



# I WANT TO VOLUNTEER

2023

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# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: I WANT TO VOLUNTEER

## 2023

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## ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

Volunteer BC's revised "Community Connections: Volunteer Engagement Handbook", is a guide for communities wanting to promote, encourage and match people to local volunteer opportunities. Individuals are looking for safe, meaningful opportunities and sustainable local volunteer engagement. We enhanced this handbook to reflect the challenges individuals & communities are facing in a post-pandemic landscape.

## ABOUT VOLUNTEER BC



Volunteer BC is the voice of volunteerism with the goal of promoting the value of volunteerism and building healthy BC communities.

### OUR VISION

Volunteer BC is the voice for supporting & connecting the voluntary sector to achieve excellence in volunteerism for the benefit of all British Columbians. organizations.

### OUR MISSION

To be a strong and relevant provincial voice in promoting the development and value of volunteerism in BC by working cooperatively with the general public, volunteer centres, voluntary organizations, governments, business, and volunteer-involved organizations.



# **VOLUNTEERING BASICS**

2023

## DISCLAIMER

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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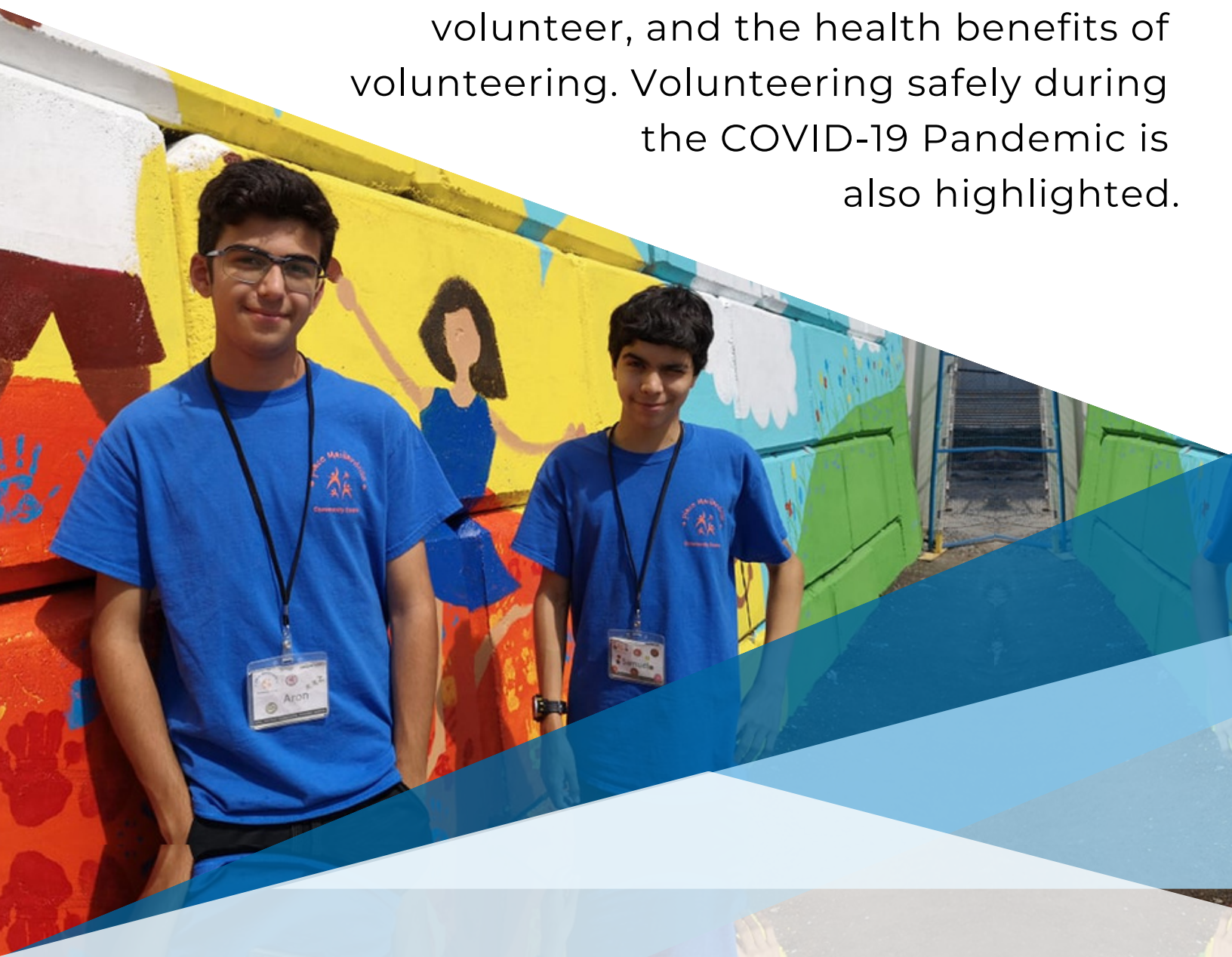
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# INTRODUCTION

