

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK:

A Resource for Service-Providing Organizations
Assisting Newcomers to Canada



VOLUNTEER
BÉNÉVOLES
CANADA

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Developed by Volunteer Canada
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FOREWORD

Volunteers have always played a key role in supporting newcomers to Canadian communities, and settlement organizations continue to involve volunteers in a range of programs and services.

It is important to have volunteer management processes in place to better match people and organizations, to ensure the quality and safety of programs and services and to reduce liabilities and risks to all concerned.

This handbook provides a general overview of the volunteer management process with a focus on volunteers supporting newcomers. It includes links to useful tools, resources and templates to

help develop and implement these practices in your organization. Use this handbook as a road map to create or update policies, procedures and practices to fit your organization.

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Volunteer Canada

Involved Canadians build strong and connected communities to create a vibrant Canada. Volunteer Canada provides national leadership and expertise on volunteerism to increase the participation, quality and diversity of volunteer experiences.

Since 1977 we have worked closely with our network of more than 200 volunteer centres across Canada, over 1200 Volunteer Canada members, charitable and non-profit organizations, businesses, educational institutions, and government departments.

LEGEND



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IRCC INFO

Information for organizations funded by IRCC



LINKS

Hyperlinks to additional information related to this section



SECTION TOOLS

Useful tools and templates related to this section



RESOURCES

Complete package of resources accompanying this handbook



1. TRENDS IN VOLUNTEERING

When developing effective volunteer management processes, it is important to look at recent trends in volunteering. These trends can help organizations adapt their volunteer recruitment and retention programs and engage volunteers from various demographic groups and skill levels. Here are some key trends¹ to consider:

- > many people are looking for group activities, but few organizations have the capacity to offer group activities;
- > many people come with professional skills, but many professionals are looking for volunteer tasks that involve something different from their work life;
- > organizations are expected to clearly define the roles and boundaries of volunteers, but many volunteers want the flexibility to initiate what they have to offer (i.e., to create their own volunteer opportunity);
- > many organizations still want long-term commitment, but many more volunteers are looking for short-term opportunities; and
- > many organizations focus on what they need, but, besides helping others, many volunteers come with their own goals to be met.

When responding to these trends, organizations may want to consider three types of volunteering: **skills-based volunteering**, **employer-supported volunteering** and **family volunteering**.



¹ Volunteer Canada *Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for our Communities*. (2010).



2. THE CANADIAN CODE FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Volunteer Canada's **Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement** (the Code) has integrated many of the trends in volunteering into its Values, Guiding Principles, and Standards of Practice. The Code provides non-profit organizations with a framework to start the discussion about developing safe, inclusive and effective volunteer involvement.

I. Values for Volunteer Involvement

- a. Volunteer involvement is fundamental to a healthy and democratic society.
- b. Volunteer involvement is vital for strong, inclusive and connected communities.
- c. Volunteer involvement builds the capacity of organizations.
- d. Volunteer involvement is personal.
- e. Volunteering is about building relationships.

II. Guiding Principles for Volunteer Involvement

- a. **Volunteers have rights.** Charitable and non-profit organizations recognize that volunteers are a vital human resource and commit to the appropriate infrastructure to support volunteer engagement.
- b. **Volunteers have responsibilities.** Volunteers make a commitment and are accountable to the organization.

III. Organizational Standards for Volunteer Involvement

Mission-based approach: The organization's board of directors and senior staff acknowledge, articulate and support the vital role of volunteers in achieving the organization's purpose or mission. Volunteer roles are clearly linked to the organization's mission.

Human resources: Volunteers are welcomed and treated as valued and integral members of the organization's human resources team. The organization has a planned and integrated approach for volunteer involvement that includes providing appropriate resources to support volunteer involvement.

Infrastructure for Volunteer Involvement:

The organization adopts a policy framework and procedures that define and support the involvement of volunteers. The organization has a clearly designated individual(s) with appropriate qualifications and resources responsible for supporting volunteer involvement.

