



Everyone Ready®

An online volunteer management
staff development plan

FROM ENERGIZE

Online Seminar Discussion Guide

Effective Supervision: A Seminar for Busy Staff Who Partner with Volunteers

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Getting the Most from the Online Seminar

The online seminar, *Effective Supervision: A Seminar for Busy Staff Who Partner with Volunteers*, provides an overview of a very complex and important topic. We hope that **organizational members** will view it 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've learned after taking the seminar. Use the discussion questions below to lead the way.

Promoting a Healthy and Successful Staff/Volunteer Partnership

For volunteer supervision to be effective, it takes staff who are clear on expectations of supervising volunteers and who have the skills to carry out the job. They must also work in an organizational culture that *supports* a healthy volunteer/supervisor partnership. It is important for staff to be able to identify barriers keeping them from being excellent volunteer supervisors. Therefore, it is important that management staff – those who can respond to the issues raised and provide the support needed – be involved in any discussions following the seminar. Otherwise, these discussions can turn into unproductive gripe sessions.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the expectations of those who supervise volunteers in our department/unit?
2. On what skills in supervising volunteers do our staff members need additional training?
3. Does our organization have a partnership philosophy of volunteer engagement? If not, what can we do to develop such a philosophy?
4. Does our organization reward staff who attract and supervise volunteers with exceptional talent/skills?
5. How does our organization *support* staff who are expected to supervise volunteers in the course of their work with the organization?

Ideas for Building an On-site Workshop around the Seminar

Organizational members of the *Everyone Ready* program can capitalize on the seminar and incorporate it into a longer staff-training workshop session. Here are some additional ideas for building a longer workshop around this topic.

1. Staff Survey

If there are significant concerns related to volunteer supervision among staff, design a staff assessment/survey about their experiences involving volunteers. The results of the survey will surface any significant issues the organization should address in order to enhance the staff's commitment and competency when supervising volunteers.

Examples of such surveys can be found in *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All the Resources of the Community* (2nd ed.) by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch and in the introduction to *Training Busy Staff to Succeed with Volunteers: The 55-Minute Training Series (Complete Set)* by Betty Stallings. (Both are available at www.energizeinc.com/bookstore, where you can use your *Everyone Ready* bookstore discount.)

An entire seminar can be based on information gleaned from the survey. Identify the problems that staff indicate are barriers to being more effective in supervising volunteers. List them and have discussions as to how, both organizationally and personally, some of these issues can be diminished.

2. Hint Sheets for Staff

Using the seminar handouts as samples, develop your own helpful hint sheets to give to staff when involving volunteers in their work. Or, ask staff to develop the hint sheets with your guidance.

3. Define "Supervision" with Staff

Prior to watching the online seminar, ask participants to jot down their definition of supervision and some attitudes and beliefs that might be important to hold when supervising volunteers.

After listening to the section of the presentation on "What Is Supervision?," ask participants if their definition is close to the one discussed in the presentation. Make certain that people fully understand that supervision is about empowerment of *others* to be successful. Also review and emphasize the importance of the key attitudes in supervising volunteers.

4. Analyze the Organization's Culture of Volunteer Supervision

Divide the workshop participants into two groups. Have one group discuss all of the ways that the organization's culture promotes and supports good supervision between staff and volunteers, and among volunteers. Have the other group look at what ways the organization discourages it. This discussion should bring about some suggestions for improving the organization's support of good supervision.

5. Panel of Volunteer Responders

Convene a panel of volunteers to respond to questions about their experience in the organization with respect to each of the key activities involved in supervision: job design and placement, orientation, support and resources, feedback and recognition, recordkeeping, etc. Select the topics most pertinent to your group.

6. Comfort Level with Delegation

Discuss the staff's comfort level in delegating some of their jobs to others. This will deal with organizational as well as personal issues that tend to encourage or discourage effective delegation. It is always helpful to share success stories. If possible, invite other volunteer supervisors who have learned to empower their volunteers, especially if the supervisors had to overcome the fear of not "doing it all themselves."

7. Practice Giving Feedback

Pause the presentation after the section on "Giving Feedback" and have participants try their skills at each element: being specific, describing the behavior- not evaluating it, and not giving absolutes. You can create scenarios that are apt to occur in your setting.

8. End on a High Note

To end the workshop on a high note, divide participants into small groups and ask them to discuss, and then present, their group's most creative new way(s) to recognize volunteers in their organization/unit/affiliate. You might ask them to act it out, if appropriate.