

*TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
VOLUNTEER SERVICES*

HANDBOOK FOR VOLUNTEERS



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Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Brad Livingston
Executive Director

Dear Criminal Justice Volunteer:

Welcome to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. We are committed to the active recruitment and retention of concerned volunteers with the qualifications and commitment to accept the challenge inherent in a correctional rehabilitative setting.

The goal of our volunteer programs is to assist the agency in achieving a reduced recidivism rate, improving vocational and life skills and changing the attitudes and actions of those who will be released to our communities. By working with our staff, you will become an integral part of our ongoing rehabilitative efforts.

This handbook has been prepared to give you, the volunteer, an overview of the department and to set forth pertinent rules, regulations, and guidelines which must be followed in order to promote public safety. In carrying out your vital role as a volunteer, you will be expected to understand and follow these requirements as well as local rules of operation. Please ask staff for clarification if you have any questions or concerns.

We have found that community citizens, staff, and offenders alike have deeply moving and rewarding experiences through volunteer programming within our agency. We are very grateful for your interest, time, and commitment as we work together for a safer and better Texas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Livingston", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brad Livingston
Executive Director

Our mission is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime.

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HANDBOOK for VOLUNTEERS

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HANDBOOK for VOLUNTEERS

The objectives of this handbook are to state the mission of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ); provide an overview of the volunteer program; provide an understanding of TDCJ policy regarding the volunteer program; and to promote an understanding of the dynamics involved with volunteering in a TDCJ facility.

“The mission of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime.”

OVERVIEW

The TDCJ has enjoyed a long history of volunteer participation. Program areas in which a volunteer can participate include, but are not limited to:

- literacy and educational programs
- life skills
- job skills
- parent training classes and marriage classes
- drug and alcohol rehabilitation or education programs
- support groups
- arts and crafts
- faith based / religious classes and programs
- mentoring
- other programs designed to assist in the transition between confinement and society and to reduce the incidence of recidivism.

Agency divisions and departments will recruit and partner with volunteers and volunteer groups who:

- come from culturally and socio-economically diverse backgrounds and geographic areas of the state;
- have a positive and continuing influence on the behaviors of offenders, which promote public safety and reduce recidivism;
- share experiences and strengths, provide direction and guidance in assisting offenders to meet their goals and treatment needs, employment opportunities, abstinence from drugs and alcohol, and to reconnect with family and community;
- will join the TDCJ in building a statewide network of volunteers who can provide services to offenders, helping them become responsible and productive members of their communities; and
- will help promote community awareness and involvement while benefiting departments in need of additional resources and assistance.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The TDCJ is one of the nation's largest state agencies with 112 major institutions and is currently the second largest prison system in the U.S., next to California. Some 41,000 dedicated employees serve an offender population of over 150,000, as well as approximately 81,000 paroled offenders.

Over 426,000 individuals are under the supervision of the Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD), also known as adult probation. There are 122 CSCD offices that serve 254 counties in Texas. These are not part of the TDCJ.

Under the Parole Division, there are 67 parole offices and 12 District Reentry Centers (DRC).

The recidivism rate after three years for offenders released in 2005 was 27.2% with nearly 73% not returning.

The average cost of housing an offender per day in a state operated prison was approximately \$47.50 in fiscal year 2008.

Offender Profile:

Average age: 37.2 years old

Average Educational Achievement: 7.94 grade level

Average Length of Sentence: 17.6 years

Many have been in repeated trouble with the law.

Many claim some religious preference.

(Statistical information provided by the TDCJ Executive Services.)

