



Association for Agency-Based Counselling  
& Psychotherapy in Ireland Ltd

*This document is only to be used as a guideline for organisations*

*Should you require any further support or have any queries please contact (AACPI  
National Director)*

[www.aacpi.ie](http://www.aacpi.ie)

## **Guidelines- Volunteer Policy**

Registered Charity No. CHY

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## 1. General Principles

The (organisation) regards volunteers as a valuable resource and encourages them to get involved at all levels of the organisation and within all appropriate activities. We aim to train, support and supervise our volunteers to the best of our abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise.

### 1.1 Eligibility

The (organisation) will consider involving anyone as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the organisation and may only be placed if their needs as volunteers match the needs of the organisation. No person who has a conflict of interest with any aspect of the organisation will be accepted as a volunteer.

### 1.2 Relationship with paid staff

Volunteers are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff, not as a substitute for them. Conversely, The (organisation) does not accept the services of its paid



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staff as volunteers. Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships.

### 1.3 Working conditions

Volunteers are treated as full members of the organisations team. They are treated as fairly as paid staff and are included in the organisation's functions and decision-making processes wherever practical. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites and have access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.

### 1.4 Working times

Working times are negotiated between the line manager and the volunteer and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their line manager as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

### 1.5 Appropriate behaviour

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of the organisation and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of the organisation to the outside world.

### 1.6 Representation of The Organisation

Volunteers must seek prior approval from their line manager before undertaking anything which might significantly affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

### 1.7 Confidentiality

The organisation respects the volunteer's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while volunteering with the organisation



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## 1.8 Records

A system of records is maintained on all volunteers, including their 'Volunteer Position Description', duties performed, evaluation of work, etc. Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff records.

## 1.9 Service at the discretion of The Organisation

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of the organisation. The organisation may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteers' relationships with the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with the organisation. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

## 2 Recruitment

### 2.1 Role descriptions and person specifications

Like paid staff, volunteers require a clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description should be developed for each voluntary opportunity. This must include a title of the volunteering role, starting and finishing dates, hours and place of work, name of supervisor and tasks to be undertaken. If appropriate, a brief person specification may also be drawn up. The role description may be amended in joint agreement with the volunteer and the line manager. A copy of the final version must be given to the volunteer before commencing voluntary work as it will be used in supervision and evaluation sessions. Role descriptions must define a time limit (no longer than one year) for voluntary involvement, after which time they are reviewed, and updated if appropriate.

### 2.2 Applications

Potential volunteers may apply speculatively. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with the organisation's equal opportunities policy. All volunteers are required to complete an application form or provide a CV.



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### 2.3 Interviews

If necessary, applications are short listed and suitable candidates are invited to attend an informal chat with the line manager, to ascertain their interest in and suitability for the role. Written records of all interviews are kept. All unsuccessful candidates are thanked for applying and encouraged to reapply for other volunteering opportunities, either currently or in the future.

### 2.4 Checks for suitability

References are always taken up. Other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications). Volunteers will be asked for their consent in advance of the intention to make these checks.

### 2.5 Appointment

Formal appointments are made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary checks have proved acceptable. No placements are made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteer's supervisor can be met.

### 2.6 Probation

All placements are subject to an initial trial period of one month. At the end of this period, the line manager meets with the volunteer to discuss the volunteer's suitability for their role. At this point, volunteers may continue in their current role, be reassigned to more suitable role, or be asked to leave.

## 3. Training

### 3.1 Induction

All volunteers should receive induction when they begin voluntary work with the organisation. This consists of a general introduction to the organisation, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role.

### 3.2 On-the-job training

Volunteers receive initial and ongoing on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training must be appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.



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### 3.3 Additional training

Volunteers are actively encouraged to identify training courses, seminars, conferences, and so on, which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development. Approval to undertake such training free-of-charge must be given by the CEO and this will only be done if sufficient funds are available. Priority is given to long standing volunteers and those who have received little or no training in the past.

If training was paid for by the organisation, any course or other materials belong to the organisation and must be filed in the organisation's office. All volunteers are required to submit a short report outlining the content and usefulness of the course or meeting attended. Training information must be disseminated to relevant people within the organisation.

## 4. Supervision

### 4.1 Lines of communication

Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist formally and informally. Volunteers must have access to all appropriate information, memos, materials and meetings relevant to their assignments. Volunteers must be consulted on all decisions which would substantially affect their volunteering conditions.

### 4.2 Supervisors

Each volunteer must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day management of that volunteer. The supervisor's role is normally taken on by the respective line manager of the area in which the volunteer is working.

### 4.3 Supervision sessions

Volunteers and their supervisors should meet regularly to review their work, based on their role descriptions. These review the performance of the volunteer, suggest any changes in work style, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the line manager, convey appreciation to the volunteer, and ascertain the continued interest of the



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volunteer in serving in his or her role. The sessions also serve as an opportunity to plan future tasks.

#### 4.4 Corrective action

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following evaluation sessions. Examples include the organisation of training for an identified training need, the reassignment of a volunteer, or the dismissal of a volunteer.

#### 4.5 Termination of placement

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be asked to leave the organisation. The procedures for terminating a volunteer placement are as follows; namely, an allegation is put to them, they are allowed an opportunity to be heard, informal and formal processes ensue, before a decision is made to terminate.

Grounds for immediate dismissal include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct, being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol), theft, misuse of equipment and materials, abuse of clients and co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide by the organisation's policies and procedures, and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

#### 4.6 Concerns and grievances

If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by the CEO and if necessary, the Staff and Employment sub-group of the Board. The Chairperson of the sub-group will discuss the issue as soon as practical after receiving a written complaint, and take appropriate action. The Chairperson of the organisation's Board of directors makes any ultimate decision.

#### 4.7 Exit interviews

Where possible, informal exit interviews are held with any volunteers who are leaving the organisation, either because they have reached the end of their project, or are leaving for some other reason. Interviews are usually conducted with the volunteer's ex-supervisor and written records are kept. The session should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and what suggestions they offer to improve the way the organisation





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operates. The offer of a personal reference for future employment etc. is made to each volunteer.

## 5. Support and recognition

### 5.1 Support

The organisation endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. Support forms part of the regular supervision sessions and gives volunteers a safe setting in which to express themselves, let off steam and discuss how they feel about volunteering. The line manager will always try to be available to volunteers who require support in other areas which are affecting their performance.

### 5.2 Recognition

Volunteers provide a unique service to the organisation, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. The organisation's staff are responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organisation. The CEO is responsible for ensuring that more formalised recognition takes place at key times, such as International Volunteer Day, anniversaries of involvement, Christmas and birthdays.

### 5.3 Expenses

Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge, so it is essential that the organisation offers to reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses they incur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the organisation. The costs of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage those on low incomes, particularly as these are often the very people who have the time to volunteer. Current rates and procedures for claiming expenses are set out by the CEO and publicised to all volunteers.

### 5.4 Insurance

Insurance is provided by the organisation to cover all volunteers working on behalf and at the direction of the organisation?





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