Evaluation: Tracking, Measuring and Reporting on Impact:

The organization measures and evaluates the effectiveness of the volunteer involvement strategy in supporting/meeting its mandate. An evaluation framework is in place to assess the performance of individual volunteers and gauge volunteer satisfaction. Standardized documentation, records management practices and procedures follow current relevant legislation.

Volunteer Engagement: Volunteer recruitment incorporates a broad range of strategies to reach out to diverse sources of volunteers. Volunteer roles contribute to the mission of the organization and clearly identify the skills and abilities needed. Volunteer roles involve volunteers in meaningful ways that reflect their skills, needs, interests, and backgrounds. Volunteers receive an orientation to the organization, its policies, and practices, appropriate to each role. Each volunteer receives training specific to their volunteer role and their individual needs.



Risk management: Risk management procedures are in place to assess, manage and/or mitigate potential risks to the volunteers, the organization and its clients, members and participants that may result from the delivery of a volunteer-led program or service. Each volunteer role is assessed for level of risk as part of the screening process.

Screening: A clearly communicated and transparent screening process that is aligned with the risk management approach is adopted and consistently applied across the organization. See Volunteer Canada's 10 Steps of Screening.

Support and supervision: Volunteers receive the level of support and supervision required for the role and are provided with regular opportunities to give and receive feedback.

Recognition: The contributions of volunteers are acknowledged by the organization with ongoing formal and informal methods of recognition applicable to the volunteer role. The value and impact of volunteer contributions are understood and acknowledged within the organization and communicated to the volunteer.





3. CREATING A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION

An inclusive organization is one where people of all backgrounds and cultures² feel included, welcomed and valued. Volunteer engagement can contribute to this in two ways. Firstly, by selecting volunteers who share your organization's value for inclusivity, you can grow and reinforce your organization's capacity and commitment to cultural humility³. Secondly, by engaging volunteers from all backgrounds and cultures, you are expanding your capacity to more authentically provide services to diverse populations.

Newcomers experience significant change when they move to a new country. Understanding and respecting cultural diversity and the process and stages of adjustment for newcomers are important for organizations, their volunteers and staff to consider in all areas of volunteer management. Furthermore, many newcomers look to volunteering as a vehicle for integration. Intentionally providing culturally accessible volunteer opportunities becomes a service to the organization, its clients and the volunteers themselves and recognizes the reciprocal relationship between volunteers and organizations.

Welcoming and inclusive organizations are supported by both individual and organizational cultural competence.⁴ Organizations can review their policies and practices using Volunteer Canada's *A Guide for Cultural Competency Application of the Canadian Code*. This guide reframes the Code as a tool to increase the accessibility and inclusiveness of

volunteer management processes. This, in turn, leads to more diverse and stronger organizations that are responsive to newcomers and the community at large.

Two areas that managers of volunteers can pay special attention to are inclusivity and accessibility. Below is a list of questions to help you implement policies and practices to help create a welcoming environment for volunteers.

Inclusivity

- > What accommodations do you offer for holidays that are not statutory, for example, religious or national holidays of other countries?
- > What accommodations are offered for volunteers whose volunteering coincides with prayer time?
- > Are volunteers welcome to wear clothes and accessories that are of religious, geographic or cultural importance?
- > What is your statement on a positive workspace?
- > What training is available to staff and volunteers in your organization on principles of inclusivity in areas like cultural humility, customer service with respect to accessibility, sensitivity and confidentiality?

² Culture is the way a group of people do things together. It refers to the shared language, values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history or institutions of a group of people.

³ Cultural humility is one construct for understanding and developing a process-oriented approach to competency. Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington and Utsey (2013) conceptualize cultural humility as the "ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person]."

⁴ Cultural competence is a set of attitudes, skills and behaviours that enable organizations and staff to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.



