

# ***VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK TEMPLATE***

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This template can be adapted to your organization and used when working with new volunteers; it is meant to be a starting point for the creation of a practical reference document that your organization's volunteers can consult at any time. The **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK** is an essential tool for successfully onboarding and integrating new volunteers into your organization!

## **Recommendations for using the Volunteer Handbook**

A volunteer handbook is a resource (printed or digital) that clearly defines what your organization does and how volunteers help the organization. It can explain volunteering rules, as well as set out tasks or expectations. Your organization's volunteer handbook should be part of recruitment, onboarding, and training volunteers so that everyone begins at the same level, with the same knowledge.

When you provide new volunteers with their copy of the *Handbook*, be sure to include a sample letter in which they acknowledge having read the document. There is a template letter on the last page of the *Handbook*, once it's returned by the volunteer it should be kept in their volunteer file.

## **A few hints on customizing your Volunteer Handbook:**

- Words highlighted in grey must be replaced by information specific to your company.
- *We have also included some optional tips; they are to be deleted before printing this document.*

It is important to review and update your *Volunteer Handbook* periodically to ensure it reflects any legislative, regulatory and internal policy changes that occur over time. The team at RDN can assist you in modifying or supplementing this Handbook to that it corresponds to your organization's needs and realities.

*This guide<sup>1</sup> is provided to you for information purposes only. RDN cannot be held responsible for its final content nor for any subsequent use and/or interpretation by the member organization or a third party.*

***Please remove this introductory page when using the template to create your organization's Volunteer Handbook.***

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<sup>1</sup> Inspired by *How to Create a Volunteer Handbook for Your Nonprofit* . Joanne Fritz. May 16, 2020. Available: <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/how-to-create-a-volunteer-handbook-for-your-nonprofit-4172313>

**INSERT YOUR LOGO HERE**

# **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

*Insert the date of the most recent changes made to this document.*

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT /EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to the **name of organization** team.

The objectives of the **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK** are to give you an overview of the organization and how volunteers help ensure its smooth operations. It is meant to inform, educate, and support you as a volunteer.

This Handbook contains the following:

- **Name of organization** (short form) background
- Mission
- Values
- List of current programs and projects
- Role and responsibilities of volunteers
  - Background checks
  - Required certifications
- Other conditions
- Code of Ethics
- **Organization name** Rules and Regulations
- Policy on Psychological and Sexual Harassment Prevention
- Organizational directory

All volunteers, whether seasoned or new, may occasionally need to consult this Volunteer Handbook.

This document is intended as a clear and direct reference tool containing the answers to your main concerns. If the information you are looking for is not found within the pages of this document, please refer your questions to me or your immediate supervisor and we will make every effort to supplement the information in this Handbook and provide you additional details.

Finally, the Volunteer Handbook is an evolving document that will be adapted as appropriate to reflect cultural and organizational changes, as well as any modifications that are made to government regulations.

On behalf of the whole team, welcome to **name of organization**.

*Signature*

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Print the President's name or the Executive Director's name

## NAME OF ORGANIZATION (SHORT FORM)

*Please adapt the following paragraph as appropriate for your company:*

Name of organization is committed to supporting the vitality of the English-speaking community living in its service territory.

We exist to serve our community, whose needs and priorities are at the heart of all of our actions.

We are keenly aware that volunteer input and active involvement is vital to the effective operation of our community organization. It is important to keep in mind that we are all representatives of Name of organization when we are at work in the community and collaborating with members of the staff, other volunteers, members of the community, and partners and that this is the basis for our reputation and our long-term survival as an active member of the region's community development sector.

The respect that Name of organization has earned in the region is due to our team, i.e., an experienced team which takes pride in its contributions to the vitality of the region's minority language community and in which the organization places its ongoing trust for a successful future.

### OUR MISSION

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Describe your organization's mission.

