

# CHECKLIST FOR A HEALTHY VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

**What roles are open to volunteers in your organisation?**

- |                                    |                          |                   |                          |                     |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Clerical                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reception         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Transportation      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homemaking (Assistance to Clients) |                          |                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                     |                          |
| Group Leadership                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Case Aide         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public Relations    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tutoring                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Board Membership  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Telephone Answering | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Food Service                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Drop In Volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> | Entertainer         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Handicraft Teacher                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sports Instructor | <input type="checkbox"/> | Foster Relative     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friendly Visiting                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fund Raising      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Would you say that volunteers in your organisation:**

- Help to plan the program \_\_\_\_\_
- Contribute to the existing service (s) \_\_\_\_\_
- Extend services or innovate new services \_\_\_\_\_
- Are encouraged to share ideas with staff \_\_\_\_\_

**Will the organisation reimburse volunteers for expenses such as:**

- bus fare     baby-sitting     mileage     parking     food

**Will it provide a letter of reference, if requested, at conclusion of service? \_\_\_\_\_**

- Does the organisation have:** a written contract     personnel policy   
 written job descriptions for volunteers     Copies for our files

**What kind of working environment do you provide?**

- Structured     Unstructured

**How much on-the-job supervision and support is there? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Do you need people with special skills?**

If so, what skills? \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the intake procedure for volunteers in your organisation?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**How is the selection of volunteers made?**

\_\_\_\_\_

## **HOW DO YOU REWARD YOUR VOLUNTEERS**

### **Do you reward all your volunteers the same way?**

If 'yes' try to vary your rewards. Chocolates may not be appropriate to a volunteer who has an allergy who is desperately trying to lose weight. Flowers may be a waste on a volunteer who is a florist. Endeavour to get to know your volunteers and find little things that would be special to them.

### **Does your organisation have carefully considered budget for a volunteers programme?** Remember that volunteers are not free labour.

### **Do you involve volunteers in discussion regarding the organisation of the volunteers' programme?**

Involve them in your annual planning day when you set the goals and objectives for a year. Participation in planning is often what constitutes the difference between a volunteer and a team member. Planning is a very bonding experience.

By the very fact that they are present and that their opinions are listened to, each person feels taken seriously.

Another advantage is that volunteers who have been present know the spirit in which each decision was taken, they understand the context of the discussion and they can see why it was thought advisable at the time to compromise here or to retrench there. Greater participation at the planning stage reduces the likelihood of criticism or misunderstanding at a later date. When people have played a part, no matter how small, in deciding a course of action, they are generally more ready to work to make the implementation of the decision a success.

## **SAFETY OF VOLUNTEERS**

It is vital that volunteers feel safe in their work on your behalf. Have you considered how vulnerable a volunteer may feel if alone in a car with a member of the opposite sex? If you ask volunteers to go into stranger's homes make sure you have visited the home and check whether there is a telephone – if not, a cell phone should be made available to the volunteer.

## **POLICIES OF YOUR ORGANISATION**

### **Are your policies inclusive of volunteers?**

If you are just starting a volunteer programme examine your policies to see if they are relevant for volunteers. If they are, and are clearly understood by volunteers, you will have a secure framework within which paid staff and volunteers can work happily together.

The policies of your organisation should provide the framework within which your volunteers operate. If the volunteer chooses to work outside that framework without a

manager's permission, they take the risk of violating their contract and the matter can then be addressed in a businesslike manner.

## **RESPECT OF STAFF**

The internal culture of your organisation must be one of respect for volunteers and paid staff. The expression "he or she is just a volunteer" has no place. There must be respect for the volunteer's time as well as their skills. Just as the paid workers have external pressures on their time, so do the volunteers and this must not be taken advantage of.

When you are planning your programme make sure the volunteer has:

- A safe place to hang their coat, put their bag or leave their personal belongings.
- A desk or space they can use regularly
- The work is ready for them so they don't have to wait around until someone has time to show them what to do or permit the necessary documentation
- Are not expected to stay past their allotted time unless previously agreed to
- Are included in morning tea, lunch time chats with other staff
- Are not isolated out from the heart of the organisation (e.g. given a desk in the storeroom because it is the only space!)

Volunteers could have a great deal to learn from working with professional people from different disciplines. With Government policies that will bring professionals and volunteers into a much closer working partnership in the community, the lives of both groups will be greatly enriched. More importantly of all, the benefits will overflow to the people they serve.

## **LEARN FROM YOUR VOLUNTEERS**

Whilst volunteers can learn from paid staff the organisation has the most valuable resource available – volunteer feedback. If a volunteer leaves the organisation find out why. A simple 'exit interview' or a form that can be filled in their own time are wonderful ways of learning about how successful your volunteer programme is. Generally people are very honest about things that bother them but sometimes don't feel they are given the opportunity to express themselves. By having exit interviews or an evaluation form you will learn by your mistakes, find out what works and does not work and improvements that can be made. If you are losing a number of volunteers this is even more important, there is always a reason for things happening and these evaluations help your organisation to grow and function effectively.

A word of caution – do not take single issues too seriously, but if more than one evaluation mentions 'grumpy staff' or 'nobody seems to care' you need to work on the assumption that 'where there is smoke there is fire'.

## TO RECAP

Your volunteer programme will be successful if you have:

- Planned the process
- Good policies
- A structured recruitment programme
- A structured orientation programme
- Opportunity for training
- Opportunity for advancement
- Open and honest communication
- The culture of your organisation is accepting of volunteers
- Your organisation gives as well as receives

## HAVE FUN

Sometimes we all get so busy and, have so many pressures on our working ours and organisational resources, we forget to have fun. Celebrate your success and laugh – it is a great team builder and relaxant.

## FURTHER READING

Community Give it a Go – P O'Regan and T O'Connor

---

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



Phone (09) 486-4820

Fax (09) 486-4823



Visit North Shore Community and Social Services Inc.  
Mary Thomas Centre, 3 Gibbons Rd, Takapuna



Write P.O.Box 33 284, Takapuna, North Shore City



email [nscssc@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nscssc@xtra.co.nz)

© Copyright

While reproduction by non-profit charitable agencies is encouraged, this material is the copyright of the North Shore Community and Social Service Council Inc. It may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in whole or in part or by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise) without prior written permission of the owner. Written permission will not be unduly withheld providing full acknowledgement of source is made.