Accessibility

- > How are accommodations made for an accessible workspace?
- > How are volunteers notified if the office is inaccessible due to elevator or maintenance work?
- > How are position descriptions changed to make an accommodation for a volunteer (this can include transportation requirements, lifting requirements, a service animal, etc.)?
- > If a prospective volunteer is unable to complete an application, what are the alternatives?
- > How is a support person welcomed? Do you require screening for a support person? Are support people offered the same recognition as the volunteers they support?
- > How are volunteers invited to notify you of any accommodations they may need?
- > What training is available to staff and volunteers on making your organization accessible?





4. POLICIES

Policies and procedures can do more than tell us what to do and how to do it. They can also set the tone for a more welcoming and inclusive environment for volunteers and clients. In recent years, more organizations have been creating integrated human resource policies that apply to all those playing a role within an organization, including paid employees, co-op students and volunteers. It is important that volunteers know which policies apply to them and have a clear understanding of these policies. Some areas include accessibility, privacy, emergency management, diversity and inclusivity.

Why do policies and procedures matter?

Policies show that you care about the experience of the volunteer. Carefully thought-out policies create a framework for processes and actions that link your mission and vision to the day-to-day work of the organization. They also ensure the safety and success of everyone at the organization, demonstrating consideration for what it takes for volunteers to have the best possible experience with the organization.

Policies show consistency. Staff and volunteers know what to expect and what to do in a given situation, and, should the situation arise again, they will address it in the same way.

Policies show neutrality. Policies help to prevent preferential treatment. They apply equitably to everyone and in the best interest of the organization.

What are your organization's policies?

Find out what exists. As someone who engages volunteers in your organization, you may want to begin by reviewing the existing human resources policies. With the exception of compensation (which applies to only paid employees) and recognition (which applies mostly to volunteers), many policy areas, such as screening, confidentiality, inclusivity, health and safety, harassment and accessibility, are broadly applicable. Policies relating to privacy, security and handling of personal client information are important to consider.

Speak to those involved in creating and implementing policies if you have feedback or questions about existing policies or if you would like to suggest an area where a policy is needed. You may find that an organization-wide policy inspires you to create additional ones for volunteers specifically or to increase the training you provide to volunteers to familiarize them with policies.

How can volunteers be included? Volunteers are stakeholders who have unique insight into programs and services. They work directly with clients, deliver services, support programs, and provide leadership and expertise. Consider these questions:

- > Are volunteers asked to review policies or invited to join the process?
- > How accessible are policies to volunteers?
- > What is the feedback process?



5. SCREENING

Screening is a process that helps match people with volunteer positions while also improving the quality and safety of the programs and services offered in communities.

Screening practices begin when an organization creates a new position. Screening is used to select volunteers for specific roles, and it should continue as long as a volunteer is involved with the organization.

Volunteer Canada's "**10 Steps of Screening**" give clear guidelines for developing screening policies. These policies show an organization's commitment to safe and meaningful volunteer engagement. The 10 steps below encompass general volunteer management practices through a specific screening lens.

1. Assessment

Identify and assess the risks and essential components of each program and related positions.

2. Position assignment

Write meaningful, complete and accurate position descriptions.

3. Recruitment

Develop fair and consistent selection systems and include key information about the organization and position in promotional material.

4. Application forms

Request standard information about the applicant and specific information related to the position.

5. Interview

Develop specific questions and a consistent interview format for each position with accurate and objective written records.

6. References

Check references in accordance with pre-determined position requirement and comply with legislation.

7. Police Checks

Assess the risks associated with the position to determine whether or not a Police Records Check (PRC) is required. Review information from a PRC report as it relates to the requirements of the volunteer assignment. Request a Vulnerable Sector Check, when appropriate, and in accordance with relevant legislation.

8. Orientation and training

Provide clear information about the mission, values and policies of the organization and the specific tasks, procedures and scope of the position.

9. Support and supervision

Provide appropriate support and supervision and offer volunteers the ability to give and receive feedback.

10. Follow-up and feedback

Proactively seek feedback from program participants, clients, patients and family members.