AREAS FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Chaplaincy Department - The chaplaincy volunteer program extends services to offenders of all faiths, who are supervised or incarcerated within a TDCJ-operated or contracted unit/facility, and provides reasonable and equitable opportunities to pursue religious beliefs and participate in religious activities and programs that do not endanger the safe, secure, and orderly operation of the agency. The following is a list of services a volunteer can provide with the chaplaincy volunteer program:

Specialty Programs	Visitation/Hospitality House
Rehabilitation Programs	Family Programming
Spiritual Growth Programs	Building Projects
Mentoring	Faith Based Dorms
Reentry Programs	Offender Pastoral Visits

Parole Division – The Parole Division is responsible for the supervision of offenders released from prison on parole or mandatory supervision. Its mission is to enhance public safety by successfully reintegrating offenders, using supervision, treatment programs, residential facilities, and community resources. The following is a list of services a volunteer can provide with the Parole Division volunteer program:

AA/NA
GED
Parenting Classes
Adult Basic Education (ABE)
English as a Second Language (ESL)
Life Skills Classes

Substance Abuse Education
Pre-Employment Classes
Mentoring
Anger Management Classes
Faith Based Programming
Financial Management Classes

Sex Offender Rehabilitation Programs (SORP) – The SORP consists of two types of programs.

The Sex Offender Treatment Program (SOTP) consists of an eighteen month intensive treatment program in a therapeutic community environment to assist sex offenders determined to pose a higher re-offense risk. The SOTP involves three treatment phases employing a cognitive-behavioral model. The primary goal of the program is to reduce the rate of re-offense and move the participant toward a more pro-social lifestyle. All three phases occur in a therapeutic community environment, providing necessary behavior modifiers that allow offenders immediate feedback about their behavior and treatment progress.

The Sex Offender Education Program (SOEP) consists of a four month curriculum to assist sex offenders determined to pose a lower re-offense risk or who may be releasing to a lengthy term of supervision. This curriculum is provided in a didactic format, providing information on a variety of topics (e.g., healthy sexuality, anger and stress management, interpersonal relationships, and cognitive restructuring).

Substance Abuse Treatment Program (SATP) - The substance abuse volunteer program offers a variety of recovery groups to offenders such as:

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
Twelve-Step Programs
Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
Cocaine Anonymous (CA)

Celebrate Recovery
Partners Program
Winners' Circle
Secular Organization for Sobriety (SOS)

It all began with an AA group over 50 years ago. A Texas prison is the host of the second oldest on-going in-prison AA meeting in the world. It started in the 1940's at the Huntsville Unit (The Walls) in Huntsville, Texas. There are as many as 1,100 volunteers approved to visit the prisons and to carry the message of recovery to thousands of offenders.

Victim Services – The Victim Services Division coordinates a central mechanism for victims and the public to participate in the criminal justice process within an environment of integrity, fairness, compassion, and dignity. The volunteer programs available under this division include:

Victim Impact Panel

Victim-Offender Mediation/Dialogue

Windham School District (WSD) – The WSD provides a variety of educational programs to eligible offenders within the TDCJ. The programs are designed to meet the unique needs of adult offenders and address the legislatively-mandated goals of reducing recidivism, reducing the cost of confinement, promoting positive behavior during confinement, and increasing offenders' success in obtaining and maintaining employment. In addition to providing traditional academic and vocational education, WSD also has several life skills, problem solving and behavior oriented educational programs designed to meet the needs of the offender population. Annually, over 75,000 offenders participate in the various educational programs. The WSD primarily seeks regular volunteers to help with academic instruction

on a routine basis. Special volunteers typically serve as guest speakers for the life skills programs.

HOW TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Individuals who want to participate in the TDCJ volunteer program shall submit a completed and signed original TDCJ Volunteer Application. Once the application has been processed, the applicant will be sent a letter to attend an approved volunteer training/orientation session. Applicants are not considered approved until they attend a volunteer training/orientation session. The volunteer application is available on the TDCJ website under Quick Links to Volunteer Services Program.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play a significant role in the criminal justice setting. Because of their first hand experience and/or devoted interest in their field, volunteers have the ability to gain the attention and respect of offenders.

Volunteers are key players in programs designed for rehabilitation and reentry of offenders into the community. The transition process seeks to produce offenders who are law-abiding citizens with the strengths and skills to successfully manage the problems they will face daily. Volunteers are the role models for this journey and are an invaluable addition to the agency's limited resources.

"What is the role of a volunteer?"

- To provide programs and services in an effort to assist with the agency's mission to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, to reintegrate offenders into society and assist victims of crime.

