Dear Potential Youth Member & Family,

Welcome to our King County Explorer Search & Rescue (ESAR) community. My name is Elizabeth Hanna, and I am the ESAR Youth Coordinator. My role is to help support our youth members (Under 18 years old). Below you will find important information for families to discuss regarding this volunteer opportunity.

It is important to review the following information and all the basic training information to make sure that ESAR involvement is the right fit for your family and your youth.

After reading this document with your teen, please complete and sign the **last page**. Once it is signed, please take a photo of or scan the signed page. The **.jpg** / **.pdf** will need to be submitted as part of your teen's application to join ESAR.

You can reach out to me at youth@kcesar.org with any questions or concerns.

youth@kcesar.org

King County Explorer Search & Rescue

Parent Packet

About Us

King County ESAR is the primary ground search and rescue team serving King County and the largest of the 7 units in King County Search & Rescue. Each year, ESAR responds to around 150 incidents, including:

- Lost/injured hikers
- Urban searches (individuals with developmental disabilities, autism, Alzheimer's)
- Evidence searches (criminal investigations)
- Wilderness body recoveries – locating and retrieving deceased individuals

Most missions occur along the I-90 corridor, but ESAR responds throughout King County and often assists other counties in Washington.

ESAR Basic Training Program

Commitment:
- **170+ hours of training (Sept – March)**
- **Ongoing participation in training, missions, and unit support (like teams and committees)**

Members average 10 missions and 100+ volunteer hours (non mission) per year per member

Who it's for: King County residents interested in volunteering as ESAR team members.

Training Overview: Basic Training is a comprehensive program that runs from **Sept-March** and is designed to prepare

new members for the challenges that they will face in the field.
Trainees will receive instruction and demonstrate proficiency in:
- Wilderness navigation
- Survival skills
- Search theory
- First aid
- Evidence search procedures

Basic training is purposefully scheduled during winter months to give trainees experience working in **challenging winter conditions** that they could encounter on real missions and may include **snow, rain, wind, and other unpleasant situations**.

Important Notes:
- Participation in training **does not guarantee membership**.
- Trainees are evaluated throughout Basic Training on both subjective and objective criteria.
- Courses are pass/fail and may need to be repeated.
- Successful completion of Basic Training is required to become a member of ESAR
- **$250 training fee** due before first classroom session (Course B) .

You can learn more about the unit and the training program here.

Youth Members

King County ESAR gives its youth the chance to grow through hands-on involvement in search and rescue missions.

Who Can Join?

- You must be at least 14 years old AND have completed 8th grade before the start of Basic Training OR
- Be 15 or older.

What to Expect: Our mission and training activities offer unique challenges that require creativity, leadership, responsibility, and professionalism. We hold our youth members to the same high standards as adults.

Training is physically and mentally demanding. Youth members will spend a significant amount of time without direct adult supervision.

Because of this, ESAR may not be the right fit for every teen. It requires a serious commitment and a high level of maturity. Next Steps:

1. **Review together**: Youth applicants and a parent or guardian should look through:
    - The [ESAR website]
    - The **Basic Training Orientation Packet**
    - **Basic Training Calendar**

2. **(Youth) Think about the expectations for training and what you will be doing on missions and decide if it's right for you**:
3. (Youth) Make sure the training schedule is something you're able to fully commit to
4. (Youth) Make sure the ongoing expectation of participation after training is something you're fully able to commit to 5. (Youth) Make sure that you have a clear transportation plan for getting to training AND missions and have discussed it with your guardian.

Self Advocacy

Rules and responsibilities are the same for youth and adult members in our organization. We expect youth members to have conversations with their families prior to beginning training and self-advocate for the conditions and capacity in which they and their guardians have agreed for them to participate in ESAR. Members are NOT required to participate in all missions; they self-select, depending on availability and desire. If a youth member responds, we assume that this is done with the permission of the parent or guardian.

