

BRINGING VOLUNTEERS BACK IN-PERSON

IN 2021 AND BEYOND



INTRODUCTION

Exciting times are ahead! As we begin to invite volunteers back to their in-person activities, it is important to recognize that things likely look different than they did before COVID-19. Read on for some tips on how to bring volunteers back safely, effectively, and engaged.

PLANNING

Before welcoming volunteers back in-person, make sure you have thought out each stage of their return and are prepared to answer questions. Some important things to consider before reaching out to your volunteers include:

- Risk management
- Reorientation
- How you will reach out to your volunteers
- How you will provide ongoing support

Remember that as restrictions change, your plan might have to change with them. Be open to new ideas, take suggestions from your volunteers, and always put their safety first.

During the re-opening process, all areas of the volunteer journey will likely be impacted, including:

- Volunteer recruitment and outreach
- Onboarding processes
- Opportunities/roles
- How you provide support
- Recognition and appreciation



The Volunteer Centre of
the Central Okanagan

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management procedures are an important consideration as we welcome volunteers back into our facilities. They are in place to assess, manage and/or mitigate potential risks to your volunteers, organization, clients, staff, members and participants that may result from the delivery of a volunteer-led program or service. Applicable Health and Safety protocols should be followed. Each volunteer role needs to be assessed for level of risk as part of the screening process. This checklist can help to guide the process:

- All volunteer roles and activities are assessed for risk factors on a regular basis.
- Procedures and processes are identified and implemented to manage or mitigate the risk factors associated with volunteer activities.
- Volunteers are fully informed of the potential for risk and receive training to manage or mitigate the risk factors.

- Volunteers are able to give feedback to the organization about risk factors.
- Staff establish appropriate procedures and processes to ensure program quality standards are achieved.
- Applicable Health and Safety protocols are followed.

As a volunteer and service provider offering services to people in the community, you have an important role to play in preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The following link provides guidelines about hand washing, cleaning, and physical distancing to use as you welcome volunteers back to in-person work and engage with others in your community:

[Public Health Guidance for Community Volunteers During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)

*In giving we receive.
Volunteering brings me
perspective on issues and
life experiences I would
otherwise be ignorant of.*

Joyce Brinkerhoff
Volunteer55 Ambassador





DUTY OF CARE

Lorraine Street defines Duty of Care as *the legal principle which identifies the obligations of individuals and organizations to take reasonable measures to care for and to protect their clients to an appropriate level or standard. If the clients are vulnerable, if they cannot protect, defend, or assert themselves, permanently or temporarily, because of age, disability, or circumstances, then that duty becomes more intense and the standard higher.*

It is important for agencies and their volunteers to be aware of the legal duties and responsibility volunteers have in order to prevent a liable situation. When someone is liable, it means that they can be held legally accountable for damages resulting from hurting or costing someone money. A duty is a legal obligation that everyone has to act in a certain manner or do certain things for other people.

Proper program planning that includes position descriptions and risk management procedures can help ensure that volunteers can safely and comfortably contribute to your agency.

As you invite individuals back to their in-person activities, it is a good idea to have them sign a consent form saying that they understand any risks associated with a return to in person volunteering.

“Volunteering is satisfying, honouring, gratifying and fulfilling!”

Teena Gowdy
Volunteer55 Ambassador

REORIENTATION

Re-opening after COVID is a perfect opportunity to make sure that all returning volunteers are reminded of their duties, understand any new procedures/protocols that have been created, and re-sign forms. It is also a chance for you to remind them of your missions and values, and get up-to-date contact information.

Even if the reorientation isn't as in-depth as your usual orientation, you should still do it as a reminder to your volunteers about your organization and your expectations of them. Some of them haven't been in their roles for over a year and a half! It is likely that things have changed within your organization that they need to be made aware of, such as any virtual opportunities that were created, new communication platforms you are using, any staff changes, new programs, or other changes that they might not know about.

Reorientation is also a chance to make sure everyone in your organization is on the same page when it comes to volunteering and to improve the parts of your orientation and training that haven't been edited and updated in a while. Don't forget that you can ask your returning volunteers for input! Check in with them to see how their original orientation could have been improved and incorporate that information into your re-orientation.



REACH OUT

The next step to bringing volunteers back in-person is reaching out to them. Send an email to encourage existing volunteers to return to your organization. Let them know what you are up to, that they are welcome back in your organization, and that you have missed them!

Here are some tips for when you are writing that email:

- Acknowledge and appreciate their past contributions
- Outline the impact of COVID-19 on volunteers, clients and your organization
- Identify the need for their safe return in order for your organization to move forward with your mission
- Communicate existing plans for return
- Outline volunteer work expectations
- Request their input
- Ask if they plan to return
- Include a call to action

“Check out what you could offer to others in our community. Sooner or later, we are all going to need someone to help us [...] If we can make friends [while volunteering], more power to us all.”

Glory Bee (Gloria Clay)
Volunteer55 Ambassador



PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT

Now that you have put your reopening plan in place and reached out to re-engage your volunteers, it is time to consider how to best support and retain them upon their return.

Keep in mind that most of us will still be feeling a bit uncertain. We have all been through some significant changes and we can count on more changes to come. It is okay to admit that we don't have all the answers and that we are counting on the knowledge of our volunteers as we move through this time of change and rebuilding.

Communication around new plans and roles upon return should be done with care. Some tips include:

- A gentle and compassionate approach
- Use personal one to one discussions whenever possible
- Remind them that their safety and the safety of program recipients is your priority
- Place responsibility for changes on COVID-19 and its impact on all of us

Ensure that you are checking in with volunteers in an ongoing capacity. Ask for their feedback and questions they have for you. Listen carefully and respect their ideas and decisions. Ask them how they are feeling. Ask if there is any further support they may need.



REFERENCES & RESOURCES

[Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement - Putting the Code into Action](#)

[Consent to Return Example](#)

[Okanagan Volunteer Fair](#)

[Overview of Volunteer Management by KCR Community Resources](#)

[The VolunteerConnector](#)

[Volunteers and the Law - A Guide for Volunteers, Organizations and Boards](#)

[The Screening Handbook: Tools and Resources for the Voluntary Sector](#)

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