

CHLA/ABSC Library Volunteer Policy June, 2004

Volunteers can have role in health sciences libraries and patient education libraries and, when used appropriately, are welcome additions to a library. Volunteers are unpaid and give of their time and talents to support the library and its services. Volunteering in a health library is an excellent opportunity for those wishing to experience the library culture or for those looking for work experience. Volunteers can be enthusiastic advocates for the library within the institution and in the larger community. The role of the volunteer in a health care setting is to support the work of paid staff. In keeping with typical health institution volunteer policies that prohibit volunteers from performing any sort of medical procedure, volunteers are not responsible for the usual work of paid library staff.

Intent

It is imperative that library volunteers should only be engaged when it is clear to both administration and labour unions that they are only supporting paid workers and are not replacing them.

Library volunteers require ongoing training and library staff must be aware of the commitment that is needed both in time and materials to ensure volunteers are well-equipped to carry out their assigned tasks.

- Prior to placement in the library, all the existing paid library staff must endorse the use of volunteers in the library.
- There will be a well-defined written position description that outlines the activities that a volunteer is asked to perform. The position description adequately describes the physical demands and technical expertise that are necessary in order to fulfill the requirements of the position. Recognizing that volunteer duties are often assigned with the individual's unique skills and limitations in mind, it is within the library manager's discretion to revise the written requirements of the position upon interviewing the volunteer candidate. A copy of the revised position description will be given to the volunteer upon placement in the library.
- Whether or not the staff in the library is unionized, the institution's union representing clerical positions should review each volunteer position description to ensure that work that is part of the union's bargaining unit is not included.
- Library managers may obtain volunteers for the library through the institution's volunteer coordinator or from outside sources. If outside sources are used, potential volunteers must participate in the institution's volunteer screening process that includes a background check. Library managers may accept volunteers for the library on the recommendation of the volunteer placement coordinator; alternately, library managers themselves should have the authority to recommend to the

volunteer placement coordinator potential volunteers for the library. Whether first selected by the volunteer placement coordinator or the library manager, potential library volunteers must participate in the institution's volunteer screening process that may include a background check.

- Prior to placement in the library, the library's manager will interview the potential volunteer in order to assess their suitability, even though the volunteer placement coordinator may have conducted the initial interview.

In the screening interview the library manager needs to clarify the library's expectations for the volunteer role including the time commitment required by the volunteer.

The manager also needs to explore the volunteer's motivation, skills and expectations to ensure they are compatible with the library's needs.

It is most important in selecting a library volunteer that they are well matched with the position description.

- One paid staff library member must be assigned to supervise and manage the activities of the library volunteer.
- . In order to ensure that paid staff and volunteers are treated consistently and fairly, volunteers should be held accountable to the institutional policies and procedures that are applicable to their placement and that are in force for all paid employees.
- The library's volunteer supervisor should maintain a record of the volunteer's attendance and performance. The library's volunteer supervisor should address any performance problems immediately.
- In cases where a volunteer's performance has been substandard and has not improved in spite of coaching, the library's volunteer supervisor should seek the advice of the institution's volunteer placement coordinator.
- The contribution of library volunteers should be recognized either formally through existing institution employee recognition programs or through library initiated events.