



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR WORCESTER COUNTY
BEAU H. OGLESBY, STATE'S ATTORNEY

ADULT ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Community Service Program (CSP) is a diversion program offered through the Office of the State's Attorney for Worcester County to allow individuals who have no criminal record to avoid prosecution and conviction for minor offenses.

Your participation in this program is entirely voluntary, but your acceptance into the program is at the sole discretion of the Office of the State's Attorney.

The CSP is not available for certain charges, such as Driving Under the Influence (DUI), Driving While Impaired (DWI), Disorderly Conduct, Fake Identification, Drug offenses (other than simple possession of marijuana) or minor traffic offenses.

This program is for adults over the age of eighteen. Individuals under the age of eighteen should contact the Department of Juvenile Services at 410-632-0206.

This program is not a part of the District Court of Maryland.

Please read this information carefully. You must follow all instructions to successfully complete your community service obligation.

Mallory F. Eckman
Community Service Program Coordinator
(410) 632-4412

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What is the Community Service Program?

The Community Service Program is a voluntary diversion program created by the Office of the State's Attorney for individuals charged with minor offenses in the District Court of Maryland. Eligible individuals benefit by avoiding prosecution for these minor offenses, while courts and local police agencies benefit from increased efficiency and reduced backlogs.

How does the Community Service Program work?

Individuals must apply and be accepted into the Community Service Program before they can participate. Once accepted, individuals will receive a confirmatory letter along with guidelines for qualifying community service. A sample confirmation letter is also provided to assist organizations in meeting correctly confirming completion of the individual's community service.

If you are not accepted into the program, you will be sent a denial letter. If you are not accepted, you must appear in court on your scheduled trial date.

Who is eligible for the Community Service Program?

Adult individuals eighteen years of age or older who have been charged with the following offenses are eligible to participate in the Community Service Program:

- Minor in possession of alcohol;
- Marijuana/Paraphernalia possession;
- Open container violations;
- Public consumption;
- Noise violations.

Participation in the Community Service Program should be requested in advance of trial, although it may also be offered in court.

What if I do not fall into a category listed above?

You must appear in court on your scheduled trial date. If you believe you qualify, you may request community service from the prosecutor at that time.

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

This is a program for adults only. You must be at least eighteen years old at the time of the offense. If you are under the age of eighteen, you must contact the Department of Juvenile Services at (410) 632-0206.

When do I apply for the Community Service Program?

You should apply immediately if you received a citation for an eligible offense listed above.

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

If you received a citation but do not know your trial date, you must submit either a photocopy of your citation or the original along with your application.

How do I find an application for the Community Service Program?

Applications to participate in the Community Service Program are located at the Office of the State's Attorney's website, www.worcestersao.com, and in the lobby of the Ocean City District Court.

How do I sign up for the community service program?

Applications should be completed and mailed to the address at the top of the application, along with the application fee. If you receive an application in court on your trial date, you must complete and mail that original application, with the application fee, within five days of that trial date.

Is there a fee to participate in the Community Service Program?

There is a \$100.00 application fee to participate in the Community Service Program. 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 Cashier's Check?

A money order or cashier's check looks like a personal check, but is purchased at a bank or U.S. Post Office. Money orders are also available at grocery stores, convenience stores, and other retail outlets. There is usually a nominal fee to purchase a money order or cashier's check.

What if I found out about the Community Service Program right before my trial date?

You will have to attend court on your trial date. You may ask the prosecutor at that time if you are eligible for participation in the Community Service Program.

How long does it take to be considered for the Community Service Program?

Generally, it takes ten business days to receive a letter of acceptance into the Community Service Program. A letter denying your participation also takes about ten days.

Who decides if I will be accepted into the Community Service Program?

Your acceptance into the Community Service Program is decided by the Office of the State's Attorney. That decision is at the sole discretion of the State's Attorney.

If your offense meets the criteria listed above, you are likely to be accepted into the program. However, individuals with prior offenses or pending charges are ineligible.

How many hours do I have to complete?

The number of hours required for community service varies and is determined on a case-by-case basis. You will receive the number of hours after your request for community service has been processed and approved.

When is verification of the community service due?

All community service is due ten business days before your court date. If your case has been placed on the *stet* docket (an inactive court docket), you will be given a date for verification of your community service in your acceptance letter.

What happens if I live in another state?

This program allows you to perform your community service in any state or territory of the United States. International requests must be specially approved.

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

A list of qualifying organizations appears on the guidelines and on the website of the Office of the State's Attorney, www.worcestersao.com.

Are there organizations not eligible for community service?

Yes. Please refer to the CSP guidelines for a complete list of eligible and ineligible organizations.

What is a verification or confirmation letter?

