

YES YOU CAN!

Discipline And Dismissal Of Volunteers

by

Linda L. Graff

LINDA GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES INC.

Handouts

LINDA GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES INC.

167 Little John Road, Dundas, Ontario, Canada L9H 4H2

Tel./Fax: (905) 627-8511 E-mail: LL.GRAFF@sympatico.ca

© LINDA GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES INC., 2001. All rights reserved.

LINDA GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES INC. is an established and highly respected consulting firm located in Dundas, Ontario that specializes exclusively in not-for-profit management. It is owned and operated by its President and Senior Associate, Linda L. Graff.

Ms. Graff has been working and consulting in the not-for-profit sector since 1980. She is a voluntary sector and risk management specialist, an impassioned advocate for the field of volunteer program management, and a dynamic and internationally acclaimed trainer.

Linda was the Director of the Volunteer Centre in Hamilton for nearly ten years. She is the author of nine books and audio resources, including the best-selling, By Definition: Policies For Volunteer Programs. Linda updated By Definition in a follow-up resource called Policy Development For Volunteer Services -AudioWorkshop™. It's like attending one of Linda's workshops through the medium of audio tape.

Linda Graff's most recent book, Beyond Police Checks: The Definitive Volunteer and Employee Screening Guidebook, became an immediate best-seller as soon as it was released into the North American market. Linda's newest product, Yes You Can! Discipline and Dismissal of Volunteers - AudioWorkshop™ is now available from distributors in both the United States and Canada.

Ms. Graff currently spends a good deal of her time consulting with not-for-profit organizations and public sector agencies on volunteer program management, although training continues to form the core of her business. Linda trains and lectures throughout North America and into Europe on all aspects of volunteer program management, including topics such as risk management, policy development, screening, discipline and dismissal, volunteer-paid staff relations, and advanced issues in volunteer program management.

For more information about **LINDA GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES INC.**, contact:

Linda L. Graff
LINDA GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES INC.
167 Little John Road
Dundas, Ontario
Canada
L9H 4H2

Tel/Fax: 905-627-8511
E-mail: LL.GRAFF@sympatico.ca

ON DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL

Volunteers clearly are very special people whose donation of time and effort warrants extra consideration. It does not warrant treating them like figurines in a glass menagerie, however. On the contrary, they should be encouraged to grow, learn and seek fulfilment as they help an agency - even if this means accepting the reality that not everyone is perfect for every job. ...

The failure to face the realities of personnel management and recognize that firing is often the best for all parties has crippled nonprofit agencies.

(Diane M. Disney, 1979: 30)

Volunteers have a right to expect that fair practices are implemented and that decisions are made on the basis of objective and substantiated information. ...

Volunteer managers frequently underscore the professional quality of the services available through volunteerism. That emphasis on professionalism demands a respect for personnel protocols. Volunteer programs cannot float in a nether world where accountability does not apply.

When you approach the recruitment of volunteers in a professional manner, then you can approach termination in the same way

(Julie Washburn, 1979: 30)

It is far better to reject a volunteer in the initial interview stage, than to have to fire them later on.

(Vince Gillis)

What we have here is a classic mismatch. On the one hand, we have a dedicated individual with talent in a variety of areas. On the other, we have a position that requires a totally different set of skills. Trying to fit these two together any more can result only in unhappiness, frustration and poor performance. We will all be better off by recognizing the mismatch. Then we can find someone else for this position while we help locate another position that has requirements more closely in line with your skills.

(Diane M. Disney, 1979: 30)

The values, ethics and integrity of the program director and the volunteer are at stake. The termination of volunteers is a part of the ethical responsibility which volunteer managers must shoulder. It is a process which begins with the initial orientation of the volunteer and continues throughout the volunteer process. (Ann Cook, 1992: 19-20)

AGENDA

- 1. Introductions
- 2. No Longer Optional - Rights and Obligations
- 3. The Ground Work
- 4. Exercise: Establishing Standards
- 5. Performance Reviews
- 6. Discipline: Universal Precautions, Steps, Principles
- 7. Verbal warnings - Steps, Exercise
- 8. Written Warnings - Checklist; Exercise
- 9. Dismissal - Grounds, Principles, 'Rightful' Dismissal, 'How To's'; Exercise
- 10. Immediate Dismissal
- 11. Closure, Evaluations

WHAT DO WE DISLIKE MOST ABOUT DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL?

**Discipline and Dismissal Of Volunteers
Are No Longer Optional**

ESTABLISHING OUR POSITION	
Means And Ends	Notes: _____

Exchange Concept	_____

Volunteer As 'Worker'	_____

VOLUNTEERS DO NOT VOLUNTEER TO DO A BAD JOB

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Your response to every transgression should be based on these assumptions:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- _____
- _____

“THE GROUND WORK”

1. Clarify Your Role And Relationship With Volunteers

2. Give Notice Of Performance Review System

3. Provide Sampling of Rules, Policies, Procedures

4. Implement a Volunteer/Agency Contract (Agreement)

5. Set The Standards

6. Establish Policies And Procedures

STEPS IN THE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCESS

① Verbal Warnings

② Written Warnings

③ Suspension

④ Dismissal

STEPS IN DELIVERING A VERBAL WARNING

1. Describe what the volunteer has done (or should have done).
2. Cite the policy, procedure, work rule or other requirement which has been violated.
3. Explain the reason for the policy, procedure or work rule.
4. Ask the volunteer if he or she detects a problem (a difference between the organization's requirement(s) and his/her own behaviour).
5. Ask the volunteer what should be done about this problem.
6. Reaffirm the importance of compliance with policy, procedure or work rule.
7. Express confidence in the volunteer's ability to comply with the policy, procedure, or work rule.

