

Becoming Volunteer Ready

This fact sheet outlines what policies and processes your organisations will ideally have in place - to protect your organisation, and your team.

BEFORE YOU ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS

Before you engage volunteers you need to ensure that you have solid policies, systems and processes in place to protect your organisation, the people you serve and your volunteers. A lack of good policies can result in poor practices, and have a detrimental effect on your organisation and its reputation.

Having policies will ensure volunteers feel informed and comfortable about what they are signing up for. Having good policies will provide guidelines that help with strong decision making processes and also help to provide a consistent approach to roles, responsibilities and relationships. Policies provide boundaries in which you and your team can act.

WHAT TO HAVE IN PLACE

Organisations involving volunteers are advised to have policies or documents that cover:-

- Complaints and resolution
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Reimbursement of expenses
- Responsibilities of the organisation towards the volunteer (*Code of Conduct*)
- Responsibilities of the volunteer (*Code of Conduct*)
- Volunteer – HR policy
- Volunteer recognition processes

There are other policies to consider if you don't already have them including computer use/IT, Emergency procedures, and a vehicle policy. It is also important to identify what tasks will be carried out by volunteers rather than paid staff, or what tasks will not be carried out by volunteers e.g. *personal care of residents in a rest home.*

A number of these documents may already be in place for paid staff, and these are a good place to start when designing volunteer documents. This will help ensure that there is a consistency across the organisation for the whole team.

LEGISLATION

When designing policies ensure that they meet the requirements laid out in relevant legislation. Volunteers are covered by:-

- ACC (*as a member of the public not as an employee*)
- Health and Safety in Employment Act
- Human Rights Act
- Privacy Act

Volunteers are not covered by:-

- Employment Relations Act

FIND OUT WHAT'S AROUND

If you are part of a bigger organisation, request a copy of your volunteer policies and ensure you are familiar with them. If you are starting from scratch talk to other people in the field and research the policies they have in place. A copy of your policies should be available at all times to all staff – paid and volunteer. Policies need to be reviewed regularly, with any changes being communicated to your team.

Reduce the risk to your organisation, and your volunteers by taking time to design policies now. Don't wait for an adverse event to happen before you design a policy to protect your organisation, community and volunteers. It will save you time in the future and will be an essential tool to use when dealing with issues as they arise.