

Beau H. Oglesby
State's Attorney

Mallory F. Eckman
Community Service Coordinator



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR WORCESTER COUNTY
106 FRANKLIN STREET
SNOW HILL, MARYLAND 21863
410-632-4412 • FAX 410-632-2175
E-MAIL • meckman@co.worcester.md.us

Frequently Asked Questions:

**ADULT ALTERNATIVE
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM**

**THIS IS A VOLUNTARY PROGRAM OFFERED
THROUGH THE OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY
(NOT THE DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND)**

**ACCEPTANCE INTO THE PROGRAM IS AT THE SOLE DISCRETION OF
THE STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**

**THIS PROGRAM IS NOT INTENDED FOR DWI, DUI, INDECENT EXPOSURE,
DISORDERLY CONDUCT, FAKE ID, TRAFFIC OR ANY SERIOUS DRUG
RELATED OFFENSES!**

Individuals under 18 years old at the time of incident must contact Juvenile Services

Please read the information and follow all of the instructions!

You are ultimately responsible for any and all information submitted to this office.

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What is the Alternative Community Service Program?

The Alternative Community Service is a “**voluntary**” diversion program created by the Office of the State’s Attorney as a way to unclog congested courts rooms of minor offenses in the District Court of Maryland. It allows local police agencies to focus on major criminal cases rather than tying up officers for hours waiting for cases to be heard in District Court.

How does the Community Service program work?

Individual’s **MUST APPLY** and be accepted into the community service program. Once they’ve been accepted, individuals will receive an acceptance letter with guidelines on the back. A reference letter is also provided to assist organizations in meeting the criteria listed at the bottom of the guidelines. If you are not accepted into the program, you will be sent a denial letter stating you must appear in court on your scheduled trial date.

Who is eligible for the Community Service Program?

Adult individuals (18 or older) that have received minor charges including: Minor in possession of alcohol, Marijuana less than 10 Grams/Paraphernalia, open container, public consumption and noise violations. Community Service may also be issued in District Court as part of a plea agreement between a defendant and the Office of the State’s Attorney on your trial date. **(No traffic or civil citations along with a criminal arrest for a Fake ID’s will be given pre-trial community service)**

What if I “DO NOT” fall into a category listed above?

You must appear in court. You may request community service in court on your trial date.

How old do you have to be to enter the Community Service Program?

This is an adult program only! You must be at least 18 years old at the time of the offense. If you are a juvenile, you must contact Juvenile Services at (410) 632-0206.

When do I apply for the Community Service Program?

If you received a citation for one of the offenses listed above, you are encouraged to apply immediately. Make sure the citation is marked “must appear in court”.

What if I haven’t received a trial date yet?

If you recently received a citation, you must submit a photocopy of the actual citation with the agency and officer’s name listed. If you send the original citation, it will be returned to you with either an acceptance/denial letter.

How do I find an application for the community service program?

Applications are located on the Office of the State's Attorney's website, www.worcestersao.com or on the windowsill in the lobby of the Ocean City District Court.

How do I sign up for the community service program?

Applications should be filled out, downloaded, printed and mailed to the address at the top of the application along with the application fee. If you receive an application in District Court, it should be filled out and mailed within five (5) days of the original trial date.

Is there a fee associated with the application?

Yes, there is a **onetime** \$100.00 program fee charged. The application fee should be included with the application and mailed to the address at the top of the page. *The application fee must be in the form of a money order or cashier's check. No personal checks, cash or credit cards will be accepted. You will not be registered in the community service program until your application fee is received.*

What is a Money Order or Cashiers Check?

A money order is similar to a personal check; however it is purchased at a bank, USPS, CVS, Walmart, grocery store, convenience store, etc.

What if I just found out about the Community Service Program and my trial date is in the next few days?

You will have to attend your court date and request the community service in court.

How long does it take to be considered for the program?

Generally, it takes 10 business days to receive your acceptance into the program.

Who decides if I'm accepted into the Community Service Program?

If your offense meets the criteria listed above you will most likely be accepted into the program. Individuals with prior offenses or pending charges will not be accepted.

How many hours do I have to complete?

The number of hours required for community service varies by the offense. You will receive the number of hours after your request for community service has been processed and approved.

When is the community service due?

All community service is due 10 business days before your court date. If your case has been placed on the STET docket, your community service is due on your scheduled due date as it appears on the acceptance letter.

What happens if I live in another state?

This program allows you to perform your community service in any state. International requests must be approved by the community service coordinator.

Is there a list of organizations where I can perform my community service?

Yes, refer to the list on the guidelines located on the website.

Are there organizations not eligible for community service?