Placement, or facility assignment of volunteers is based on the needs of the institution, needs of the offender population, space availability, existing program schedules, and the proposed volunteer activity. Volunteers must not interfere with the custodial responsibilities of the TDCJ.

RULES OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are subject to sanctions for failure to abide by the TDCJ rules and regulations or failure to perform responsibilities in accordance with the assignment description or expectations. Being a volunteer is a privilege. Breaking the rules can end that privilege.

- A. Volunteers shall be respectful of the needs and requirements of each department on the facility. Volunteer activities shall be consistent with sound correctional practices for security and orderly operations.

[Respect the authority of unit staff.]

- B. Volunteers shall not form a non-professional, personal or emotional relationship with an offender(s).
- C. Volunteers (*excluding employee and Victim Services volunteers*) may correspond with an offender(s). Correspondence shall **not** include:

- or reference personal information (e.g., personal photographs, personal relationships, personal finances, etc.)
- legal and/or financial advice
- any references that are sexual in nature
- reference to criminal behavior or gang-related information
- reference to or include contraband
- reference to actions that are inappropriate, such as soliciting money
- or contain records or documents held by the TDCJ

The word "Volunteer" shall be included as part of the return address. Volunteers shall use a postal box address or the address of the organization, program, or church they represent as the return address.

- D. Volunteers shall not mail any items of correspondence for offenders. This includes, but is not limited to, correspondence between offenders, family members, victims, friends, or enemies.
- E. Volunteers shall not carry/pass messages from offender to offender; the offender's family; their victims or their victim's family in written or verbal form. This includes making or accepting personal calls for or from an offender's family member(s).
- F. No volunteer shall contact the victim of an offender, including a family member who may be the victim. The offender may state that he wants to reconcile with or make it up to the victim. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to notify staff if the offender has made such a request, but the volunteer is not to act upon the offender's request. The victim, if and when he or she chooses to come face to face with his or her offender, can contact Victim Services to arrange mediation.
- G. Volunteers are required to acknowledge on their application if a family member, friend, victim, or enemy is assigned to a TDCJ facility. Volunteers are responsible for reporting immediately to the volunteer authority when a family member, friend, victim, or enemy becomes incarcerated after the volunteer begins their service.
- H. Volunteers are not allowed to serve on a facility where a family member, friend, enemy, or victim is assigned. If, once you arrive on the facility, you discover a family member, friend, enemy, or victim is assigned to that facility, or is later moved to that facility, you must report it immediately

- I. Volunteers shall dress in a conservative and responsible manner that is appropriate for the volunteer assignment being performed and which does not detract from the safety and security of the facility. Volunteers shall adhere to established grooming standards. Any attire which is of extreme design, revealing in nature, and conveys messages of a derogatory or offensive nature through language, logos or symbols is prohibited. This includes signs or symbols of apparent membership in a Security Threat Group/Gang as evidenced by tattoos or other signs or symbols of membership. Any extreme haircuts, styles or colors are also prohibited.

Items that will not be allowed are:

- jewelry items worn on the facial areas (e.g., earrings/studs in nose, tongue, lips, or eyebrow)
 - any attire (to include slits in skirts) shorter than three (3) inches above the middle of the knee while standing
 - sweat suits and wind suits unless they are appropriate for the activity being conducted
 - any attire that exposes midriff or shoulders or any portion of an undergarment
 - slacks and pants worn below the waist
 - any attire that is considered to be see-through, low-cut (in front or back) or tight-fitting
 - white shirt and white pants worn together
 - flip-flops or shower shoes (any sandal with the top portion consisting only of a strap that divides the toes)
 - open-toe shoes for male volunteers
- J. Volunteers shall immediately report an injury to the assigned staff member.
- K. Volunteers shall not be permitted to perform any activity involving the actual receipt or handling of money (either cash or readily negotiable documents such as checks, money orders, state warrants, etc.) while performing volunteer services for the TDCJ.
- L. Volunteers shall not accept any personal gifts from offenders or give personal gifts to offenders.
- M. Access to telephone service on a facility will be limited to emergency use only. Volunteers that are approved Certified Volunteer Chaplain's Assistants (CVCA) are excluded from this rule for the purpose of making authorized calls for offenders. All calls from the facility may be monitored by TDCJ personnel.
- N. Volunteers, and their family members, shall not place money in an offender's Trust Fund Account. [Exception: Family member or individual with whom a relationship was established prior to incarceration and declared to the unit volunteer authority or Volunteer Services.]
- O. Volunteers may not visit an offender in regular unit visitation. [Exception: Family member or individual with whom a relationship was established prior to incarceration and declared to the unit volunteer authority or Volunteer Services.]

