



**Alamo RCD Area Inc.
Gardeners' Welcome Packet/APPLICATION
Growing Rural Garden Program
St. John Lutheran Church "Vineyard Community Garden"
(Update January 2023)**

Welcome to our Growing Rural Community Garden! This Welcome Packet contains important information about how our garden operates and who to contact with general and specific questions. It also contains information about how you will pitch in to make the garden run smoothly and efficiently. Because community gardening requires a fair amount of work beyond tending your own plot, every gardener is asked to participate to the best of his or her ability in the management and upkeep of the entire garden.

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Welcome to our Growing Rural Community Garden

A community garden means many things to many people. For some, a community garden is a place to grow food, flowers and herbs in the company of friends and neighbors. For others, it's a place to reconnect with nature or get physical exercise. Yet others use community gardens simply because they lack adequate space to have a garden at their house or apartment.

Regardless of why you are choosing to take part in a community garden, the activity comes with both responsibilities and rewards.

Responsibilities: Successful and vibrant community gardens rely on the dedication of each and every gardener to 1) maintain his or her own plots and 2) contribute to the upkeep and management of the entire garden. There are many jobs that need to be done in order to help the garden run smoothly, including keeping paths mowed or mulched, maintaining tools and equipment, planning & attending events and training workshops, stocking and hauling supplies and building raised beds, among other things. The adage "many hands make light work" is appropriate. If everyone pitches in according to their ability and desire, then the garden will prosper and grow.

Rewards: Community gardening has the potential to offer a range of benefits to individuals, families, communities and the environment. Benefits include, but are not limited to, the following:

Food production — Community gardens enable people to grow high quality fruits and vegetables for themselves, their families and their communities.

Nutrition — Some research indicates that community gardeners eat more fruits and vegetables than non-gardening families.

Exercise — Gardening requires physical activity and helps improve the overall physical health of gardeners.

Mental health — Interacting with plants and nature helps reduce stress and increase gardeners' sense of wellness and belonging.

Community — Community gardens foster a sense of community identity and stewardship among gardeners. They provide a place for people of diverse backgrounds to interact and share cultural traditions.

Environment — Gardens help reduce the heat island effect in cities, increase biodiversity, reduce runoff from rain, recycle local organic materials and reduce fossil fuel use from long-distance food transport.

Learning — People of all ages can acquire and share skills and knowledge related to gardening, cooking, nutrition, health, culture, etc.

Youth — Community gardens provide a place for youth to explore gardening, nature and community.

Income — Produce grown at community gardens used to offset food purchases from the grocery store.

Crime prevention — Community gardens can help reduce crime.

Property values — Some research indicates that property values around community gardens increase faster than property values in similar areas without gardens.

Above all, community gardening can provide a real sense of satisfaction and accomplishment for all involved.



Success and Security at the Garden

The following tips are intended to help ensure your success at the garden, minimize theft and vandalism, and keep you safe while gardening.

Successful Community Gardening

- ❖ **Plan to visit your garden two to three times a week during the growing season.** Make a schedule with yourself or other gardeners. Write it in your calendar. Post a colorful reminder on the fridge. Because your garden is not located outside your front or back door, it's sometimes easy to forget that there is weeding, watering, staking or harvesting to do. Maintaining your garden is required for you to remain in our program.
- ❖ **Attend scheduled meetings and volunteer workdays.** This will help you meet other gardeners and become part of your gardening community. You will also learn about the various jobs and projects that need to be done to keep your garden in shape. Attendance is required for you to remain in our program.
- ❖ **Make friends with other gardeners.** Experienced gardeners are an invaluable resource at your garden. Pick their brains for gardening tips. Visit their plots to see how they stake their tomatoes or trellis their beans.
- ❖ **Volunteer for a garden job or committee.** Community gardens don't manage themselves. They require a fair amount of work. By pitching in on a certain job or project, you will be supporting the garden as a whole and ensuring that the work is spread among many people.
- ❖ **Educate yourself.** Complete our Growing Rural Youth Garden Curriculum (all youth in the project will need to formally complete the curriculum to participate in our Garden Awards Celebration in the Fall). All those who participate in the garden can learn from our curriculum. There's always something to learn about gardening. The more you learn, the more success you will have.