### OUR VALUES

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*Below are some examples of values. Describe your organization's values.*

- **Teamwork:** Our organizational capacity is based on everyone's involvement and collaboration; we establish structures that encourage dialogue as a way of implementing best practices.
- **Respect:** To ensure a climate that encourages workplace well-being, it is vital that we treat our employees and the organization's volunteers with respect and fairness, while also being sensitive to each individual's needs.
- **Innovation:** To remain effective in our work, we try to foster new ideas by maintaining an ongoing improvement process. We believe in human potential and in the constant development of our team.
- **Occupational health and safety:** As a responsible employer, we ensure that every member of the team is committed to promoting and creating a working environment that is safe at all times. This approach allows us to maintain ongoing improvement in workplace health and safety.

*You may add the organizational chart to this section.*

## LIST OF CURRENT PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

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*List all of the programs and projects that your organization offers or manages, as well as any community outreach activities.*

*Include services offered to the community and/or partners as well as the location they are offered from if your organization has more than one location.*

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS

*This is where you outline specific qualifications for the organization's volunteers. If the requires background checks for volunteers or certifications such as CPR , this is where to provide those details.*

*This is also where you should explain absence and termination policies, for example:*

Volunteers are sometimes required to be absent from, or late for, their volunteer responsibilities. The organization has provided a procedure for such cases to ensure that all volunteers are treated fairly.

Volunteers are responsible for advising (*indicate how – by telephone, email, text message, ...*) their immediate supervisor/designated staff person of any absence or lateness as soon as possible before the start of the activity so that the necessary replacement arrangements and maintain good continuity of the organization's activities.

If a volunteer is chronically absent from their assigned activities or responsibilities, the organization reserves the right to end the volunteer's formal engagement with the organization.

## OTHER CONDITIONS

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### *Using the Internet and social media*

The Internet and social media may be used during volunteer hours only for purposes of carrying out task-related requirements and responsibilities. When the Internet and social media are used for task-related purposes, volunteers must act in a professional manner while also abiding by the organization's Code of Conduct. It is forbidden to play video games during volunteer hours.

### *Using personal mobile devices*

Using personal mobile devices during volunteer hours is not allowed since doing so could adversely impact your productivity; volunteers may use personal mobile devices on your scheduled breaks.

### *Using computer software*

Computer software must be approved by the management team and be compatible with the technological options chosen by the organization, and must always be accompanied by a legitimate user license.

### *Travel expenses*

When travelling on behalf of the **Name of organization**, as part of your volunteer commitments, you must attempt to use the least expensive form of public or private transportation. When, in the interest of time and efficiency, private automobiles and other more rapid forms of transport can be used, you must have the approval of their supervisor prior to incurring such expenses.

Volunteers required to use their own vehicle for organization business shall submit an expense form for reimbursement on a per kilometre rate (as indicated on expense forms). **The rate is dependent on the Government of Canada and Quebec rates and may fluctuate. Parking costs are reimbursed based on the actual costs incurred.**

### *Meal expenses*

If the volunteer's commitments require that they have a business meal\*, the maximum amounts allocated are:

Breakfast: \$20

Lunch: \$20

Dinner: \$50

Claims in excess of these rates will be reimbursed when warranted and pre-approved by the Executive Director.

\*Meals that are covered as part of activity or meeting attended are not eligible for reimbursement (i.e., a continental breakfast and/or lunch were provided at a conference or activity the volunteer attended).

### *Accommodation expenses*

When overnight stays are necessary for organizational business, you should choose an establishment that is reasonably priced, unless the choice of the hotel is dictated by the event. The cost of accommodations will be covered by the corporation. Volunteers are encouraged to opt for double occupancy whenever possible.

**Name of organization** is responsible for booking the accommodations, except in extenuating circumstances where the volunteer needs to make arrangements at the last minute (example: travelling during a snowstorm, road closures etc.). The original hotel bill must be submitted along with the volunteer's expense form for reimbursement.

If you benefit from the hospitality of an acquaintance, **Name of organization** will reimburse you \$50 per night to compensate for a gift to your host.

### *Dress code*

Name of organization requests that you wear appropriate clothing, according to the situation. Volunteers may dress casual at the office, but if you need to work directly with the organization's partners or community members, you are asked to please present a professional image and dress appropriately.

