



Volunteer Orientation Manual

(Updated November 2011)

WELCOME TO THE
RSVP
COMMUNITY OF VOLUNTEERS!

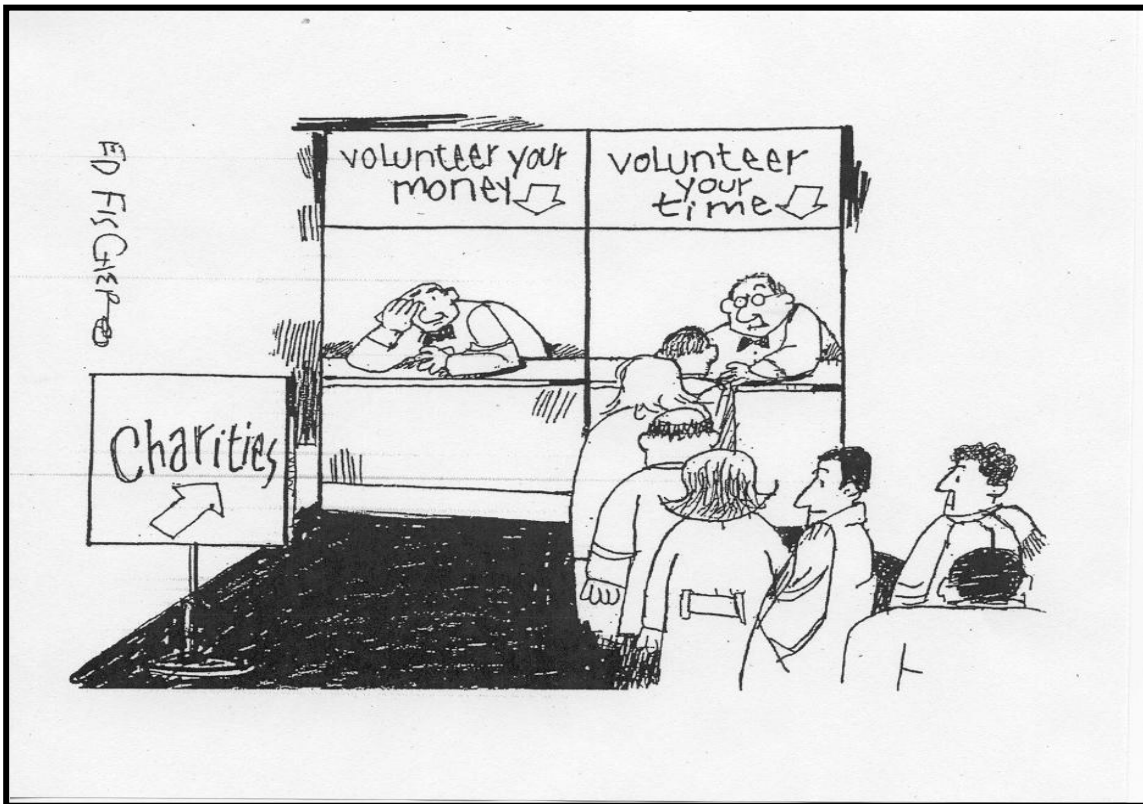
There exists today, perhaps more than ever before, a tremendous need for volunteers in many of the non-profit community agencies throughout Suffolk County. Volunteers are needed to share their experience, time and expertise with others. RSVP has many opportunities to offer you. Together we can work to build a better life for our community. Through your gifts of time and talent, you are sharing a precious gift – YOURSELF!

This handbook was written for you, the volunteer, as a part of your orientation to RSVP. We hope you will take the time to read the information. It has been assembled to help ensure that RSVP volunteers are confident, competent and comfortable as they engage in important community activities.

Please feel free to share any hesitations or concerns with us so that we can respond to you in a helpful manner. RSVP exists to serve YOU, its volunteers. We are here to work with you.

RSVP Suffolk is one of 35 RSVP projects in New York State and one of 750 nationally and internationally. The common mission of these projects is to engage adults over 55 in meaningful volunteer activities.

The aim is to develop specific volunteer opportunities that utilize the particular skills and interests of each individual volunteer with an eye to what needs to get done in the community.



*"Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer."
Author Unknown*

BENEFITS OF BEING AN

RSVP VOLUNTEER

- Recognition for your service hours.

