



## Program Staff Responsibilities for Volunteers

Source: The Stop Community Food Centre

*While the Volunteer Coordinator at The Stop helps to orient and accept new volunteers, a great deal of responsibility is placed on program staff to supervise, support and guide volunteers, and indeed this is the case at other Community Food Centres. This document addresses the role of program staff in ensuring a positive volunteer experience.*

### Staff training

It is the responsibility of the Program Coordinator to train all program staff to manage volunteers appropriately. This includes:

- ensuring that the respect policy applies to volunteers as well as all others in the organization's environment (respect by volunteers and to volunteers by staff and participants) ;
- giving clear instructions;
- giving on the job training;
- effectively delegating to ensure volunteers are kept busy but not overworked;
- troubleshooting volunteer workloads; and,
- dealing with conflict and other issues.

### Volunteer welcome and orientation

A welcome and orientation are very important for new volunteers. This includes an orientation to the space and people, to health and safety issues and to the beginning of your working relationship.

- **Orientation** - Welcome them to your program and provide a tour and orientation to the space, the staff and other volunteers on their shift.
- **Health and Safety** - Volunteers must learn the health and safety aspects of the job as soon as they arrive. Consider having a hand out on health and safety in your program for them to read or have another volunteer go through it with them before they begin their first shift.
- **Building a working relationship** - Learn their name. Take an interest in them. Explain aspects of the program as you work together. Tell them to come to you and other staff if they have any questions or feedback about the program.

### Task allocation

Match the job to the person. Consider how long they have been in the program, their capacity to learn new tasks (as you assess it), their physical capacity to do the task and the difficulty of the task. Until you know them better, check back with them regularly to see how they are doing. Consider starting them on



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easier tasks and building up to more difficult ones. Provide a buddy who can spend time introducing them to various tasks and share their knowledge of the program.

### **On the job training**

On the job training can be done by staff or by using a buddy system with another volunteer. Follow the steps below to train on the job.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Describe the job to the volunteer.
2	Show them the job by doing it yourself.
3	Watch them do the job and provide feedback.
4	Ask them if they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have understood</li><li>• are comfortable doing this task</li><li>• have any questions.</li></ul>
5	Tell them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• when to stop (when there are no more eggs, when you are tired)</li><li>• who to ask if they need help</li><li>• what to do next.</li></ul>

## Health and safety

Ensure that all volunteers are safe and comfortable doing their tasks.

- **Environmental risks** - Check that their environment is safe and clear of obstacles. If there are obstacles, point these out to the volunteers. Warn about any potential dangers. For example, “Be careful if the floor gets wet. I’ll show you where the mop is if this happens”.
- **Safe working practices** - Provide as much literature as necessary to help volunteers understand how to remain safe in our environment (instructions on how to lift, safe knife handling, safe food handling techniques, conflict prevention).

## Encouragement

Beginning any new job is stressful. Because new volunteers may be nervous, shy or anxious they may make a mistake. You can help them through these early jitters by understanding how they may be feeling and providing encouragement. Say thank you and praise their work as an individual and as part of a team.

## Support on the job

Assess the new volunteer’s abilities on the job. Check that they are a good match for the job (it may be too hard or too easy). Check that they have not been given too much work or too little. Either can be discouraging for a volunteer.

Ask the volunteer how they like their position, or if they have any problems, questions or concerns. Tell them to speak to you if anything arises. If they are not happy, see if they can be reallocated within the program or go back to the Volunteer Coordinator to see if they can be reallocated to another program.

## Volunteer issues

Watch new volunteer for indications that they are unsafe in the environment, either with equipment, food, other volunteers, staff or participants. In all instances address issues quickly, whether it be:

- conflict with staff, other volunteers or participants;
- theft;
- poor quality of work;
- drug or alcohol use on the job;
- inappropriate attitude to staff or participants or volunteers; or,
- poor attendance or poor punctuality.



## Recognition

Volunteer recognition can take many forms. It is most effective if Program staff use all of the methods available to them. Do give ongoing praise to volunteers, provide individual volunteer profiles or team profiles for a volunteer newsletter or organization newsletter (paper or electronic).

Make your volunteers aware of the Good Food Market membership and sign them up if they are eligible. Make full use of Holiday season cards which will be provided by the Volunteer Program. It is important that recognition is consistent or balanced across programs therefore program staff should liaise with the Volunteer Coordinator around newsletter items and recognition events.