

Queensland Association for Healthy Communities (QAHC)

Volunteer Policy and Procedures October 2007

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Introduction

This document outlines the broad best practice policy and procedural principles for the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities (QAHC) in relation to its volunteer workforce. This document has been developed after research and consultation with staff and volunteers and is framed within the best practice standards from Volunteering Australia as well as the principles of community engagement and participation. The policy and procedures relate to all areas of the organisation that utilise the skills and time of volunteers, from Board members to safe sex pack 'stuffers'.

The policy focuses on the rights, roles and responsibilities of volunteers as well as the responsibilities that QAHC has in engaging volunteers in the operations of the organisation. The procedures that follow outline the ways in which Volunteer engagement, recruitment, support and ongoing development will occur. It is the aim of QAHC to promote fairness, equity and common practice in all its dealings with volunteers to not only improve the effectiveness of the organisation but also enhance the experience of volunteering for QAHC.

QAHC is committed to meeting the National Standards on Volunteering, and as such enshrines the standards in this policy document. It is the intention of QAHC to regularly review its volunteer program and endeavour to work towards meeting each of the standards to ensure a continuous quality improvement process.

National Standards for involving volunteers in not for profit community organisations:

Standard 1 - Policies and Procedures

An organisation that involves volunteers shall define and document its policies and procedures for volunteer involvement and ensure that these are understood, implemented and maintained at all levels of the organisation where volunteers are involved.

Standard 2 – Management Responsibility

An organisation that involves volunteers shall ensure that volunteers are managed within a defined system and by capable personnel with the authority and resources to achieve the organisations policy goals.

Standard 3 – Recruitment, Selection and orientation

An organisation that involves volunteers shall plan and have clearly documented volunteer recruitment, selection and orientation policies and procedures that are consistent with non-discriminatory policies and guidelines.

Standard 4 – Work and Workplace

An organisation that involves volunteers shall clearly specify and control the work of volunteers and ensure that their place of work is conducive to preserving their health, safety and general well being.

Standard 5 – Training and Development

An organisation that involves volunteers shall ensure that volunteers obtain the knowledge, skills, feedback on work, and the recognition needed to effectively carry out their responsibilities.

Standard 6 – Service Delivery

An organisation that involves volunteers shall ensure that appropriate processes and procedures are established and followed for the effective planning, control and review of all activities relating to the delivery of services by volunteers.

Standard 7 – Documentation and records

An organisation that involves volunteers shall establish a system and have defined procedures to control all documentation and personnel records that relate to the management of the volunteers.

Standard 8 – Continuous improvement

An organisation that involves volunteers shall plan and continually review its volunteer management system to ensure that opportunities to improve the quality of the system are identified and actively pursued.

Queensland Association for Healthy Communities

Volunteer Policy

Definition of Formal Volunteering

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

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

National Principles of Volunteering

1. Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer;
2. Volunteer work is unpaid;
3. Volunteering is always a matter of choice;
4. Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances;
5. Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community;
6. Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs;
7. Volunteering is an activity performed in the not for profit sector only;
8. Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work;
9. Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others;
10. Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

QAHC Guidelines

In addition to the national principles, QAHC has a set of organisational Guiding Principles for the engagement of volunteers:

1. QAHC is a community-based organisation which draws strength from its constituent communities.
2. In addition to maximising the resources for the organisation, volunteering engages QAHC's constituent communities and facilitates community action.
3. QAHC is committed to open communication and provision of information to volunteers.
4. Volunteers are entitled to adequate support and supervision.
5. The volunteer system aims for flexibility in order to meet the differing needs and expectations of the volunteers, as well as the needs of QAHC projects and regions.
6. QAHC is committed to continuous quality improvement and best practice standards in volunteer management.
7. QAHC is committed to volunteer participation in the decision making and planning processes of the organisation.

Types of Volunteers at QAHC

There are six distinct groups of people who give their time and energy to assist QAHC in meeting its aims and objectives. Supporters are those volunteers who offer their time on an ad hoc basis, whereas volunteers are fully trained and ongoing members of the team. There are also those members of the community who participate in events and actions that are for community benefit, such as attending a forum or workshop. Whilst these individuals do not fall within these policies and procedures, QAHC acknowledges that it still has a duty of care with regard to these individuals and their involvement.

