

# Volunteer Recruitment

## Orientation

Once you have determined what types of volunteers are needed, the functions they will perform and the people who will fill these positions, it is necessary to provide orientation and training. Volunteer orientation is intended to provide the general information that you wish your volunteers to know prior to beginning their volunteer service. Training pertains to very specific jobs and job duties of volunteers. Orientation is intended for everyone and there should be no exceptions.

Just as each clinic is unique, so is the process they use to orient their volunteers. Some clinics may do this on an individual basis, some may do it on a group basis and some may do a combination of both. It is suggested that whatever method is used, that you have a regular and set schedule for orientation. This makes it easier on both the potential volunteer as well as the staff/volunteer responsible for conducting the program. Having a structured process will provide information to your volunteers so they are equipped to properly perform their duties. Also be aware that orientation is the beginning of team-building within your program and will set the tone for their volunteer experiences.

Communicate your core values to your volunteers!

Examples include:

- The mission and vision of the clinic
- The expectation that each volunteer is a courier of the clinic message to the community at large
- An explanation of patient-focused service and emphasis on respecting the value and dignity of each patient
- Utilizing a charitable clinic doesn't mean sub-standard care

Again, the logistics of the orientation may differ from clinic to clinic, but some basic structure has proven successful in conducting orientations.

Below is just one example of an orientation outline that you can use as a basis to build your own program.

- Welcome & Introductions
  - About the Clinic
    - Mission
    - History
    - Funding Sources
    - Services Provided / Not Provided
- Volunteer Opportunities
  - Healthcare related
  - Non-healthcare related
- Volunteer Policies & Procedures
  - Volunteer application
    - Including:
      - contact information
      - confidentiality statement
      - licensing information
      - any clinic required testing (i.e. TB, hepatitis, etc.)
  - Scheduling and cancellation processes
  - Code of Conduct/Code of Ethics
  - Dress Code
- Safety Procedures
  - OSHA
- Privacy Procedures
  - HIPAA
- Clinic Tour
- Next Steps
- Question and Answer Period

When developing your orientation schedule you need to select a time that is convenient for the majority of your volunteers to attend. This might mean evening or Saturday orientations or a combination of daytime and evening times. It is

further recommended that the orientation be held at the clinic in order to build a sense of inclusiveness and responsibility to the overall clinic operation.

## Remember

An orientation session for volunteers will also provide a screening process for you to weed out candidates who, for whatever reason, may prove inappropriate for your efforts. While we wish there were a fool-proof manner in which to do so, the orientation will provide your first real screening of candidates. The initial step may be in completion of a questionnaire given to all candidates to gather education, training, and background experiences. You may also begin to ask individuals to articulate their reasons for wishing to volunteer, always an interesting way to gain insight into potential volunteers. Later, you may decide that a particular group of volunteers are good candidates to work with patients. It would be at this point of the training phase that background checks might be implemented to determine if the self-submitted information corresponds to the official record and to determine if there are any circumstances that could eliminate an individual from consideration for volunteering.

## Training

Training differs from orientation in that it focuses on the specific jobs and duties of each type of volunteer. Also, while one consistent person may conduct orientation, different people may be called upon to deliver training depending upon the types of volunteers.

Simple yet thorough job descriptions for each position is a good basis for training. Developing these job descriptions not only clarifies what is expected of each volunteer type for the clinic, but it clearly communicates these responsibilities to each volunteer. While there will always be the need for flexibility in a clinic setting, starting from an agreed upon set of duties sets up the volunteer for success from the beginning.

As with orientation, training can be conducted in different ways. Some positions such as a physician may be best trained for on a one-to-one basis by shadowing an experienced practitioner in the clinic. Other roles may be better-suited to a small group session. Either way, at the conclusion of the training session, the prospective

volunteer must demonstrate both the skill and the attitude sought by the clinic for their particular role. If these criteria are not met, you may need to consider additional training or perhaps re-assignment, if appropriate, to a role that better fits his/her talents.

### Never Stop Evolving!

Utilize training not only as a learning experience for the volunteer, but for the clinic as well. Sometimes a new perspective can help improve or streamline a process making the overall operations more efficient and effective.