Annually, we hold a gala Tribute Day Luncheon in the Fall. This event celebrates our unsung heroes (YOU!) for giving 50 hours of volunteer service a year (calculated from June to July of the following year).

- Open House.

During April's National Volunteer Week, RSVP staff hosts an "Open House" at the Smithtown office. This is a great opportunity to meet all RSVP staff, share a light refreshment and get to know other RSVP volunteers from a variety of sites.

- Liability Insurance.

A wrap-around policy to your own insurance, covering you while traveling to and from your station and while volunteering at your station.

- Travel Reimbursement.

If you choose to claim travel, you are paid .09 cents a mile, capped at \$15 a month. If you prefer, you can claim charitable driving on your tax return at a rate of .14 cents a mile. Many volunteers choose not claim mileage as some documentation is required for reimbursement. Check with your Program Coordinator for details.

VOLUNTEERS COME TO RSVP FOR MANY REASONS

- For some it is a social opportunity to become part of a community and make new friends.
- Others are moved to volunteer where they may be able to make a difference in an area of interest or concern.
- Some see it as an opportunity to affirm the value of their life by sharing the knowledge and experience they have acquired.
- Many see it as an opportunity to learn and apply new skills, a proven way to help retain cognitive function.
- For others, it is a way of saying “thank you” to the universe for their life and gifts by giving back to the community through service.

Whatever your reason, we are grateful that you have chosen to be a part of the community of volunteers at RSVP. We hope your volunteer experience enriches your life and provides you with an opportunity for service and learning.

AS A VOLUNTEER, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Receive adequate information, training and a clear description of what is expected of you from RSVP and your volunteer station.
- A suitable project, task or job and to say “no” to tasks that you are unable to do or would rather not do.
- Have supervision provided by a designated staff member at your volunteer station.
- Receive respect and support from your fellow volunteers and staff.
- Be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, providing prior approval is obtained with the supervisor.
- Work in a safe and healthy environment.
- Be provided with a place to work and suitable tools and materials.
- Have your personal details kept in a confidential manner.
- Be informed and have an understanding of the volunteer station’s fundamental mission and place in the community.

- Be recognized for your service.
- Be informed of standard emergency procedures at your station. Your station supervisor should tell you about fire alarms and warning devices, evacuation procedures and directives for medical emergencies. If this information is not part of your volunteer station orientation, ask about emergency procedures.
- Have an enjoyable, fulfilling experience volunteering. RSVP does its best to find you a placement that will be a good fit for you and the station you are affiliated with. If for any reason you are dissatisfied with the assignment you are given at the station, or if you want to try something new, discuss your options with the volunteer station supervisor or an RSVP Program Coordinator. We want to provide you with the opportunity for a fulfilling volunteer experience.

AS A VOLUNTEER, YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE TO:

- Complete, sign and return monthly RSVP attendance sheets to your station supervisor.
- Show enthusiasm, loyalty and belief in the work of the organization.
- Be dependable so assignments and tasks can be planned. You provide valuable service, and people will depend on you to be punctual and consistent in attendance.
- Inform your station supervisor at the site if you will not be able to serve at your regularly-scheduled time or date.
- Keep you station supervisor informed of changes of address and/or phone number.
- Participate in the training necessary to carry out your volunteer activities.
- Not spend money or order goods on behalf of your activity without prior approval.
- Work in a safe way and not jeopardize the health and safety of yourself or others.

- Inform RSVP and your assigned station of any conditions or special needs that RSVP or the assigned station should be aware of.

WHY DO WE NEED YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS?

It is very important that RSVP Suffolk knows how much time you spend volunteering at your station because:

- The federal government requires us to keep track of your time spent volunteering as a means of assessing our performance as a community project.
- It indicates that you are an active RSVP volunteer and thus allows you to participate in RSVP recognition events, etc.
- It provides proof that you were volunteering in case of an insurance claim.
- It allows us to share with other funders quantitative data which they often require in extending funding to the project.
- It provides information to our legislators about the types of volunteer work and numbers of hours of service. This information assists them in deciding the amount of federal monies appropriated for all RSVP projects in the U.S.
- It helps RSVP promote seniors as active, contributing members of their communities, thereby dispelling the myths held by some that people who are older are useless, a drain on society, and have nothing to contribute. We know that couldn't be farther from the truth, and collecting hard data helps RSVP to tell the true story of the value of today's seniors.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The RSVP staff and your volunteer station are committed to providing a positive and safe experience for our volunteers and the people we serve.