Security and Personal Safety at the Community Garden

- **YOU MUST SIGN IN at every visit to the garden.** Please REPORT to Alma via TEXT when you arrive and when you leave (with your full name, plot numbers, and time in and out. We also require at minimum of two "Action" pictures to be submitted with each sign in. We want to also see your gardening GROW. We also maintain records of your attendance in the Garden.
- **Know your neighbors.** Learn the names and a little about your gardening neighbors. Share some extra produce. Take the time to visit with them about how the garden works. You may be surprised to find that people just assume that they can take food from the garden. "Hey, it's for the community, right?" NO! Only members can go into the garden at any time. The garden remains locked at all hours. You are to only Harvest from your plots. NEVER touch anything in any other garden plots. NO Unregistered visitors are allowed.
- **Harvest produce on a regular basis.** Some people use the excuse that "a lot of food is going to waste" but one of our goals is that you also learn how to freeze or otherwise store your harvest properly so that you get months of great nutrition from your garden space. During harvest season, let garden leaders know if you plan to be out of town for more than a few days. Gardeners can harvest for you and donate the food to our Alamo RCD Senior Assistance Program.

- **Growing more than you need.** If you do wind up with an abundance, Alamo RCD runs a Senior Assistance Program Pantry and we are glad to take the “extra” that you have so that Senior Citizens can benefit from your donation. Let Alma know ASAP, please, if you wish to donate.
- **Put a border or fence around your plot** Even a simple barrier can help movement around the garden. Many plants tend to grow and grow. You will need Tomato cages (we will supply them) but you may also put up a low wire fence to keep your crop from overflowing into the walk way or other garden beds. Talk to the Garden Administration if you wish to do this.
- **Use common sense.** Even though your garden may be well-lit from street lights, **only garden during daylight hours**. Garden in pairs AND keep a cell phone nearby if it makes you feel more comfortable.
- **Report theft, vandalism and unusual activities to garden Administration (Alex or Alma).** The more people who are looking out for the garden and talking about what’s going on, the more success you’ll have at being safe and curbing unwanted activities.



Community Garden Job Descriptions

Community gardens depend on gardeners’ willingness and ability to take responsibility for a number of important tasks. Please review the following job descriptions.

Alamo RCD Garden Administrator: Alma Aguirre, Alamo RCD Advisory Council/Volunteer

Growing Rural Garden Program Volunteer: CONTACT (Text and email only),
Phone 210-548-9248. Email: alamorcd@gmail.com

Lifelong gardener and leader of this program from 2011 to present.

Alma as the Primary contact for the garden for Alamo RCD. Her volunteer job is to collect gardener applications and manage the waiting list, create spreadsheet or other files for gardener contact information. She revises and assembles the Gardener’s Welcome Packet, posts on our social networks and web page; communicates with the Church Coordinator about available plots. Communicates with gardeners through TEXT or email, about garden news, meetings and events. She also maintains garden notices, mentors new gardeners, circulates new gardening resources, and coordinates gardening workshops and training (on Zoom, by text or in person). She coordinates and facilitates all garden activities and meetings, recruits gardeners for various jobs, provides training, leadership and guidance for gardeners and volunteers. She also provides translation for gardeners (speaks Spanish). She is the Administrator and Chair of the garden’s leadership team.

Church Coordinator:

Mr. Alex Post,
St. John Lutheran Church Garden Director,
Phone (cell): 210-315-5516
Email: alex@alexpostagency.com

Mr. Post organizes registration, makes plot assignments and garden map, insures access to garden and availability of water, insures that all Church garden rules are met at all times and is in constant contact with our Garden Administrator.

Garden VOLUNTEER Jobs: Gardeners are required to volunteer (outside volunteers are also welcome but an Alamo RCD volunteer form must be completed prior to service).

Volunteer Crew #1: Grounds Helpers: Maintains the garden's common areas. Clips grass and weeds along fence lines, clears pathways and removes trash. Waters and weeds common areas.

Volunteer Crew #2: Maintenance Helpers : Maintains tools, equipment, hoses and raised beds, helps to set up tomato cages/trellis, (bean, squash and cucumbers cages/trellis or fence additions to plots).

Volunteer Crew #3: Events Helpers: Coordinates regular and special garden events such as our Garden Work Days, serves food, sets up equipment and helps with general setup and cleanup activities.

