

Managing Volunteers Effectively During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A User Guide

(As of April 24, 2020)

Are you managing volunteers to carry out essential services during this COVID-19 pandemic? Use this guide to inform your volunteer management practices.

Step 1: Plan

- Use the Volunteer Engagement Cycle to guide your planning. **Volunteer safety and client safety** need to be considered in every single step.

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS





- It is required that California volunteer managers abide by regulations set forth by cities, counties, the State of California and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Is your work considered essential by your local government? If the answer is yes, you may continue to utilize volunteers on site if you follow safety protocols, such as keeping all volunteers at least six feet apart, instructing volunteers to wear face coverings that are disinfected daily, disinfecting work stations frequently, reminding volunteers to wash their hands and avoid touching their faces, etc.
- If your volunteers are not providing essential services at this time, they still may volunteer for you remotely. They should not be allowed to volunteer for your organization on-site.
- Do your current volunteers want to stay engaged, but you don't have anything to do for them at this time? Encourage them to find short-term volunteer opportunities online at cvnl.org/covid19help
- Plan to supply on-site volunteers with COVID-19 prevention supplies that are easy for them to access (e.g., hand washing station, soap, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, tissues, trash baskets, and face coverings).
- Does your organization have an insurance policy that covers volunteers? Volunteer Accident Liability Insurance can be added to workers compensation policies in some cases. It can help prevent litigation.
- If your organization is activated by your county's *Emergency Operations Center (EOC)* to provide an essential service to the public, your volunteers may be sworn in as Disaster Service Worker volunteers, and will then be covered by state Workers' Compensation. Each county utilizes this State of California program differently. Contact CVNL for more information.
- Determine if you would like your volunteers to be background-checked. If you do not have a background check service and you are interested in obtaining one, you can get a 20% discount on Sterling Volunteers' services if you mention you were referred by CVNL. Visit this link for information: <https://app.sterlingvolunteers.com/csu/3luzo5a>



Step 2: Recruit

- Volunteers with compromised immune systems, underlying health conditions, or are aged 65 or older are at the highest risk of suffering serious complications from COVID-19. Encourage any potential volunteers in these vulnerable populations, or who live with others in these populations, to volunteer virtually if possible, or to wait until we are no longer experiencing this pandemic to volunteer in person.
- Make sure your volunteer position descriptions clearly provide information on the recruitment process. Eager volunteers may show up at your site without prior notification, so it is best to provide clear details on the sign-up process.
- Post your volunteer opportunities online on your own website and on CVNL's volunteer matching portals:
 - <https://volunteer.cvnl.org> - for all counties in the Bay Area
 - <https://sonoma.cvnl.org> - for Sonoma County opportunities
 - <https://solano.cvnl.org> - for Solano County opportunities

All volunteer opportunities posted on Sonoma and Solano's portals appear on the Bay Area portal.
- Visit this site for posting instructions: <https://cvnl.org/volunteer-recruitment-help/>

Step 3: Select

- Implement some sort of screening process so that you can ensure the person who shows up to volunteer is actually who they say they are. This screening process also allows you to identify potentially problematic volunteers or people who would be a better fit for other organizations rather than your own.
- Confirm with volunteers that they are scheduled for their specific shifts. Give them information on how to reach you if they can no longer volunteer.

Step 4: Provide an Orientation

- Some volunteers want to jump right into their role before learning the parameters of their volunteer involvement. Provide an orientation that explains what the volunteers are going to do, how they are helping the community, how they can stay safe while volunteering with you, and whom they should contact if they have questions or if a challenging situation arises.
- During the orientation, ask all volunteers to sign a volunteer liability waiver, and if necessary, a photo release. Contact CVNL for liability release waiver templates.
- Give the proper level of infection control training to volunteers. At a minimum, all volunteers should read the CDC's recommendations on *How to Protect Yourself*.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>
- If the volunteers will visit neighbors or clients who are at a higher risk of severe illness (e.g. people over the age of 65 or people with underlying medical conditions), the volunteers should:
 - Keep visits as brief as possible
 - Wear a face covering during the visit
 - Always keep a distance of at least 6 feet from neighbors and clients
 - Avoid exposure to potentially infectious objects or materials
 - Practice cough etiquette during the visit (cover mouth and nose during a cough, cough into a tissue and dispose of it, etc.)
 - Bring hand sanitizer, and use it before and after the visit
 - Also bring sanitizing wipes to wipe off the doorbell, doorknob, handrail, etc.
 - In neighbor-to-neighbor efforts, take down the phone numbers of neighbors for follow-up

Step 5: Manage the Volunteer Experience

- If a volunteer arrives on site and has a fever, cough, or shortness of breath, or has lost the sense of taste, it is best to tell the volunteer to return home, self-isolate for two weeks, and contact a medical provider.

- All volunteers should report to a supervisor of some sort. The supervisor can be a staff member or another volunteer who serves as a Team Leader. Volunteers without supervisors are the ones who tend to “go rogue” and create their own systems. Get ahead of this by ensuring that everyone knows to whom they should report when they arrive, when they have challenges or want to celebrate successes, when they hear unverified information about the spread of the virus, and when they depart at the end of their shifts.
- When they start their shifts, ensure that volunteers wash their hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizers that contain 60-95% alcohol. Encourage the same actions when they depart.
- During volunteer shifts, make sure you clean and disinfect surfaces regularly. Keep emphasizing infection control and safety throughout the volunteer experience.

Step 6: Recognize Volunteers

- Enthusiastically thank your volunteers for their help, and ask them to come back if you have more shifts available. Remind them to sign up for those later shifts rather than just show up.
- Many volunteers feel valued when you can explain the impact of their volunteering on your organization and the wider community. One tool is to inform them of the value of their volunteer time by using Independent Sector’s “Value of a Volunteer Hour” in California, which is \$29.95 per hour. Here is an example: “Thank you for serving with us for 4 hours today! Your volunteering is an in-kind donation, and that amount of volunteering is valued at around \$120. What a generous contribution you’ve made!”
- Collect the contact information of your volunteers so you may send thank you notes or call them to express your gratitude in the near future.

Thank you for the work that you do for our communities!