

## Managing Volunteers in Your Organization

As a non-profit organization, most of your workforce is probably comprised of volunteers. These individuals are devoting their time and energy to helping the community through your organization. Though these individuals are offering their services without expecting compensation, they still require supervision to ensure that their jobs are done correctly. Furthermore, it is essential that your organization manages its volunteers to minimize the risk of harm to the community members you are attempting to serve and to the volunteers themselves.

There are three types of volunteer liabilities that may affect your organization as follows:

1. **Direct liability:** The organization or volunteer is liable for an action or failing to act. This would include:
  - Not properly screening volunteers who will work with children
  - Providing volunteers with unsafe tools while doing repair work
2. **Indirect (vicarious) liability:** The non-profit is liable for the actions of a volunteer on the organization's behalf. This would include:
  - Volunteer damaging city property while working for an organization in a park

- Medical bills accrued by a community member after an injury while supervised by a volunteer at an organization-sponsored event

3. **Strict Liability:** The need to determine negligence is not necessary because responsibility for inflicting harm is automatic

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### Training Program

As a non-profit, it is essential that your organization develops a training program for its volunteers. The program will depend heavily on the position the volunteer holds, the experience he or she brings to the role, the needs of the community member(s) he or she is serving and the policies your organization has in place.

While in the training program, volunteers should be given a safety handbook outlining your organization's policies. Furthermore, they should sign a waiver after reading through the organization's policies and procedures.

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The training program should also include the following, at minimum:

- An official welcome to the organization and education on the history, mission statement and services provided. Outline the goals of the organization and the specific needs of the community members being serviced.
- Provide an overview of the skills and responsibilities required for the position. If special equipment is being used, a supervisor should teach the volunteer how to use it until the volunteer feels comfortable.
- Explain the organization's policies and procedures such as reimbursement policies and sexual harassment training.
- Conduct a safety briefing covering how the volunteer can protect him- or herself and community members from danger and injury while representing the organization.

## Managing Volunteers

After volunteers complete the training program, it is essential that your staff members continue to monitor and manage them throughout their tenure at your organization. Ensure that your staff members feel comfortable delegating responsibilities to the volunteers and correcting them if they make mistakes. Furthermore, if a volunteer is acting inappropriately, advise the staff members to dismiss the volunteer before he or she inflicts harm onto another person or him- or herself.

Provide motivation to your volunteers to work hard for the community. Encourage them and praise them for giving it their all. In addition, provide them with a t-shirt, hat or poster as gratitude for their hard work.

## Checklist for Supervising Volunteers

To ensure that your organization is fully prepared for managing volunteers, determine if your non-profit has the following in place:

- A description of all volunteer positions describing the tasks and duties expected.
- Maintain and distribute a volunteer safety handbook for use during training.
- Establish a grievance policy in the event that volunteers are dissatisfied while working for the organization.
- Ensure that all volunteers sign a waiver acknowledging the organization's policies.
- Establish disciplinary standards for volunteers.
- Train all staff members and supervisors who come in contact with volunteers on how to interact with them.

Our team of professionals is here to help. If you need assistance with establishing policies for volunteers, please contact Henderson Insurance Inc. today.