Volunteer Crew #4: Outreach Assistant: Helps to write and distribute flyers in the community, writes articles for local newspapers, takes photos and videos and posts on our Growing Rural Garden Facebook page and Alamo RCD Facebook page and Instagram Page.



Gardener Guidelines

The following guidelines have been established by the Growing Rural Garden Administration and our Alamo RCD Board of Directors so that all members of this garden know their responsibilities. Please read the guidelines and direct any questions or comments to the garden Administration.

- 1. All gardeners are required to complete an application form.**
- 2. All gardeners are required to sign up for one of the garden volunteer teams. Please contact the garden Administration for more information.**
- 3. Garden Training Meetings and Volunteer Team Works days** are scheduled throughout the season and **attendance is required.** Please plan to attend to learn organic gardening Best Practices, to get to know your fellow gardeners and help with garden upkeep and special projects.
- 4. Keep your plot and the adjoining pathways tended.** If your plot appears to be untended for a period of time, and you haven't contacted the Administration, you will be contacted and your plot may be assigned to another gardener. TEXT the Administrator if you need help or if you will be out of town for an extended period of time. If you plan to discontinue use of your space, please let the Administration know as soon as possible so that your plot can be assigned to another gardener.
5. Plant tall plants and vines in places where they will not interfere with your neighbor's plot. Planting illegal plants is prohibited.
- 6. At the end of the gardening season, all dead plants and non-plant materials (string, wire, wood, metal, plastic, etc.) must be removed and disposed of properly** or returned to the administration for reuse and all gardens left neat and tidy. If your garden is not cleaned-up by the assigned date, you could lose your gardening privileges for the next season.

7. **Pick up litter** when you see it and dispose of it in our large green trash containers. Always close the flap door on all trash containers.
8. **Please DO NOT put weeds and dead diseased plants into the compost bin** but do put them into the trash. Do not leave them in the pathway. Any diseased plants or seedy or invasive weeds are to be bagged and put in the trash so as not to contaminate the gardens. Old woody plants are to be placed in the brush/compost pile to be used as future fill or compost.
9. **Do not apply anything to or pick anything from another person's plot without their express approval.**
10. Always handle all garden tools with the utmost care and do not leave them where they may hurt others.
11. **Do not leave the water on unattended.** When finished gardening for the day, please roll up the hose at the faucet area, return tools to the shed and lock the shed before leaving the garden. BE SURE if you are the last one there to LOCK all garden gates.
12. **Smoking and chewing tobacco is NOT ALLOWED** inside or around the outside of the garden area. Tobacco can transmit a lethal virus to tomatoes and cigarette butts are loaded with toxins and can cause a fire. Please do not smoke in or around the garden.
13. **Pets, drugs, alcohol, radios, boom boxes and fires are not allowed.**
14. **NO UNATTENDED or unauthorized children or youth are allowed in or outside the Garden.** Please make sure your children/youth are registered AND supervise your children in the garden at all times. They are to participate in YOUR garden plots only. An Adult MUST always be present with any children or youth in the garden.
15. **For your safety, only garden during daylight hours.** Consider gardening in pairs or keeping a cell phone nearby. Always report in and out to the Administration using TEXT and send in at least two photos at each visit of your garden activity.
16. **Report theft, vandalism and unusual activities to the garden Administration.**
17. Use common courtesy, be considerate of your gardening neighbors and enjoy your garden experience.
18. Violation of Gardener Guidelines: If any of the guidelines are violated you will be contacted by phone or email and have one week to address the violation. After one week, if the violation has not been remedied, you may lose your gardening privileges.





Frequently Asked Questions

Questions about how the garden operates will arise throughout the year. The following answers to some frequently asked questions may help shed some light on a few questions. Other questions can be directed to the garden administrators.

