



U.S. Department of State Volunteer Service Certificate

The Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) offers a certificate of appreciation to CBYX, FLEX, and YES high school exchange students who complete 100 hours or more of volunteer service during their exchange program.

Please note that only U.S. citizens or permanent residents who complete 100 or more hours of community service may apply for the President's Volunteer Service Award (<http://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov/>). International exchange students are not eligible for the President's award.

Volunteer service is a vital part of American society and culture. Whether done on your own initiative or through your placement organization, school, host family, or a community organization, volunteering provides an important way to learn about your host community and helps you develop leadership and organizational skills that can benefit your home community.

To qualify as volunteer service toward the certificate, an activity should be unpaid and should provide a benefit to the community beyond you and your host family. A few examples of qualifying activities are:

- Stocking and distributing food at a food bank
- Mentoring or tutoring a child
- Volunteering with or fundraising for a nonprofit organization (often called 501(c)3 organizations) or charitable cause
- Up to 10 hours volunteering at outreach events, such as community fairs, with your placement organization (You may volunteer additional time for your placement organization, but it will not count toward a Department of State issued certificate.)
- Participating in a community service project through a school club (Honor Society, Key Club, etc.)
- Assisting a teacher before or after school
- Shoveling snow for a neighbor in need
- Volunteering with a parent/teacher organization within the school or school district
- Selling tickets, working concession stands, or ushering at sporting events, concerts, or theater productions (if not required for a class)
- Time in service club meetings spent planning or organizing volunteer activities (but not for other club business)

Examples of activities that **do not** qualify as volunteer service include:

- Doing chores for the host family
- Making required International Education Week presentations at school
- Attending classes, workshops, or events
- Raising funds for the student's personal benefit (e.g., for a trip, field trips, dances)
- Participation in clubs, student council, sports teams (including as team manager), and school plays (These are typical extracurricular activities in American school systems and not volunteer activities.)

While in the United States, Department of State-sponsored exchange students may **not** volunteer for or participate in political campaigns connected with any elections to political office at the federal, state or local level. They may volunteer for non-partisan political activity, such as a get-out-the-vote drive. They may also observe partisan political activities, such as a campaign speech or rally.

Your placement organization representatives will guide you in choosing volunteer opportunities and recording your volunteer hours. They must validate the hours in order for you to qualify for the Department of State Volunteer Service Certificate. Your placement organization will inform you of the deadline for completing and validating your hours, which will be several weeks before you depart the United States.