Addressing clarity of expectations: staff/volunteer partnerships

Do written policies, procedures, and job descriptions include basic volunteer management principles? Do they outline each employee’s duties with respect to volunteers?

* If expectations are not documented:

**Problem**: Staff have nothing to guide them when answering questions about who is responsible for what.

**Possible solution:** Add this information as soon as possible. If this is clearly a big issue, you may want to address it now. If it is less urgent, you might wait until policies and job descriptions are evaluated and updated.

* If expectations are outlined, but staff are still not clear, you may be facing one of three issues:

**Problem #1:** The expectations are written into policy, but no one has discussed the policy with staff so they are unaware of the policy or do not understand it.

**Possible solution:** Hold staff or individual meetings to discuss the policies to ensure that everyone understands and is comfortable with the expectations.

**Problem #2:** The expectations are written into policy, but the reality of who is doing which tasks does not align with what is written in the policies or job descriptions.

**Possible solution:** Examine existing policies compared to existing practices. If the problem that the policies don’t make sense, and they should be adjusted to make them more realistic? Or are the policies sound, and the behavior of staff needs to be adjusted to fit the policies?

**Problem #3:** Expectations are written into policies and job descriptions, but employees are not evaluated on their performance in this area so they make it a low priority.

**Possible solution:** Include the ability to work effectively with volunteers on employee evaluations. Reward successes and ask for improvement if they fall short.

Are expectations for working with volunteers consistent and understood throughout every level of your organization?

* Include this information into all new staff orientation and relevant continuing professional education.
* Discuss volunteer management topics or concerns at staff meetings.
* Have one person lead the volunteer program, and ensure all staff understand that person’s role and that they can ask questions or ask for help.