



Dealing with Volunteer Issues or Incidents

Source: The Stop Community Food Centre

While issues and incidents aren't common, it's important to have systems in place to address them when they do arise, and more so, to try to prevent them from happening in the first place. This document provides insights into how The Stop does both.

How to deal with Volunteer issues

Most issues that arise with volunteers are covered in the Volunteer Code of Conduct which volunteers are required to sign before they begin their position. Be sure to reiterate the relevant policy clearly and check that all volunteers understand. Tell them the consequences of noncompliance.

Should an issue arise, seek help from the Volunteer Coordinator in the first instance or management if necessary. In most cases, it is better to discuss the issue directly with the volunteer and other parties (if involved). Listen to all sides of the story, and make a clear statement of the expectations of them as volunteers.

If the issue cannot be resolved through discussion and support from the Volunteer Coordinator, then the Volunteer Coordinator or Program Coordinator should inform management and strategise with them about how to find resolution. Any instances that involve severe misconduct must be made known to management through an incident report.

The role of the Volunteer program

The Volunteer program has an open door policy for volunteers and staff to discuss any issues that relate to volunteers at 1884. These issues must be brought to the attention of the Program Coordinator who has the responsibility to deal with it.

If the issue is between a staff person and a volunteer, encourage the volunteer or staff member to approach the person in question directly with the concern. If they are not able or willing to do this, pass the issue to the Program Coordinator who will deal with it directly.

Terminating volunteers

As with any job, it is acceptable to fire a volunteer who cannot or will not follow standard policies as laid out in our Volunteer Code of Conduct, or if they prove unable to do the job. It is the Program Coordinator's prerogative as to whether a volunteer gets a warning or is asked to leave immediately.

We obviously prefer to not fire people. It's important to look for ways that we could improve on our end, perhaps through better initial screening, more appropriate task allocation, more support on the job or a quicker intervention when it was clear the allocation was not working.

If a significant incident has occurred involving a volunteer, write an Incident Report and inform both the Volunteer Coordinator and management.

If you are getting a number of unsuitable volunteers, consider writing a more specific job description to more clearly specify the requirements and expectations of the position.

Grounds for dismissal

The following is a list of grounds for dismissal of a volunteer:

- drugs or alcohol use on the job;
- theft;
- violence or intimidation of other volunteers, staff or participants;
- discrimination or rudeness to other volunteers, staff or participants; and,
- favouritism of certain participants over others.

Dismissal procedure

Follow the steps below to dismiss a volunteer.

| Step | Action |
|------|---|
| 1 | Speak to the volunteer about their behaviour, referring to the Volunteer Code of Conduct which they previously signed. Explain why their behaviour is unacceptable. |
| 2 | Provide a warning and give a clear explanation of how the behaviour must change. Ask for their agreement to this. |
| 3 | If there is no change to the behaviour ask them to leave. Note: It is very important that the volunteer understands they are welcome to continue using all of our programs (Food Bank, Drop In) even though we cannot use them as a volunteer any more. |



Harassment and discrimination

The anti-harassment, anti-discrimination policy is at the core of all of the programs at The Stop. Volunteers may face harassment or discrimination and should be familiarized with the policies and process.

Anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies

The anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies at The Stop are as follows:

The Stop will not tolerate prejudice, discrimination or harassment of any kind.

The Stop will actively work to redress inequality among people at The Stop.

The Stop will challenge inequities within the community.

All volunteers, staff, board members and participants at The Stop will:

- Work to ensure that people are treated equally with respect
- Work to ensure that people feel safe and welcome
- Work to address discrimination based on race, class, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation, status, or cultural background
- Work to ensure that incidents of ill-treatment or injustice that negatively impact a person or a group of people are reported to a staff person

If the harassing or discriminating actions are not severe, the perpetrator should be given some time to stop whatever it is that they are doing.

If the harassing or discriminating actions are severe the perpetrator can be banned from the programs for a period of time and/or fired from their volunteer position.

Volunteers who experience harassment or discrimination may address the issue with the perpetrator directly if they wish, or they can seek support from their supervisor. In situations where the harassment or discrimination is serious volunteers should let a staff person know.

All people involved, whether it is the person being harassed, the harasser, friends, support people and/or staff, must keep information about the incident as confidential as possible.

If a volunteer sees someone being harassed or discriminated against, they must tell a staff person immediately.