



Chapter 5

Volunteer Management

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Volunteer Management

Most local programs depend on volunteers to help deliver programs and services. This is especially true in today's economic climate. In order to best utilize volunteers, a clear plan must be developed and implemented. The following are recommendations for establishing a new volunteer program or enhancing an existing one.

5.1 Identify Volunteer Roles

Before recruiting volunteers, determine areas of unmet needs for the programs. Think about volunteer roles and responsibility, what skills are needed, and the time commitment. Having volunteers just for the sake of having volunteers can be more work in terms of orientation and supervision than their productivity warrants. Spending the time to establish the proper infrastructure and support mechanisms can go a long way in recruitment and retention of many valuable volunteers.

Similarly to paid staff, volunteers need a job description. This will give them a clear picture of what is expected in the role they will be filling. You can draw from job descriptions for paid staff, just be sure to indicate clearly that the position is a voluntary one. Here are some examples of program areas that volunteers could fill:

- Administrative
- Coaching
- Committee members
- Computer/database
- Event management
- Resource development
- Sport specific volunteers

5.2 Recruitment

Volunteer recruitment should be an ongoing consideration. There are many strategies to recruit volunteers, from formal advertisements to informal word of mouth.

It is helpful to have some type of printed promotional material available to give a prospective volunteer, for example a brochure or flyer with photos that describes your program, lists the type of volunteer opportunities available and provides contact information including a link to more detailed information on your website can help orientate future volunteers to your program.

Consider the following sources as potential places to solicit volunteers:

- Volunteer centers (most major cities have one)
- United Way Office
- Service clubs: Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions etc.
- Colleges and universities
- Intern programs
- Work study programs
- Fraternities and sororities
- Specific departments: therapeutic recreation, physical therapy, adaptive physical education, etc.
- Rehabilitation centers or hospitals
- Friends and family of participants



- Veteran participants from your program
- Any non-profit serving individuals with a disability
- Corporate volunteer programs
- Community volunteer fairs
- Online volunteer websites

Many of these sources have a number of opportunities for you to advertise for volunteers. Company and organizational newsletters, website, employee bulletin boards and flyers attached to employee's pay checks all can be effective ways to recruit volunteers.

5.3 Screening

To reduce the chances of recruiting a volunteer who is not the right fit with the program or organization, interview candidates for ongoing volunteer positions. Background checks and identity verification are mandatory in most instances.

5.4 Orientation

All volunteers should have some type of an orientation prior to beginning their job. This is where they are given an overview of the organization and the programs where they might be working. Make sure they understand key issues like confidentiality during this time.

Often it is helpful to develop training for volunteers. This will allow a program to have a formal summary of the orientation training for the volunteer's personnel file. Some programs also require their volunteers to sign a form documenting their completion of a formal orientation.

Depending on the extent of the program's volunteer program, orientation can be as simple as a list of "Do's and Don'ts" or as detailed as developing a volunteer manual. Topics to consider including in a manual are: parking, use of program vehicles, uniforms, ID or credentials, breaks and meals, smoking policies, safety and first aid, care of personal items, personal medication, release forms, unscheduled absences, human resources issues and policies, media policies, expenses and reimbursement, emergency procedures, reporting procedures and dismissal procedures. In cases where there is not a volunteer manual, having volunteers review department or agency manuals may assist in their orientation process.

5.5 Supervision

Ensure the volunteer knows who to report to and who their supervisor will be during their tenure as a volunteer. All new volunteers should have supervision until they are comfortable with their position and able to function in their role independently.

In time, a program may have a number of volunteers that provide supervision to other volunteers. Many sport teams are coached by volunteers who oversee a number of assistant coaches and team support staff. Even in these cases, all volunteers should know which staff is responsible for the program.

As part of volunteer supervision, it is recommended to keep track of attendance of all volunteers and the number of hours they contribute each time they work. There are several circumstances when having accurate attendance will come in useful including the liability issue of knowing who is at each program. Some corporate volunteer programs provide small grants based on the time their employees volunteer in the community. A number of grant



programs will allow volunteer hours to be used at a per hour rate as part of in-kind matching funds.

Tracking volunteer hours also allows an organization to establish a formal recognition program around the total number of hours served over time. It is very common for loyal volunteers to invest thousands of hours to their community service.

Dismissing or “firing” a volunteer is something that no one enjoys, but in rare occasions is a necessary action. All volunteers should be made aware of the different reasons for dismissal as well as clear expectations of behavior and performance.

5.6 Training and Credentials

For volunteers engaged in ongoing programming you should consider requiring specialized training. Even volunteers with an extensive background in sport, recreation, or recreation therapy may not have education and training specific to disability sport. Volunteers who earn either a Level I or Level II credential as a Certified Disability Sport Specialist (CDSS) will have proven their ability to provide programming in a safe manner and to the standard of best practice in disability sport. Certification is available through the BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science. More information about the BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science Certified Disability Sport Specialist credentialing program is available at: <http://www.blazesports.org/resources/professional-development/>

5.7 Special Event Volunteers

Hosting a one or two-day competition, clinic, or event will require the assistance of a large number of volunteers. Although most of the points discussed above also relate to volunteer management for a special event, the process of volunteer management is different than that of an ongoing program. Depending on the number of volunteers involved you may need to assign a staff member or volunteer to serve as a volunteer coordinator.

Recruitment and training of volunteers should be done well before the event. The training done prior to the event can be done on or off-site, possibly at a local practice or at a service club’s monthly meeting. Location and time really does not matter as long as it is done prior to the day of the event.

Whenever possible, divide your event into time segments. When you are planning for an event that will be 8-12 hours long (including set up and clean up), it will be easier to recruit volunteers for 4-hour blocks of time. Always recruit more volunteers than you need to factor for absent volunteers. However, always ensure that all volunteers have a task to complete. The quickest way to lose a volunteer is for them to take the time to volunteer for the event and end up with nothing to do.

5.8 Recognition

Recognition is a way to make volunteers feel appreciated and valued for their work. Volunteer shirts or nametags could help everyone identify who is a volunteer and give the volunteer unique acknowledgement. Consider an annual awards ceremony where you publically recognize volunteers for what they have done and how much time they have given. Students may ask for a letter acknowledging their volunteer effort.

National Volunteer Week is an annual celebration of volunteerism held in April. There are a number of ways your program can show appreciation to your volunteers during this national recognition. Examples include a spotlight in organization newsletter or website, simple yet



thoughtful gifts award, certificates, or plaques. Acts of recognition and praise aid in increasing volunteer retention.

Volunteer Resources:

Sample Volunteer Management Policies –

<http://www.casnet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/sample-manage.htm>

Volunteer management training - <http://www.volunteertoday.com/train.html>

Corporation for National and Community Service - <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/>