RSVP expects everyone associated with our program to follow federal, state and station guidelines to ensure that we do not initiate or tolerate discriminatory or harassing behaviors.

Harassment is defined as any act based on race, creed, religion, disability, national origin, gender or sex, age or sexual orientation that substantially interferes with or is hurtful to a person or persons. It is illegal.

Harassment consists of unwanted or uninvited sexual comments, advances, cartoons, innuendoes, racial and gender slurs, jokes, intimidation, etc.

If you become aware of a behavior that might be considered harassment, report it to the station supervisor. The same goes if you are the object of harassment of any kind.

If the situation is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact RSVP.

In order for you to have a rewarding volunteer experience, it is important for you to conduct yourself in a manner that promotes respect for yourself and others.

- Check with your volunteer station about what is the appropriate dress code.
- Treat others with considerate behaviors.
- Use respectful language.
- Be aware of the culture or standards

For example: Every volunteer station that serves children, seniors, or the public at large, has it own “culture” or standards regarding physical interaction (touching) between volunteers and those served.

What is appropriate at one station may not be appropriate at another.

If you are not instructed or made aware of the standards for such interaction, speak to the station supervisor to learn what is appropriate at that site.

We hope that your experience with RSVP and volunteerism will be a rewarding adventure! Thank you for the gracious giving of yourself.

Please call the RSVP office anytime that you have a question or concern. We are here to serve you the volunteer!

Facts About Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly affects an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances, including but not limited to the following:

- The victim, as well as the harasser, may be a woman or a man. The victim does not have to be the opposite sex.
- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker or a non-employee.
- The victim does not have to be the person harassed, but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
- Unlawful sexual harassment may occur without economic injury to or discharge of the victim.
- The harasser's conduct must be unwelcome.

It is helpful for the victim to directly inform the harasser that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. The victim should use any employer complaint mechanism or grievance system available.

When investigating allegations of sexual harassment, EEOC looks at the whole record: the circumstances, such as the nature of the sexual advances, and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred. A determination on the allegations is made from the facts on a case-by-case basis.

Prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace. Employers are encouraged to take steps necessary to prevent sexual harassment from occurring. They should clearly communicate to employees that sexual harassment will not be tolerated. They can do so by establishing an effective complaint or grievance process and taking immediate and appropriate action when an employee complains.

Relating Cross Culturally

Some Common Cultural Differences

Be aware of cultural differences; accommodate and adjust to them where and when you can.

1. **Eye Contact**: The way that eye contact is perceived varies radically from one culture to another. Direct eye contact is forward and rude in some cultures, whereas people who avoid eye contact are suspected of shifty behavior, when in fact, that is a form of respect in some cultures. Eye contact between the genders is also a complex cultural matter.
2. **Personal Space**: Most people are uncomfortable when another person gets too close. This behavior is usually not meant to be threatening, but just a difference in cultures. Persons in some cultures position themselves very close to one another when conversing even in the most casual encounters.
3. **Conversational Style**: We have all interacted with people who seem abrupt, almost rude, in their conversational style; yet, when we get to know them, we realize that nothing negative is intended. It's just their "way." Initially, these differences can be upsetting, particularly if there are other apparent cultural distinctions. In certain cultures, silence may indicate respect; while in others, it may indicate disapproval, and in another, might be construed as "the silent treatment." Some cultures use loud voices as commonplace linguistics, whereas in other cultures, soft inflection is a respectful gesture used in conversation.
4. **Touch**: Another wide disparity among cultures is the use of touch. Particular cultures discourage hugs, handshakes and informal physical gestures, while in another culture, people will be very physically demonstrative to each other.
5. **Time**: Time perception is another variable among cultures. Some groups are very literal about the time of day, and in that culture, punctuality is a prized trait. Some groups are less formal about time keeping, and a ten o'clock appointment may be interpreted anywhere between 9:30 and 10:30.

These are just a few of the common differences found in cultures that may be evidenced at your volunteer site. The amount of diversity cross culturally is as considerable as the groupings throughout the world.

CONTACT RSVP

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East Hampton Office

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RSVP Website: www.rsupsuffolk.org