

Section 7: Volunteer Handbooks

Volunteer handbooks are a key foundational risk management strategy. They can help protect your volunteers, clients, and agency from unintended harm by providing guidelines for acceptable conduct. They're also a great resource for volunteers when they have questions about a policy or process they may have forgotten or missed during orientation.

7.1 What is a Volunteer Handbook?

The list below provides examples of topics that have been included in Volunteer Handbooks. While some topics are of greater importance because volunteers work closely with vulnerable clients without supervision, they may not be needed in organizations that rarely have situations where volunteers will be alone with clients. Also, it is important to know that some volunteer programs deal with more volunteers than others, and therefore have a more comprehensive Volunteer Handbook. If your Volunteer Program is smaller, it is okay to have a few topics from each area that you feel are important to cover.

Organizational Overview	Professionalism and Ethics	Role of Volunteers	Workplace Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Mission <input type="checkbox"/> Organization chart <input type="checkbox"/> Staff roles <input type="checkbox"/> Impact of organization	<input type="checkbox"/> Representing the organization <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict of Interest policy <input type="checkbox"/> Gifts	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer conduct <input type="checkbox"/> Equal rights <input type="checkbox"/> Agreement/Memo of understanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety rules/checklist <input type="checkbox"/> Reporting accidents <input type="checkbox"/> Substance use <input type="checkbox"/> Guns
Service Standards	Supervision and Support	Training	Volunteer Dismissal
<input type="checkbox"/> Civil rights training <input type="checkbox"/> Risk management <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-discrimination <input type="checkbox"/> Client confidentiality	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer/staff relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Key staff <input type="checkbox"/> Time sheet <input type="checkbox"/> Travel reimbursement	<input type="checkbox"/> Value and impact <input type="checkbox"/> Peer mentoring <input type="checkbox"/> Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/> Resignation <input type="checkbox"/> Exit interview <input type="checkbox"/> Immediate dismissal <input type="checkbox"/> Greivance procedure

If you're short on time right now, pick a few of the most important areas -- ones that represent a high risk for your organization or areas where volunteers frequently have questions. Also, don't forget what a great resource volunteers can be in helping pull the handbook together and give it life. Also, use an intern to create your volunteer handbook.

Creating a volunteer handbook requires key staff involved and an extensive planning process. Therefore, I would like to thank David Miller and the entire Neighbors Inc. team and Diane Erickson and the entire Prism team for offering their handbooks as examples. I appreciate the hard work they have endured to create these handbooks, and I am glad to offer them as great references in the development of your very own.