

Basic Questions to Ask Before Deciding to Use Volunteers

1) Why are we engaging volunteers in our work? Why should our organization invest in the development of volunteer resources?

2) How does the work carried out by volunteers help us achieve our mission?

Volunteer Policy Exercise

Directions:

Read your assigned Scenario(s) and then answer the following questions:

- 1) What could go wrong? What is the worst-case scenario?
- 2) Develop a policy / policies that the organization and volunteers must follow in order to decrease their risk.

Scenarios

- 1) Volunteers providing home support for the disabled are helping to transfer patients in and out of the bathtub without training.
- 2) Volunteer counselors staff a suicide prevention hotline with little training, and they have no professional backup while on duty.
- 3) A volunteer friendly visitor drives his client to the grocery store each week to help her do her shopping. If he were to be stopped, his car would be pulled off the road for noncompliance with safety regulations.
- 4) A volunteer at the local senior citizen center has some first-aid training and has been helping seniors make some decisions about which of their prescription medications they should and should not bother to take.
- 5) An elderly woman who has been a volunteer escort at the cancer treatment center for over two decades is beginning to lose her faculties. Last week she took a patient in a wheelchair to the wrong clinic, where he waited for three hours before staff were able to locate him.
- 6) Female volunteers are sent out to deliver parenting information classes to single mothers in low-income housing projects. The volunteers go alone, according to their own schedule, often at night. The agency has no record of who is going where or when.
- 7) Volunteers for the local environmental cleanup agency have been disabling the chain brake safety mechanisms on chain saws because the brakes make this already hard work even more arduous.

Volunteer Placement/Motivators Activity

Thinking about the reasons why people volunteer, take a look at your own agency and consider the following questions. If more than one person per agency is participating in the workshop, discuss the questions as a group.

1. Why would someone volunteer for you?
2. What does he or she need from your program?
3. Identify a volunteer opportunity that would be appropriate for a volunteer who is motivated by:
 - Praise
 - Accomplishment
 - Affiliation
 - Power/Influence

Risk Management Exercise

Think about the work your volunteers are asked to do, and then answer the following:

- 3) What could go wrong? What is the worst-case scenario?
 - a. Identify potential losses (property losses, liability issues, losses resulting from job- or service-related injuries or disease, losses from fraud, criminal acts, and employee dishonesty, death or disability of key people, board liability)

 - b. Evaluate potential losses - Estimate the frequency and severity of potential losses
 - i. Frequency = likelihood that a loss will occur (high, moderate, low)
 - ii. Severity = the size of the loss usually expressed in financial terms

- 4) Develop a policy / policies that the organization and volunteers must follow in order to decrease their risk.

