

**STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

Volunteer Services and Management Implementation Guide

IMPORTANT TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Government-subsidized Volunteer: An individual generally found within the structure of a state or federally-funded program. They may work on a full-time basis for a contracted period to accomplish a pre-defined goal and may receive a stipend from outside the Department of Corrections (DOC).

Guest Volunteer: A volunteer that has not completed the full application process and training requirements yet provides occasional services to the DOC under the supervision of paid staff or other registered volunteers. Any guest volunteer who provides services more than three times a year must apply to be a registered volunteer in order to continue providing services. Guest volunteers, for purposes of identification, will be treated as visitors on official business

Intern: An individual who applies knowledge gained in a classroom setting in a job-like setting to gain real experience in an employment setting. Additionally, an intern may receive monetary compensation and/or academic credit from a college or university as part of their course work.

Registered Volunteer: Any person who performs a function within a correctional facility for no payment from the Agency of Human Services. They may receive a stipend from an outside source. A registered volunteer has completed a DOC application, screening and training, and is listed with the Volunteer Services Coordinator as an approved volunteer. People who deliver services to the DOC and offenders/inmates will be volunteers if they are not paid employees or contracted staff of the Agency of Human Services (AHS). For example, if a person is a volunteer/employee for a community group and that agency asks them to work with the DOC, they will need to officially become a DOC volunteer.

Restorative Systems Administrator (RSA): The DOC Central Office staff person who has supervisor responsibility for the Volunteer Services Coordinators (VSC).

Supervising Staff Member: A person authorized by the DOC to be responsible for the supervision of a volunteer.

Volunteer Services Coordinator (VSC): The DOC staff person who has responsibility for the volunteer services program in a correctional facility, including the religious observance program (in conjunction with the facility Superintendent).

PROCEDURES, GUIDELINES, AND BEST PRACTICE

Status of Volunteers

Volunteers will be treated professionally and must follow the DOC's policies and directives that pertain to all corrections professionals. Volunteers will be integrated into on-going operations at all sites.

DOC volunteers are considered State employees for purposes of determining the State's obligation to defend and/or indemnify them from civil suits and damages and criminal charges. DOC volunteers are also considered State employees for purposes of determining whether they are entitled to workers' compensation if they are injured performing their volunteer duties. There are some limitations to these protections, however. First, they only apply once an individual completes the registration and orientation process before beginning work. In addition, if the volunteer is involved in an accident involving their motor vehicle, the State will indemnify them only after their private auto insurance is exhausted. Finally, the State's representation and indemnification rules for civil lawsuits do not apply if the volunteer engaged in gross negligence or willful misconduct. If the volunteer is grossly negligent, or willfully commits a wrongful act, they must assume all costs of representation and/or damages.

If a volunteer is named as a defendant in a civil case, the DOC's Legal Division will notify them in writing of their rights and the limits of insurance coverage, and keep them apprised of any developments in the case.

Planning and Implementation of Volunteer Services

The support of volunteer services is a responsibility shared by all DOC personnel. In order to facilitate this effort, DOC staff members assume responsibility for volunteer services management at their work site.

Recruitment of Volunteers

Recruitment of volunteers will be targeted to meet the specified needs of the DOC as identified in the volunteer program planning process. This does not preclude the acceptance of volunteers for other open positions if their interests and skills are needed in other available positions not deemed a priority.

Qualifications for Volunteer Services

A satisfactory interview or assessment, with a member of the volunteer services staff or designee, that covers the areas of the proposed volunteer interest, skills, position placement, and motivation for volunteering. This interview is designed to assess the appropriateness for an individual to volunteer in the DOC, as well as to identify a possible match between an applicant's interests and volunteer role openings.

Interview

There shall always be an interview and review of a job description between the supervising staff member and potential volunteer. The purpose of this interview is to insure that a successful match between the supervisor, job and the potential volunteer is made. If this interview does not result in a match the volunteer will be informed in writing that their application has not been accepted.

Criteria for Volunteer Services

Minimal requirements to obtain volunteer status are described in DOC Administrative Directive #376 *Volunteer Services and Management*. It should be noted that for ex-offenders there are additional requirements that must be met before volunteer status can be obtained. Additionally, in compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) any ex-offender with a prior sex offense must obtain approval by the Commissioner of Corrections prior to being able to volunteer.

Denial of Application

When a volunteer application is not approved, the Volunteer Services Coordinator will notify in writing the applicant and all the Coordinators of Volunteer Services statewide, in writing with the reason for the denial. They will also be listed as a denied volunteer in the volunteer database with the reason for denial.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

The volunteer job description is designed to establish an agreement between the DOC and the volunteer for the delivery of services. As such, it is intended to outline the mutual expectations of the DOC as represented by the staff supervisor/Volunteer Services Coordinator and the volunteer. In addition, it will outline needed supervision.

Process for Development of Job Descriptions

1. Job descriptions will be completed prior to providing services. This document will describe the service(s) to be provided, length of service/schedule, any training needs of the volunteer(s), and the name of the supervisor for the volunteer(s).
2. The VSC will approve and maintain all job descriptions. Alternately, the individual proposing a program or requesting a volunteer service will develop a job description in cooperation with the VSC.
3. All job descriptions will be maintained on the statewide volunteer database by the volunteer services staff.

Volunteer Identification

The VSC will issue each registered facility volunteer a photo identification card, which must be carried by the volunteer while on official business. When volunteers move from site to site, they will be asked to contact the local VSC for any additional relevant procedures at that site.

Each volunteer identification card will include the following:

1. First and last name
2. Approved worksites
3. Their photograph

Training

1. Ongoing Training (In-service): Volunteers are encouraged to attend worksite staff in-service training. Regular announcements of statewide DOC trainings will be made available to volunteers. Selection of volunteers for these trainings will be made on a space-available basis.

2. **Staff Training:** The volunteer services staff, in cooperation with local DOC training coordinators, will develop and regularly administer training for DOC staff about volunteers and their roles. It will acquaint staff with the goals, practices, and availability of volunteer services and ensure that all staff supervising volunteers understand the DOC's direction concerning volunteer management.

Supervision and Evaluation of Volunteers

The VSC will serve as a resource when needed and may provide feedback to the supervisor when issues are brought to their attention. Supervision includes ensuring that the volunteer hours, effectiveness of position, problem areas are highlighted and reported and documented to the VSC.

The supervisor is responsible for regular evaluation (whether written or verbal) of the volunteer. Evaluations should encompass both volunteer job satisfaction and the effectiveness of the volunteer efforts. Volunteer services staff will insure that volunteers are given the opportunity to evaluate the quality of their supervision as well as the cooperation of relevant staff members.

Dismissal and/or Suspension of Volunteers

The DOC may dismiss a volunteer for substantial and valid reasons, usually due to a serious breach of policy or work rules. The facility or district managers may take this action, but only after consulting with the VSC at the work site.

A volunteer may be immediately suspended for a serious violation of work rules while the DOC investigates the incident. A decision about final dismissal will come after the investigation is completed. Being dismissed from one role does not necessarily mean an individual could not volunteer in another capacity in the DOC if that is mutually agreeable between staff and the volunteer.

A volunteer may appeal dismissal by contacting the local site manager, the Restorative Systems Administrator, or the Commissioner of Corrections in that order.

Regardless of the reason, the VSC will contact the departing volunteer for an exit interview.

Recognition of Volunteers

Supervisors are responsible for recognition of volunteers. Volunteers may be recognized regularly in area and/or statewide events. However, volunteers should also be appreciated through regular informal gestures by staff.