Supporters and volunteers are grouped in the following ways:

Resource Supporters: These are volunteers who like to offer their time on an ad hoc basis to assist with large campaigns and preparation for events. Duties for this group of volunteers might include helping with mail-outs, stuffing safe sex packs and distributing newsletters etc.

Event Supporters: This group of volunteers may offer their time to assist on an ad hoc or regular basis depending on the type of event (e.g. World AIDS Day, Pride festivals). Duties for this group might revolve around event management and production, event bump in and bump out etc. This group also includes those volunteers who give their time freely to entertain and perform at events and fundraisers, such as DJ's, drag queens/kings, singers etc.

Administration Volunteers: These are volunteers who offer their time to assist with the regular day to day administrative operations of QAHC and our community Resource Centres. Duties for this group of volunteers might include reception work, providing admin support to project staff (filing, photocopying, data entry etc).

Health Education Volunteers: These are the volunteers who undertake activities on behalf of QAHC in a more representative role, such as outreach workers, health information workers etc. This group also includes those people who give their time to produce and edit regional newsletters.

Project/Community Development Volunteers: This group of volunteers often undertake project based activities on behalf of QAHC which may include managing and directing project work with supervision by QAHC staff, such as facilitating social/support groups, chairing or participating in QAHC Action Groups (e.g. Ageing)

Board members: These are volunteers (and financial members) who are elected by the membership at each annual general meeting to provide a governance role for the organisation. Duties for this group of volunteers include strategic direction setting, financial and legal compliance etc.

QAHC Responsibilities to its Volunteers

In order to enhance the volunteer's experience and comply with legislation and duty of care, QAHC will:

- Interview and engage volunteer staff in accordance with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation;
- Provide volunteers with orientation and training;
- Provide volunteers with a healthy and safe workplace;
- Not place volunteers in roles that were previously held by paid staff or have been identified as paid roles;
- Ensure that there is clear differentiation between paid and unpaid roles;
- Clearly define volunteer roles and develop clear job descriptions and/or duty statements;
- Provide appropriate levels of support, supervision and management to volunteers;
- Provide volunteers with all relevant policies and procedures that may affect their work including grievance and disciplinary procedures;
- Ensure volunteers do not take up additional duties that would otherwise be undertaken by a paid staff member during industrial disputes or staff shortages;
- Acknowledge the rights of volunteers;
- Ensure that the work of volunteers complements but does not undermine the work of paid staff;
- Offer volunteers opportunities for ongoing training and development;
- Reimburse volunteers for out of pocket expenses incurred on behalf of QAHC;
- Treat volunteers as valuable team members, and advise them of opportunities to participate in planning and decision making at QAHC;
- Acknowledge and reward the contributions of volunteers

The rights of volunteers at QAHC

Unlike paid staff, volunteers at QAHC are not covered by an award or Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA). Volunteers at QAHC, however, do have rights, some of which are enshrined in legislation and some of which QAHC believes are the obligation of the organisation.

As a QAHC Volunteer you have the right:

1. to work in a healthy and safe environment as prescribed in the Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 (Reprinted 1 July 2007);
2. to be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and anti discrimination legislation;
3. to be adequately covered by insurance;
4. to be given accurate and truthful information about QAHC and the communities it serves;
5. to be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses incurred on behalf of QAHC;
6. to be given a copy of the volunteer policy and procedures, as well as any other policies and procedures of QAHC that may affect your work;
7. not to fill a position previously held by a paid worker;
8. not to do the work of paid staff during industrial disputes;
9. to be able to choose the tasks that you undertake and to have a job description and/or duty statement outlining your role and tasks and agreed working hours;
10. to have access to the QAHC grievance procedure;
11. to be provided with orientation to QAHC and the communities it serves;
12. to have your confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act 1988;
13. to be provided with sufficient training and ongoing development opportunities for you to be able to undertake your volunteer duties;
14. to be provided with support, supervision and guidance; and
15. to be part of the planning and decision making processes of QAHC where appropriate.

