteer coordinator will try to assist.

---

## Volunteer Policies

---

This manual explains our policies and procedures. It will help you understand how to carry out your duties and give the best service to GSML clients. This manual is also designed to assist you in answering questions you may have regarding operations at GSML.

Thank you for the time, devotion and caring you are willing to share with our clients. We appreciate your efforts.

### 1. Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of this agency that there will be no discrimination or harassment in its programs, activities or employment based on race, color, sex, sexual preference, marital or parental status, religion, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, Vietnam era or veteran status. Questions or concerns related to affirmative action, nondiscrimination or equal opportunity should be directed to the volunteer coordinator.

### 3. Disability Policy

GSML would like to welcome volunteers with disabilities, however our facilities are not fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please contact your support person if you have special requirements that you believe we can accommodate with our physical limitations.

### 3. Volunteer Support

You will be assigned to work with a staff or other volunteer member who will provide support and supervision. The staff member will provide on-the-job training and serve as a direct link between the volunteer and the rest of the staff. The number of hours volunteers work is based on their assignments. Most volunteers work an average of 8 to 16 hours per week.

### Volunteers as Volunteer Supervisors

A volunteer may act as a support person for other volunteers after appropriate training for the position has been completed.

### Volunteer/Staff Relationships

Volunteers and staff are partners in fulfilling the mission and programs GSML. Each has an equal but complementary role to play.

### Volunteer Coordination

Staff who provide support for volunteers will remind the volunteer to keep records on your volunteer service. The volunteer coordinator will be informed immediately of any substantial change in the work or status of a volunteer. The volunteer coordinator should be consulted in advance before any change in responsibilities or any type of corrective action is taken. The support person shall inform the volunteer coordinator of any changes in your volunteer status.

### Age Limitation

The minimum age for volunteers is 16 years. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have the written consent of a parent or guardian before volunteering. The volunteer duties assigned to a minor will comply with all appropriate laws and regulations on child labor.

### **Employee Volunteers**

Gulf Specimen Marine Lab does/does not accept paid staff as volunteers. This volunteering must be done outside normal work hours and must not be done as a requirement of employment. Family of staff may/may not volunteer with GSML. If family members of a staff person do volunteer, they must not be placed under the supervision of the employee.

### **Length of Service**

Volunteers are assigned for three month periods (or in the case of interns one semester) of time. Volunteers are neither expected nor required to accept a position at the end of this time, although they are welcome to do so. Volunteers may instead seek a different volunteer assignment within the program, or may retire from volunteer service.

### **Interviewing**

All volunteers must be interviewed by the volunteer coordinator before any volunteer service. The interview will determine volunteer interests and skills, and appraise volunteers of agency needs. The interview must be in person and preferably include the support person(s) who will be working with the volunteer.

### **Orientation**

All volunteers receive an orientation. It will include information about Gulf Specimen Marine Lab and Aquarium, our policies and procedures for volunteers and requirements for the position they are accepting.

### **Placement**

Volunteer interests and desires, and agency needs must be weighed in the interview process to insure the mutual benefit to volunteer and organization. All volunteers work first as docents in the aquarium area. After 50 hours of docent work a volunteer may train for other positions, such as tour leader, or aquarist. When possible, the volunteer will have the final say in determining which volunteer position best fits his/her needs.

### **Position Description**

You will receive a written position description before you begin your volunteer assignment. Your position description includes a description of the purpose and duties of the position, a designated support person and work site. Also included is a time frame for the completion of the job, a listing of job qualifications, and a description of job benefits. Every effort is made to place you in an assignment matching your abilities and interests. This position description will be used in evaluation efforts.

### **Volunteer Position Acceptance**

The volunteer will be notified in writing/in person/by telephone of their acceptance as a GSML volunteer within two weeks of their interview. Before starting your volunteer duties all forms and paperwork given you at the interview must be completed and returned to the volunteer coordinator. Upon receipt of the paperwork you will receive the equipment, volunteer registration card and name badge needed to fulfill your volunteer duties.

