

ORIENTATION OVERVIEW & TRAINING SCRIPT TEMPLATE

ORIENTATION OVERVIEW

The problem: Do volunteers have an adequate and uniform understanding of their tasks and role when they are starting out?

The solution: Design a volunteer orientation agenda that touches on all the key points and incorporates an adult-learning approach.

Orientation plays an important role in retaining the volunteers you worked so hard to recruit. Through a formal orientation, you welcome volunteers and provide them with background and practical knowledge about the organization; the reasons why you need them; a picture of what their work will be like; and how they can best contribute.

Some organizations avoid holding an orientation because it's difficult to get volunteers to attend. At the same time, without an orientation, it's easy for new volunteers to feel lost and disconnected (and they may be more inclined to drop out of the program). To make it easier for volunteers to attend, you might try offering orientations at night or on weekends. You can break them into short sessions and require attendance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE ORIENTATION

- Don't overwhelm volunteers; inspire them.
- Allow volunteers to get to know each another and the organization.
- Make it fun! Move away from lecturing whenever possible. Actively engage participants and draw on their experiences and knowledge
- Provide training in specific skills, especially communications.
- Connect volunteers to a "big picture" view of their work.
- Include other programs coordinated by the agency.
- Be respectful of participants' time. Make good use of it and never end late.

Orientation concepts:

Here are three basic questions new volunteers often have:

- Why should I be working here?
- How will I be working here?
- Where do I fit in with everyone else?

During an orientation, try to answer these questions by providing the information suggested below:
Why should I be working here? Provide an introduction to the purpose of your organization. Here are some examples of what to cover:

- A description of the problem the organization is dedicated to solving
- A description of the client base
- The mission/values/history of the organization
- Programs and services offered
- How volunteers fit into the organization's vision

How will I be working here? Provide an introduction to the processes and systems that apply to volunteers. Here are some examples to present and discuss:

- The structure of the organization, including examples of how volunteers contribute
- Policies and procedures (including paperwork)
- An introduction to facilities and equipment

Where do I fit in with everyone else? This portion of the orientation introduces new volunteers to the social community and begins to form the personal bonds that sustain volunteer involvement. Here are some examples of social introductions:

- An introduction to the leaders of the organization, the staff, and current volunteers
- A description of the culture and etiquette of the organization
- A face-to-face introduction to the clients/students served

SIMPLE ORIENTATION AGENDA TEMPLATE

Here is a basic agenda for a 2 ½-hour volunteer orientation. Feel free to rearrange the topics and adjust the time allocations to meet your needs. An agenda like this works best for simple, low-tech trainings led by an experienced trainer or someone very familiar with the content. (For a new trainer or more complex presentations, use the training script template.)

Welcome everyone, provide brief introductions	10 min.
Include a team-building exercise and getting to know you opportunities (a good place to find these is at http://www.teampedia.net/)	5 min.
Introduce staff	5 min.
State and discuss the organization's mission statement	10 min.
Give background and history of organization	15 min.
Agree on expectations for working together	15 min.
Share the time line and/or work plan	20 min.
Break	15 min.
Present logistical information/housekeeping items (reimbursement, background checks, etc.)	15 min.
Host a tour of the work place	25 min.
Preview topics of future trainings on specific skills (e.g., diversity/sensitivity issues)	5 min
Open the floor to questions and answers	10 min.
Close	5 min.

TRAINING SCRIPT TEMPLATE

Applying the principles of adult learning theory to your orientation can help ensure your volunteers retain the information, concepts, and skills presented. You can learn more about these principles and how to create learning outcomes based on them through readings in the supplementary resources.

Here are two principles to draw on when creating a training orientation based on adult learning theory:

1. Establish learning outcomes.

What do you want volunteers to be able to do after the training?

What knowledge do you want them to be able to apply to their volunteer work?

What behaviors/attitudes do you want them to demonstrate after the training?

2. Create interactive elements that draw on what the trainees know already.

In an orientation environment, learners will spend much of their time listening to and viewing presentations. Research shows that a “lecture” environment is not the best approach for trainees to retain and apply what they are learning. When possible, create opportunities during the training for volunteers to interact with each other and apply their existing knowledge and skills to what they are learning.

Examples of interactive elements include:

- Create and share in a small group an elevator speech to help trainees describe their volunteer activities to community members
- Engage in a role play to help volunteers master protocols to use with clients

[TRAINING SCRIPT TEMPLATE]
[INSERT TITLE OF TRAINING HERE]
[INSERT TRAINING DATE, TIME & LENGTH]

Session set-up:

[INSERT LIST OF ITEMS THAT NEED TO BE COVERED PRIOR TO TRAINING. FOR EXAMPLE, SETTING UP TABLES AND LCD PROJECTOR]

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

[INSERT YOUR LEARNING OBJECTIVES. FOR AN ORIENTATION OR WORKSHOP SESSION, STICK TO A SMALL NUMBER OF OBJECTIVES]

Time	Steps	Materials
[INSERT # OF MINUTES OR CLOCK TIME]	[INSERT NAME/DESCRIPTION OF THIS PORTION OF THE TRAINING AND OUTLINE STEPS AND PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES]	[INSERT ITEMS SUCH AS OVERHEADS, HANDOUTS, ETC.]
	Note to Facilitator(s):	
	[INSERT NEW ROWS FOR STEPS AND FACILITATOR NOTES AS NEEDED]	

Adapted from McCurley, S., & Lynch, R. (2011). *Volunteer management: Mobilizing all the resources of the community* (3rd ed., Chapter 7, pp. 117–126.). Plattsburgh, NY: InterPub Group.