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This handbook will provide the step-by-step process on how to find volunteer engagement programs in your community. This easy-to-use guide includes the benefits of volunteering, rights and responsibilities of a volunteer, skills needed to be a great volunteer, and the health benefits of volunteering. Volunteering safely during the COVID-19 Pandemic is also highlighted.



## 1. VOLUNTEERING IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD

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During the Covid-19 pandemic, the volunteer landscape changed and needs have shifted. Here's a checklist to help you get started.

### I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER – WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- ✓ **Stay up to date** and follow provincial health orders prior to volunteering.
- ✓ **Do not volunteer if you are unwell** or you have been in contact with someone who is unwell. We need to keep volunteers, clients and staff safe and healthy during volunteering.
- ✓ **Informal self-organizing volunteers.** Please exert caution in embarking on informal volunteering. Individuals need to consider issues of privacy and self-care and avoid putting themselves and others in the community at risk.
- ✓ **Start with your local volunteer centre.** Volunteer centres know your community and will ensure that you will be in a safe environment. Centres are focused on promoting volunteering and offer resources and volunteer opportunities including virtual volunteer roles.
  - Find your local Volunteer Centre.
  - Learn even more about Volunteer Centres and what they can do for you.
- ✓ **No volunteer centre in your area?** Here are some ideas.
  - VolunteerNow, Volunteer Connector, Charity Village, iVolunteer, Dosomegood.
  - Schools, colleges and universities often have volunteer posting boards.
  - Foodbanks, Homeless shelters, Lions or Rotary Club, Family Resource Centres & animal shelters.
  - BC211 Safe Seniors, Strong Communities Program – matches seniors who need support with non-medical essentials. Contact Senior Community Centres.
- ✓ **After volunteering:**
  - Inform your volunteer coordinator how everything went and share feedback. Managing volunteers during a pandemic is new to everyone.
  - If you are not feeling well after volunteering contact your local Public Health Authority and follow their advice.
- ✓ **Final steps:**
  - Look after yourself and stay safe and healthy. Know who you can talk to in your organization.
  - Staying connected and maintaining your mental health are important. Learn about resources to support you: i.e. HealthlinkBC, Canadian Mental Health Association of BC.

*And... Remember volunteers like you are important and essential to communities across BC. Thank you for all you do!*



## 2. WHY VOLUNTEER

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Before we answer the question of why volunteer, we need to answer the question, who are volunteers anyway?

A volunteer is an individual who freely gives time and service. Volunteers possess skills, abilities, and limitless talents that they are willing to share to support an organization, ideal, cause, event, activity, or another individual without financial gain.

Volunteers are highly valued resources of diverse individuals of all ages, makes models, and sizes that make a huge impact on a daily basis on the health and well-being of communities.