Yes, sport or athletic program, business club, any college sorority or fraternity sanctioned event, day care center, business for profit or a political campaign. . Please view the guidelines for the full list of agencies that do not meet the criteria for this program. If you are unsure of an organization, please call to confirm acceptance.

What is a verification (confirmation) letter?

The verification letter is proof that you completed your community service. The organization you chose must provide you with a letter written on their official business letterhead/stationary. The letter must be addressed to Mallory F. Eckman and include the date the letter was written, the case/citation number, how many hours you completed and a brief description of what you did while completing your community service. The supervisor must hand sign the letter. The letter should be mailed to the address at the top of the acceptance letter. All letters must include the organizations corporate logo, ink stamp or a raised seal to be accepted. Make sure the organization is able to provide the proper documentation before you start your community service. If they are not able to provide the proper documentation, you will have to locate a new organization.

Acceptance of your community service documentation is at the sole discretion of the State's Attorney's Office.

What is business stationary and logo?

Most organizations have a color embossed professional stationary that identifies the organization. Stationary usually includes the Board of Directors or investors in the company, their business address, logo, or some identifying graphic design (logo) to identify the organization along with a phone number. An example would be the Office of the State's Attorney's official crest and the name of our State's Attorney, our address and phone number.

What if the organization doesn't have business stationary (letterhead)?

The community service office will accept either an ink stamp with the organizations name or a raised seal, as an alternative. *If the organization is not able to provide one of the three methods of verification, then you must find a new organization to complete your community service.*

What is an ink stamp or a raised seal?

An ink stamp is also referred to as rubber ink stamp. It has the name of the organization embossed in the rubber stamp. A raised seal is created when you place paper in a two sided metal instrument that has the organizations name embossed on the inside. When you squeeze the handles together it makes an indentation into the paper showing the organizations name and other information

What if all they have is a work sheet?

A work sheet may be attached to the completed community service verification letter; however it will not be accepted as verification of community service. You must provide the verification letter. Our office does not issue work or log sheets.

Why should I make copies of all my documents?

Documentation of all paperwork is essential when dealing with any state agency. In the event that something is lost, or never arrives, your will need to have proof that you completed your community service and paid your application fee. Make sure to photocopy your money order and verification letter and save the copies for your records.

Will I receive confirmation that the community service documentation was received by the Community Service Program Coordinator/State's Attorney's Office?

No, it is your responsibility to contact the community service office to make sure that the proper paperwork was received and acceptable. For your protection, you are encouraged to send all materials by registered/certified mail with a return receipt. This office encourages all participants to take a picture of their letter and e-mail it to this office to insure it will be accepted before they mail a hardcopy.

Is it acceptable to fax in my information?

Yes, we encourage individuals to fax the completion letter if they are unable to send an e-mail. As with an e-mail, we will advise you if there is a problem and what you need to correct before you send a hardcopy. This is a way to avoid losing time and money, in the long run. You will know before you send your original letter that it will be accepted. This office does not accept the fax or e-mail copy as a substitute for the original completion letter. You must still send the original letter and call to confirm that it was received.

What if I am unable to complete the community service by the due date?

First, contact the Office of the State's Attorney for instructions. If you have a court date, you will either be instructed to contact the District Court of Maryland to request a postponement or you will be instructed to appear in court on the trial date. The judge will either place your case on the STET docket to finish completing your community service or he/she will conduct the case while you're in court that day.

Is it possible to get my District Court date postponed?

Any correspondence with the District must be in writing. Letters should be directed to the presiding judge. Make sure you reference the fact that you are currently enrolled in the community service program and explain your reason for requesting a postponement. The maximum postponement request is usually 90 days. If the judge denies your request, you will have to appear in court on your scheduled trial date.

When is my community service due if I get my court date postponed?

Community service is always due 10 business days before the new court date.

What happens if I miss my court date?

The District Court will issue a bench warrant for your arrest. **Once you have missed your court date, the offer for community service is no longer applicable.**

What does FTA mean?

FTA is an acronym for "Failure to Appear". This is a disposition that is ordered by the presiding judge in District Court on your trial date. Failing to appear will result in court issuing a bench warrant for your arrest. That warrant information is sent to the Worcester County Sheriff's Department and they alert your county sheriff who will serve the warrant in your home town. The warrant may be served at your home, place of employment or on a traffic stop. You may be taken into custody on the spot and delivered to the local police department to be processed and eventually given a new trial date.

What does the "You must appear in court" box mean on the citation?

When you are issued a citation by a police agency, the officer will mark the citation either a payable ticket or you must appear in court. If it's a payable, make sure to pay the citation. If the citation is a "must appear in court" offense, you will receive a subpoena from the District Court of Maryland, with your scheduled trial date. ***** It's your responsible to contact the court if a reasonable amount of time has gone by and you haven't received a court date. ***** There are no excuses for not appearing in court on your scheduled trial date.