### **Assignment Samples**

#### **1. Assignment**

You are considered on an official assignment when the volunteer coordinator has requested that you provide a service. It is important to remember that only the volunteer coordinator or executive director can make official assignments. Other staff, clients, or organizations cannot authorize an assignment.

### **On-The-Job Training**

Besides our formal training procedures, volunteers receive on-the-job training to help them with information and tools to perform their duties. On-the-job training may be provided by your support person, a qualified volunteer or our volunteer coordinator as appropriate.

### **Transfers**

The volunteer department will consider the amount of staff time involved in training a volunteer for a specific assignment. Therefore, a volunteer will be required to remain in an assigned position for three months unless a transfer is approved by the volunteer coordinator.

### **Absenteeism and Punctuality**

#### **1. Be On Time**

Be on time and arrive when expected. If you are unable to arrive for your regular time, please let the person at the front desk know as soon as possible by calling the main number (850) 984-5297. Additionally, be punctual and conscientiousness in the fulfillment of duties assigned and accept supervision from the staff and the experienced volunteers.

#### **2. Absenteeism**

Please observe the following policies:

- \* If you are ill, please call your support person as well as the front desk (850) 984-5297. If you have no support person, please call the volunteer coordinator.
- \* If you have a planned absence, please attempt to find a substitute or trade days with another volunteer. Please notify your support person of the name of your substitute. If you do not have a support person, notify the volunteer coordinator.
- \* Volunteers returning to work after an extended illness or holiday must notify the volunteer coordinator before resuming duties.
- \* Volunteers should notify the volunteer coordinator, or their support person of any change in address or telephone number in case we need to contact them.

#### **3. Leaves Of Absence**

Please coordinate any extended absence with the volunteer coordinator.

#### **4. Illness**

Do not come to work if you are ill. Call in as soon as possible, so that we can find a substitute for your position.

#### **5 .Substitutions**

Volunteers are encouraged to find a qualified substitute to cover an upcoming absence. Please inform your support person before making arrangements to ensure a qualified "fit" for the position.

### **Corrective Action-Evaluations**

Corrective action may be recommended following the evaluation. These may include a requirement for additional training, reassignment, suspension, probation or dismissal of the volunteer.

## **Program Evaluation**

The volunteer program will be evaluated annually by the volunteer coordinator. The number of volunteers used in the program, and the quality of services rendered through the volunteer program will be evaluated. By October 1, 20XX, the volunteer coordinator will prepare an annual report to the director, which will review the volunteer program. The report may be presented to the board at their request.

## **Mediation**

Mediation is a means of facilitating healthy resolution of conflicts. If direct communication fails to resolve an interpersonal conflict between any two staff members or volunteers, the conflict may be submitted to the director for mediation.

The parties in conflict will meet with the director. Parties involved in mediation have the right to request an alternate mediator. In such cases, the director will choose another mediator agreeable to both parties.

Paid and volunteer staff members should attempt to reach a solution at the appropriate level. This should involve a minimal number of fellow staff members. You will not be subject to reprisal for filing a grievance or for participation in the grievance procedure. If, after exhausting other means to address your concerns you wish to file a grievance, please contact our volunteer coordinator for details and procedures.

## **Grievances Samples**

### **1. Grievances**

Paid and volunteer staff members should make every attempt to reach a solution at the appropriate level, involving a minimal number of fellow staff members. You will not be subject to reprisal for filing a grievance or for participation in the grievance procedure. If, after exhausting other means to address your concerns you wish to file a grievance, please contact our volunteer coordinator for details and procedures.

Note: Grounds for grievances may include the violation of policies, unfair situations where no policies exist, and unfair or discriminatory policies. The grievance procedure is not the appropriate vehicle for resolving interpersonal conflicts. (Please refer to Mediation.)

### **2. Volunteer Grievance Procedures**

Volunteers may submit a written grievance to the volunteer coordinator if they are not satisfied with a decision made about their volunteer status. The grievance is to be submitted within 30 calendar days of the time the volunteer knew of the decision.

