

Volunteer Management Overview

All types of volunteers will require specific orientation and coordination activities. They may include licensed professionals, church affiliated volunteers, and unaffiliated volunteers. They may come from both inside the presbytery and outside the disaster region. They may or may not have needed skills. Volunteers may come in organized groups or be spontaneous individuals. Most volunteers affiliated with a professional or faith-based organization will come with some degree of experience and coordination.

During a disaster response/recovery, PDA no longer directly manages volunteer work teams. However, National Response Team members that work with host sites and long-term recovery groups should know some basics about volunteer management. This document is meant to share some basic information about volunteer management and provide resources that can be shared with host sites, LTR groups and others who may find themselves directly managing volunteers.

Every disaster attracts a number of volunteers that are unaffiliated with a managing organization. Left unmanaged, these unaffiliated volunteers can actually become part of the disaster rather than part of the solution. Therefore, much of the content of this document is focused on unaffiliated volunteers, but it can apply to all volunteers.

Guidelines for Unaffiliated Volunteers

In most disaster situations volunteers will appear, whether solicited or not. It is important to have someone who can coordinate their energy or pass them on to an appropriate coordinating agency. A Volunteer Coordinator should be named in the beginning of the disaster response cycle to get prepared for management of volunteers before they arrive. It is very hard to catch up with these preparation activities after volunteers begin arriving. One important function of this position is to record volunteer hours.

Unaffiliated Volunteers are not part of a recognized response agency and usually have no specific disaster relief training or experience. However, they play a critical role in any disaster recovery effort. Successful volunteers are flexible, self-sufficient, aware of risks, and are willing to be coordinated by local emergency management experts.

Communications are key to successful management of unaffiliated, indeed all, volunteers. Those in first contact with volunteers must know what information is needed and what the next step is for the volunteer. Information should be provided that educates the public, minimizes confusion, and sets expectations.

Knowing how to manage volunteers is one of the many facets of the disaster relief and recovery process. Volunteers can become a burden to the recovery effort if they are ill informed and a local organization is not in place to direct their efforts. Their morale,

effectiveness, and ultimate satisfaction are heavily influenced by how they are managed. Managing volunteers should be a coordinated effort with other relief agencies that may have niches where they bring extensive experience (e.g., hosting, feeding, needs assessment, case management, work management, funds management).

Volunteers need good supervision that includes:

- Prioritize work according to needs in the community
- Match volunteer skills to work
- Provide necessary materials and tools
- Train volunteers on basic safety and work skills if needed
- Provide supervision for complex tasks
- Set expectations and provide feedback
- Develop relationships and offer gratitude

Like all other tasks involving people, volunteers should know what is expected, be equipped to do the job, and then be empowered to solve problems and accomplish the task.

Prior to a disaster find out where the community volunteer centers are likely to be and who will be the coordinating authority. After a disaster, confirm which agencies are managing volunteers and obtain contact information. Refer volunteers to appropriate agencies after initial screening (see sample call script below).

When making decisions about hosting volunteers, consider the checklists and information needed that is provided below. Also decide about age restrictions for children and youth. Some volunteers may want to bring children and youth may want to work on site. Information about these policies needs to be available early in the disaster response cycle.

If hosting volunteers in churches or in a volunteer village-type situation, it may help to use the PDA National Call Center to coordinate group reservations and disseminate information to incoming volunteers (pda.callcenter@pcusa.org).

The primary concern of the volunteer should be the needs of the survivors. At the same time it is important that each volunteer have a rewarding experience. The primary need of survivors is to tell their story, to receive motivation to begin making recovery decisions, and to get plugged in to the wide range of disaster services. With this in mind volunteers need to be:

- Flexible – prepared to improvise and respond to changing needs in an environment that may be disorganized
- Cooperative – willing to work in a team and be guided by others including survivors
- Sensitive – to feelings of survivors and other local people not in immediate stress

Below are the major categories of volunteer management and a list of what field volunteers need.

- Volunteer Planning
 - Reserve housing
 - Skill inventory (sample included)
 - Liability release forms (PDA sample included)
 - What to bring list
 - Typical daily schedule
 - Behavior covenant
 - Feedback survey
 - Costs
 - Worksite ID (background checks may be required by some agencies)
 - Emergency contact info
 - Work team leaders
 - Daily work log
- Orientation (occurs prior to volunteer travel and immediately after arrival)
 - Nature and scope of local disaster
 - Services available/not available (water, food, lodging, gas, communication, medical, building supplies, retail)
 - Local points of contact and emergency services
 - Nature of work
 - What to bring
 - Work site safety information
 - Safety and personal protection items
 - Donation management (cash, gift cards, supplies)
- Work Planning
 - Coordination and supervision of work
 - Job assessments
 - Tool management
 - Volunteer skill inventory
 - Work team assignments
 - Tracking volunteer hours and sites
 - Material procurement
 - Volunteer and supply transportation
 - Coordination with other agencies
- Hosting
 - Shelter (heated or cooled)
 - Meals (breakfast, lunch preparation, supper)
 - Showers
 - Toilets
 - Transportation and parking
 - Facility chores
 - Daily devotions, sharing, recognition, celebration, and recreation
 - Script outline for incoming volunteer calls

Here is a list of information needed from volunteers who call or walk-in to the presbytery volunteer coordination office. This information should be passed on to the site coordinators or other agencies coordinating volunteers.

- Name
- Address
- Phone – cell, home, work
- E-mail
- Dates available
- Professional or volunteer training, licenses, certifications
- Skills: disaster response, building, counseling, communications, computer, medical, languages, other
- Previous disaster response experience
- Task preferences
- Coming as part of group or individual
- Church/group affiliation
- Age range
- Mode of transportation: arrival/departure, on-site
- Accommodation plans
- Special medical/dietary conditions
- Willing to work as assigned and as part of team?
- Next step (who to contact next or who/when someone will call back)

References and Resources (Note: You may need to cut and paste the URLs below into your Internet browser if the active links do not work.)

1. National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster - Volunteer Management Points of Consensus, May 2011.

http://www.nvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2014/04/POC_Volunteer-Management.pdf

2. National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster - Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster: The Synergy of Structure and Good Intentions, 2008.

http://www.nvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2014/04/final_2008_managing_spontaneous_volunteers_lr.pdf

3. *Community Arise – A Disaster Ministry Curriculum: Managing Volunteers in Disaster*, Church World Service, Emergency Response Program, New York, NY, 2006.

<http://www.communityarise.com/CMManagingVol.htm>

4. *Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster: The Synergy of Structure and Good*

Intentions, Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network.

<http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/disaster/>

5. *Volunteer and Donations Management*, Federal Emergency Management Agency,

<http://search.usa.gov/search?affiliate=netc&query=volunteer+management&op=Search>

6. *Light Our Way – A Guide for Spiritual Care in Times of Disaster*, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, 2006. (Available through PDA)



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

Volunteer Management
