

Help sheet no.25

Volunteers in residential facilities

Some facilities may benefit from using volunteers. Volunteers are people who provide a service:

- that benefits the community
- of their own free will
- without financial payment.

Developing a volunteer policy

A volunteer policy should reflect and state the philosophy and mission of the organisation and its commitment to volunteer involvement.

Your volunteer policy should also include:

- principles of volunteering
- a code of practice
- a statement of volunteer rights and responsibilities
- a procedure manual which should contain such things as reimbursement of expenses, insurance, grievance procedures, health and safety regulations
- task descriptions for volunteers.

Pre-placement checks

It is important to check the details of people who are volunteering, including:

- proof of identity
- qualifications
- referee checks
- work history
- police checks.

Task descriptions for volunteer positions

Activities should be written into a clear and concise task description so the agreement between the agency and volunteer is not open to misinterpretation. It should include the following basic elements:

- a description of the position
- skills or qualifications – mandatory and desirable
- key areas of responsibility – a list of duties.

It should also clarify organisational relationships, answering questions such as:

- who is the volunteer supervised by or accountable to?
- does the volunteer supervise other volunteers?
- does the volunteer liaise with others in the organisation?

The task description should also spell out the conditions of the position:

- days and time required
- training requirements.

Training volunteers

Training is an important part of a volunteer program. It can be divided into four categories:

1. Orientation
2. Pre-placement training
3. Continuing education
4. On the job.

Training should be ongoing, not just at the start of the volunteer's service. Regular review discussions should be scheduled.

Recruitment of volunteers

Methods of recruitment could include:

- enquiring among family and friends of residents
- staff members presenting talks at local community groups to invite participation
- host an open day morning tea
- list your facility with Volunteering Victoria in your region.

Arranging insurance

Appropriate and comprehensive cover is vital for any organisation involving volunteers. Types of insurance to consider are:

- professional indemnity
- personal accident for volunteers
- directors' and officers' liability
- public liability
- burglary
- money
- contents/special inclusions
- fire.

As a general rule volunteers are not covered by WorkCover.

Remember to:

- recognise volunteers as valuable team members
- provide mechanisms to acknowledge the value of contributions made by volunteers (such as certificates, annual volunteer event).

If you have any questions about volunteers, contact

Volunteering Victoria

7th Floor, Bourke Street

Melbourne 3000

Ph: (03) 9642 5266

Community Visitor Scheme on (03) 9845 2720 to help link volunteers with isolated older people in residential care facilities.

Adapted from Volunteer Centre of Victoria information sheets.