The volunteer coordinator will respond in writing within 15 days. If the grievance is not resolved, the volunteer has 15 days to submit it in writing to the director for a final binding decision. The director will respond within 15 days.

## **Performance Problems**

When a volunteer's performance is below the standards required by GSML, or when client rules are violated, the volunteer coordinator may issue a verbal warning outlining the problem.

GSML has identified two categories of inappropriate behaviors and their consequences—performance problems and serious violations. Examples cannot be listed to cover every situation. The director may deal with problems and violations not specifically mentioned here.

The following are considered performance problems and are not acceptable:

- \* Conducting personal business during your shift.
- \* Excessive personal telephone use.
- \* Littering or otherwise creating unsanitary conditions.

- \* Safety violations.
- \* Tardiness for your shift.
- \* Unauthorized operation of equipment.
- \* Unfriendly or uncooperative attitude in dealing with clients, staff members, or volunteers.
- \* Unsatisfactory work performance.
- \* Waste, misuse or damage of property.

Consequences:

1. First Incident: The volunteer will be notified of the problem and the changes required.
2. Second Incident: The volunteer will be issued a second warning.
3. Third Incident: The volunteer will be placed on probation for a period of four weeks. During that time an evaluation will be done to determine if continued volunteering will benefit the volunteer. The volunteer will be provided goals that must be accomplished to resolve the situation. The volunteer coordinator may meet with the volunteer to provide feedback. If the problem is not corrected following this process, a dismissal notice will be given.
4. Cancellation of volunteer status.

For serious problems, steps 3 or 4 may be carried out immediately.

Note: It may be found that the performance problems of a volunteer are the result of the inappropriate placement. Every attempt will be made to help him or her find and train for another volunteer position at Gulf Specimen Marine Lab and Aquarium.

**Serious Violations**

The following are considered to be serious violations and are grounds for cancellation of volunteer status:

- \* Falsifying reports, records or expenses.
- \* Physical or sexual harassment.
- \* Negligent or willful damage of property.
- \* Theft.
- \* Unlawful discrimination.
- \* Willfully endangering the safety of others.
- \* Working under the influence of intoxicants.

Consequences:

Anything considered a serious violation will be cause for termination.

**Resignation**

The staff appreciates your time, talents and interests, and knows that changes will occur. If you plan to stop volunteering we would like the chance to talk with you before your departure. Please give a minimum of two weeks' notice to your support person and our volunteer coordinator. This will give us time to fill your position following your departure.

**Dismissal of a Volunteer**

Volunteers may be dismissed for failure to comply with policies and procedures of Gulf Specimen Marine Lab. Volunteers may discuss reasons for dismissal with support person or volunteer coordinator. Prior to the dismissal the support person and volunteer coordinator must agree to the dismissal. Instead of dismissal the volunteer coordinator may recommend a probationary period to develop corrective methods.

Grounds for dismissal may include but are not limited to: failure to perform assigned duties, failure to follow GSML policies or procedures, failure to meet minimum standards of

performance, abuse of clients or staff, alcohol or drug abuse while volunteering, theft of GSML property, misconduct or insubordination. Volunteers may be terminated at any time for violations of agency policy or procedures as defined in this manual.

### **Appeals of Dismissal**

Volunteers may appeal the dismissal to GSML no later than thirty days following the dismissal. Appeals must be in writing.

### **Termination**

If a volunteer should need to resign his/her volunteer position, the volunteer coordinator should be notified as well as his or her support person. Volunteers are asked to give at least one week notice when terminating their volunteer service. Volunteers are also asked to go through an exit interview upon termination. The exit interview is an opportunity for the volunteer to state reasons for leaving and for the agency to learn other volunteer concerns.

