

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

ORIENTATION should be approached in stages.

Stage one might be to have a morning tea or informal gathering of potential volunteers to introduce your organisation - its philosophy and vision. It is crucial that volunteers understand the mission statement, philosophy and vision of your organisation. It also needs to be made clear:

- The area in which a volunteer would be used
- What you can offer volunteers
- The structure of your programme
- What do you expect from volunteers

An address by a current volunteer detailing their experiences is also useful at this stage.

When potential volunteers decide to commit time to your organisation, you advise them of the date for further orientation.

At Stage Two you should:

- introduce to other potential volunteers
- explain more about the organisation
- give a statement of the organisation's goals, services, policies, and relationship to the community
- the purpose of the volunteer's job
- a discussion of volunteers jobs, roles, and guidelines
- give some tips on how to be a successful volunteer
- give a description of the administrative structure
- explain the use and purpose of any forms or procedures
- fill out a registration form
- introduce paid employees, other volunteers, and other personnel, e.g. board members, with whom they may be working

TRAINING

Volunteers have the right to training and support. Training can change attitudes, improve performance and eliminate apathy.

A good programme will allow the volunteer to:

- Appreciate responsibility
- Perform tasks competently
- Analyse their own performance
- Understand their role's relationship to others in the organisation
- Contribute to the programmes success

SUPERVISION

Supervisors should be, approachable and available for information, support, and complaints. A good programme will allow the volunteer to:

- Appreciate responsibility
- Perform tasks competently
- Analyse their own performance
- Understand their role's relationship to others in the organisation
- Contribute to the programme's success

Remember that many of your volunteers will not have been in a formal learning environment for years and many negative feelings may surface. Try to make your training as non-threatening, varied and participatory as possible.

People learn in many different ways and you should try and incorporate a mix of these learning styles into your training. The main learning methods are:

1. Learning by actively and consciously experiencing an existing situation and becoming involved in it.
2. Learning by observing a situation and consciously analysing its components and their relationships
3. Learning by understanding ideas and concepts and by analysing the components and relationships in a hypothetical situation.
4. Learning by working with or creating new situations where application and testing lead to analysis of the factors involved.

To be of maximum value, the learning situation must be perceived by the learner as realistic, meaningful and useful. The process is most effective when the experiences, materials and desired results are adjusted to the maturity and experiential background

of the learner. You would there respect the experience some new volunteers bring to the training and include those life experiences in your sessions.

SUGGESTED TRAINING PROGRAMME

Training programmes need to be tailored to the needs of your organisation. We recommend that they are not long and boring but there is an element of fun in them! Try and make them at an accessible time and as near to the time the volunteer will be required as possible.

- Week 1 Informal get together – as outlined in our orientation Stage 1.
- Week 2 Philosophy/vision of your organisation – what does it mean, what does your logo mean. Explain policies and procedures. Visit to sites if necessary.
- Week 3 Listening/communication skills or other skills specific to your needs e.g. First Aid
- Week 4 Recap Week 3 and answer any questions that may have arisen during the week. Target specific training e.g. phone answering/crisis calls, visiting protocols. Now is the time to decide which recruits will be assets and which ones will be liabilities. Confront the issue now – don't let it linger into week 5 or you are heading for disaster.
- Week 5 Celebration and presentation of certificates of accreditation now that training has been completed.

You may lose some potential volunteers in this process but those that last the five weeks will be very prepared to contribute to your organisation as they have shown commitment and enthusiasm for the work that you do.

DIFFICULT VOLUNTEERS

(Adapted from Training for Trainers – Ontario Volunteer Bureaux and Centres)

Within any group of people there are a mix of personalities and volunteers are no different! Let us be real – some can be extremely difficult. Some of those difficulties can be addressed during training and some suggestions for dealing with difficult people are listed below. We hope you have success!

Those who hold the floor

These people are generally good group members in other ways. Try “thank you, I get your point. Now, is there someone else?” or “That’s interesting Joe. Now, Jim you wanted to add something?” Ask a direct question to someone else – avoid the talker’s eye. Use a hand gesture or body language to ‘exclude’ the dominator. You can talk to him/her privately; “I need your help to” Or “You’re a more experienced person.....” In other words, harness their energy

Person with an inflexible mind set – only one way to approach anything – judgemental and critical

Deal with this person in the group, so the group learns to confront the behaviour. Avoid the sense of defeat this kind of person can bring to the group. “You seem to be saying ...but I think there are several ways to approach this issue. Has anyone else a view on this issue?” If nothing works, confront the person privately.

Person who is obsessed with their own problems. A self-centred person.

“Joe, this had come up several times in your interaction with the group but we are not here to deal with individual problems. Maybe we could meet afterwards and I may be able to help you ...”. If nothing works, confront the person privately.

Person who never participates

Acknowledge their presence in the group. Affirm the fact they are there. Ask them non threatening questions. You may like to ask them “would you feel comfortable responding to ...?” Watch their body language – they may just be drinking in all the information and not feel the need to participate.

Chip on the shoulder, aggressive, angry, argumentative

Often when the group reaches out to such a person, the behaviour moderates or disappears. If not, confront the issue. “That sounded very angry... could you say it in a different way?”

Stiff reserved person. Aloof, distant

Deliberate silence and withdrawal. Lack of trust in people is often the cause. Affirm them in the group, allow time for group process to reach out to them.

The ‘wise old owl’. The Reflective person

Leaders often have difficulty knowing how to use these people effectively. They can be seen as a threat, but acknowledge the role of such people. Realise that they often like listening to the interaction but don’t like responding. Invite them to offer a summary, to make clarifying statement, to ask a question of the group.

The advice giver

Usually your training is not an advice giving session but a process oriented session. Therefore, try and turn their advice into a resource. Try to stop the statements “I think you ought to” and instead ask “How do you see yourself dealing with that?”

Training is a wonderful opportunity to really see who will make good volunteers and who would cause more damage than good. Now is the time to confront those who don’t make the grade, but allow them to leave with dignity.

If you would like a list of our other community resources, or to be put on our mailing list, contact us at:



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