

Volunteer Program Planning

Direct Service Volunteer Program STANDARDS

By the California Volunteer Network

The following set of standards reflects the experience to date of a large group of volunteer administrators and volunteers. Other groups are recognizing or beginning to understand the need for program guidance through standards.

In the Winter '78 VAL, for instance, we included the Statement of Standards adopted last year by the Michigan Council of Directors of Volunteer Services in Health Care Facilities. In addition, the Association of Volunteer Bureaus recently chaired a task force of the Alliance for Volunteerism on guidelines, standards, accreditation and model development.

We will be reporting on the task force's final report in a future VAL. We also will present other sample volunteer program standards as the volunteer administration field continues to grow and mature.

The California Volunteer Network is a statewide organization open to all segments of the volunteer community. It facilitates communication, collaboration and support for volunteerism and issues affecting volunteers. It operates through an "open system," with no organizational structure and no formal membership. Each quarter a different person volunteers as coordinator to handle the Network's administrative work.

Volunteer programs must be an integral part of the total operation of a service-oriented organization to be effective. CVN supports standards of program management that will protect the organization and the individual volunteer.

These standards represent the joint efforts by both volunteers and paid staff to define practical objectives for the professional management of volunteer programs. They deal with specific areas of concern but allow for alternative approaches to implementation based on the uniqueness of each program.

Volunteer Defined

A volunteer is anyone who performs a service for an agency/organization without pay. Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses does not constitute payment. Such service must have been accepted, requested, or directed by an agency or an agency employee.

Volunteer Program Administrative Basis

1. The volunteer program shall have support and approval from the administration of the organization with which it is associated. The volunteer program goals and objectives should support, reinforce and reflect those of the agency.
2. There shall be periodic evaluation of the volunteer program performance in the attainment of goals and objectives and adherence to guidelines.
3. The agency/organization shall make a responsible examination of their insurance program with regard to risk factors to volunteers and shall inform volunteers of their rights and responsibilities in this area.

Staff-Volunteer Roles and Relationships

1. All paid staff shall be fully informed about the volunteer program and individual staff responsibilities to volunteers.
2. The agency/organization shall have a person designated to coordinate volunteers. This person will serve as liaison between the community, the volunteers, and the paid staff of the organization.
3. Volunteers shall supplement, not supplant, activities and functions of employees and departmental programs and special projects.
 - a. Volunteers shall not displace a paid worker or be placed in a job slot for which funding is available. This does not mean volunteers cannot apply for paid positions.
 - b. Tasks assigned to a paid worker shall not be removed for the purpose of creating assignments for volunteers.
 - c. Volunteers shall not be substituted for classified staff when authorized positions can be filled.

Screening and Selection

1. Criteria for selection of volunteers shall be recorded and an appropriate screening process established.

2. Each prospective volunteer shall be interviewed by the person(s) designated by the agency/organization to coordinate the volunteer program, or their delegate(s). Assignments shall be individually suitable and made with minimal delay after initial contact.
3. If the agency/organization is unable to appropriately match a volunteer with an available assignment, the volunteer shall be directed to a central volunteer referral office or to another suitable agency.

Volunteer Roles

1. Volunteer roles shall be defined and shall outline the activities and responsibilities of the volunteer who serves in that role. The person(s) designated to supervise the volunteer shall insure that the volunteer clearly understands the role definition.
2. Volunteers shall be assigned to roles which reflect their skills, abilities and needs.
3. Provisions shall be made for upgrading volunteer responsibilities when desired by the volunteer and appropriate to the organization.

Supervision

1. Volunteers shall be supervised in accordance with sound supervision practices and within the policies, regulations and guidelines of the agency/organization.
2. Clearly defined lines of supervision shall be communicated so that volunteers will know to whom they are responsible.
3. Supervision of individual volunteers shall be provided. Periodic contacts on a regular basis between volunteers and their supervisors shall be held to assure continued communication. The supervisor will discuss with each volunteer his/her work, focusing on recognition for positive efforts and strengthening areas of weakness.

Orientation

Volunteers shall receive orientation which shall include information regarding

- the agency's/organization's objectives and principles;
- roles of volunteers and staff;
- avenues of volunteer service and career mobility;
- volunteer rights and responsibilities;
- agency/organization policies applying to personnel matters and employee conduct.

Training

1. Training shall be provided to prepare the volunteer to carry out his/her service role in accordance with agency/organization policy.
2. Training shall be provided to staff to prepare them to work with volunteers and to supervise volunteers where appropriate.

Recognition

1. Means to provide recognition and incentives for volunteers shall be developed.

2. Staff effectiveness in the utilization and supervision of volunteers shall be recognized.

Volunteer Program Records

1. Enrollment Records—Individual Volunteers
 - a. All individual volunteers shall be registered with the agency/organization served by means of a volunteer enrollment form which shall contain the following information:
 - Name
 - Address
 - Phone
 - Date of enrollment
 - Birth date (if under 18)
 - Person to notify in emergency
 - Signature
 - b. If the volunteer may be called upon to drive during the course of assignment, the following information also must be included:
 - Verification of valid drivers license
 - Expiration date
 - Insurance company of volunteer if driving own car
 - c. Other information may be included on the enrollment form when required to meet agency/organization policies or volunteer program requirements.
2. Enrollment Records—Volunteer Groups
 - a. Groups providing services to the agency or to clients of the agency will be enrolled by means of a group enrollment form which shall contain the following minimal information:
 - Name of group
 - Name of group chairperson
 - Address of group chairperson
 - Phone number of group chairperson
 - Service to be given
 - Date and time of service to be given
 - Names of members of group who participate in providing service
 - b. Additional information may be included on the enrollment form when required by the agency/organization to meet agency/organization or volunteer program needs.
3. Volunteer Service Records and Reports
 - a. A running record of volunteer assignments shall be maintained. Such records shall contain at least the following information:
 - Type of assignment
 - Work performed
 - Hours served
 - Performance evaluation
 - Person responsible for supervision
 - b. All injuries sustained by volunteers while on assignment shall be reported in writing to the agency/organization executive.
 - c. All volunteer records are to be treated as confidential personnel records.
 - d. Provisions shall be made to assure that records are accessible to volunteers for at least five years after termination and verification and quality of service shall be provided at the volunteer's request.