

VOLUNTEERING IN AGED CARE SETTINGS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: GOOD PRACTICE DURING COVID-19 AND BEYOND

GUIDE FOR STAFF WHO WORK ALONGSIDE VOLUNTEERS

This guide is designed to inform staff who working alongside volunteers in our organisations. It is hoped this will assist with better understanding the role and contribution of volunteers.

Important: this is a generic guide based on data collected from volunteers and volunteer managers in a range of organisations. It is important that you check with your superior or your organisations' volunteer manager if you have questions about any of the contents.

Key COVID-19 Takeaways for Staff

- Volunteering is a major contributor to person-centred care
- You play an important role in keeping volunteers engaged
- You are urged to be friendly, welcoming and supportive
- Volunteers may need to ask you to do something they cannot do
- Are you clear about what volunteers ARE and are not allowed to do?
- Volunteers need to be vaccinated too
- Volunteers may need staff help during lockdowns – organisations know this
- Your organisation would like to hear from you if you have concerns about any volunteers

About Volunteers: A Volunteer is someone who gives their time freely to contribute to the wellbeing of aged care clients. Volunteers are not paid. Their roles include: visiting clients on a regular basis; assisting with recreation activities like arts and craft, music and art therapy; driving a bus to take clients on outings; assisting with church services or pastoral care visits; driving clients to and from medical appointments; helping clients to write letters to family and friends or to write their life history. Some may speak the first language of a client and share memories in their own language; they may help residents to learn how to use computers or tablets so they can talk to family who may live too far away to visit regularly; or help them to listen to music or watch movies. Volunteers may (by arrangement) bring their dog or other pet (perhaps chickens!) into your workplace

to spend time with residents; or they may play an instrument for resident singalongs.

Complementary roles: Above all, volunteers are there to offer social support, offer them some company or a service, like driving, or one on one attention for a short time each week or so. Theirs is not a paid 'care' role and should not conflict with paid roles but complement them and add to the level of care or service provided.

Remember, they are not 'just' volunteers. They can make a big difference to individual clients through social interaction which can help to reduce the sense of isolation that many clients in aged care settings experience. They play an important role in contributing to the quality of life of your clients, supporting your organisation's service provision and the success of the person-centred aged care model. You play a key role in keeping volunteers engaged and helping clients

Volunteers are trained: Volunteers are individually interviewed by the volunteer manager as part of the volunteer program, are expected to undertake training and are carefully matched with a client or an activity. Volunteers recruited directly to your organisation, or who are part of another organisation, will have received appropriate information on what they can and cannot do as volunteers. CVS volunteers, for example, have to agree to and sign a memorandum of understanding before being accepted as volunteer visitors.

Volunteers also benefit: Volunteers choose to volunteer and enjoy giving their time to helping others in an aged care setting. They may also enjoy the benefits of volunteering in the form of regular social connection or undertaking useful activities to occupy their time and being part of a community. The personal benefits of volunteering are often as great as the assistance offered.

Supported volunteering: Some volunteers may be supported in their volunteering by their own support workers. Volunteers with a disability may have some other physical requirements to enable their volunteering in your aged care setting. This may be organised by the volunteer manager in consultation with you and specific tasks may be allocated for these volunteers



Employability: Volunteering can be a pathway to employment and you should encourage volunteers who are seeking experience for employment to be clear about their intentions. That way you can point them to organisational policies about referee reports, skills acquisition and applying for jobs in your organisation. (This includes students who are seeking to supplement their resume for post-graduation employment.)

Who is your onsite volunteer manager? If you have concerns or queries about volunteer behaviour/actions, these should be directed to them for them to take appropriate action.

COVID-19

Volunteers are expected to comply with vaccination requirements and organisations are responsible for checking Government Directions for the latest requirements.

During COVID-19 lockdowns: During COVID-19 restriction periods, new forms of volunteering developed including sending letters to residents, phone calls, visiting through windows and using computers to converse or play games from afar.

The assistance of onsite staff is important to the success of these activities and is appreciated by both clients and volunteers, but if the level of assistance requested interferes with your role you may need to chat to your line manager.

Help them feel welcome: While volunteers are not employees, they do enjoy being greeted in a friendly fashion and made to feel welcome, and a quick chat goes a long way. This helps them to feel part of the place and also helps you to know why they are there (for example, for security reasons). They know you are busy – but it helps to feel welcome.

Often regulars: You will probably get used to seeing volunteers onsite on a regular basis. If you see a volunteer at the door, please let them in and, if necessary, see if they need any help to do the requisite sign in/check in/temperature check etc. Volunteers may need to sign out at the end of their visit and please let them out if you are come across them at a locked exit or point them in the right direction for the approved exit door!

Need to follow protocols: If you see a volunteer visitor not following current protocols, a quick reminder about current infection control like using

hand sanitiser, face masks, is appropriate. Volunteers will normally wear a badge with their name and organisation on it.

Understand confidentiality but might need support: Volunteers understand there are confidentiality clauses and protections in place that limit their knowledge of a client’s health and personal business. This is important. Sometimes, however, they may be upset if they have turned up for a regular visit to find their client has become too sick to visit, passed away or been transferred. You may like to suggest they seek support from their co-ordinator.

VULNERABLE CLIENTS

Volunteers receive training about ‘boundaries’ when they begin their role. They are advised as part of their training what they can and cannot do – no lifting clients or feeding, for instance. If you notice a volunteer making a mistake or doing the wrong thing, please alert your supervisor who will approach them.

Volunteers may act as a neutral friend for clients, but they are not official advocates for their clients and should report any misgivings to their volunteer manager for clarification/further investigation.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Volunteers and staff come from diverse backgrounds and empathy, equity and inclusion are vital to provide optimum whole person-centred care in aged care settings. Ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion for all people is a key tenet of person-centred care. It is especially important to pay attention to diverse needs in aged care settings including identifying and providing appropriate volunteers to visit and support individual clients and groups. For instance, options for volunteers with a disability, those who need wheelchairs or other support should be explored and encouraged.



This resource can be downloaded from www.volunteeringwa.org.au/agedcare