### Evaluation

Volunteers are, in effect, unpaid staff. In addition to ensuring that they are adequately interviewed to make sure they fit the job description and offering them training, it is important to also make sure they are given the benefit of an evaluation. Evaluations can provide an important check-in time with volunteers to make sure they are fulfilling the demands of the job and that everyone is satisfied with the results, including the volunteer. Conducted at least annually, this process can demonstrate to the volunteers (and staff) that their role is an important one and worthy of a formal review process.

### Evaluation Template

### Volunteer Recognition and Retention

It is usual practice for clinics to recognize the power and value of volunteerism in the start-up planning phase of the clinic development. It is easy to recognize when examining the membership of the Planning Team the impact that dedicated volunteers can have in turning an idea into reality. Ample time and attention is generally dedicated to forming the initial framework of the operating clinic, complete with volunteer staffing at every planned level. However, to retain a volunteer corps and to help ensure the success of the clinic, recognition and retention activities need to be deliberate and ongoing.

Volunteer retention requires agency-wide commitment, and begins from the moment that a volunteer learns about the clinic. Directly impacting the success of

any volunteer's experience (and thus the clinic's success) is the manner in which information is shared, the responsiveness to questions and the way it is made known that this volunteer is a valued member of the team. When volunteers feel that they are a key player in clinic programs they will begin to take ownership of these programs and feel a responsibility for their success. It is this type of feeling that you want to instill in your volunteers.

Once a volunteer begins to actively participate in regularly scheduled clinic hours, and the clinic grows increasingly busy, it can be easy to lose track of individual volunteers, and as a volunteer moves into the routine of their experience, the initial enthusiasm may begin to wear off. If a situation like this remains unchecked, you may experience volunteers dropping off the schedule, leaving the clinic with gaps to fill. To help prevent or minimize this situation, you will need to adopt strategies to ensure that volunteers are fulfilled and appreciated.

It is good to remember that each volunteer comes to your clinic with expectations. Although they are there to help others, they may not verbalize it but they often wish to receive something from their volunteer experience. These expectations differ with each volunteer so it is important to develop a process to learn this information. One of the best ways to learn what motivates volunteers is to ask them. You might do this in the form of an initial questionnaire during orientation or through more informal conversations directly with volunteers. Either way, the clinic should focus on giving volunteers opportunities that will help fulfill their needs and expectations.

Clinics must construct volunteer programs that not only provide specific individual roles, but also provide opportunities for growth. A committed volunteer is an important asset, and you need to develop a variety of strategies to keep that individual engaged and excited about her participation with your clinic. While the specific duties and responsibilities may bring a great deal of satisfaction for the volunteer, after a time, they may want to broaden their experience by learning and doing new things. Consequently a clinic is well served to build in growth opportunities for volunteers. They may become cross-trained to take on other responsibilities. They may assume some oversight responsibilities for other volunteers in the same area. All of these activities and opportunities serve to reinvigorate volunteers and enable the clinic to keep committed volunteers engaged for an extended period of time.

Recognition for volunteers is an important component of a successful volunteer program. Recognition takes place in large and small ways, and is built into the clinic infrastructure. At the basic level, recognition should occur each and every time a volunteer contributes time to the clinic. In the same way that a donor must be thanked each time they make a monetary contribution, a volunteer must be thanked for their contribution of time and talent. While the staff members who are overseeing volunteers may have that specific responsibility, all who are involved at the clinic should carry this activity under “other duties” as assigned. A simple acknowledgement of appreciation will serve as a strong incentive in maintaining a volunteer’s commitment to the clinic.

Celebrate the volunteers at the clinic!

- Have a volunteer recognition week with activities throughout the week that recognize volunteer service
  - This type of recognition works well if volunteers generally participate on a weekly basis
- Have a monthly dinner party on-site in the break area or after clinic
- An annual volunteer recognition luncheon or dinner
- Certificate of completion after orientation or training
- The presentation of a simple laminated identification card, indicating the individual’s status as an active volunteer
- Apply for national awards, such as the presidential volunteer awards for those volunteers who complete a specific amount of hours
- Apply for local/state volunteer awards for the entire clinic or for particular volunteers that have gone above and beyond
  - Many local communities will have these types of awards
- Personalized name tags with the volunteer function, years of service, etc.
- Be creative!

Keep in mind that many community enterprises may be willing to contribute to the success of your volunteer recognition activities with in-kind and/or monetary donations. This is one way to further involve your community as well as keep the costs of such activities to a minimum. The rewards in terms of committed, dedicated volunteers who help you accomplish your mission will represent an incredible return on your investment.

