

# How to Start and Manage a Volunteer Program

Lora Gerard, Renee Pepin, Lori Fortini  
- Dartmouth Centers for Health and Aging

Bill Schmidt  
- Dummerston Cares Board President



**Dartmouth**

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# Benefits of a volunteer program

- Volunteers can expand the reach of programs or the types of programs offered.
- Volunteers can bring expertise in many areas.
- Volunteerism has many benefits to the volunteer.
  - Physical and mental activity and social engagement

# What is our program or project?

- Define your program.
- Who else is doing this work in the area? How do we collaborate?
- Establish the goals of program.
- Establish a scope of work, and create policies & procedures based on this.
- Investigate possible areas of risk and determine how to minimize risk.
- Conduct a community assessment, such as the Tri-State model

<http://agefriendly.community/community-assessment/>

# Who are our volunteers?

- Skills and qualities needed? This may vary by position.
- Criteria for an individual to meet the expectations of the program.
- What would exclude an individual from being able to volunteer?
- Non-discrimination laws apply only to employees. However, best practice is to create a non-discrimination statement and adhere to it.
- What information should be collected from individuals expressing interest in volunteering?

# Who will have oversight of the volunteer program?

- Volunteer management is very similar to managing employees.
- Volunteers can be moved to roles of increased responsibility.
- Volunteers can be released from service ('fired').
- If volunteers have a concern, who do they report that to?
- If clients have a concern, who will discuss it with the volunteer?
- Who will manage a volunteer schedule, assign tasks or clients, and manage unexpected absences?

# Who are our clients who will be served by volunteers?

- What information needs to be collected as part of an intake process?
- What criteria does someone need to meet to receive services?
- Who will determine if someone is eligible for services or make decisions if there is a gray area?

# How will we recruit and screen volunteers?

How will applicants apply to be volunteers?

What information needs to be collected initially?

How will background checks be conducted?

What criteria will be used to determine if someone is not eligible to volunteer?

What are some strategies for recruiting volunteers?

# Risk Management- Background Checking

- Background checking is essential. It protects the clients and the program from financial and reputational risks.
- No one should be excluded from background checks.
- It is OK to google potential volunteers.
- Background checks do not replace reference checking
- Ideally checks are repeated every 12 months and after breaks in service.
- Potential volunteers should grant permission for a background check.

# Risk Management- General Liability

- Good Samaritan laws apply only to emergency situations.
- Federal law :The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997- protects volunteers in states without other immunity laws
- VT- no state law
- NH- 2013 Statute, Limitations of Actions 508: 15, 16, and 17
- Organizations are not protected if a volunteer is harmed in the course of completing their duties. Due diligence and training are very helpful to prevent harm and protect the organization if there is a court case.

# Risk Management- Motor Vehicles

- The individual's personal auto insurance provides coverage for activities conducted during his or her volunteer role.
- The organization may wish to suggest or require coverage levels.
- The organization should have a process to document that the volunteer has ongoing, adequate coverage (such as providing proof of insurance on an annual basis).
- What if a volunteer approaches the organization about a cost differential between his or her current insurance and the organizational requirements?

# What will our volunteers do?

- Define your expectations.
- What is out of scope for our volunteers?
- Create 'job descriptions'.
- Will they receive reimbursement for mileage or supplies?

# Volunteer Training and Support

- Training & Support are key to volunteer satisfaction.
- If your organization has employees and conducts staff training, retreats, or morale building activities, are volunteers included?
- Training demonstrates that the organization is practicing due diligence, which can reduce risk.
- Training needs to be documented; volunteer should sign documentation.
- A volunteer handbook is an essential component of training and orientation.

# Volunteer Handbook

- Mission
- Organizational chart
- Program description
- Policies (such as non-discrimination policy)
- Procedures (such as reimbursement process)
- How to report concerns
- Expectations for ongoing training
- Expectations for volunteers (job description, hours of service, etc)
- Prohibited conduct

# Evaluation

Assess your program with evaluations of volunteer experiences to continue to improve the experiences of volunteers

Assess program with evaluation from service recipients.

# Resources

- National Association of Volunteer Programs in Local Gov't  
[www.navplg.org](http://www.navplg.org)
- Aging Network Volunteer Resource Center  
[www.n4a.org/volunteercenter](http://www.n4a.org/volunteercenter)
  - Common Good (VT)  
[www.commongoodvt.org](http://www.commongoodvt.org)
  - NH Center for Nonprofits  
[www.nhnonprofits.org](http://www.nhnonprofits.org)
- NH Association of Vol Administrators  
[www.nhava.org](http://www.nhava.org)

# Resources

Corporation for National and Community Service

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources>

Vermont Crime Information Center

<http://vcic.vermont.gov/ch-information>

NH State Police Criminal Records

<https://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/nhsp/ssb/crimrecords/>

Dummerston Cares

[www.dummerstoncares.org](http://www.dummerstoncares.org)