Responsibilities of Volunteers at QAHC

1. To uphold the standards, policies and procedures and philosophy of QAHC whilst performing duties on behalf of the organisation;
2. To be dependable and consistent in fulfilling your responsibilities;
3. To follow instructions in relation to health and safety;
4. To work according to your job description and/or duty statement and work within your allocated hours;
5. To know your own limitations and be willing to honestly evaluate your own ability to undertake duties;
6. To seek help from or refer to other volunteers or staff for issues beyond your limits/abilities;
7. Ensure that you maintain the privacy and confidentiality of your colleagues and the clients of QAHC;
8. To take responsibility for your own health and safety whilst working at QAHC and ensure that you do not adversely affect the health and safety of others;
9. Use equipment safely according to the way in which you have been trained to;
10. Notify QAHC of any work place health and safety incident, including equipment or situations that may lead to an unsafe work place;
11. Respect your paid and unpaid colleagues and the clients and communities that you work with.

QAHC Volunteer Procedures

1. Identification of roles and duties:

QAHC will assess on a regular basis its requirements for the use of volunteers and ensure that all tasks and duties identified meet with the national standards and QAHC guidelines. The use of volunteers in the organisation will form a core part of any QAHC planning process to ensure that a planned and coordinated approach to volunteer management and use can be maintained.

In particular QAHC will:

- a. Through planning and consultation map on an annual basis the projected needs of the organisation for volunteers;
- b. Clearly identify the roles and duties required for each of the volunteer positions;
- c. Clearly identify the knowledge, skills and attributes required of volunteers to perform the work;
- d. Clearly identify the management role within QAHC that will be responsible for the ongoing management and supervision of each position;
- e. Ensure an OHS assessment is undertaken for each position (eg. Beat outreach workers);
- f. Ensure all other legal requirements are met (eg. If positive discrimination is required for a position/police checks etc); and
- g. Prepare a job description/duty statement outlining all of the above for each position.

2. Point of Contact and Record Keeping

QAHC will ensure that all potential volunteers are treated with respect and are promptly communicated with. QAHC acknowledges that entry points for potential volunteers are numerous but believes it is important to ensure that all potential volunteers are treated equitably and promptly.

Entry Point – General Enquiry – A general volunteer inquiry can be taken by any staff member who can give an overview of volunteer roles at QAHC. Full details of the person will be taken and forwarded to the Office Manager. The Office Manager will then send the person a Volunteer Inquiry Pack within 5 days.

Entry Point – Specific role – Where a person knows the project and region in which they want to volunteer, they will be passed on to the staff member who supervises that project. That staff member will be able to provide some detail as to the volunteer tasks in that project, will record the person's details and send them a Volunteer Inquiry Pack within 5 days.

QAHC will then:

- a. Record all details of potential volunteers on a centralised data base within 24 hours of the receipt of their request;
- b. Ensure that when a volunteer registration form is returned it is placed into a newly created file for the volunteer. This file will be used to record all relevant data for future contact recording, training, potential recruiting and supervision and will be kept in a centralised location in the Head Office or Regional Office (which ever is the most relevant).

NB: the above would not be the case for Board members, who are required to be elected by the membership.

3. Recruitment and selection

QAHC is committed to an open and transparent process for the recruitment of volunteers. QAHC will endeavour to match the most suitable volunteer with a particular task, duty or role. To ensure that this is undertaken in an equitable and fair manner, QAHC will identify which of the six groups of Supporter/Volunteer types the position falls into. If the position falls within the **Resource Supporter or Event Supporter roles**, then no formal recruitment process is required (However briefing is required, see below in Section 4). For all other groupings a formal recruitment and selection process will be required. QAHC will undertake this process in the following manner:

- a. Ensure all elements as outlined in section 1 (Identification of tasks and roles) of this procedural document have been undertaken and a duty statement/job description will all relevant aspects has been generated;
- b. Advertise the position to all volunteers on the QAHC Volunteer Data Base ensuring details of application process, selection criteria to be addressed and timeframes are all clearly explained;
- c. Convene a panel of at least 2 people to assess applications;
- d. Select candidates for interview based on their responses to the selection criteria and their requisite skills, experience and future development interests;
- e. Ensure all candidates are informed of their applications progress promptly;
- f. Panel to prepare clear and simple questions to gain further information from interview candidates;
- g. Interview candidates for the position and record their responses to questions and base decision on their 'fit' with the position;
- h. Check a minimum of 2 referees for the successful candidate;
- i. Advise all interviewed candidates of the outcome of the interviews within 5 working days of the interview;

j. Send letter confirming appointment and ensure that successful candidate is clear that the position will not commence until the QAHC self paced learning/orientation program has been completed.