CHECKLIST TO ASSESS A WRITTEN WARNING

Use the following checklist to assess a written warning you have prepared on an employee. For each item listed in the left column, check () an answer in the right column to indicate whether the issue has been addressed in your written warning. If you answer 'no' to any item, you should probably revise your written warning so that you can answer 'yes.'

QUESTIONS Does your written warning answer each of the following questions:	ANSWERS	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
1. What is the problem? (Describe what the employee did and what he/she should do.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the employee know the expectations, policies, earlier steps taken regarding this matter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Does the employee know that this is a matter of some importance/seriousness and that our concern is increasing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. What should the employee do to correct the problem?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. How long will the employee be given to improve before subsequent and more severe disciplinary action will be taken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. What consequences will stem from a repeat occurrence of the a) problem behaviour?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
or b) violation of the organization's policies, procedures or work rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does the employee know you are committed to helping this work out and that you are hoping for a mutually satisfactory outcome?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SOME COMMON WAYS THAT WE CONTRIBUTE
TO DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS**

- I didn't articulate clear expectations and standards from the very start (also known as the 'I didn't want to scare them off!' school of volunteer management)
- I accepted and placed a less-than-appropriate volunteer (also known as the 'I'm desperate for volunteers' school of screening)
- I didn't provide adequate orientation/training for the position
- I didn't monitor work performance (didn't want them to feel like I was always looking over their shoulder; didn't want them to think I didn't trust them....)
- I knew their performance was slipping, but didn't really want to deal with it (hoped it would correct itself; thought staff would deal with it; didn't think it mattered too much)
- I continued to allow performance to slip and slide to avoid conflict (they might not like me; they might raise a fuss; could be bad P.R. for the agency; reinforced sub-standard performance)
- I started to ignore the volunteer or even treated them badly hoping they would decide to leave on their own
- I had a wee chat with the volunteer, but minimized the seriousness of the situation and did not let the volunteer know what I expected; that I would check back; that lack of improvement would have further (more serious) consequences
- I finally decided I just couldn't take any more and jumped on the volunteer's head when a small chat much earlier might have resolved the problem

SOME HOW TO'S OF DISCIPLINE

- act ethically and compassionately
- act quickly
- document every step
- clarify that this is a disciplinary action
- clarify what has been unacceptable
- be prepared to listen to the volunteer's perspective
- don't let it sink to a series of accusations and responding excuses
- clearly define what "unacceptable" means
- clarify if consideration of dismissal is imminent
- establish time frame for improvement
- follow through

GROUNDS FOR DISMISSAL

What repeated behaviours would you consider to be grounds for dismissal?

BEWARE THE POLICIES YOU WRITE ...

YOU MAY BE CALLED UPON TO ENFORCE THEM!!

SIX PRINCIPLES OF DISMISSAL

- ① _____
- ② _____
- ③ _____
- ④ _____
- ⑤ _____
- ⑥ _____

THE DETERMINATION OF RIGHTFUL DISMISSAL

Must Be Able To Prove Charges

Charges Must Be Sufficient To Warrant Discharge

Cause Must Be Related To Job Performance

Proper Disciplinary Procedures Must Have Been Followed

TEN HOW TO'S IN THE DISMISSAL INTERVIEW

IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL:

"Any behaviour or action which is detrimental to the health, safety or reputation of agency personnel, clients, or the agency itself."

GROUND FOR IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL

What repeated behaviours would you consider to be grounds for dismissal?

THINKING ABOUT SAFETY

FURTHER READING

- BROWN, KATHLEEN M. "Thoughts On the Supervision of Volunteers." Voluntary
1984 Action Leadership. (Spring) pp. 14-16
- COOK, ANN. "Retiring The Volunteer: Facing Reality When Service Is No Longer
1992 Possible." The Journal of Volunteer Administration. (Summer)
- GRAFF, LINDA L. By Definition: Policies For Volunteer Programs. Dundas: GRAFF
1992, 1997 AND ASSOCIATES.
- GRAFF, LINDA L. Beyond Police Checks: The Definitive Volunteer and Employee
1999 Screening Guidebook. Dundas: GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES.
- GRAFF, LINDA L. Policy Development for Volunteer Services. *AudioWorkshop*™.
1996 Ontario: GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES
- GRAFF, LINDA L. YES YOU CAN! Discipline and Dismissal of Volunteers.
1999 *AudioWorkshop*™. Dundas, Ontario. GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES.
- LEE, JARENE FRANCES and JULIA M. CATAGNUS. Supervising Volunteers: An
1999 Action Guide. Philadelphia: Energize Inc.
- MACKENZIE, MARILYN. Dealing With Difficult Volunteers. Downers Groves:
1988 VMSystems.
- MCCURLEY, STEVE, and SUE VINEYARD. Handling Problem Volunteers. Downers
1998 Grove: VMSystems.
- MCCURLEY, STEVE. Volunteer Management Forms. Downers Grove:
1988 VMSystems.
- _____, and RICK LYNCH. Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All The Resources
1996 Of Your Community. Downers Grove: VMSystems.
- THORNBURG, LINDA. "Evaluating Volunteer For Positive Results." Voluntary
1992 Action Leadership. (Fall) pp. 21-24
- WILLIAMSON, VANDA, REHNBORG, SARAH JANE, DISNEY, DIANE M.,
WASHBURN, JULIE, ROBERTS, LAURA B. "Should Volunteers Be Fired?"
1979 Voluntary Action Leadership. (Fall) pp. 27-31.