

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Lotus Outreach Australia Incorporated

2014

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1. Introduction

Lotus outreach is a not-for-profit organisation that encourages the full involvement of volunteers in its operations. This is based on our belief that volunteering is a practical and productive way to engage the community with our organisation and in doing so improves our services and impact as volunteers bring a range of skills, experience and diversity.

2. Policy Statement

This policy sets out the vision, direction and operational framework for involving volunteers in LOA. Its intent is to clarify LOAs underlying volunteer philosophy and to establish a policy and procedural framework that will provide direction and structure to the way volunteers are managed.

3. LOA Volunteer principles

The following principles will guide LOA in the management of volunteers and ensure that LOA comply with the standards relating to volunteers.

1. Volunteering is always a matter of choice:
 - a. LOA understands that volunteering is always an individual choice and that through the action it can be distinguished from other forms of unpaid work or obligations that people have little choice around.
2. Volunteers are treated with respect and gratitude for their work:
 - a. LOA recognises the important contribution that volunteers bring to the organisation and endeavour to respect and value their work and opinions. Each volunteer is shown gratitude for their work and efforts.
3. Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work:
 - a. LOA values the work of its volunteers but strongly reiterates that any volunteer work at LOA is not paid.
4. Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers:
 - a. This principle is to emphasise that volunteer work and paid work are essentially different, and that volunteers should not be exploited by placing them in a role that LOA formerly deemed as a paid role. This principle also ensures the safeguarding of the relationship between paid and volunteer staff to ensure the critical support of both paid and volunteer staff by LOA.
5. Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others:
 - a. Through the act of volunteering, individuals respect the rights, dignity and culture of others. LOA ensures that all activities undertaken by volunteers are fulfilling and relevant to their understanding of different cultures and communities.
6. Volunteering promotes human rights and equality:

- a. This principle highlights the main aim of volunteering. LOA works to ensure that any work conducted by a volunteer in providing services to others is not an end in itself but is a means to promote human rights and equality.
7. Volunteering benefits the organisation, communities that we work with and the volunteer:
 - a. Volunteering at LOA works to contribute to a positive outcome for the communities that we work with overseas, and that through engaging in volunteer work, the volunteer is achieving a positive result for LOA, our partners and themselves.
8. Organisational commitment to this policy:
 - a. LOA will ensure that staff will be briefed on the nature and purpose of this policy and how to operationalise it. LOA staff have made a commitment to abide by the policy and its procedures at all times. This policy will be updated on a needs basis and circulated to staff accordingly.

4. Definitions

In this policy the term “volunteering” refers to Volunteering Australia’s definition of Formal Volunteering:

“Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place through not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- To be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- Of the volunteer’s own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial payment; and
- In designated volunteer positions only.”

5. Policy

5.1 The rights and responsibilities of volunteers:

Unlike employees, volunteers are not covered by award conditions or work place arrangements. But they do have rights, some of which are protected by legislation and some of which are moral obligations.

Those rights are:

- Work in a healthy and safe environment as per occupational safety and health legislation.
- Be interviewed and employed in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation.
- Be given truthful and accurate information about the organisation.
- Be reimbursed for authorised out-of-pocket expenses incurred on behalf of LOA.
- Not do work for an employee during industrial disputes.

- Have a job description and agreed working hours.
- Be provided with orientation to the organisation.
- Be provided with sufficient training to do the job.
- Be given clear guidelines on who they are to report to and speak with in case of a complaint or incident.
- Be provided with a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for direct management of that volunteer.

Equally, volunteers have the responsibility to:

- Work in a reliable manner and within the job description provided.
- Sign and comply with all LOA policies, including the LOA Child Protection Policy, PSEAH Policy and this Volunteer Policy.
- Present a good image to the community as a representative of LOA. Volunteers must dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties.
- Inform LOA in writing if they wish to leave LOA. This should be done at a minimum of 2 weeks prior to leaving.
- Manage their tasks and duties in a time efficient way.
- Seek assistance, guidance and information on any aspect of their role or activities, which are unclear.
- Not provide comment to the media unless authorised in writing by LOA.
- Work in places and at times as mutually agreed.

5.2 The rights and responsibilities of LOA:

LOA has the right to:

- Recruit and refuse volunteers on the basis of their competency for the role.
- Expect volunteers to work within the parameters of the job description.
- Expect volunteers to complete the tasks assigned to them within the agreed timeframe and standards.
- Evaluate the performance of volunteers and reassign, redirect or terminate volunteer involvement as deemed appropriate.

LOA has the responsibility to:

- Plan and facilitate induction, orientation and training for volunteers.
- Respect volunteers for their contribution and commitment.
- Ensure that expectations and parameters are known, understood and maintained by employees and volunteers.
- Ensure volunteers are aware of LOA policies.

LOA is committed to:

- Treating each volunteer with respect and dignity during their placement with LOA.

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- LOA volunteers are treated as valuable team members, and are advised of opportunities to participate in decision-making; and in doing so are recognised for their contributions.
 - Volunteers are provided with a healthy and safe workplace.
 - Ensuring all volunteers are as far as possible protected from harm, and shall be relieved of liability for acts performed in the discharge of their volunteer functions.

6. Screening of volunteers

LOA will conduct “screening” on all prospective volunteers prior to appointment. This includes verbal referee checks and targeted behaviour-based interview questions. Volunteers will declare any conflicts of interest according to the Conflicts of Interest Policy. Police checks are performed for volunteers that will be in contact with children.

7. Child Protection and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

In order to minimize the risk to children, and other staff or volunteers, LOA will employ a rigorous recruitment process and it is mandatory for all LOA volunteers to read and indicate their agreement with the LOA Child Protection Policy and PSEAH Policy.

8. Corrective action and dismissal

In some situations, corrective action may be taken following an evaluation. Examples of corrective action include the requirement of additional training, reassignment of the volunteer to a different position, suspension or dismissal.

No volunteer will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the matter with their supervisor.

Volunteers have a right to access the channels described in the Complaints Policy.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.