6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Organizations have a legal, moral and ethical responsibility to reduce the exposure and level of risk to the organization, staff, volunteers and clients. Risks that are not identified cannot be managed or mitigated, so take the time to identify risks related to volunteer engagement in your organization. In other words, identify, assess and manage any risks.

Start with conducting a risk assessment for each volunteer position to identify what risks are involved and what possible solutions can be applied to minimize or eliminate the exposure to risk.

- > Level of supervision
- > Degree of physical isolation
- > Degree of physical contact with a vulnerable person
- > Degree of trust or discretion required
- > Degree of skill or knowledge required
- > Degree of physical demand
- > Other risks inherent to the task or environment

Review risk assessments annually and amend position descriptions to reflect any new risk assessment results.

- > Are all the activities the same in practice as described in the position description?
- > Have any health and safety policies changed to apply to activities?
- > Have you revisited the environments where volunteers do their work?
- > Have there been any recent incidents of unsafe situations or environments that volunteers reported to you?





7. RECRUITMENT

Welcoming volunteers to your organization starts with a comprehensive recruitment strategy. Before you start with the recruitment process, take the time to

- > review each existing volunteer position;
- > develop position descriptions for new volunteer roles you need or wish to fill;
- > assess each volunteer role for risk;
- > ensure all necessary training materials are in place;
- > ensure you have a process in place to manage inquiries; and
- > develop a written recruitment plan.

Position descriptions

- > **A position description is a key recruitment tool.** It clarifies what kind of skills, qualities and experiences the volunteer should have to be successful in the position.
- > **A position description allows for screening.** Referring to the position description helps identify which candidates are suited for the position and which are not. Candidates can also self-screen by referring to the position description and determining whether or not they are suited for the position.

- > **A position description determines necessary training.** With a clear idea of the work involved and the skills and experience best suited for the position, a training program can be designed. This ensures that new volunteers will have all the tools necessary to effectively do the work assigned to them.
- > **A position description helps evaluate the work performed.** It defines desired outcomes and expectations that help the volunteer manager recognize a volunteer for a job well done or take corrective action for a volunteer who is struggling. In some cases, it helps initiate the process of termination.

Here is a suggested position description checklist:

- > Title
- > Client group
- > Goals
- > Responsibilities
- > Expected time commitment
- > Limitations (if any)
- > Qualifications
- > Available orientation and training
- > Supervision and evaluation provided
- > Working environment and conditions
- > Benefits to the volunteer
- > Screening measures



Recruitment strategy

Once you have determined that your organization's volunteer positions are necessary and beneficial, create or update a position description to reflect the work the volunteer is doing or is expected to do. Ensure you have an immediate next step for individuals who call or email about these opportunities.

Although volunteer recruitment can include everything from the initial posting, through screening and up to training, this section specifically addresses marketing your volunteer positions.

Here are some suggested **marketing and promotional practices** that may help you recruit new volunteers:

- > Create a checklist of where to post volunteer positions.
- > Know the skills and competencies you need.
- > Create partnerships if targeting specific groups.
- > Emphasize the positives.
- > Use word of mouth.

Volunteer selection

Here is a suggested checklist for recruitment and selection:

- > Job description
- > Established selection criteria
- > Application form
- > Interview
- > Qualifications checks
- > Reference checks (consistent and directly related to the position requirements)
- > PRCs and Vulnerable Sector Checks, if applicable
- > Valid driver's license, if required

Matching direct-service volunteers and newcomers

Organizations that assist newcomers should consider the following when matching direct-service⁵ volunteers and newcomers:

- > the level of assistance newcomers need and the amount of help that volunteers can provide;
- > the cultural group(s) that the volunteer has the capacity to work with;
- > common interests and background (e.g., family, education, age, occupation, skills); and
- > the language skills of the volunteer.

