

Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers

Guide

Organisations have a duty of care to protect staff, volunteers and service users from harm. Unlike paid staff, volunteers are not covered by industrial awards.

Sometimes people 'fall' into volunteering, but most of the time people make a conscious decision to volunteer. Volunteers have a role to play within their community organisation and there is a range of things they should understand before seeking a volunteer role. This includes their rights and responsibilities when assuming the role of a volunteer.

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement in Not for Profit Organisations are also a useful guide to understand the most effective framework for volunteer programs. It represents best practice in volunteer management. Volunteering Victoria provides professional development opportunities to improve your practices and align your organisation to the National Standards.

Build on a solid foundation of understanding and respect, volunteering is a two-way opportunity. There are important benefits including time, skills, expertise and opinions that volunteers provide to an organisation to pursue its programs and activities. Volunteer involvement can contribute to, and extend the capacity of organisations to meet its aims and goals, whilst contributing to community outcomes.

Rights

- Orientation at your host organisation
- Recognition as a valued team member
- Clarification of your role (through your position description)
- Agreement about hours and conditions (through your volunteer agreement)
- Access to training to perform duties to the standard required

- Information and consultation on matters directly or indirectly affecting you and your duties
- Support and supervision in your role
- Adequate insurance cover and a healthy, safe work environment
- Awareness of the organisation's grievance procedure
- Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses
- Freedom of choice (including refusing positions that may be filled by paid staff rather than volunteers)
- Holiday breaks
- Access relevant information about your host organisation, such as volunteer policies.

Responsibility

- Commit to their volunteer position
- Be punctual and reliable
- Notify in advance any changes to your availability
- Accept responsibility for your actions and behaviour
- Notify your host organisation of any potential hazards or dangerous situations
- Abide by your host organisation's volunteer policies
- Deal with complaints in the appropriate manner
- Respect the rights and privacy of others
- Carry out the duties listed in your volunteer position description, including training
- Support other team members and ask for support when needed
- Give advance notice before leaving their host organisation.

More information

Go to the Volunteering Victoria website to view the National Standards of Volunteer Involvement.