

☑ Code of conduct

What is a Volunteer Code of Conduct?

A volunteer Code of Conduct is a document that lists the kinds of behaviours that you would like volunteers to adhere to as they go about their voluntary duties.

What are the benefits of having a Code of Conduct?

The benefit of having a Code of Conduct is to give volunteers a framework for guiding their decisions and actions so they can make sure their conduct is in agreement with the philosophy of your group or organisation. For some smaller groups and organisations, a Volunteer Code of Conduct might be a very simple one page document, listing a few necessary guidelines; whilst larger service organisations may need to be slightly more comprehensive.

Is it a legal document?

A Code of Conduct is not a replacement for criminal law and any government legislation that applies to all people. Generally speaking, it includes brief descriptive variations on relevant legislative requirements, such as anti-discrimination, crime, sexual harassment, Occupational Health and Safety and so on.

There are a number of Federal Acts of Parliament, made in recent years that may apply to volunteers; particularly if groups or organisations provide services to the community which includes the care and wellbeing of individuals.

Access to these Acts of Parliament, along with any recent amendments, is available from the following website.

<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

When drafting a Code of Conduct, your group

or organisation may need to consider legislation and Acts of Parliament from under the following headings:

- Anti-discrimination
- Care and protection of children and young persons
- Freedom of Information
- Privacy
- Crime
- Ombudsman
- Occupational Health & Safety

It will depend on the kind of service or business your group or organisation is doing in the community as to what kinds of legislation you need to be aware of when drafting your Volunteer Code of Conduct.

What sorts of things should be included in a Volunteer Code of Conduct?

You may need to include reference to the following areas in your Volunteer Code of Conduct. Smaller community and interest groups will not need to be quite as comprehensive as larger organisations, so some of the following may not be applicable. Seek advice from your local Volunteer Resource Centre if you are unsure.

- Personal and Professional Behaviour
- Conflict of Interest
- Public Comment
- Confidentiality and Security of Information
- Criminal Record Checking
- Volunteer Supervision and Support
- Acceptance of Gifts
- Breach of the Code of Conduct
- Dismissal
- Fairness and Equity
- Occupational Health and Safety

A Volunteer Code of Conduct is the basis of the agreement the volunteer makes with your group or organisation. For this reason

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breach of the Code of Conduct needs to be treated very seriously but fairly.

In conclusion

A Volunteer Code of Conduct protects your group or organisation by giving your volunteers a clear idea of the kinds of attitudes, behaviours and actions that will bring the best possible outcomes for everyone involved.

Having a Code of Conduct demonstrates that your group or organisation is serious about valuing the work your volunteers do and that you respect your volunteers who want to bring a high standard of contribution into their role.

The information contained in this information sheet is generic. Please contact your volunteer resource centre if you require further assistance.