May I contact the community service coordinator if I have additional questions?

Absolutely, the number is (410) 632-4412; however, in the summer it's extremely busy. Please leave a message and your call will be answered in the order it was received and of course, as soon as possible. You may also send an e-mail.

If you contact this office, please have your case/citation number and a pen/paper ready in the event that you get through for any pertinent information relating to your case.

If you have contacted the community service office and reached the answering machine, please leave your name, case/citation number and a phone number where you can be reached. Your call will be returned as soon as possible. If you receive a message from this office, please listen to the return message before you rely on your caller I.D. to call. The phone line is on a trunked line through out the building and all outgoing calls register as (410) 632-2177. The secretary will not be able identify who contacted you and will instruct you to listen to the voice mail that this office left for you.

***** Please leave a message! Do not call repeatedly *****

Are you allowed to speak to my parents?

Please ascertain the information pertaining to the community service program and relay it to your parents. This office is only allowed speak to the person that was issued the citation /statement of charges or their attorney.

It is a courtesy to the parents when we speak about a defendant (daughter/son).

What if I have retained an attorney?

If you have retained a defense attorney or the public defender, our office is obligated to speak only to the private attorney or public defender on your behalf.

When should I mail in the application I received in court?

You have five (5) days from the original court date to respond to the community service office so that your application can be processed. **(You must submit the original application you received in court).** You should make a copy for yourself.

How do I get my case expunged (removal of records from public inspection)?

After your case has been dismissed, you may pick up the Order for Expungement of Records and the General Waiver and Release forms at any District Court location in Maryland or go inline to their website www.courts.state.md.us and view their expungement link.

What is the difference between community service offered in court and court ordered community service?

Community service *offered* in court is usually an agreement between the prosecutor and the defendant (you) and or your defense attorney. The prosecutor will provide you or your attorney with an application that you must fill out and mail to the address at the top of the page. **It is your responsibility to fill out and mail the original application** issued in court. The application should be mailed within five (5) days of receiving the application. If you have any questions in reference to the application, please call the community service coordinator for assistance.

The agreement states that you will be placed on the STET (inactive) docket to complete a certain number of community service hours. If you successfully sign up for the community service program, submit all of the required paperwork on or before the due date, the case will be taken off the STET docket. The District Court of Maryland will issue an administrative court date so that your case will be officially closed on the open docket. Participants will first receive a copy of a motion that we submit to the District Court to start the process of closing your case on the open record. Expect to receive a subpoena shortly from the District Court with your court date. You will not need to appear in court for this trial date. Just know that this is the date that your case will be officially closed.

Court *ordered* community service is ordered by a judge as part of probation before judgment or a guilty sentence. You report your completed community service to the District Court and any and all issues pertaining to your case are between you and the District Court of Parole and Probation and not monitored by this office.

I received a Marijuana citation and I'm over 21 year of age. Do I need to enter into your program?

A Marijuana citation for individuals 21 and over is a payable citation. Pay the citation.

I received a Marijuana citation and I am between 18 and 20 years of age. Can I enter into your program?

Marijuana citations are must appear citations for individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 years old. This means that will be required to appear in court on your trial date or you may elect to enter into our diversion program.

Do you have a list of phone numbers for other related agencies?

Yes, other related phone numbers that may be helpful:

Public Defenders Office:	(410) 632-1933
District Court of Maryland (OC):	(410) 723-6935
District Court of Maryland (SH)	(410) 219-7830
Juveniles Service Department:	(410) 632-0206
Parole and Probation Department:	(410) 632-4200
Office of the State's Attorney (District Court Division)	(410) 632-2177
Office of the State's Attorney (Circuit Court Division)	(410) 632-2166
Ocean City Police Department (Front Desk)	(410) 723-6610
Worcester County Sheriff's Department	(410) 632-1111

Please have the organization fill out your verification letter using the format shown below. The letter should include all of the information listed below including a date and hand signed signature.

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February 13, 2017

Mallory F. Eckman
Community Service Coordinator
Office of the State's Attorney for Worcester County
106 Franklin Street
Snow Hill, MD 21863

Re: Case No. (List case number, here))

Dear Mrs. Eckman,

This letter is to inform you that (person's name) has completed (Number of Community Service Hours) of community service with the (Your Organization – Here).

Please include a brief description detailing what the individual did while competing community service at your location.

Sincerely,

(Make Sure You Sign Letter - Here)

Joe Smith
(Print Title – Here)

Revised: 2/13/17