### 3. THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING

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Consider this possibility; Linda L. Graff, former international speaker & non-profit consultant asked: **What if, volunteers simply did not show up for a day, a week, or a month?** What would our cities, towns, and country look like? What would our hospitals or schools look like? What basic needs would not be met? What opportunities would be lost? You likely will cross paths with a volunteer no matter where you are. Another way to measure the impact of volunteers is to look at statistics such as hours served and the economic value of volunteer time.

Volunteers continue to help improve the quality of life for so many while gaining valuable experience and developing new skills. As well, studies have further indicated that volunteering Canadians enjoy improved overall health.

*Volunteer Canada*

#### **PROVINCIAL VOLUNTEERING FACTS**

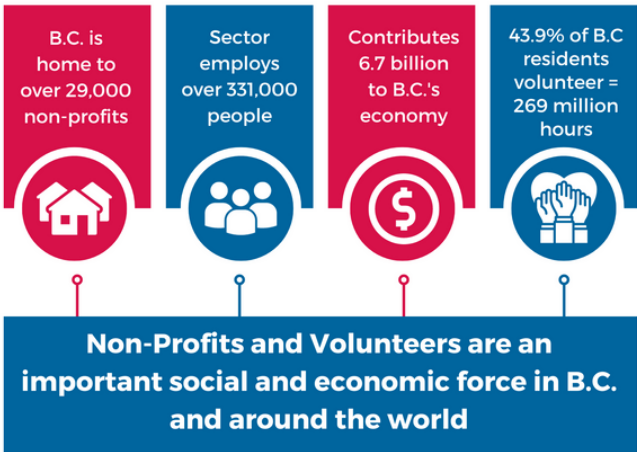
- BC's non-profits make an important contribution to BC economy. They provide employment, spending, investments, as well as help create healthy populations.

*Stats Canada*

#### **NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING FACTS**

- An impressive 13 million Canadians or 44% of people aged 15 and older have participated in volunteer work.
- Volunteers contribute almost 2 billion hours of their time.
- An average volunteer contributes 154 hours per year. This equals 1 million full-time jobs.

*Imagine Canada*



B.C. is home to over 29,000 non-profits	Sector employs over 331,000 people	Contributes 6.7 billion to B.C.'s economy	43.9% of B.C. residents volunteer = 269 million hours
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**Non-Profits and Volunteers are an important social and economic force in B.C. and around the world**

## 4. THE REASONS PEOPLE VOLUNTEER

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1. ***It's good for you!*** Research shows that those who volunteer have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, as they get older and report good health more often.
  2. ***Get happy.*** Those who volunteer are less likely to be depressed. So, go for it - put on a happy face.
  3. ***Learn something new.*** Volunteering is a great way to learn a new skill.
  4. ***Belong.*** There is no better way to meet good people and connect with your community.
  5. ***It feels good.*** It just plain feels good to give back to your community - it's as good as ice cream. Why not do both?
  6. ***Be up on yourself.*** Volunteers consistently report a high feeling of self-worth, achievement, and higher motivation.
1. ***Move up the ladder.*** More than 90% of employers feel that volunteering enhances job skills, and over 70% said they would hire someone with volunteer experience over someone without.
  2. ***Get out of a rut.*** Need a change of career? Volunteering is a great way to explore and get experience in a new field.
  3. ***Spend time with your family.*** Volunteering as a family is a great way to spend time together. Pick a family cause of passion and give back to yourselves and the community at the same time!
  4. ***Enrich your life.*** Volunteering adds meaning in many ways, through learning new skills, making new friendships, and by making our community a better place to live.
  5. ***World peace.*** Okay - this is number eleven, and no one person can bring world peace, but can you imagine it ever happening without the efforts of volunteers?

## 5. GETTING STARTED

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### TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING

1. **Formal Volunteer Service:** Structured assistance provided through groups and organizations, to benefit the community, clients, and individuals outside the organization, as well as the organization itself.
2. **Informal Volunteer Service:** Unorganized help to family, friends, neighbours, and complete strangers.