4. Orientation, Training and Education

QAHC is committed to providing high quality orientation, training and ongoing developmental opportunities for its volunteers. QAHC will achieve this in the following manner:

a. All volunteers regardless of which grouping they are in must be given a briefing on the role or activity they are undertaking as well as orientation to an office, site or venue and be given clear briefings on Occupational Health and Safety with regard to their role.

b. All volunteers (that are not in the Resource Supporter or Event Supporter Groups) must undertake the QAHC self paced learning package (or face to face training where available) in the first two months of commencing any voluntary work with QAHC. This self paced learning package forms the core training and induction process to the organisation, its structure, philosophy and service provision.

c. Volunteers who will be undertaking specialised roles within QAHC, such as health promotion, group facilitation and outreach will in addition to the self paced learning package be given specific training and induction to the role prior to commencing volunteer activities. Where appropriate, prior skills, experience and knowledge will be taken into account when the training is being planned.

d. Through supervision (see Section 5) ongoing training and development needs will be discussed to ensure that the both the organisation and the volunteer have up to date information and skills to maintain QAHC's commitment to quality service provision.

e. Where possible and appropriate, QAHC will encourage and facilitate training opportunities for volunteers that may assist in pathways to Nationally Accredited Vocational Training;

f. As part of QAHC's annual planning processes key volunteer training needs will be identified as part of the role/duty identification process.

5. Supervision and support

QAHC is committed to ensuring the ongoing support and supervision of its volunteers. As such QAHC will:

a. For all ongoing volunteer positions QAHC will provide regular supervision sessions for each volunteer on a (minimum) two monthly basis. These sessions will be undertaken by the QAHC staff person who is the most directly responsible for the ongoing supervision and management of the volunteer. The sessions will provide an opportunity for QAHC to provide structured feedback on the Volunteers performance, allow the volunteer an opportunity to feedback on their work and QAHC, identify any

issues or concerns, identify gaps in training or opportunities for future development. All session outcomes will be clearly documented and kept in the Volunteers personnel file;

b. Supervision is not the forum for formal grievances to be aired and therefore these sessions do not replace the volunteer or QAHC accessing the QAHC grievance procedure;

c. QAHC will ensure that lines of communication are clearly articulated to all volunteers so that they are able to easily discuss urgent issues with a relevant staff member outside of regular supervision and commits to responding promptly;

d. For all ongoing volunteer positions QAHC will undertake an annual performance assessment with each volunteer to ensure that both the quality of work is being maintained and the volunteer is still the right 'fit' for the position (See Section 6);

e. QAHC will also ensure that relevant organisational information is regularly communicated to Volunteers via email and/or a volunteer newsletter;

f. QAHC will ensure that when critical information relating to specific volunteers (such as changes in treatments) occurs, volunteers are updated within 5 working days of QAHC receiving this information to ensure service quality is maintained.

6. Performance Assessment

QAHC is committed to maintaining levels of service from its volunteers that ensure quality service provision is provided to the organisation, its clients and constituent communities. To ensure that ongoing volunteers continue to be supported, trained and up-skilled as necessary, QAHC will undertake an annual performance assessment. This assessment is to encourage discussion on the role of the volunteer in the organisation, their current duties, their skills and knowledge required for the role etc. To ensure fairness, safety and equity in this process QAHC will undertake this review in the following manner:

a. All volunteers in formally recruited positions will be taken through an annual performance assessment after the first 12 months of service, and annually thereafter;

b. The volunteers most direct and regular supervisor will be responsible for undertaking the assessment;

c. Two weeks prior to the volunteers anniversary date, the Supervisor is required to make an appointment with the volunteer for the assessment, provide the volunteer with a questionnaire which seeks feedback from the Volunteer on the Organisation, their volunteer role and future development, task, role ideas etc;

d. The supervisor is also required to seek feedback from colleagues of the volunteer, (1 staff member, 1 volunteer) on their performance, in the two weeks prior to the assessment meeting. There are only 3 questions that will be asked, being:

1. What does the volunteer do well?

2. What should the volunteer do more of?
3. What should the volunteer do less of?

e. At the assessment meeting, the Supervisor will discuss with the volunteer their response to the questionnaire, feedback from colleagues, the current duty statement/job description and assess with the volunteer the ongoing fit of the role and possible training developmental needs. NB: This is not a process to raise or lodge grievances with the Volunteer, and the assessment process is framed in a supportive, developmental manner.