You may not have an opportunity that matches the skills and interests of every individual who applies to volunteer with your organization. Here are some suggested practices when there is not a suitable match:

- > be prompt;
- > be sensitive;
- > keep the results confidential;
- > take a personal approach and call the candidate;
- > it is not necessary to divulge **all** the reasons why someone was not selected (unless you are asked directly);
- > thank candidates for their interest in your organization and volunteer program;
- > refer these candidates to other potential volunteer opportunities to pursue, if appropriate.

⁵ A direct-service volunteer works directly with agency clients, whereas other volunteers may provide support in other areas, including administration, governance, communications and fundraising.



8. ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Orientation provides more general information about the organization and its structure, volunteering, policies and procedures. Training provides volunteers with specific information related to their individual role to ensure they are prepared and comfortable to begin volunteering.

Orientation

Why is orientation important to the organization?

- > It shows your volunteers that you value them and their efforts.
- > Well-informed volunteers provide quality service and know where to turn for assistance.
- > It reduces the risk associated with volunteer roles.

Why is orientation important to volunteers?

- > Volunteers have access to skill development and information that help them feel more confident to fulfill their role.
- > Volunteers recognize the value of their own work in relation to the vision and mission of the organization.

There are different areas of orientation.

- > **Social orientation** introduces volunteers to the people and places of the organization.
- > **Position orientation** explains the volunteer position's relationship to the organization.
- > **System orientation** explains the organizational structure and functions.

For organizations working with newcomers to Canada, everyone working with newcomers, including volunteers, should be provided with additional orientation, such as

- > **cultural orientation** to provide information about the specific country and culture of the newcomers they will be working with; and
- > **orientation to immigration issues.**



Training volunteers

The person responsible for managing volunteers is in the unique position of delivering training to both volunteers and other staff. They help to ensure that volunteers are prepared to do their work, to ensure that staff colleagues are prepared to work with volunteers and to encourage common understanding of engagement principles among all parties.

Basic volunteer training should include

- > a review of the position description and the expectations of the volunteer in the role;
- > an introduction to the person who provides supervision and support to the volunteer;
- > training specific to the position's duties;

- > a review of policies and procedures, including proper handling of personal client information;
- > a review of whom to contact in various situations; and
- > the setting of individual goals.

For organizations working with newcomers, training for volunteers and their supervisors should also include

- > training specific to the cultural group of the newcomers;
- > a review of the rights and responsibilities of volunteers, including proper handling of personal client information;
- > a review of the rights and responsibilities of newcomers; and
- > cultural profiles of the newcomers they will be matched with.





Training staff

Training staff who work with and supervise volunteers helps improve the experience of volunteers at the organization. Here are some recommended tools and activities to include in basic training:

- > a position description and the expectations of the position;
- > an introduction to the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement;
- > an orientation for the person who provides supervision and support to the volunteer;
- > an overview of the goals for training specific to the position's duties;
- > an overview of the goals for training specific to the client group the volunteer is working with;
- > a review of organizational policies and procedures;
- > a review of how to communicate with the volunteer manager;
- > a plan for how individual goals are set.

For organizations working with newcomers, training for volunteers and their supervisors should also include

- > training specific to the cultural group of the newcomers;
- > the rights and responsibilities of volunteers;
- > the rights and responsibilities of newcomers; and
- > cultural profiles of the newcomers they will be matched with.

To ensure continued success, check in regularly with both volunteers and the staff who work with them and ask questions about how things are going.

- > Do they feel confident in their roles?
- > Do they have feedback about training to share with you?
- > Do they have success stories?
- > Do they feel properly supported by you?

Because volunteers interact with many other members of your organization's team, you may also consider offering this training to all staff.



9. SUPERVISION

Providing regular check-in opportunities between volunteers and supervisors to share feedback and come up with strategies to improve the experience is good practice. A transparent and consistent supervision and reporting structure allows the volunteer manager to observe, collect information on and evaluate the success of volunteers in their roles. It also provides volunteers with the opportunity to direct their suggestions, questions and concerns to the right person.

