

TORONTO UNITED CHURCH COUNCIL

Connecting Resources with Ministry

Church Development Discussion Papers

TITLE: Volunteer Staff: Obligations and Rights

AUTHOR(S): Volunteering Australia

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Volunteering Australia has developed, through consultation with volunteer involving organizations and projects in the not for profit sector, national standards for volunteer staff involvement which represent and explain the tenets of best practice in the management of volunteer staff.

The following identifies:

- policy considerations for organizations currently deploying volunteer staff or considering this staff option as part of their future development.
- rights of volunteer staff.

Code of Practice

Interview and employ volunteer staff in accordance with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation. Thereafter:

- provide volunteer staff with orientation and training;
- provide volunteer staff with a healthy and safe workplace;
- provide appropriate and adequate insurance coverage for volunteer staff;
- do not place volunteer staff in roles that were previously held by paid staff or have been identified as paid jobs;
- differentiate between paid and unpaid roles;
- define volunteer roles and develop clear job descriptions;
- provide appropriate levels of support and management for volunteer staff;
- provide volunteers with a copy of policies pertaining to volunteer staff;
- ensure volunteers are not required to take up additional work during industrial disputes or paid staff shortage;
- provide all staff with information on grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures;
- acknowledge the rights of volunteer staff;
- ensure that the work of volunteer staff complements but does not undermine the work of paid staff;
- offer volunteer staff the opportunity for professional development;
- reimburse volunteer staff for out of pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the organization;
- treat volunteer staff as valuable team members, and advise them of the opportunities to participate in agency decisions; and
- acknowledge the contributions of volunteer staff.

Rights of Volunteers

Unlike paid staff, volunteer staff members are not covered by awards or workplace agreements. Volunteers however do have rights, some which are enshrined in legislation and some which could be considered the moral obligations of an organization involving volunteers. Volunteering Australia promotes the following as the basic rights of a volunteer.

As a volunteer you have the right:

- to work in a healthy and safe environment;
- to be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation;
- to be adequately covered by insurance;
- to be given accurate and truthful information about the organization for which you are working;
- to be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses;
- to be given a copy of the organization's volunteer policy and any other policy that affects your work;
- not to fill a position previously held by a paid worker;
- not to do the work of paid staff during industrial disputes;
- to have a job description and agreed working hours;
- to have access to a grievance procedure;
- to be provided with orientation to the organization;
- to have your confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles privacy legislation; and
- to be provided with sufficient training to do your job.

Volunteering Australia works to advance volunteering in the Australian community.

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