## CODE OF ETHICS

Our organization has adopted values that will allow us to achieve our growth objectives while also promoting general workplace well-being. These values must be upheld by each and every one of us. Management cannot, therefore, tolerate any conduct that contravenes these organizational values. Below is the **Code of Ethics** by which everyone must abide. We encourage you to inform your supervisor of any conduct that is illegal or contrary to the Code of Ethics. The organization is committed to protecting employees and volunteers against all forms of reprisals.

*Examples of elements that may be included in your organization's Code of Ethics.*

### RESPECT

- Treat all of your colleagues and supervisors the same way, with respect and equality.
- No vexatious conduct, words or actions shall be tolerated, in accordance with our policy on psychological and sexual harassment prevention.
- Show an interest in your colleagues and be a good listener.
- Be courteous, polite and straightforward with your colleagues.
- Respect other people's work areas as well as their knowledge and skills.

### HONESTY

- Honesty vis-à-vis all your workplace activities is essential.
- Theft is not tolerated and may lead to dismissal.
- It is important to avoid placing yourself in a situation of personal conflict of interest vis-à-vis your employment/volunteer obligations.

### PROFESSIONALISM

- Respect the confidentiality of information provided by community members, colleagues or management.
- Project a positive corporate image; any work-related problems must be settled internally rather than outside the organization.
- Employees/Volunteers must pay particular attention to cleanliness and are expected to maintain a workplace-appropriate appearance. We rely on your good judgment to determine what is and is not acceptable, within the bounds of safety and the public image that goes with your responsibilities.

### AUTONOMY

- Show initiative in terms of improving the workplace or the services provided to our members/community.



## RESPONSIBILITY

- Look for solutions to work-related problems and submit these solutions to management.
- Admit your mistakes without looking for excuses.

## WORK TEAM

- Know how to provide mutual support.
- Be sensitive to the needs and requests of your colleagues.
- Be ready to collaborate and offer constructive criticism.

## COMMITMENT

- Show enthusiasm in the workplace.
- Strive to constantly improve your work methods.

## STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

- Abide by management directives.

## ATTENTIVENESS

- Respect the work schedule.
- Be vigilant in performing your tasks.

## LOYALTY

- Refrain from saying anything that might damage the reputation of the organization or management, both within and outside the organization.
- Be vigilant in everything you say so that the people around you will see that you stand in solidarity with your employer/the organization and colleagues.

## ORGANIZATION NAME RULES AND REGULATIONS

**Name of organization** expects volunteers to abide by certain rules and regulations in order to create a positive working environment for everyone.

Volunteers are also required to follow the rules, regulations and guidelines laid out in this Handbook and communicated within the workplace.

*Examples of rules and regulations. You may also add sector-specific rules and regulations related to health and safety standards.*

*Workplace health and safety. As a volunteer, you must:*

- Follow the health and safety regulations.
- Observe the hygiene standards.
- Wear protective equipment when required.
- Immediately report an accident in the workplace to your immediate supervisor.
- Show respect for your colleagues and/or not use abusive or disrespectful language.
- Avoid getting into fights or quarrels, running or shouting.
- Refrain from having a weapon on the organization's property.
- Refrain from having or consuming alcohol or drugs on the organization's property and from working under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Adhere to our policy on psychological and sexual harassment prevention.

*Respect in the workplace setting. As a volunteer, you are not allowed to:*

- Smoke on indoor work premises and within nine metres of the outside doors and windows.
- Gamble on the organization's property.

*Schedule. As a volunteer, you must:*

- Respect the schedule that has been assigned to you.
- Arrive on time for meetings and obligations and return punctually from breaks.

*Company equipment and assets. As a volunteer, you are not allowed to:*

- Use the organization's equipment for personal reasons during work hours. Permission to do so may be granted outside work hours.
- Falsify files, documents or reports.
- Possess or transport any assets belonging to the organization off its property without written authorization.
- Break tools or equipment belonging to the organization.
- Be on the employer's property without authorization or invitation when not on the job.
- Park vehicles anywhere other than in specifically designated areas.
- Engage in fund-raising on the employer's property without prior authorization.

- Post items on the organization's social media accounts without authorization.