Simply put, volunteers contribute to the heartbeat of any healthy resilient community, and to society in general.

### CONSIDER YOUR REASONS TO VOLUNTEER

What skills, abilities and talents do you have and are willing to give? What would you like to learn, develop and enhance? What's your passion? What inspires, motivates, and interests you?

### SOME THOUGHTS AND MOTIVATIONS:

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- Volunteer with friends and family
- Give back to their community / do their civic duty
- Personally affected by a cause
- Meet new people / see new places
- Make a difference
- Check out potential career and job opportunities
- Feel needed / feel good
- Get to know a new community

- Help someone in need
- Gain leadership skills / share skills
- Have an impact
- Get meals, transportation, benefits
- Be part of a team
- Learn something new
- Be an advocate
- Have some fun!
- Volunteer because they were asked to

*Imagine Canada*

## 6. WHERE TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES

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### VOLUNTEER CENTRES

Volunteer Centres work in local communities to strengthen volunteering and citizen engagement. With more than 200 in Canada, each volunteer centre's name, size, structure, and services reflect the unique characteristics of its community.

### VOLUNTEER CENTRES IN BC

Looking to volunteer? BC Volunteer Centres can help. Volunteer Centres play an important part in communities. BC boasts over 35 volunteer centres, each providing an unique mix of programs to fit the needs of your community. To find a volunteer centre in your area, [click here](#).

**Why contact your volunteer centre? what can they do for you?**

See our Volunteer Centre Fact Sheet for a [FULL LIST](#) of all the great things they do in communities.

Though diverse in many ways, they share the the following functions:

- Promote volunteering
- Build the capacity of organizations to engage volunteers
- Facilitate connections between people with volunteer opportunities
- Provide leadership on issues related to volunteering and citizen engagement

Here are some of the great things your local Volunteer Centre does:

- Explain how to be a volunteer
- Host volunteer fairs, manage volunteer awards and appreciation events
- Matching volunteers to organizations
- Host an online listing of volunteer opportunities
- Training for organizations and volunteers on volunteer engagement
- Specialize support for seniors, persons with disabilities, youth & immigrant volunteerism
- Celebrate National Volunteer Week
- Operate Volunteer Programs

## DON'T HAVE VOLUNTEER CENTRES?

### Online Volunteer Postings

- [VOLUNTEER NOW](#)
- [Charity Village](#)
- [GoVolunteer](#)
- [Dosomegood](#)
- [BC211](#)
- [Volunteer Connector](#)

### VOLUNTEER NOW: Volunteer BC's Online Volunteer Positions

Volunteer Now offers a one-stop-shop for volunteering. Search and apply for multiple volunteer opportunities. Browse and register for a [free account here](#).

### OTHER IDEAS:

- Community theatres, museums and archives
- Community centre
- Hospitals and medical clinics
- Libraries, schools, college and universities
- Food bank, homeless shelters, senior centres, and crisis lines
- Family Resource Centre
- Service organizations (ie: Lions or Rotary Club)
- Local animal shelters, rescue organizations, or wildlife centres
- Youth organizations, sports teams, and after-school programs
- Historical societies, local and national parks, and conservation organizations.
- Places of worship

## VOLUNTEER CANADA

[Volunteer Canada](#) is the national voice for volunteerism in Canada. Volunteer Canada's mission is to provide leadership in strengthening citizen engagement and to serve as a catalyst for voluntary action. Find a list of [volunteer centres](#) or [virtual opportunities](#) across Canada.



## 7. FINDING A VOLUNTEER POSITION THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

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There are endless volunteer opportunities available to choose from including one-time, episodic, long-term, short-term, project, virtual and the list goes on. It's important to source out volunteer positions that are of interest to you. Something you would enjoy, are capable of doing, and be honest with yourself, have the time to commit.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Why do you wish to volunteer?
- Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a group?
- Are you looking for opportunities within an organization or volunteer remotely?
- Would you like to work with adults, children, seniors, families or animals?
- Do you prefer to work behind the scenes or do you wish to take on a more visible role?
- What are your goals and interests when volunteering?
- Realistically how much time are you willing to commit?
- How much responsibility are you ready to take on?
- What skills and abilities can you bring to a volunteer position?
- What causes are most important to you?