7. Rewarding and thanking volunteers

QAHC is committed to recognising and acknowledging the essential support and service that volunteers provide both to the organisation and to the communities that QAHC serves. As such QAHC will:

- a. During Volunteer's Week, present all people who have volunteered with QAHC in the previous year, in whatever capacity, with a volunteer appreciation certificate.
- b. Acknowledge the outstanding work of volunteers by awarding a presidents annual award to up to three volunteers from across the volunteer group categories. (Gold, Silver and Bronze awards). Nominations for this award will be taken from staff, volunteers and clients and the President of QAHC will make the final decision on each category;
- c. QAHC will hold bi-annual events in each region where we have an office base to thank volunteers for their work. Events in other regions will be evaluated on a case by case basis and may involve joint events with other similar organisations;
- d. Ensure a section of the Annual Report recognises the work of volunteers;
- e. Ensure that where appropriate, QAHC brochures, newsletters etc provide regular updates and information on the work of volunteers;
- f. Ensure all out of pocket expenses that volunteers incur whilst acting on behalf of QAHC are reimbursed.

8. Occupational Health and Safety

QAHC is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all is volunteers. As such QAHC will:

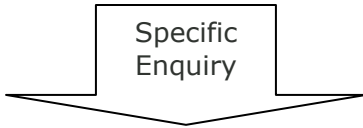
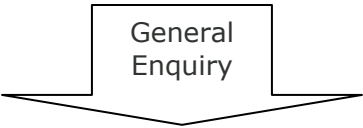
- a. Ensure that a current insurance policy is in place to cover all volunteer activities so that should an accident or injury occur, volunteers are adequately covered and ensure that all other organisational insurances such as Professional Indemnity, Public Liability, Directors Insurance etc adequately cover volunteers;

- b. Ensure that an OHS assessment is undertaken of all roles and duties that volunteers undertake on behalf of QAHC that adheres to the provisions of the Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Act;
- c. Undertake site inspections and conduct OHS evaluations of all sites, venues, outdoor areas etc where volunteers will be asked to work;
- d. Ensure all volunteers are trained in safe working practices;
- e. Ensure that personal safety is paramount for all volunteers asked to work in potentially dangerous situations, such as Beats, and provide emergency procedural training and site orientation.

Identification of Roles & Duties

- Annually map need for volunteers.
- Identify supervisor for volunteer positions.
- Develop job description for each role.

Point of Contact & Record Keeping

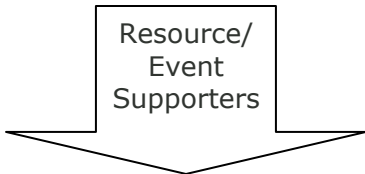
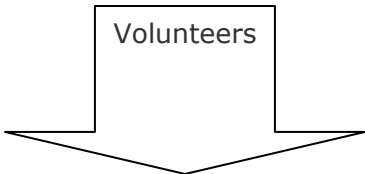


- Taken by any staff.
- Provide overview of volunteer roles.
- Take contact details and pass to Office Manager.
- OM to send out Volunteer Inquiry Pack.

- Speak to supervisor for that position.
- Provide overview of volunteer role.
- Take contact details.
- Send out Volunteer Inquiry Pack.

On receipt of Volunteer Registration Form, enter details on database & open Volunteer Personnel Folder.

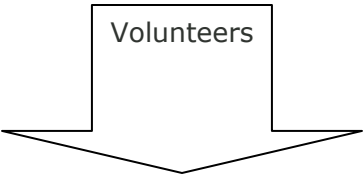
Recruitment & Selection



- Advertise position/s to all volunteers on database.
- Convene panel and assess against position description.
- Advise applicants.

- Call for Supporters.
- Provide orientation to task.

Orientation & Training



- Undertake self-paced learning package or face-to-face training.
- Undertake additional specialist training if required (e.g. outreach)

Supervision & Support

- Supervision on a min. 2 monthly basis.
- Provide information updates via email or newsletter.

Performance Assessment

- Provide assessment questionnaire to volunteer.
- Gain feedback from colleagues.
- Undertake annual assessment meeting.

Thanking Volunteers & Supporters

- Present volunteers and supporters with certificate of appreciation during volunteer's week.
- Invite nominations for President's Award for Volunteering.
- Hold bi-annual events in each region for volunteers & supporters.
- Recognise contribution of volunteers & supporters in QAHC News, annual report etc.