Everyone Ready®

An online volunteer management staff development plan

FROM ENERGIZE

Online Seminar Discussion Guide

Bridging the Gap between Volunteers and Employees: Keys to an Effective Partnership

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Getting the Most from the Online Seminar

We hope that **organizational members** will view the Online Seminar in groups followed by a discussion on the content as it relates to your organization. One significant outcome may be the identification of procedures, tasks or skills that a unit, branch, etc., may want to discuss at length at a future time.

Individual members can also benefit by gathering a small group of individuals from your organization and share what you have learned after taking the seminar. Use the discussion questions below to lead the way.

Discussion Questions

1. **Assess the general climate of paid employees in your organization regarding working with volunteers.**

   Consider:

   - What are the overall attitudes and comfort toward involvement of volunteers?
   - Is there understanding of and appreciation for the role that volunteers play in the organization?
   - How much support for volunteers is demonstrated by top management and by middle-management?

An interesting specific question to consider: If you were to ask each paid employee how many volunteers are currently involved with your organization, how accurate do you think their responses would be? What does this say about the overall position of volunteers in the organization?

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2. **Assess the attitudes and abilities of those paid employees who directly work with and supervise volunteers.**

   Consider:

   - What is their degree of involvement in the overall volunteer management process: participation in planning volunteer roles, recruiting and selecting volunteers, supervising volunteers?
   - What are their attitudes and feelings toward working with and supervising volunteers?

3. **If you were to survey volunteers on their evaluation of how they are supervised by paid employees, what would they say?**

   What areas of strength do you think they would identify? What areas of improvement would they suggest?

4. **In what areas are you encountering challenges in relationships between paid employees and volunteers?**

   Consider:

   - Are there specific types of conflict or misunderstandings that commonly occur, such as struggles over levels of authority or power?
   - Are there some programs or departments that tend to encounter more problems than others?
   - Are there some types of volunteers who seem to encounter more problems than others?

5. **If there are "groupings" of problem areas, how can you adjust your volunteer management system to make them less likely?**

   Can we provide specific training to staff or volunteers, take more care in assigning volunteers in certain program areas or positions, change our interviewing process to select more suitable volunteers?

6. **How might you provide role models for line staff regarding appreciation for and involvement of volunteers?**

   Consider:

   - Does the volunteer management program itself make use of volunteers in high level work?
   - Does senior management involve volunteers in its areas of responsibility?
   - Are there some employees who work with volunteers that come become peer role models?

7. One other area to consider in this regard is whether staff who work well with volunteers are adequately recognized and rewarded, so that they see themselves as successful role models. **How might you highlight good performance and see that it is recognized and rewarded?**

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Ideas for Building an On-site Workshop around this Seminar

One way to tailor each online seminar for your organization is to incorporate it into a longer workshop session during which participants can view the seminar together. Here are some additional ideas for building a longer workshop around this topic.

1. Designing a policy agreement on volunteer involvement

One way to connect the organizational value to what the organization should do in actually supporting volunteers is to develop a statement of commitment giving further guidance. The following is an example of such a statement, developed by the Alberta Children's Hospital.

Statement of Commitment to the Volunteer

The Alberta Children's Hospital recognizes the contribution of volunteers in assisting staff fulfill the mission of the hospital.

Towards the continued pursuit of excellence in volunteerism and in support of volunteers as valued members of the ACH team, the hospital's administration makes the following commitment to the volunteer community at ACH.

1. *The hospital will support a Volunteer Resources Department providing appropriate staffing to manage the volunteer program.*

2. *Hospital staff, both professional and support, who are directing volunteers will be oriented to the needs of volunteers. In specific terms, all new staff, as part of their orientation, will receive instruction from Volunteer Resources. All staff working with volunteers will receive ongoing education from Volunteer Resources as required.*

3. *Hospital staff will play a role in the orientation, directing, evaluation and recognition of volunteers working in their areas.*

4. *Staff will facilitate a positive environment for volunteers working in their areas. This will involve welcoming them, assisting them, mentoring them when necessary and thanking them regularly for their contributions.*

5. *Staff working with volunteers will be recognized for this contribution.*

Signed in March 1998 by the Administrative Leaders of the Alberta Children's Hospital and the Regional Senior Operating Officers responsible for the hospital and its volunteer program.

If you were to write such a policy agreement for your organization, what would it say?

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2. Orienting and Training Employees about Volunteer Involvement

Break participants into small work groups and give them the following instructions:

- Assume that our organization conducts a one-day orientation session for all new staff members.
- Assume that we have been informed that the volunteer management unit will control a 60-minute time slot during this orientation session.
- Assume that staff have already been provided with background on the agency and on the volunteer program so the focus of the session should be on telling them *what as new staff they will need to know in order to do the best possible job in working with volunteers.*
- The assignment for your work group is to design the content of this 60-minute time slot, including:
    a. key topics to be covered
    b. approximate time for each topic
    c. key point to be made in each topic
    d. best person to present a topic
    e. interesting stories or techniques that might be used

You can use the following worksheet *(see next page)* to keep track of ideas.

Allow about 30 minutes for development of the orientation agenda and then debrief groups.

When this is done, ask the following question:

How could we get this information across other than through a training program?

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Orienting Staff to Volunteers Worksheet

Topic	Time	Key Points	Technique/Presenter

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