The services of a volunteer may be terminated by the volunteer coordinator for reasons including, but not limited to: violation of GSML policies and procedures, impaired ability to function in a safe and prudent manner, or violation of the privacy of the clients or staff of Gulf Specimen

### **Exit Interviews**

An exit interview will be conducted with volunteers leaving volunteer service. Included in the interview will be questions about reasons for leaving, suggestions for improving GSML, and possibilities for future involvement with Gulf Specimen.

---

## **General Policies**

---

### **Confidentiality**

All information concerning clients, staff, financial data, business records and employees is confidential. No information may be released without appropriate authorization. This is a basic rule of client care and business ethics. The board of directors, staff and our clients rely on our volunteers to conform to this rule of confidentiality.

### **Dress Code**

All volunteers must wear a regulation volunteer tunic or T-shirt and name tag while volunteering. Uniforms with name tags identify the authority and role of the person in contact with visitors, and other staff. Any exceptions to this must be negotiated with the volunteer coordinator.

The volunteer department will furnish name tags to new volunteers and to volunteers whose names have changed. Replacement pins will be made as needed. Name tags should be worn on the left of the tunic or jacket while on duty.

It is important that hair be clean and well-groomed, as you will be representing Gulf Specimen to visitors. If beards and mustaches are worn, they must be neatly trimmed. Use of deodorants is recommended. Use of heavily scented perfumes and lotions should be avoided.

### **Solicitation**

Volunteers may not solicit or distribute literature during work hours. They may not solicit or distribute literature on GSML property at any time.

### **Smoking and Eating**

Smoking or eating are not allowed in the public aquarium area of Gulf Specimen Marine Lab and Aquarium. Eating and drinking in the pickle building are allowed. You are however, encouraged to have a water bottle or beverage container and hydrate frequently. Refrigerators in the pickling building are provided for staff food stuffs or meals.

Alcohol is not allowed on campus except at certain events.

To help ensure a healthy environment for clients, visitors, volunteers, employees and staff, GSML is a smoke-free or non-smoking facility.

### **Drug and Alcohol Use**

Volunteers are subject to immediate dismissal if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol while performing their volunteer duties. Volunteers may not bring drugs or alcohol into the GSML facility under any circumstances.

### **Conflict of Interest**

A Gulf Specimen volunteer, acting in an official capacity, shall not take any action that would result in the volunteer's financial benefit. They will not ask for or receive for themselves or for a member of their household, directly or indirectly, any moneys or gifts from GSML clients of visitors.

### **Vehicle Use**

GSML volunteers who have completed the e-Learning module on vehicle use may be given permission to utilize a GSML vehicle. This includes GSML volunteers with a valid driver's license and as part of an official GSML activity. If your assignment involves the use of a Gulf Specimen vehicle, your support person will acquaint you with the policies.

### **Client Needs**

Remember that each client has special needs that you should try to determine and help satisfy. Try to find out special needs so visitors get what they need (special facilities, certain locations, special services, etc.)

Use a pleasant tone of voice. Be cooperative, courteous, attentive, alert and cordial but not chatty.

### **Children**

You may bring a child with you for your shift, if it has been cleared with the volunteer coordinator and it does not limit your performance of your duties. Children must remain under your supervision at all times and are not allowed to roam the office during your shift or affect our client service. They must abide by the same standards that we have for volunteers.

### **Security**

Only GSML volunteers who have been trained in closing procedures should be responsible for securing the GSML campus. GSML volunteers who are using a GSML vehicle or vessel should secure it before exiting the car, truck or boat.

### **Theft**

Theft or pilferage of cash or merchandise by a client, volunteer or paid staff member is a serious offense and should be reported to the director. Losses of this type affect us. Theft negatively affects not only our ability to deliver services, but also the trust upon which our staff structure is based. Theft is cause for immediate dismissal.

### **Access to Program Property and Materials**

As appropriate, volunteers shall have access to agency property and materials necessary to fulfill their duties, and shall receive training in the operation of any equipment. Property and materials shall be used only when directly required for agency purposes. This policy includes access to and use of agency vehicles.

