



# Professional Ethics in Volunteer Administration

Revised and Updated, November 2016

## INTRODUCTION

Volunteer administration is the profession concerned with the practice of integrating volunteers effectively into an organization to enhance performance and results. It includes people who mobilize and direct volunteer engagement as a full-time job, those who carry this responsibility in addition to other job duties, and those who serve in this role as volunteers themselves. Volunteer administration embraces both paid and unpaid leaders.

This document presents the five core values and related principles for ethical practice in volunteer administration. Adherence to these ethical values is critical to sustaining organizations that:

- are accessible to diverse groups
- operate ethically with all stakeholders
- strive for excellence
- maintain the public trust
- sustain a helping environment
- are at low risk for legal actions against them

The Council of Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA) identifies the competencies for this profession, offers an international professional certification, and promotes ethical behavior and decision-making as a hallmark of professional practice. This document is a revision of previous work done by the former Association for Volunteer Administration and many individual leaders in the field. CCVA gratefully acknowledges the “Six Pillars of Character” developed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics which form the basis for this code, as well as similar work done by the Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada.

## RELATED TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- *Administrator of Volunteers*: As there is no single, universal job title for leaders and managers of volunteer engagement, this document uses this term for the sake of consistency.
- *Stakeholders*: This term is used to refer to the many individuals who are involved with and impacted by volunteer engagement, including volunteers, paid staff colleagues, clients or customers, organizational leaders, and community partners.
- *Values*: Core beliefs that guide actions
- *Principles*: More focused beliefs that contribute to a broader value
- *Code of ethics*: Formal set of values that govern the behavior of a group
- *Policies*: Rules for behavior in specific situations
- *Collective Standards*: Specific methods of practice

## USING THIS DOCUMENT and ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This document is intended as foundational tool to aid Administrators of Volunteers in becoming strong and principled leaders who make decisions that are founded on core ethical values.

Use this document as a starting point whenever you are faced with a decision and are unclear which course of action might prove to be in the best interests of your stakeholders, including, volunteers, staff, and clients. Each of the five core ethical values is composed of a related set of principles. For each value, you will find a standard of ethical conduct for Administrators of Volunteers to apply to their actions.

To supplement this document, CCVA offers additional tools to help you explore professional ethics in more depth and assist you in navigating real-life ethical dilemmas. These resources include:

- PowerPoint slides with talking points for leading a workshop on professional ethics
- Single page mini-poster version of Core Values, suitable for framing
- Decision-making toolkit with worksheet and sample scenarios (*coming in 2017*)
- Discussion guide for each value (*coming in 2017*)
- “Ethics in Action”, providing examples of how the values and principles relate to specific volunteer management tasks (*coming in 2017*)

These resources are available at no cost at [www.cvacert.org](http://www.cvacert.org). From the home page, navigate to Resources and Media > Professional Ethics.

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## CORE VALUES

### CITIZENSHIP

- The Administrator of Volunteers understands that volunteerism is a foundation of civil societies and guides the organization and its stakeholders toward active community participation.

### RESPECT

- The Administrator of Volunteers acknowledges the inherent value, skills and abilities of all individuals and affirms the mutual benefit gained by the volunteer and the organization.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

- The Administrator of Volunteers demonstrates responsibility to the organization, its stakeholders and the profession of volunteer administration.

### FAIRNESS

- The Administrator of Volunteers commits to individual and collective efforts that build and support a fair and just organizational culture.

### TRUST

- The Administrator of Volunteers maintains loyal and trusting relationships with all stakeholders and is dedicated to providing a safe environment based on established standards of practice.

## Professional Ethics in Volunteer Administration

## CORE VALUES and PRINCIPLES

**CITIZENSHIP:** The Administrator of Volunteers understands that volunteerism is a foundation of civil societies and guides the organization and its stakeholders toward active community participation.

- **Philosophy of Volunteerism:** Maintain a clear personal philosophy on volunteerism and support the development of an organizational philosophy on volunteer engagement.
- **Social Responsibility:** Facilitate a compassionate and caring culture through which community needs are met and shared values are enhanced.
- **Philanthropy:** Cultivate and model the generosity of spirit, time and resources to further volunteer engagement and meet community needs.

**RESPECT:** The Administrator of Volunteers acknowledges the inherent value, skills and abilities of all individuals and affirms the mutual benefit gained by the volunteer and the organization.

- **Dignity:** Act in a compassionate manner that upholds the right of all volunteers to be valued and involved in decisions that affect them.
- **Inclusivity:** Encourage and facilitate the participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds, perspectives and abilities.
- **Privacy:** Protect the privacy of individuals and information considered confidential.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** The Administrator of Volunteers demonstrates responsibility to the organization, its stakeholders and the profession of volunteer administration.

- **Collaboration:** Include stakeholders in the development and support of volunteer engagement and cultivate partnerships to enhance the impact of volunteers.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Pursue excellence by enhancing professional competence, maintaining certifications and fostering innovation.
- **Professionalism:** Provide outstanding service to the organization and the people it serves while upholding personal and professional boundaries in all interactions.

**FAIRNESS:** The Administrator of Volunteers commits to individual and collective efforts that build and support a fair and just organizational culture.

- **Impartiality:** Remain unbiased and objective when working with stakeholders.
- **Equity:** Ensure access to opportunities, resources and support which enable volunteers to be successful.
- **Justice:** Implement open and consistent processes that inform decision-making and address discriminatory or prejudicial behaviors.

**TRUST:** The Administrator of Volunteers maintains loyal and trusting relationships with all stakeholders and is dedicated to providing a safe environment based on established standards of practice.

- **Honesty:** Commit to the truth and strive for transparency.
- **Integrity:** Demonstrate consistency between word and action by practicing ethical decision-making and addressing conflicts of interest.
- **Commitment:** Act in a forthright manner with sincere good intent and follow through on promises and agreements.