To get a sense of what an organization is like, consider an onsite visit. This will give you an opportunity to observe the daily operations, the interaction between staff and volunteers and if applicable the organization's clients. This may ultimately help in your decision to ensure that the volunteer position you are considering will be a good fit. Sometimes an opportunity that looks fantastic in the job description can turn out to be quite different when you are actually in the position.

## 8. VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING

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Volunteering has changed dramatically during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Organizations can offer virtual volunteering opportunities. You can donate your virtual time and skills. For many virtual roles, all you need to make a difference is an internet connection! Check out Volunteer Now or Volunteer Canada for virtual volunteer opportunities.

## 9. FOUND A POSITION, NOW WHAT?

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Make sure that the experience is a good fit and matches your skills, abilities, goals and objectives. Address valid issues up front such as what will be your time commitment, training involved, who will be your direct supervisor, who to go to with questions, and who will you be working with.

### ASK QUESTIONS

Does the organization have:

- A volunteer handbook or guidelines outlining policies and procedures for volunteers. During Covid-19, volunteer safety is a priority.
- If you cannot volunteer in person, do they have virtual volunteering options?
- Screening Tools in place. I.e. Criminal Record Check and or Vulnerable Sector Check
- An orientation for new volunteers.
- Accurate, up-to-date descriptions for each volunteer position detailing: The title, or the position, and skills and qualifications required to meet the position.
- Insurance Coverage: What kind of insurance is provided?

### BE CLEAR YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT'S EXPECTED

You should feel completely comfortable with the organization, and the work you are undertaking with a clear understanding of all aspects of the position.

### IT'S OKAY TO MAKE A CHANGE

Not all volunteer positions are a good fit and you are definitely not locked in for life. Don't feel obligated to stick with a volunteer position that makes you uncomfortable or that you dislike. Ultimately volunteering should be an enjoyable experience, not something that causes grief and unhappiness.

The best volunteer experiences benefit both the volunteer and the organization. Talk to your immediate supervisor about changing your position, or look for a different organization that may be a better fit.



## 10. VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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### VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

#### The right:

- To be treated as a co-worker, not just as free help.
- To a suitable assignment, with consideration for personal preference, temperament, life experience, education and employment background.
- To know as much as possible about the organization and its services, including policies and procedures, people, clients and programs.
- To be heard and recognized.
- To workplace training that is thoughtfully planned and effectively presented.
- To continuing education on the job, a follow up to initial training, information about new developments and training for greater responsibilities.
- To sound guidance and direction, by someone who is experienced, patient, well informed and thoughtful.
- To a place to work, which is conducive to work, and worthy of the job to be performed.
- To promotion and a variety of experiences, through advancement of assignments of more responsibility, through transfer from one activity to another, through special assignment.

### VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Responsible to:

- Be open and honest with staff and fellow volunteers.
- Understand the role of paid staff and respect the bounds of volunteer responsibilities.
- Understand the requirements of time and duty.
- Treat all with respect and dignity.
- Respect individuality.
- Take commitment seriously.
- Share ideas and get a different perspective.
- Seek and accept feedback.
- Be an informed and effective advocate for change.
- Give the priceless gift of service and enthusiasm.
- Serve as goodwill ambassadors.



## 11. INSURANCE AND LIABILITIES

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Risk management is an important factor in the proper management of any non-profit or charity. Failure to recognize and practice due diligence can result in potential damage to an organization including injury to people or assets, financial costs, and perhaps loss of reputation and goodwill. Loss of goodwill would make it nearly impossible to fundraise, attract staff and volunteers, and implement programs. While proper insurance is important, it remains only one part of risk management.

