

Volunteer Management Resource: Exiting a Volunteer

There are many reasons that your organisation may need to exit a volunteer. Perhaps they are no longer able to perform the role, cannot safely complete the required tasks, or are not aligned with the values or vision of the organisation. Exiting a volunteer is sometimes necessary, but not always an easy process...

There are a variety of reasons why a volunteer may need to be moved on, and attrition can be beneficial to organisations. Perhaps they can no longer perform the duties to the standard required, they do not observe boundaries, are burnt out, are disruptive to the team dynamic, their values do not align with those of the organisation or simply it may be time for them to move on or retire.

Whatever the reason, once you have identified that they are no longer effective in the role – it is time to take action. In the first instance consider if there is another role within your organisation that they may be more suited to. If not, or if they do not fit in with your organisation, it is time to move the volunteer on.

Have the conversation sooner rather than later.

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

- Understand the message before you deliver it, it pays to talk it through first, perhaps with your manager or an appropriate colleague.
- Acknowledge their service particularly if 'retiring' a volunteer
- Be honest, clear and concise
- Protect their feelings and dignity
- Don't make it personal, but do acknowledge their feelings
- Stick to the facts - remember the purpose of the meeting.

It may be useful to have the job description on hand to help focus on the requirements and the volunteer's ability to perform the required tasks.

Starting with 'I' statements can be a useful non-threatening way to address your concerns e.g. 'I have noticed...' or 'I have become aware...'. It

sounds a lot warmer than 'You have done...'

Sometimes you might find the volunteer is relieved, they didn't want to resign/quit because they didn't want to let you down.

Generally your options for exiting a volunteer from their role are:

Reassign - Find another role or different responsibilities. This may be within the same team or not depending on the fit and dynamic. Volunteers who have been with your team for some time may be a great resource to assist with the training or support of new volunteers.

Refer - You may have identified another role or organisation that the volunteer is better suited to. Alternatively you can refer them to your local Volunteer Centre.

Retire - Are you holding onto a volunteer where their role is no longer needed? Have changes to their circumstances, health or abilities impacted on their ability to carry out their duties. Might they potentially put your clients and/or organisation at risk? The time may have come for retirement and you will need to let them know that you no longer require their services.

Release - Make sure that you preserve the volunteers' dignity and self worth as much as possible. Thank them for their service and acknowledge their contribution.

Consider letting the volunteer determine the date they finish, within a defined time frame, giving them some control over the process. Eg, "could you think about a date within the next two months that you would like to have as your last day."

It is never easy to have an 'exit' conversation with someone. Be prepared, and be kind to yourself and to the volunteer.