Volunteering involves interaction and interpersonal relationships. It is crucial that relationships are respectful and healthy, so managing volunteers also involves defining boundaries. Here are some suggested practices for setting and maintaining boundaries:

- > Set boundaries that are related to the position and to the relationships volunteers can develop.
- > Provide the rationale and background to the policies as they relate to protecting clients, the organization and volunteers.
- > Reference relevant legislation, funders' requirements or contractual agreements that may require these boundaries.
- > Ensure that your organization has policies concerning harassment, discrimination and other related issues (e.g., violence, conflicts, complaints);
- > Identify these boundaries in position descriptions, orientation and training.
- > Explain what boundary breaches are.
- > Keep communication open; volunteers should be able to approach you with questions or concerns about boundaries.
- > Explain the potential risks and consequences of crossing boundaries to the client, the organization and the volunteer.





10. EVALUATION AND RECOGNITION

Evaluating how successful your organization is in working with volunteers involves reviewing more than just a volunteer's performance. Other areas may include

- > a performance review for the volunteer manager;
- > performance reviews for individual volunteers and volunteer supervisors;
- > a volunteer satisfaction survey;
- > a client satisfaction survey;
- > exit interviews;
- > collecting statistics on volunteer hours and work completed;
- > a review of volunteer position descriptions; and
- > a review of volunteer involvement in individual programs.

For the purposes of this handbook, the review of a volunteer's time at the organization is called an evaluation. This includes addressing performance and also gathering and providing feedback.

Feedback

Volunteer performance feedback should not be reserved for formal evaluations, especially positive feedback.

- > Keep records of volunteer performance, including hours, awards, recognition and corrective action. This makes for easier formal evaluation.
- > Ask volunteers to provide feedback on programs as another way to evaluate programs.
- > Remember that the details of the feedback provided to a volunteer are confidential.





Corrective action

Screening continues after a volunteer is selected. Volunteers can be dismissed, put on probation or reassigned at any time if it benefits the organization and the volunteer. An incident report is a great tool to track and document cases of policy infringement, accidents or other irregular occurrences.

- > Corrective action is most effective when a volunteer's performance is addressed as early as possible.
- > Documentation must be kept with observations and dates of a volunteer's unacceptable behaviour as well as any action taken.

Exit interviews

An exit interview is a useful tool when a volunteer leaves your organization, no matter the reason. The volunteer role may have ended, or the role may not have been the right match for either the volunteer or the organization.

An exit interview provides an opportunity to

- > receive feedback from the exiting volunteer about their experience;
- > identify what the organization is doing well and where it can improve;
- > confirm the skills, experience and attributes needed for the volunteer role;
- > understand why the volunteer is leaving;
- > say goodbye on good terms.

In organizations that have a staff person responsible for human resources, that person conducts the exit interview. Otherwise, the supervisor of the exiting volunteer conducts the interview.

Exit interviews can be conducted in person, through a written survey (hard copy or electronic) or by telephone. The option should be available to every volunteer leaving the organization; however, participation must be voluntary.

Recognition

Volunteer recognition begins during the recruitment process. Getting to know your volunteers helps you understand how they prefer to be recognized. Volunteers want to know the impact their contributions have on the organization's mission and in the community.

Meaningful volunteer recognition can lead to volunteer retention. Here are some ways to recognize the contributions of volunteers:

- > Make volunteers feel welcome by soliciting their feedback or offering training.
- > Thank volunteers personally on a regular basis.
- > Offer different forms of recognition, both formal and informal.
- > Recognize volunteers by learning about their motivations and interests.
- > Ensure that volunteers are meeting their desire to use or develop skills.
- > Acknowledge milestones and achievements.
- > Include volunteers in staff socials and other team-building activities.
- > Feature volunteers in an organization newsletter.
- > Involve volunteers in decision-making, when possible.
- > Provide certificates, letters of reference and nominations for awards.
- > Recognize volunteer contributions year round, not only at formal events.
- > Build strong relationships between staff and volunteers. Staff and board members should recognize and acknowledge volunteers' contributions to the organization.



11. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

It is critical to ensure that appropriate and accurate documentation is kept to support volunteer involvement, reviews, corrective actions and legal requirements. Ensure your organization's practices are in line with current Information Access and Protection of Privacy (IAPP) legislation. The lists below will help your organization create record-keeping policies and maintain a solid record-keeping system.

Personnel files for volunteers may include

- > the position description for the file;
- > waivers (liability, confidentiality, photo release);
- > record of completed training;
- > policies;
- > proof that the code of conduct is understood;
- > evaluation results;
- > references given;
- > incident reports;
- > proof that written warning was given;
- > a copy of the warning letter;
- > a corrective action plan with a review date signed by the volunteer;
- > a letter of termination.

Time logs may include

- > hours each volunteer has contributed in specific time increments;
- > hours contributed in each position.

Activity logs may include

- > supplies used;
- > incident reports filed;
- > client concerns brought to a volunteer.

It is critical that the volunteer manager and organization maintain the confidentiality and the privacy of this information.

Here are some questions to guide your organization to create and solidify record-keeping practices:

What information is included in volunteer records?

Who is responsible for maintaining volunteer records?

Who has access to the records and under what conditions?

Where are records kept?

How are new records created?

How long are records kept?



12. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of volunteers is to enhance and extend services to the public. Staff and volunteers work together as a team, understanding each other's unique roles and assisting each other to accomplish mutual objectives.

Explaining to volunteers what your expectations are and what they can expect from the organization forms the basis of volunteer rights and responsibilities.

Volunteer rights can include

- > being assigned tasks and duties that are meaningful, along with the freedom to use existing skills or to develop new ones;
- > being trusted with confidential information that helps them carry out assignments;
- > being treated fairly and with respect;
- > being provided with appropriate training, orientation, supervision and knowing why they are asked to participate in tasks;
- > being informed as clearly as possible of tasks, duties, responsibilities, work schedules and who the supervisor is;
- > expecting that their time will be maximized and working in a welcoming, inclusive environment;
- > being treated as full members of the organization;
- > knowing if their work is effective and how it can be improved by receiving regular performance evaluations;
- > having a chance to offer suggestions and to be heard;
- > expecting valid recommendation and encouragement from their supervisor;
- > being given appropriate recognition for their contributions.

Volunteer responsibilities can include

- > notifying the organization as early as possible of absence or inability to carry out their role;
- > respecting confidentiality and privacy of client information;
- > serving as an ambassador and advocate for the organization;
- > acting with professionalism, respect and integrity when assisting individuals and agencies;
- > understanding what the position requires and carrying out tasks efficiently and honestly;
- > following the organization's policies;
- > participating in training, orientation and meetings, as needed;
- > accepting guidance and supervision from the person in charge of volunteers;
- > being considerate, respecting differences in volunteers, staff and clients and working as part of a team with these members;
- > providing feedback, suggestions and recommendations for improvements or changes.



Code of conduct

A volunteer code of conduct is a document that specifies the behaviours a volunteer must adhere to in order to represent the organization in the best possible way. A code of conduct outlines how to successfully follow policies.

Some organizations may have a single code of conduct that applies to paid staff, volunteers and students.

Here are some suggested code of conduct areas to explain to volunteers, with respect to the policies in place at your organization:

- > belief in the mission of the organization;
- > respect for others;
- > appreciation of diversity;
- > attendance and volunteer hours;
- > change of placement;
- > confidentiality;
- > conflict of interest;
- > corrective action and dismissal;
- > dress code;
- > emergency closing;
- > evaluation;
- > harassment and discrimination;
- > health, safety and security;
- > privacy;
- > reimbursement of expenses;
- > smoking;
- > supervision and reporting;
- > training;
- > use of facilities and equipment;
- > use of organizational affiliation.