

## WHY YOU NEED A VOLUNTEER POLICY

**Do you** have an approved volunteer policy for your organization? If not, you are running an ad hoc system without a unified, clear focus on how to best utilize this valuable resource.

But, you say, we have such a diverse organization. How can we have a volunteer policy that covers everything when our needs are so varied?

You can, and should, have a policy that is broad (general) enough that it stipulates corporate needs while still allowing each operating unit to tailor volunteer resource management to its own unique demands. A well thought-out policy is an ideal method of summarizing volunteer involvement as it can include aspects from recruitment to supervision and problem-solving. This overall framework will guide managers in defining volunteer opportunities within the organization, target recruitment of volunteers, and outline methods of managing and treating volunteers, including recognizing outstanding volunteer commitment.

Further, the policy can ensure that paid staff and managers understand why volunteers are involved, and the roles they have within the organisation.

### KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Today, more municipalities and non-profits advertise, either through local organizations or on the internet, for volunteers. Both methods are effective IF you draft the advertisement thoughtfully to increase the likelihood of getting the job done properly with able workers. Before advertising, establish a) the type of work to be done and b) the skills and time commitment needed to do the work. Then you will have a better chance of getting qualified volunteers who will be enthusiastic about the tasks they have signed up for.

### DEMONSTRATE COMMITMENT

Any formal volunteer policy helps to demonstrate your organization's commitment to working with volunteers. Short, easy to read and understand policy is even better. It shows that you have put thought and care into developing a workable volunteer program. You will show potential volunteers an assurance that they will be treated equally and fairly. No one wants to be subject to the whims of their supervisor without recourse to a well thought-out written policy that ensures fair treatment for all. It also



*"Volunteering is so pervasive it's invisible. We take for granted all the things that have been pioneered by concerned, active volunteers."*

Susan J. Ellis

lets volunteer supervisors know that their practices are supported by the policy and thereby senior manager approval.

## ONCE IT'S WRITTEN – THEN WHAT?

We all know that once a policy is written, it's easy to put it on a shelf to gather dust. DON'T do this! Keep this policies and its procedures into a readily-accessible place where anyone who needs to can easily reference it. If you have a corporate intra-net this is an ideal location, as a digital version can be kept up-to-date and easily accessible to anyone, any time.

With all the work that goes into preparing a volunteer policy, it's worth compiling key sections into a Volunteer Handbook that can be used for orientation of new volunteers. Again, it acts as a reliable guide for supervisors who deal with new volunteers as well as providing an overview of the policy and procedures for volunteer workers.

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*Consider including a 'referral' section in your volunteers' agreement. This allows you to refer individuals to other areas of your organization if they find the task they originally signed up for is not to their liking.*

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## CONCLUSION

Finally, ensure that your policy is reflective of your organisation. Too much formality or complexity is likely to put off potential volunteers and discourage volunteer supervisors. Upon completion, communicate it to staff and volunteers at all levels. And, remember, every policy needs regular review to ensure it remains suitable for current purposes.

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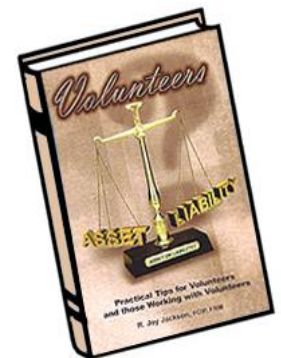
### Volunteers: Asset or Liability?

This handy reference manual has more than 200 pages describes way to effectively and efficiently establish and maintain your volunteer program. You will learn:

- ~Simple, practical risk management practices to optimize working with volunteers
- ~Guidelines for screening volunteers that protect clients, co-workers and customers
- ~Tips that you and employee who works with volunteers can use
- ~Ideas for minimizing effort and maximizing results

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