- ❖ **Who are the sponsors of this garden program?** Alamo RCD Area Inc. Growing Rural Garden Program of Boerne Texas (www.alamorcd.org) and St John Lutheran Church Vineyard Community Garden of Boerne Texas.
- ❖ **How much does it cost to garden here?** After making an annual application to participate and upon your selection by our Program Committee, you will be provided with assigned garden plots and be able to tend to your garden regularly (read above requirements), youth will be required to complete our garden curriculum, attend training online using Zoom, keep in constant contact with the Administration and always be courteous and willing to help.
- ❖ **Who is allowed in the garden?** Only garden administrators and families with assigned garden plots may be in the garden. Children and youth of any age must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Parent or Adult sponsor will be provided with the **garden gate pass code. DO NOT SHARE THAT CODE WITH ANYONE!** If you are wanting to bring someone else to the garden, you MUST clear that visit with the Administration (volunteer application is required for admittance).
- ❖ **Are pets allowed in the garden? NO! Pets of any kind will NOT be allowed in the garden.** Dogs can be VERY destructive to the garden and are NOT allowed at any time. If you bring your pet, be prepared to leave them in your vehicle or securely tied to the outside of the garden fence away from the entry gates. No loose pets are allowed outside the garden fence at any time for their safety and the safety of our patrons.
- ❖ **What kinds of tools, equipment and supplies are available at the garden?** You will be provided with all garden tools that are necessary, by appointment only. Small garden tools such as hand spades, gloves should be purchased on your own and brought with you to all gardening activities because our tool shed will be locked. We also recommend a hat of your choice. All larger equipment will be "shared" and maintained in our Garden Shed under the supervision of our Garden Administrator and will be available by appointment ONLY.
- ❖ **Can I leave a sprinkler or soaker hose "on" if I am not at the garden? NO never leave a garden hose "on" without you being right there with the hose in hand.** You will receive training on how to water and when and how much to give to each plant. We do not use sprinklers but you can use soaker hoses if you supply your own. We supply garden hose and hand watering wands that stay in the garden stored right by the water access points. Water is graciously supplied by St. John Lutheran Church. If you see water leaking for any reason or an unattended hose that is on (please cut it off) then PLEASE notify the Administration IMMEDIATELY.
- ❖ **What do I have to do to stay in good standing with the garden?** You will need to be a "responsible" gardener and complete all weekly visits, maintain your garden beds properly, harvest regularly, clean up your garden area, attend all trainings, group workdays and be courteous, at all times.

- ❖ **Can I bring fruit and vegetable scraps from home to compost in the bins at the garden?** YES! We will train you on the creation and use of Compost in your garden and this will be part of your required online training. Control of the Compost Bin, Composter and Compost area is in the hands of a gardener volunteer. Contact the Administration if you are interested in helping with the development of Compost.
- ❖ **How are plot sizes determined and how many plots do we get?** The Church Garden Coordinator has already set in garden plots that cannot be adjusted or changed. He will assign each family two garden plots that will be provided for FREE by our garden Sponsors. If you want to get more than two plots, contact our Garden Administrators. Plot assignments are subject to availability. Beyond two Free Garden Plots, a rental fee must be paid to St. John Lutheran Church (Alex Post, Coordinator).
- ❖ **Is this an organic garden?** This is an ORGANIC Garden. We supply you with gardening training for soil augmentation and fertilization. We use compost and organic fertilizers as well as organic pest control, which are recommended by the Administration. **DO NOT bring ANY other chemicals, fertilizers and pest control items into this garden from outside sources without clearing them with the Administration first.**
- ❖ **Who do I contact for gardening advice?** Alma, our administrator, is your main contact. See Garden Administration information above.
- ❖ **How much time should I expect to spend at the garden?** You must work in the garden at least two or three times a week, to weed, fertilize, compost, plant, water, do pest control, harvest and more. **YOU MUST check in and check out with ALMA via TEXT EACH time** you visit the garden and provide her with a minimum of two photos of your garden in action at each visit. We are keeping attendance records and maintaining your progress via your photos. On average you will spend from an hour to two hours working and enjoying your garden. You can ONLY visit the garden during DAYLIGHT HOURS.
- ❖ **What should I do if I experience or see theft or vandalism?** Report it immediately to the Administration via text with a picture if possible. We will report it to the authorities.
- ❖ **What should I do if I am threatened or harassed at the garden?** The only people allowed inside the garden fencing is those with garden plots and the Garden Administration. Please always remain courteous and kind. Get to know your garden neighbors and NEVER touch or disturb anything in their garden area. Please stay calm if harassment occurs and contact the Administration immediately

RESOURCES:

Please refer to our Growing Rural Garden Curriculum and our Web page at www.alamorcd.org for more information.