### **Borrowing and Lending**

No volunteers shall loan or borrow any equipment, vehicles, or documents without permission of the administration.

### **Phone Etiquette**

Paid staff are generally responsible for answering the telephone. If it's necessary for you to answer the phone, a good greeting is: "Hello, this is Gulf Specimen, Jane speaking. May I help you?" Phones are an essential part of our business interaction with clients and suppliers. They should be answered quickly, politely and proficiently. If you cannot answer the client's question, refer them to someone who can provide an answer. If they are unavailable, take the client's number and question and route it to someone who will respond.

When you put a caller on hold, please take care that the person is not left on hold for a long period of time. It is discourteous and ties up the telephone.

Note: Do not give out the home phone numbers of staff members unless they have specifically given their approval. The list of staff phone numbers is for Gulf Specimen Marine Lab business use. If callers insist it is an emergency, refer them to a paid staff member. Do not unnecessarily disturb staff members by calling them at home with business that could be taken care of during work hours.

### **Telephone Usage**

Telephone usage shall be limited to business purposes. Personal phone calls, except in cases of emergencies, are discouraged.

### **Background Checks**

A criminal records background check is required for volunteers over 18. A volunteer must pass this check to be given an assignment involving children or minors or dealing with sensitive information.

### **Agency Representation**

All actions or statements that reflect on, cause obligation to, or affect financially GSML must have prior approval by agency staff. These may include, but are not limited to, lobbying government or other organizations, statements to the press, the signing of contracts or assuming financial obligations. Volunteers taking on such responsibilities must have these duties clearly defined in their job descriptions.

### **Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Physical, Mental, or Sexual Harassment**

Volunteers witnessing child abuse, sexual abuse, physical, mental, or sexual harassment must report it immediately to their support person or the volunteer coordinator, Gulf Specimen does not condone and will vigorously prosecute any such incidents. If you have questions regarding what constitutes abuse or harassment, please contact the volunteer coordinator.

### **Continuing Education**

Volunteers wishing to improve their level of skills are encouraged to take advantage of advanced training and classes offered by Gulf Specimen. Please contact our volunteer coordinator to discuss what options are available for your position.

## **Reimbursements - Mileage, Meals, Lodging, Parking Samples**

### **1. Reimbursement - Mileage/Meals**

Some mileage and meal reimbursement may be available to you depending on your volunteer assignment. The volunteer coordinator will explain what reimbursement is available and the requirements to receive the reimbursement. For those who do not wish to claim reimbursement the volunteer program will put in writing the number of volunteer miles driven and other allowable expenses. This is a tax deductible expense according to Internal Revenue rules.

### **9. Reimbursement Of Expenses**

Volunteers are (may be) eligible for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred while volunteering. Prior approval must be sought for any major expenditure.

### **References (For Jobs or Continued Education)**

References many employers recognize volunteer work as valid job experience. Your volunteer employment also provides you with current personal references regarding your skills. This can be very useful in obtaining paid employment.

### **Volunteer Tax Deductible Expenses**

Volunteers who itemize income taxes can deduct some expenses:

- \* The following are not reimbursed expenses: transportation to and from the site of volunteer services, or transportation expenses incurred during the volunteer activity. Expenses not reimbursed may include bus or taxi fares, the cost of driving and parking a car but not maintenance, repair or depreciation.
- \* Mileage can be calculated at the organization's rate or the actual cost of gas and oil. Ask the volunteer coordinator for the rate.
- \* Travel expenses can be deducted if the volunteer attends a meeting as a representative of the volunteer organization.
- \* The cost of special uniforms needed for the volunteer work or supplies purchased for the volunteer work.
- \* Telephone bills for calls made concerning volunteer work.
- \* Non-cash contributions of property, such as clothing or household items.
- \* Out-of-pocket expenses incurred during volunteering that are not reimbursed. Volunteers must itemize expenses.
- \* Volunteers may not deduct expenses for dependent care, such as child care even if they incur those expenses in order to volunteer. They may not deduct the value of their time and service.

