

Section 3: Policies and Procedures

Policies and Procedures help your volunteers to understand the workplace and their job. They make your organization more efficient in delivering services to the community. And they can reduce the potential for things to go wrong.

What is a Policy?

A policy sets out an organization's values or position on a particular issue. It is a statement or guideline that says how the organization intends to operate and how it expects its staff to act. In general, a policy should tell people "why" the policy has been developed and "what" should happen in a particular circumstance.

A good policy should be clear and concise. It should make a positive statement, be free of jargon and be easily understood by everyone involved with the organization.

What is a Procedure?

A procedure describes actions. It provides a clear step-by-step guide to help people put into practice an organizations policy on a particular issue. In general, a procedure tells people "how" to do something. It sets out what needs to be done, who needs to be involved and the order in which different tasks will be completed.

A good procedure document should be clear and unambiguous. People should be able to understand what they need to do after reading through it the first time.

3.1 Policies & Procedures Checklist

Depending on the size of your volunteer program, you can decide if this will be included in your volunteer handbook or if it is necessary to have a separate policies and procedures manual.

- Attendance
- Confidentiality
- Nondiscrimination and anti-harassment
- Grievances and conflict resolution
- Background checks
- Court-ordered volunteers
- Youth volunteers
- Drugs and alcohol
- Anti-theft
- Electronic communication
- Resignation, termination and dismissal
- Personal use of donated items
- Clients as volunteers

3.2 Involving Clients in Your Volunteer Program

Involving clients in your volunteer program is a difficult task. There are certain aspects that you need to be sure are clear to the client/volunteer to ensure fair service to everyone. Therefore, it is important to have in place some type of policy.

Best practices:

- Separate their needs as volunteer and as client
- Explain non-negotiable rules
- Minimize risk
- Set them up for success

Some policies on client volunteer involvement may include:

- Have a policy that states clients cannot volunteer
- Have a policy that states client volunteers must come for food on a day that they are not volunteering
- Have a policy that states the food shelf manager must assist the client volunteer when they get food.

The following section offers examples on client involvement in an organization's volunteer program:

Example 1:

Our volunteers may be clients and, as such, will be treated the same as all other clients. Only registered clients will be eligible to receive food available for distribution. For eligible volunteers, you must complete the application process in order to benefit from food bank services. Once you have a food bank card, you are required to check in on distribution days and go through the line before the volunteer shift begins. All food must be placed in coolers/containers and labeled with the volunteer's name; it can be stored until the end of the volunteer's shift.

Please do not:

- *Take food items off the distribution line to save for yourself*
- *Add items to your bags of food once you have been through the line*
- *Take food home on non-distribution days*

Example 2:

Volunteers may also be clients and receive food in the same manner as all clients. It is suggested that you get your distribution before or after your volunteer time, or come on a separate day. As a client/volunteer, you will follow the same food distribution policies as all clients. You must be escorted, just as any client. Do not “graze” during your volunteer time. Taking items from the shelves and placing in your bag or in the kitchen for your distribution during your volunteer time is not allowed. During distribution times, items for consumption by the volunteers need to be pre-approved by the executive director if taken from the pantry shelves. No exceptions.

Example 3:

Second Harvest Heartland Clients Accessing Product Who Also Provide Volunteer Services

Volunteers assisting with product distribution, who meet agency client eligibility criteria, may receive donated product. Implementation of this practice requires the following:

- The distribution of products is handled in exactly the same manner for all other eligible individuals and either directly or incidentally for the care of the ill, needy, or infants*
- Individuals receiving donated product through this distribution mechanism cannot be required to provide volunteer assistance in exchange for donated product.*
- Individuals cannot be given donated product as a “thank you” for their service.*
- Volunteers are not allowed to “cherry pick” product*
- Strict adherence to a set of written procedures defining these requirements is necessary.*

Quotes from our partners on Client Involvement

“The one policy that we have regarding client/volunteers is that they cannot receive food from the food shelf on the day they are volunteering. In the past we had some issues with people filling their own food orders, which open the doors for a whole host of problems.”

-- Pastor Ed Nugent

Le Sueur Food Shelf

“We have them come on days they are not working, but hours we are open, but we do have one that works all the time and it is hard then so we have decided that if we are not busy we will take them through.”

-- Jan

Springfield Area Food Shelf