REFERENCES:

This Gardeners' Welcome Packet was adapted in part from the Welcome Packet Documents in the Community Garden Organizer's Handbook published by the Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin (now found in the links under "Spring Registration and Welcome Packet" on The Gardens Network website at <http://danecountycommunitygardens.org/resources/for-garden-leaders>). Other materials were adapted from Gardening Matters (<http://gardeningmatters.org>) and the Community Garden Coalition (<http://comogardens.org>).

GARDEN SCHEDULE:



Throughout the year the garden hosts a number of meetings and events. To date, the following meetings and events have been proposed or scheduled. Questions concerning events should be directed to the Garden Administrator. This schedule is subject to change.

Event	Date/Time	Location	Purpose
Garden Opens and Prep begins... Administration ONLY	Begins Jan. 1 of each year	Ongoing	Review last gardening season. Plan for upcoming gardening season. Update and revise Gardener Guidelines. Select garden co-leaders. Select crew leaders and leadership team. Prepare for spring registration.
Spring /Fall registration	<u>Spring Registration:</u> Jan 15 to end of Feb. Gardening begins March 1. <u>Fall Registration:</u> July 15 to August 30, Gardening Begins Sept 1.	Online and In Garden	Get Welcome Packet. Complete application. Confirm plot assignment. Sign up for a job/crew. Attend Opening Zoom Meeting to meet other gardeners and Administrators. At end of Season, you must put your garden to bed.
Opening day		Online and in Garden	Attend Training #1 on Zoom the week prior and follow those instructions. Plots are assigned. Administration Ensures water is turned on and HH (Head of Household) has pass code. Clean the garden areas and beds and till about 6 inches deep. Clean the garden or help with various projects.
Garden Volunteer work	Varies throughout growing seasons.	In garden	Volunteers will do their assigned jobs under the direction of the Garden Assistant
Work your garden plots two or three times a week.	Each week during growing seasons. Off during December and January and August of each year.	In Garden	You will set your own work schedule but you must be in the garden ONLY during daylight hours. You must check in and out via TEXT with Administration and send photos.
Attend all Training Sessions using the Zoom App.	Dates and times vary.	Online	Trainings will be provided once a month online using the Zoom App. Dates and times will be announced via text by the administration.
Youth complete all activities within our Growing Rural Youth Garden Curriculum	On their own at home. Individualized Youth training will be provided if needed.	At home Online	Must be completed by the ending date of each gardening session. Only need to be completed once during the year.
Harvest Award Celebration and Dinner.	In Late November or early December. Date and time to be announced.	At St. John Lutheran Church Meeting Room	Put your garden to bed for the season. Plan for the next Season's Garden session to begin. <u>All plots should be cleaned by this date to guarantee your space for next season.</u> Attend Harvest Awards Celebration. Lunch will be served!



Alamo RCD Area Inc. Growing Rural Garden Program Application 2023

At St. John Lutheran Vineyard Garden, Boerne Texas



PLEASE PRINT IN BLUE OR BLACK INK.

1. NAME-Gardener/Head of Household _____

2. Gardening Family Members (first name/age of all in the family household)

3. Physical Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

4. Home Phone: _____ **Cell phone:** _____

(Cell phone will be used for direct text communications with Administration)

5. Email: _____ **6. Monthly Income \$** _____

7. Have you got gardening experience? Please check: Yes ___ No ___ If Yes, describe your

Experience: _____

8. Why are you applying for our garden program?

9. Please sign up for at least one of the garden volunteer crews listed below. Refer to Garden Welcome Packet for a description of each job.

- ___ Grounds crew
- ___ Events crew
- ___ Maintenance crew
- ___ Outreach and community relations
- Other: _____

10. Photo permission: From time to time, gardeners, garden leaders and the media will take photos of the garden. Please check here (___) **if you do NOT give your permission** for your photo to be published and please let photographers know when you encounter them at the garden.

11. Phone and email: All gardeners are required to share their phone number and email address with garden Administration. Phone numbers and email will remain confidential. Only the Administration will maintain them for recordkeeping and communications.