- P. Volunteers shall not allow a releasee to reside at their personal place of residence. [Exception: Family member or individual with whom a relationship was established prior to incarceration and declared to the unit volunteer authority or Volunteer Services.]
- Q. Volunteers shall not have releasees visit in their home [Exception: Group meetings or events (i.e., AA group meetings, religious study groups, religious fellowships, etc.)]
- R. Volunteers shall not, under any circumstances, supervise or manage offenders or other volunteers.
- S. Volunteers shall report immediately to the appropriate authority any information revealed by an offender that is criminal in nature or could impact public/facility safety.
- T. The TDCJ has zero tolerance for sexual misconduct. Volunteers are prohibited from establishing or continuing in personal relationships with offenders, including engaging in, or attempting to engage in, any form of consensual sexual misconduct with offenders or forcing or attempting to force offenders to participate in non-consensual sexual misconduct. Volunteers who violate the policy shall not be allowed to continue to perform services for the agency and may be subject to criminal prosecution.

Acts of sexual misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- having sexual contact or sexual intercourse with an offender;
- requiring or intentionally allowing an offender to engage in sexual contact, sexual intercourse or other sexual conduct for any reason (e.g., the sexual gratification of another employee or other individual);
- masturbating in front of an offender;
- making obscene or sexual advances, gestures or comments toward an offender or being receptive to any such advances, gestures or comments made by an offender toward another employee or other individual;
- touching of self in a sexually provocative way to solicit a response from an offender or while located in any area where offenders might be located (e.g., unit, an office when an offender cleaning crew is present);
- conducting any verbal communication of a sexual nature with or within potential hearing range of an offender;
- providing written communication or photographic items of a sexual nature to an offender; or
- influencing or making promises in exchange for sexual favors or because an offender refused to submit to a sexual advance. This includes putting money into or promising to put money into an offender's trust fund or bringing in or promising to bring in contraband for an offender in exchange for sexual favors.

It is a felony offense if anyone at a TDCJ facility, including a volunteer, violates the rights of a person in custody or engages in sexual contact or sexual intercourse with a person in custody. Any volunteer who witnesses any such misconduct shall be required to report the misconduct immediately to one or more of the following: facility administrator/warden; Records Management Office, Office of Inspector General – Investigations Division in Huntsville, TX; or the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman Office in Huntsville, TX.

A volunteer shall not be subject to harassment, retaliation, intimidation or coercion for reporting a personal employee-offender relationship or any incident of sexual misconduct.

- U. Communication with the media by volunteers regarding any TDCJ business shall be approved by the TDCJ Public Information Office and coordinated with the unit volunteer authority prior to contact and dissemination of any information.
- V. If a volunteer is required to take a prescription/non-prescription medication while on the facility, it must be taken into the facility in the original container. If the medication causes side effects that may affect the volunteer's service, a written statement that includes the name of the prescribed drug, the name of the prescribing physician, and possible side effects must be submitted to the appropriate authority.
- W. Volunteers must notify Volunteer Services when there is a change in the volunteer's name and/or contact information (i.e., address, phone number(s), etc.)
- X. Volunteers must notify the unit volunteer authority or Volunteer Services within 48 hours if they have been arrested.
- Y. Volunteers shall not proselytize or induce someone to convert to one's faith or recruit someone to join one's party, institution, or cause while serving as a volunteer. Volunteers shall not disparage the faith of any offender, nor deliberately seek to influence a change in any offender's denomination.
- Z. Volunteers may transport releasees to assist them in searching for work or housing, going to appointments, church or other places consistent with successful reentry.