The verification letter is proof that you have completed your community service. The organization you chose must provide you with a letter written on their official business letterhead or stationary. The letter must be addressed to:

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

The verification letter must be dated, and must include the case or citation number, the number of hours of community service you completed, and a brief description of the work you performed. Your supervisor must hand-sign the verification letter. All verification letters must include the organization's corporate logo, an ink stamp or a raised seal before the letter can be accepted.

Make sure an organization is able to provide the proper documentation before you start your community service. If the organization cannot provide proper documentation, you cannot perform qualifying community service at that organization. Acceptance of your community service verification is at the sole discretion of the Office of the State's Attorney.

What is business stationary or letterhead?

Most organizations have professional stationary, or letterhead, that is used for business correspondence. Stationary is often color-embossed, and usually includes the names of members of Boards of Directors or officers of the company, along with a business address and telephone number and logos or other identifying graphic designs.

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

The community service coordinator may accept an ink stamp with an organization's name or a raised seal of the organization if it does not have business stationary. If an organization is not able to provide adequate verification of community service, you cannot perform community service at that organization. You must instead find a different organization to complete your community service.

What if all the organization has 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 a qualifying verification letter. The Office of the State's Attorney does not issue work or log sheets.

Should I make copies of all my documents?

Documentation of your participation in the Community Service Program is essential. In the event that a document is lost in the mail, you will need proof that you completed your community service and paid your application fee. Make sure to photocopy and keep any documents, including money orders or cashiers' checks that you send to the Office of the State's Attorney.

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

No, it is your responsibility to contact the community service coordinator to make sure that the proper paperwork was received and accepted. For your protection, you are encouraged to send all materials by registered/certified mail with a return receipt.

Is it acceptable to email or fax in my information?

As a final review, you may make a digital copy of any documents to be mailed to the Office of the State's Attorney and email that digital copy to meckman@co.worcester.md.us. You may also fax a copy of your verification letter to (410) 632-2175. By doing so, it will enable the CSP Coordinator to approve the letter or contact you in the event changes are necessary. You are still required to mail the original letter to close the case.

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

Contact the Office of the State's Attorney for instructions. You may be able to request a postponement of your court date, but you may have to appear and face prosecution.

Any correspondence with the District Court must be in writing. Letters should be directed to the presiding judge. You should reference your enrollment in the Community Service Program and explain your reason for requesting a postponement. 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 ten 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, and your enrollment in the Community Service Program will be terminated.

What does FTA mean?

FTA is an acronym for “Failure to Appear” for a court date. Failing to appear will result in the presiding judge issuing a bench warrant for your arrest. The warrant information is entered in a national data base, subjecting you to service of the warrant or arrest in any state or county.

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

When you are issued a citation by a police agency, the officer will mark the citation either a payable or a "must appear" citation. If a citation is marked “must appear," you must appear in court when notified to do so. Failure to appear as directed may result in the issuance of a warrant for your arrest.

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

Yes. The number for the community service coordinator is (410) 632-4412. You may also communicate with the community service coordinator by e-mail at meckman@co.worcester.md.us. Please have your case number or citation number handy, along with pen and paper.

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 the community service coordinator, you may return the call at 410-632-4412. Please note that your caller I.D. may not accurately display a return telephone number. Please leave a message. Calls are returned in the order in which they are received. Repeated calls may delay a timely response.

Are you allowed to speak to my parents?

This office will only speak to the person that was issued a citation or charging document, or to an attorney representing that person. If you require your parents' assistance, you will have to relay any information to them.

What if I have retained an attorney?

If you have retained a defense attorney, including the Public Defender, our office may only communicate with that attorney. The Office may no longer communicate with you directly.

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

The CSP is a diversion program that may be offered to you or your attorney by the prosecutor. The prosecutor will provide an application for your participation in the CSP if it is offered in court.

On the other hand, a judge may order community service as a part of the sentence in a criminal case. You must verify the completion of court-ordered community service directly to the Court, and not to the Office of the State's Attorney.

I received a Marijuana citation and I'm over 21 year of age. Can I enter into the Community Service Program?

Yes. Citations for possession of small amount of marijuana or possession of paraphernalia are civil – rather than criminal – citations. However, you may still be eligible to participate in the Community Service Program.

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

Yes. Citations for possession of marijuana by individuals between 18 and 20 are "must appear" citations. However, you may still be eligible to participate in the Community Service Program.

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

Here is a listing of related phone numbers that may be helpful:

Office of the Public Defender:	(410) 632-1933
District Court of Maryland (Ocean City):	(410) 723-6935
District Court of Maryland (Snow Hill):	(410) 219-7830
Department of Juveniles Service:	(410) 632-0206
Division of Parole and Probation:	(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 Office:	(410) 632-1111

CSP Sample Letter

Organization's Name

Address

Phone Number

Email Address

Date

*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)

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).

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

Sincerely,

(Supervisor's hand signature)

(Supervisor's printed name)

(Supervisor's printed title)

(Supervisor's contact phone number)

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