Volunteers should keep records of their expenses, including the name of the organization for which they volunteer and the details of the contribution.

## **2. Safety**

The safety and health of staff members is important. A safe work environment and safe work procedures are both of major concern. If in your work you should encounter an unsafe situation, or observe others working in an unsafe manner:

- \* Reporting immediately all unsafe work conditions to the volunteer coordinator or director. Report any ongoing safety problems to you support person or volunteer staff.

Taking this responsibility expresses your concern and recognizes that an injury to one person hurts everyone by increasing workloads and insurance costs for Gulf Specimen Marine Lab. We encourage your ideas and suggestions about how we can create a safer workplace.

### **Safety Rules for Volunteers:**

- \* **Accident Reporting:** Volunteers must report immediately all personal injuries, vehicle accidents and incidents to the volunteer coordinator or support person. They should maintain contact with their work site and provide updates on their condition when off due to injury or accident.
- \* **In Case of Injury:** All human blood and body fluids are to be treated as if they were infectious for HIV, Hepatitis B and other blood-borne pathogens. Volunteers should immediately inform the volunteer coordinator and support person if they believe they have been exposed to infection. Use gloves and if it's sticky, wet or slimy don't touch it without them.
- \* **First Aid:** Have first aid kits in offices and state vehicles. Volunteers should know their location. We encourage volunteers to have kits in their vehicles. A prompt first aid response can keep most injuries and medical situations from growing worse. Every worksite has an emergency medical plan.
- \* **Fire Plan:** Your support person will show you where the fire plan is for your work area. Be sure you know your nearest exit in case of fire.
- \* **Maintenance:** Safety in the workplace requires keeping the environment free of hazards that arise from lack of regular maintenance and servicing. Volunteers should report any work conditions that are potential safety hazards. Trip and fall hazards are abundant at GSML: please take the time to correct any that are correctable, tools or debris in pathways, unsafe ladders or step stools
- \* **Office Safety:** Office work is not hazardous, but accidents do happen! Most are preventable if we identify common hazards and preventive measures. Your support person will go over common hazards and ways to avoid them. Volunteers should learn the numbers to call for fire or medical emergency. These are found in the front of this manual.
- \* **Lifting:** Most back injuries result from improper lifting. The support person will provide you with information on how to lift properly to protect your back against injury.

### **Fire Extinguishers**

There are two fire extinguishers in the packing area. They are located on the back wall of the packing room and on the loading dock on a pillar.

### **4. Injury Prevention**

- \* Always obtain adequate help with a task.
- \* Always help supervise. Keep your eyes open for potentially dangerous situations.
- \* Check floors often and remove obstacles, clean up spills and put away equipment and tools.
- \* Try to anticipate needs and allow adequate time to avoid hurrying participants.

### **5. Injuries**

If you cut your finger or bump your head or need other emergency assistance, either report to the support person in your area or report to the volunteer coordinator for treatment. An accident form will be filled out and you will be treated.

After normal hours contact the volunteer coordinator. Inform them you are a volunteer and that you have hurt yourself on the job. They will help you as soon as possible.

## **First Aid Kits**

There is a first aid kit located in the office in the restroom, one is in the pickle building behind the door to the volunteer coordinators office, and one is available to take on boat trips and to field trips it is in the packing room Remember the location of the kits. An accident may require the immediate use of its contents. If you are not familiar with basic first aid procedures, there is a booklet explaining basic first aid in the kit. Another staff person can usually be found who can be of help.

## **Accident Reports**

If a volunteer is injured at work, the accident should be reported at once to your support person or the volunteer coordinator. If you have an accident or are injured, notify your support person and the volunteer coordinator. An accident report will be completed to record necessary information. Medical assistance or treatment will be given if necessary.

Report any unsafe conditions or defective equipment you observe to your support person or the volunteer coordinator.

## **Hazard Communication Program**

Volunteers need to be aware of the potential danger of the chemicals in their work areas and be trained to use proper safeguards. Each department has a list of known hazardous chemicals to which volunteers may be exposed through their work in that department.