CONTRABAND

Contraband is defined as any item not permitted in the secured perimeter of a unit or in some cases, at any TDCJ facility. It is also any item brought into, or taken out of a facility, or in the possession of an offender, visitor or employee as defined in the Texas Penal Code, Section 38.11, or is prohibited by the rules and regulations of the TDCJ. Contraband includes cash (over \$25), alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cigarette lighters, matches or any tobacco products, controlled substances or unauthorized medications, cell phones, firearms, pocket knives, explosives, escape implements, or dangerous weapons; or correspondence to or from an offender, documents, legal materials and sensitive information not received through authorized channels.

Chapter 38 of the Texas Penal Code was amended to add Section 38.114, making it an offense to provide contraband to an inmate in a correctional facility. Anyone other than an employee or volunteer of the correctional facility who provides contraband to an inmate, commits the offense of a Class C misdemeanor. Providing certain types of contraband to an offender may be punishable as a felony offense. If an employee of the facility or a volunteer commits this offense, it is a Class B misdemeanor. The TDCJ has a zero tolerance policy towards contraband on its facilities.

Volunteers may be permitted to bring into the facility or be in possession of: a pair of eyeglasses/sunglasses, a clear purse or bag, feminine hygiene products, a small notepad, *un*-opened beverages in clear plastic (up to 32 oz.), as well as items related to the performance of their service, such as binders, workbooks, folders, books and pens and pencils. Additional items or materials may be brought in with the approval of unit administration.

All items or materials the volunteer will be using during their program/service must be approved and coordinated with the appropriate volunteer authority before entry into the facility.

- Volunteers must submit a Proposal Form for Service Providers to the Rehabilitation Programs Division and include any curriculum to be presented. The Proposal Form for Service Providers is available on the TDCJ website under Quick Links to the Volunteer Services Program.

Volunteers shall not remove any item from the facility without prior approval. Volunteers shall not take out of any institution either letter, message (written or verbal), or any article or thing for an offender.

Everyone entering a TDCJ facility is subject to search. This includes the search of the vehicle, personal belongings, or person, and can include a physical search.

Firearms, or other instruments designed/used as a dangerous weapon or having explosive substance, are not allowed on TDCJ property. The exception is for those persons licensed to carry a handgun under Chapter 411, Subchapter H of the Texas Government Code to possess a handgun on TDCJ property if the *un*-loaded gun is secured in the locked trunk of a vehicle, or locked compartment if the vehicle does not have a trunk, prior to entering TDCJ property.

Volunteers shall report the possession or trading of contraband between offenders, offenders and staff, and offenders and other volunteers.

Under NO circumstances will volunteers engage in trading or trafficking with offenders. Volunteers are prohibited from possessing, selling to, buying from, or delivering to ANY offender ANY article or commodity of ANY description except through authorized channels.

Offenders spend a lot of idle time thinking of ways to get their hands on contraband. It is important that you are part of the solution to controlling contraband and not part of the problem.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AND SAFETY

CHEMICAL AGENTS

On occasion the use of chemical agents is necessary to contain, or take control of emergency situations. Staff are trained to handle emergency situations. If you are exposed to chemical agents during an emergency situation, you should follow the following decontamination procedures.

For exposure to Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) gas:

OC is a natural substance made from the oil and resins of peppers. The effects of OC will usually subside in 45 minutes; however, the following procedures will help minimize the effect.

- Exit the effected area, face into the wind or a fan, breath normally, and try to relax.
- Do not rub eyes or skin. This will force the substance into soft tissue and prolong the effects.
- Flush eyes and exposed skin with large amounts of cool water.
- Remove and discard contact lenses, if applicable.
- Blow your nose if it is irritated.
- Use a wet paper towel, followed by a dry one, and pat the exposed area to lift the resin. Change the paper towel frequently and avoid rubbing the towel over the exposed area. This will only smear the resin to other areas.
- Do not use lotions, salves, or creams on the effected area since this will trap the resin against the skin.
- Do not use commercial eyewashes to flush the eyes. This may cause an adverse chemical reaction with the OC.
- Use soap and shampoo that do not have an oil base to wash the affected area. Start from the head and wash down.
- Once washed, use a cool towel or ice pack on exposed areas to reduce inflammation.
- Avoid direct sunlight and stay in a cool place. An air conditioned room is ideal.
- If major symptoms persist, seek medical attention.

