

Components of a Successful Volunteer Program

An effective volunteer program is one that makes a significant contribution to achieving the agency's mission. A number of key volunteer management elements are required to meet this goal. Listed below are some of the essentials in developing a successful volunteer program.

Written Policies - This will ensure consistent treatment of all your volunteers. Cover your guidelines regarding behavior, safety issues, insurance, expense reimbursement, medical requirements and general expectations.

Written Job Description - List duties and qualifications for the position and goals to be achieved.

Recruiting - Use several strategies to recruit volunteers. Think proximity (people in your area) and passion - your enthusiasm will be contagious. The Volunteer Center is a great resource!

Application - All volunteers should complete an application; include background information and ask for a reference. Ask why they want to volunteer and what skills they would like to use.

Interview and Screening - Do a background and reference check on all volunteers. Use the application to explore the volunteer's interests and abilities. Use a standard interview format and match the volunteer's interests to the duties you assign.

Orientation and Training - Include information on your agency (mission, programs, locations, future plans), program participants, confidentiality, and how the volunteer fits into the organization. Training can be a specific event as well as ongoing coaching. Be sure to include the volunteers in staff meetings and regular in-service training.

Supervision and Evaluation - One supervisor should direct the volunteer's activity and evaluate their work. Evaluation should be tied to expectations outlined in the job description and can be informal and ongoing or done on a regular schedule (for example every six months).

Recognition - This can include your "thank you" at the end of every day as well as an annual event. Don't forget that information is important to volunteers and you can recognize them by keeping them in the information loop and valuing their ideas and opinions.

Record Keeping - Maintain current information on the volunteers, including their birthday and emergency contact. Record their volunteer hours so you can recognize the contribution of time.

Measure Program Effectiveness - Determine the dollar value of the volunteer hours and/or how they enhance your program. Communicate the volunteer successes to the whole organization and community — this can be a recruitment tool.

No Nonsense Volunteer Management

Nonprofit Center

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