

*NOTES FROM MEETING*

**Practical strategies that work to minimise conflict in volunteer programs**

- Open door – willingness to listen/talk/be accessible
- Clear job descriptions – responsibilities outlined
- Use (VQ) Code of Practice / ethics / conduct / grievance process
- Orientation including sign off on code of practice/ ethics etc and volunteer agreement
- Training including volunteer policy/ agreement – include possible areas of risk and conflict and what to do in case of conflict
- Information session – address expectations – present options to proceed with grievance or not
- Interviews and selection process
- Regular briefings, consultations, team meetings and training
- Team of staff to deal with different people / personalities
- Be clear on commitment – OK if you can't come - phone and let organization know
- Workplace policy and provide training on good working relationships – 'zero tolerance' to harassment, bullying etc.
- Clear guidelines on who deals with conflict – grievance policy and process that includes volunteers
- Everyone has volunteer handbook
- Review with new recruits after 4 weeks with option to change roles
- Job descriptions – identifying tasks and areas of responsibility
- Build strong relationships – model organisational code of conduct at all levels of organisation
- Value experience of volunteers – include volunteer in decision making and planning
- Use cooperative action plan to renew volunteers commitment and offer personal development
- Opportunities to de-brief and give feedback – also provides recognition and support
- Provide feedback when decisions are made
- Skill up paid staff to work effectively with volunteers (be clear about paid and volunteer roles)
- Take time out – create an environment that conflict can be managed in – win/win
- Involve volunteers in problem solving – team of volunteers to whom individuals can take issues – built into grievance policy

### **Practical strategies to deal with conflict in volunteer programs**

- One-to-one in a mutually safe and private environment – NOT over phone
- Depending on issue bring both sides of conflict together in mediated dialogue.
- Need solution – focus and closure (how to move forward)
- Need to identify and address THE REAL ISSUE behind the conflict
- Address issues that could become a conflict before it occurs
- Look out for 'build up' of conflict before it explodes
- Very clear job descriptions
- Supervision (formal) – phone or face-to-face (monthly) - keep record of supervision
- Try to understand that the cause of the conflict may be influenced externally
- Personality clashes – suggest shift changes
- Option to go to within the grievance procedure – next level of management or alternate person
- Identify the cause of the conflict and deal with the cause not the symptoms
- Respect confidences of parties
- Listen / acknowledge / respect different views
- Come back to core reasons for being there
- Praise and recognition
- Graceful exit opportunities
- Correct policies and procedures in place eg. Probation period, review process, having a checklist/ tool in place to measure performance
- Building strong relationships and communication
- When a conflict exists – approach volunteer personally and discuss issue
- Outside mediation or higher level of management involved
- Reviewing and clarifying 'job roles' of volunteers
- Working out suitability – moving to different roles
- Addressing the PROBLEM not THE PERSON (do not make the issue personal)
- Good screening process
- Early intervention