



Richmond Centre for Disability

“Promoting a new perspective on disability”

2012 Business Excellence Awards – Association of the Year Winner

Volunteer Policy & Guidelines

Volunteering is:

- Offering services, without remuneration;
- Based on personal motivation and choices, freely undertaken;
- A way of community involvement;
- Enhancing human potential and the quality of daily life, for the volunteer and other people;
- Generally taking the form of group activities carried out within the framework of an organization, hence adhering to the organization’s goals, objectives and policies.

Why do you want to volunteer?

- ❖ Values-driven
- ❖ Canadian cultural experience
- ❖ Better time management in life
- ❖ Life-long learning
- ❖ Work experience/Entry to paid positions
- ❖ Mandatory

What is the responsibility of a volunteer?

DUTY OF CARE – The legal principle that identifies the obligation of individuals and groups to take reasonable measure to care for and to protect participants to an appropriate level or standard.

There is no law to require a volunteer to do anything. However, the law requires that everyone, including volunteers, is responsible for their own behaviour. Under this interpretation, volunteers have the following duties during any volunteer activities.

1. Duty to take reasonable care – every person has a duty to take reasonable care at all times, and in our everyday activities we are expected to do some things and refrain from others (act appropriately). Volunteers must behave to the same standard of care that would be shown by a reasonable person with similar ability and experience in those particular circumstances. If a volunteer is supervising children or people with special needs, the standard of care is higher. Moreover a volunteer has a duty to prevent any reasonable foreseeable injuries or damages.
2. Duty to NOT discriminate
3. Duty of confidentiality – volunteers have an obligation to keep information confidential, and volunteers who release confidential information may be liable for any loss or injury that results. To protect confidentiality and prevent liability, volunteers should inform participants if they feel there is a chance they might have to reveal confidential information in future. Participants can then make an informed choice about what to disclose.
4. Duty to NOT assault – an assault occurs when someone strikes another person or acts in such a way as to cause the other person to fear being struck. This means a volunteer does not have to touch the other person to be liable for assault.

Volunteer Checklists

Know your job

- ☞ You should have a written description of your volunteer roles and responsibilities, and the organization's policies and procedures, as well as training manual if available. If necessary, you can write one yourself and ask that it be approved.
- ☞ Record any changes to your duties.
- ☞ Know your direct supervisor and who to approach if you have a concern.
- ☞ If you are asked to do something outside of your agreed responsibilities, be sure the request is from a person in authority.
- ☞ Ask for help if you are not sure of a policy or procedure.
- ☞ If using your own materials, agree in advance who will pay for loss or damage.
- ☞ Do not proceed with an activity you feel may be unsafe.

Anticipate and prevent accidents

- ☞ Obtain safety procedures for your volunteer activity, and follow them carefully.
- ☞ Advise your supervisor if you feel you are not properly trained or experienced to proceed with an activity.
- ☞ Avoid supervising large groups of participants without sufficient assistance.
- ☞ Identify and eliminate risks before starting an activity.
- ☞ For potentially risky activities, consider the amount of risk involved and the ease with which risk can be eliminated. Obtain waivers. If necessary, reconsider whether the activity is important enough to proceed.
- ☞ Learn the safe practices of voluntary organizations doing similar activities.

Protect confidentiality

- ☞ Do not discuss participants outside of your job as a volunteer.
- ☞ Do not repeat information provided to you in confidence unless you are legally required to do so. Inform clients in advance.

Caring for children

- ☞ Know your additional duties to children:
 - duty to supervise
 - duty to not abandon
 - duty to report child abuse
 - duty to not use excess force
- ☞ Take extra care to ensure that spaces are safe and hazards have been removed.

Providing services to seniors and people with disabilities

- ☞ Consider the higher standards of care for children, as outlined above.
- ☞ Make reasonable attempts to accommodate people with disabilities in activities or services available to the public.
- ☞ Respect the rights of youth and people with disabilities as independent people.
- ☞ Protect confidentiality.

Giving advice

- ☞ Do not give advice without being asked; or feeling uncertain or uncomfortable.
- ☞ Foresee how participants might use your advice now or in future.
- ☞ Provide a disclaimer clearly stating the limits of your knowledge or experience.

(Rev. Feb 4, 2013)