Communication

ESAR strives for open and clear communication with our members. For our youth members, this includes both what they

want and what they have agreed to with their parent(s) or guardian(s).

- We expect youth members to be able to communicate questions/concerns/limitations on missions and training.
- During training, youth are expected to communicate directly with the training staff and unit leadership. We don't mind trainees using parents' emails, or CC'ing parents on communications, but the youth members must be the one writing the email or making the phone call
- When parents have questions or concerns the youth coordinator can help address them.

Self Limiting

Members must know their limits and act accordingly. ESAR operates in a fast-paced, often high-stress environment, which can sometimes make individuals feel like they should push on when the wiser choice is to stop. No one should continue a task if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable. While ESAR manages risk, the decision to participate always rests with the individual—this is called self-limiting. It must be respected and supported at all times. Youth members should be willing to communicate if they need to stop, modify, or decline tasks, especially when paired with adults, which will happen regularly. Clear expectations and advanced discussions with guardians about what kinds of situations they may need to practice self-limiting will help prepare them to make confident decisions in the field. Our culture values and upholds self-limiting—for everyone, in every situation and it is imperative that all of our members are willing to use it.

Expectations

- Knowing your limits, reporting to team leader when you feel unsafe
- Self advocating and asking for clarification and help
- Understanding weather, slippery slopes and other inherent hazards that affect wilderness travel
- Have a transportation plan worked out in advance for how you will get to trainings and missions

Potential List of Conversations for parents/children:

General

- Limited cell phone communication during missions
- Communicating with other adult volunteers through text messages or social media outlets
- Carpooling with other members (adult and youth)

Transportation

- Transportation to missions, who drives and how many people can be in a vehicle
- Returning from missions late at night
- Carpooling with other members (adult and youth)

Overnight

- Co-ed sleeping arrangements
- Late night missions
- Overnight on missions

Missions:

- Type of missions: (Trail, urban searches, evidence searches)
- Body Recoveries
- Environmental hazards (cold, wet, snow, rock fall etc)
- Responding during school hours or other commitments like sports practices

***every family will decide upon their own preferences in regards to the above examples. If you would like more information about this list we can connect you to other ESAR parents or you can talk to the youth coordinator .*

Supervision

Due to the dynamic nature of search and rescue training and mission activities, there often are times when youth members will not be directly supervised by an adult. In general ESAR organizes volunteers into teams of two or more which may consist solely of youth members or any combination of youth and adult members. Teams may also be co-ed.
More information about team composition requirements during training can be found in the Orientation Packet.

Abuse Prevention

ESAR does not allow or tolerate abuse or harassment of any kind, for any reason, and follows best practices to help prevent abuse from occurring. ESAR members are background checked by the King County Sheriff's Office, and our training staff receive additional training in Youth Protections through Boy Scouts to help them identify and prevent abuse. During training, as much as possible, we organize members of similar age and identified gender in the same groups. Our organization has an established reporting and investigative process of all allegations of harassment, abuse or breach of our code of conduct and standard operating procedures.

Social Outings

In addition to ESAR training and mission activities, youth members can elect to participate in outings. To get connected to

these opportunities email youth@kcesar.org

Who to Contact: We are always willing to answer questions. Please reach out:

Youth Coordinator	youth@kcesar.org
Director of Training	training@kcesar.org
Director Of Operations	operations@kcesar.org
President	president@kcesar.org

I have reviewed the Youth Member section and Volunteer Packet with my Youth and I authorize them to participate in King County Explorer Search and Rescue.

Parent or Guardian

Printed Name_____

Signature_____ Date_____

Phone:_____ Email:_____

** I have reviewed the Youth Member section and Volunteer Packet with my Parent or Guardian and agree to communicate and advocate for my needs, as understood and agreed upon with my Parent or Guardian, while participating in activities affiliated with ESAR.

Teen:

Printed Name_____

Youth Member Signature_____ Date_____

Phone:_____ Email:_____