By signing below, I agree that I have read and understand the Gardener Guidelines and plan to abide by all of the garden rules. I understand that neither the Alamo RCD or St. John Lutheran Church, are responsible for my actions. I therefore agree to **hold harmless** Alamo RCD Area Inc., St. John Lutheran Church and the garden group for **any liability, damage, loss or claim that occurs in connection with use of the garden by me or my family.**

Name: (Please Print) _____

Signature _____ **Date** _____



Alamo RCD Area Inc. Growing Rural Garden Program Commitment Form 2023

I the undersigned, have read the following GARDEN PROGRAM RULES and do here by state that I and my family have read the Garden Welcoming Packet and will ABIDE BY ALL THE RULES AND GUIDELINES FOR THIS PROGRAM.

1. **All gardeners are required to complete and sign an application form and this form annually.** Any visitors beyond your registered family MUST complete a Volunteer Application with the Administration prior to visiting the garden.
2. **All gardeners are required to sign up for one of the garden volunteer teams.** Please contact the garden Administration for more information.
3. **Garden Training Meetings and Volunteer Team Works days** are scheduled throughout the season and **attendance is required.** Please plan to attend to learn organic gardening Best Practices, to get to know your fellow gardeners and help with garden upkeep and special projects.
4. **Keep your plot and the adjoining pathways tended.** If your plot appears to be untended for a period, and you have not contacted the Administration, you will be contacted and your plot may be assigned to another gardener. TEXT the Administrator if you need help or if you will be out of town for an extended period. If you plan to discontinue use of your space, please let the Administration know as soon as possible, so that your plot can be assigned to another gardener.
5. Plant tall plants and vines in places where they will not interfere with your neighbor's plot. **Planting illegal plants is prohibited.**
6. **At the end of the gardening season, all dead plants and non-plant materials (string, wire, wood, metal, plastic, etc.) must be removed and disposed of properly** or returned to the administration for reuse. All gardens must be put to "bed" and left neat and tidy. If your garden is not cleaned-up by the assigned date, our Administration may revoke your gardening privileges for the next season.
7. **Pick up litter** when you see it and dispose of it in our large green trash containers. Always close the flap door on all trash containers.
8. Please DO NOT put weeds and dead diseased plants into the compost bin, but do put them into the trash. Do not leave them in the pathway. Any diseased plants or seedy or invasive weeds are to be bagged and put in the trash so as not to contaminate the gardens. Old woody plants are to be placed in the brush pile to be used as future fill or compost.
9. **Do not apply anything to or pick anything from another person's plot without them being present or without their express approval.**

10. **Always handle all garden tools with the utmost care and do not leave them where they may hurt others. SAFETY AT ALL TIMES! If tools have been borrowed from the shed, return tools to the shed and lock the shed before leaving the garden.**
11. **BE SURE if you are the last one there to LOCK all garden gates securely.**
12. **Do not leave the water on unattended.** When finished gardening for the day, please roll up the hose at the faucet area
13. Smoking and chewing tobacco is NOT ALLOWED inside or around the outside of the garden area. Tobacco can transmit a lethal virus to tomatoes and cigarette butts are loaded with toxins and can cause a fire. **NO smoking on our garden campus.**
14. **Pets, drugs, alcohol, radios, boom boxes and fires are not allowed.**
15. **UNATTENDED children or youth are NOT allowed** in or outside the Garden. Please supervise children in the garden. Your registered children or youth are to participate in YOUR garden plots only. An Adult MUST always be present with any children or youth in the garden.
16. **For your safety, only garden during daylight hours.** Consider gardening in pairs or keeping a cell phone nearby. Always report in and out to the Administration using TEXT and send in at least two photos at each visit of your garden activity.
17. Report theft, vandalism and unusual activities to the garden Administration.
18. Use common courtesy, be considerate of your gardening neighbors and enjoy your garden experience.
19. **Violation of Gardener Guidelines:** If any of the guidelines are violated you will be contacted by phone or email and have one week to address the violation. After one week, if the violation has not been remedied, you may lose your gardening privileges.

By signing below, I state that I have read and understand the Gardener Rules and that I and my family, will abide by all of the garden rules. I also understand that neither the Alamo RCD or St. John Lutheran Church are responsible for my actions. I therefore agree to hold harmless Alamo RCD Area Inc. and St. John Lutheran Church and the garden group, for any liability, damage, loss or claim that occurs in connection with use of the garden by me or my family.

Head of Household:

Name: (Please Print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____