Each volunteer will receive information about the hazard communication program at orientation. Additional information will be given by the staff or volunteer trainer as it pertains to a volunteer's assignment during initial training. Whenever a new hazard is introduced into the work area you will be given information about it.

## **Emergency Plan**

- \* Remain calm

In a life threatening emergency or with any accident tell your support person immediately. Remain calm and if necessary, call 911. Follow their instructions precisely while you await their arrival. Be prepared to give the Gulf Specimen, address and phone number, your name, and the nature of the emergency.

Evaluating an emergency may be more difficult, but here are some general guidelines.

Call an ambulance if the victim is:

- \* Unconscious.
- \* Unable to stand (when they usually can).
- \* Unable to breathe.
- \* Vomiting blood.

Call the client's doctor or your support person for consultation if the client is:

- \* Much more confused than usual.
- \* Having extreme unexplained behavioral change.
- \* Unable to speak clearly.
- \* Having sudden one-sided weakness.
- \* Bleeding (apply immediate pressure to wound).
- \* Having unusual extreme pain.

In the event of a fire or other emergency requiring the evacuation of the building, remain calm. Assist other staff in notifying clients and helping to direct them out of the building safely and quickly. Make sure your work area is secure if time and safety allow. Your support person will be

in charge of evacuation. Office personnel and volunteers will assist as directed. Evacuate people in immediate danger first.

- \* Remain with clients and wait for further instructions from your support person or director.

### **Cleanliness**

It is the intent of Gulf Specimen Marine Lab to maintain high standards of quality and cleanliness. Volunteers, while on duty, are expected to be clean and to dress neatly. This type of appearance presents to customers our concern about the sanitary handling of the organisms. We want customers to have the utmost confidence that our staff is clean and professional.

Personal Hygiene:

- \* Always wash hands before shift begins for at least 20 to 30 seconds. Follow the procedure below.

Hands should be washed and well rinsed before and after caring for organisms. This protects the organisms and yourself and reduces the possibility of transferring infection to the tank or from tank to tank. It is important to learn to wash hands properly and to know the appropriate times for hand washing

- \* Turn on the water in the sink. Remove or push up watch.

- \* Wet hands and soap well. Lather.

- \* Wash hands and wrists. Use friction and rub well between fingers, nails and thumbs.

- \* Rinse hands and wrists. Slant fingers down toward sink so water runs from wrists to tips of fingers.

- \* Dry well.

- \* Finally, take care not to re-contaminate yourself from the dirty faucet, turn off faucet with paper towel that was used to dry hands. Dispose of paper towel in waste basket.

- \* Always wash hands using the procedure above before leaving the restroom and then rinse thoroughly.

- \* Keep head and facial hair clean and well-groomed. Men without beards should be clean shaven unless growing a beard.

- \* Bodies should be clean. Be aware of strong odors such as tobacco smoke, strong perfumes.

State law requires that all volunteers and employees wear shoes and shirts. All clothing should be clean and appropriate for the work required. Clothing should be neat but not precious as it is quite likely that you may get wet, dirty, or encounter bleach.

### **3. Disease Control**

Hand washing is the single most important preventive measure! Volunteers should wash their hands:

- \* After toileting.

- \* After handling "contaminated" articles (Kleenex, handkerchiefs, etc.).

- \* Volunteers should encourage aquarium visitors to wash their hands before leaving and before lunch and snacks. Clean uniforms, clothing and good personal hygiene must be maintained to safeguard the health of our clients. Volunteers are requested to call in sick, when ill or when a contagious illness is suspected.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

We appreciate your willingness to volunteer with Gulf Specimen Marine Lab and Aquarium. We hope you will enjoy your experience as a volunteer. As you learn your volunteer duties feel free to ask questions. Our staff is happy to help you. It is your commitment and that of volunteers like you that allows GSML to most effectively serve our client's needs. Thank you.



# Index

---