The organization expects volunteers to exercise judgment with regard to appropriate work conduct. In order to ensure respect, harmony and safety for everyone in the workplace, volunteers who breach the regulations may face disciplinary action that could lead to dismissal.

Since it is difficult to anticipate and list all situations that might arise in the course of your volunteer work, this section of the handbook makes broad reference to Quebec's *Act Respecting Labour Standards* (Labour Standards Act) and to other applicable employment legislation in Quebec.

## POLICY ON PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION

### 1) Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to affirm the **Organization name's** commitment to preventing and stopping any situation of psychological or sexual harassment within the organization, including any form of discriminatory harassment. It also aims to establish the principles of intervention that are applied within the organization when a complaint of harassment is filed or a situation of harassment is reported to the employer.

### 2) Scope

This policy applies to all personnel, and at all hierarchical levels, including in the following locations and contexts:

- the workplace;
- common areas;
- any other place where people are required to be in the course of their employment (e.g. meetings, training, travel, social activities organized by the employer);
- communications by any means, technological or otherwise.

### 3) Definition

The *Labour Standards Act* defines psychological harassment as:

"Vexatious conduct in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, words, actions or gestures that affects an employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment for the employee. For greater certainty, psychological harassment includes such conduct when it takes the form of words, acts or gestures of a sexual nature". See Annex 1

A single serious act of conduct may also constitute psychological harassment if it causes such harm and produces a continuous harmful effect on the employee."

The definition includes discriminatory harassment related to one of the grounds set out in the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*.

The notion of harassment must be distinguished from other situations such as interpersonal conflict, work-related stress, difficult professional constraints or the normal exercise of management rights (management of attendance at work, work organization, disciplinary measures, etc.).

#### **4) Policy Statement**

**Organization name** does not tolerate or condone any form of psychological or sexual harassment in its organization:

- By managers towards employees;
- Between colleagues;
- By employees towards their superiors;
- By any person associated with it: representatives, client, supplier, visitor, volunteer or other.

Any behaviour related to harassment may result in the imposition of disciplinary measures that may go as far as dismissal.

**Organization name** undertakes to take reasonable steps to:

- Provide a work environment free of all forms of harassment in order to protect the dignity as well as the psychological and physical integrity of individuals;
- disseminate the policy in such a way as to make it accessible to all its employees, by posting in a place accessible to all staff on the server; as well as in paper form if requested;
- prevent or, as appropriate, stop harassment by:
  - Setting up a procedure for handling complaints and reports related to situations of psychological or sexual harassment;
  - Ensuring that the policy is understood and respected by all persons;
  - Promoting respect between individuals.

#### **5) Expectations of Staff**

It is the responsibility of all personnel to adopt behaviour that promotes the maintenance of an environment free of psychological or sexual harassment.

## 6) Procedure for Handling Complaints and Reports

Whenever possible, a person who believes they are being subjected to psychological or sexual harassment should first inform the person concerned that their behaviour is undesirable and that the person must stop it. They should also note the date and details of the incidents as well as the steps they have taken to try to resolve the situation.

If this initial intervention is not desired or if the harassment continues, the employee should report the situation to one of the responsible persons designated by the employer so that the problem behaviours can be identified, and the means required to resolve the situation. <sup>See Annex 2</sup>

A complaint may be made verbally or in writing. The behaviour complained of and the details of the incidents must be described as precisely as possible, so that action can be taken quickly to put an end to the situation.

The responsible persons designated by the employer are as follows:

Name of person (most often the Executive Director)

Telephone number & email address

The person who witnesses a situation of harassment is also invited to report it to one of the responsible persons mentioned above.

## 7) Principles of Intervention

Organization name undertakes to:

- Deal with the complaint or report as soon as possible;
- Preserve the dignity and privacy of the persons concerned, i.e. the person who made the complaint, the person who is the subject of the complaint and witnesses;
- Ensure that all persons concerned are treated humanely, fairly and objectively and that they are provided with adequate support;
- Protect the confidentiality of the intervention process, including information related to the complaint or report;
- Offer to meet with the persons concerned, with their agreement, to resolve the situation;
- If necessary, conduct a prompt and objective investigation, or assign responsibility for it to an external party. The persons concerned will be informed of the outcome of this process. If the investigation does not establish that unacceptable behaviour has occurred, all material evidence will be retained for two years and destroyed thereafter;
- Take all reasonable steps to resolve the situation, including appropriate disciplinary action.