The risk management process is not a cookie-cutter approach, as what is appropriate for a larger organization may not be the same for a smaller organization. Risk can be reduced without costing much or limiting the ability of the organization to actively conduct its business.

**The following list of questions is provided as a guideline only.**

Each organization is unique in all respects and the big picture should be taken into account when making your decision to volunteer.

### QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Does the organization have:

- A volunteer risk management policy setting out procedures to reduce risk.
- A volunteer handbook with policies and procedures that volunteers need to be aware of and comply with, including safety measures volunteering during Covid-19 or offer virtual volunteering options.
- A written application form with all necessary information including contact, background, skills, health, references, and consent to check references.
- Accurate, up to date job descriptions for each volunteer position.
- Screening Tools in place. I.e. Criminal Record Check and if working with youth or vulnerable persons - does the organization conduct a vulnerable sector check.
- An orientation for volunteers.
- Training for volunteers in their specific duties.
- Insurance Coverage: What kind of insurance is provided?

## QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Does the organization have:

- A process in place to identify and assess the risks for such things as bodily harm; personal injury; financial loss; risk to individuals; clients, the community, liability; and property damage. Insurance may be helpful in covering harm to volunteers and harm caused by volunteers.
- Depending on the organization's existing insurance policies that include: Commercial General Liability insurance or CGL is coverage that will protect your organization/business in the event that you are sued. CGL coverage is designed to protect against claims of bodily injury or property damage.
- Directors & Officers Liability (D & O) is for the members of the board of directors who are responsible for overseeing the organization/business activities; they're required to act in good faith and in the best interest of the organization. Directors & Officers may have an exposure to personal liability in addition to exposing the organization to corporate liability.
- Automobile Insurance: Organizations that have volunteer drivers should have special policies dealing with this and the volunteer's personal insurance coverage.
- Policy and procedure to respond to, and deal with, inappropriate or illegal behaviour.
- Policy and procedure for Harassment, Suspension, and Termination.
- A volunteer contract including a volunteer code of conduct.
- A safe and supervised physical space in which volunteers are performing their duties.
- Policy and procedure that details the appropriate use of the organization's resources.
- A risk assessment plan and review process in place.
- A functioning board conducting the affairs of the organization.

## 12. BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

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The potential health benefits of volunteering can be enormous. The right volunteer match can help reduce stress, find friends, reach out to the community, learn new skills, and even advance your career.

### **VOLUNTEERING CAN PROVIDE**

- Provide a sense of purpose.
- Makes you happy.
- Increases self-confidence and helps combat depression.
- Helps counteract the effects of stress, anger, and anxiety.
- The opportunity to practice great skills such as public speaking, teamwork, communication & problem solving,
- Help build on skills you already possess and utilize them to benefit your community, cause, event or activity.
- An opportunity to meet individuals with shared interests.
- Exposure to professional organizations, internships, and co-op opportunities that could be of benefit of your career.
- A fun and easy way to explore passions and interests.
- Renewed creativity, motivation, and inspiration for meaningful and interesting opportunities.
- Does not exclude people with disabilities or chronic health conditions providing huge health benefits.
- A relaxing and revitalizing time out from the day-to-day routine of work, school, or family obligations.

**DURING THESE CHALLENGING TIMES,  
THE TOP REASON TO VOLUNTEER IS:**

It helps you stay physically and  
mentally healthy.

*helpguide.org*



## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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- [\*Apathy is Boring\*](#)
- [\*BMS Group - Under Our Wing Insurance\*](#)
- [BC211](#)
- [Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement: Volunteer Canada](#)
- [Charity Village](#)
- [DoSomeGood](#)
- [Ellis, Susan J: Energize INC. - Why Volunteer](#)
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- [Volunteer BC - How to Volunteer Safely During Covid-19](#)
- [Volunteer Canada - Resources on COVID-19 and Volunteering](#)