Any person who commits a breach of the harassment policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. The choice of the applicable measure will take into account the seriousness and consequences of the action(s) as well as the previous record of the person who committed them.

A person who lays false accusations with the intention of causing harm is also subject to appropriate disciplinary measures.

In dealing with and resolving a situation involving harassment in the workplace, no one must suffer prejudice or be subject to reprisals by the employer.

**N.B.** A non-unionized person who believes that he or she is suffering or has suffered psychological or sexual harassment in connection with his or her work may also file a complaint at any time directly with the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST). The maximum time limit for doing so is two (2) years from the last manifestation of harassment. The complaint may be filed online at <https://www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/in-case-of/psychological-or-sexual-harassment/you-are-an-employee/index.html> or by telephone at 1 844 838 0808. The fact that an employee chooses to first contact their employer will not prevent them from also filing a complaint with CNESST.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTORY

*Include telephone numbers for staff members or volunteer leaders in case of emergencies or reporting workplace or activity incidents, etc. You can also list other essential phone numbers, group tools, and websites that will help volunteers keep track of their tasks or schedules.*

## **Recognising Psychological or Sexual Harassment**

The *Labour Standards Act* provides criteria for determining what can be considered psychological or sexual harassment either:

- vexatious (hurtful, humiliating) conduct;
- that occurs repeatedly or in the course of a single serious act;
- in a hostile (aggressive, threatening) or unwanted manner;
- that violates the dignity or integrity of the person;
- resulting in a toxic (harmful, detrimental) work environment for the person.

These conditions include words, acts or gestures of a sexual nature.

Discrimination based on any of the grounds listed in section 10 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* may also constitute harassment: race, colour, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, disability or the use of any means to palliate a disability.

For example, the following conduct could be considered vexatious conduct constituting harassment if it meets all the criteria of the law.

### **Behaviours that may be related to psychological harassment**

- Bullying, cyberbullying, threats, isolation;
- Offensive or defamatory words or gestures about a person or their work;
- Verbal abuse;
- Disparagement.

### **Behaviours that may be related to sexual harassment**

- Any form of unwanted attention or advance with sexual connotations, for example :
  - insistent solicitation;
  - looks, kisses or touching;
  - sexist insults, rude language.
- Sexual comments, jokes or images with sexual connotations by any means, technological or otherwise.

**Responsible Persons Designated by the Employer**

Organization name

- will ensure that the designated responsible persons will be properly trained and have the necessary tools at their disposal for the handling and follow-up of the complaint or report;
- free up working time so that the designated responsible persons can carry out the functions assigned to them.

The following persons are designated to act as persons responsible for the application of Organization name's Policy on the Prevention of Psychological or Sexual Harassment at Work:

Person's name, Executive Director

581-398-4098 - ed@regdevnet.ca

These responsible persons should mainly:

- inform staff about the company's policy on psychological or sexual harassment;
- intervening informally to try to resolve situations;
- receive complaints and reports;
- recommend the nature of the actions to be taken to put an end to the harassment.

**Commitment of those responsible**

I hereby declare my commitment to abide by this policy and assure that my intervention will be impartial, respectful and confidential.

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Responsible person's signature

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Date



**INSERT YOUR LOGO HERE**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HAVING READ THE VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, attest that I have read the Volunteer Handbook and its various components, including the following:

- Role and Responsibilities of Volunteers
- **Organization name** Rules and Regulations
- **Organization name** Code of Ethics
- **Organization name** Policy on Psychological and Sexual Harassment Prevention

I acknowledge having received all the relevant information that I needed in order to have a good understanding of the content or scope of this Handbook.

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**Volunteer's signature**

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**Date**

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**Executive Director's signature**

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**Date**

*Please sign this letter and give it to your supervisor.*