For exposure to Orthochlorbenzalmalononitrile (CS) gas:

CS consists of an oily liquid that makes decontamination fairly easy. If exposed to CS gas remain calm, get out of the effected area, and use soapy water to wash exposed skin. Exposed clothing can be washed by normal washing.

HOSTAGE SITUATIONS

The TDCJ policy will not permit offenders, or others, to use hostages (i.e., employees, volunteers, visitors, or other offenders) to escape from custody or otherwise interfere with orderly institutional operations. Hostages will not be recognized for bargaining purposes.

There are no guarantees in a hostage situation; however, research indicates that the following guidelines have proven very helpful.

- Do not be a hero! Accept your position and be prepared to wait. Be patient. Remain calm.

- The first fifteen to forty-five minutes are the most dangerous. **Follow the instructions of your captor. Do not hesitate!** Be cooperative.
- Do not speak unless spoken to and only then when necessary. Be a good listener.
- Try to rest. As soon as things settle down, try to get as much rest as possible without turning your back on your captor. Try to stay in a group if there is more than one hostage.
- Use your mind to create an emotional safe haven.
- Do not make suggestions, express opinions, moralize, threaten, plant ideas or worry out loud. Do not try to be a negotiator.
- Do not try to escape unless you are absolutely certain that you will be successful, and even then, rethink it. Consider how your escape attempt will affect the treatment of or outcome for the remaining hostages.
- If anyone, including you, needs any special medical attention, inform your captors.
- Be observant. Try to remember everything that you see and hear. Memorize things about the captors, their descriptions and conversations.
- Do not be argumentative.
- Treat the captor like royalty. Don't turn your back on your captor unless ordered to do so. Do not stare at your captor, as this may unnerve him.
- Have a positive attitude.
- If you believe a rescue attempt is taking place, or you hear a noise or shooting, hit the floor and stay down. Keep your hands on your head and don't make any fast moves. Assume the fetal position.
- Never doubt that you will be rescued.
- When rescue comes, follow all orders given by security staff. You may be asked to remain on the floor until the offender has been apprehended, secured and removed from the area.

VOLUNTEER SAFETY

Volunteers are a valuable asset to the TDCJ mission. Your safety is important to the agency.

- A. **MOST COMMON ACCIDENT:** Slips, trips and falls are one of the most common sources of injury. Always pay attention to the surface you are walking on and wear low-heeled footwear that is comfortable and in good condition.
- B. **UNSAFE CONDITIONS:** Volunteers should learn to recognize unsafe conditions such as frayed electrical wiring, trip hazards, slippery floors, etc., and report them immediately. Unsafe actions such as leaning back in chairs, improper lifting, or not observing warning signs should be identified and discouraged.
- C. **CHEMICAL HAZARD COMMUNICATION INFORMATION:** You have a right to know if any chemical substances you come in contact with are hazardous to you. If you have questions regarding chemical substances you may be exposed to, contact the unit volunteer authority.
- D. **BLOOD AND BODY FLUIDS PRECAUTIONS:** Because of the potential hazard of contracting Hepatitis B and/or the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) that are transmitted by blood or other body fluids, you are asked to please refrain from assisting in any situation which may lead to contact with blood and/or body fluids. Please notify staff in case of emergency.
- E. **FIRE:** Fire escape plans are posted in all areas of the facility. Locate them and become familiar with the escape route(s) and emergency phone numbers.

- In the event of fire, remove yourself and others from the areas and follow the posted escape route.
- Pull the fire alarm nearest the emergency, if one is available.
- Call the emergency phone number.
- Follow staff orders.

OFFENDER MANIPULATION

Volunteers understandably want to approach their volunteer service in a positive and optimistic manner. Volunteers must be aware that some offenders will attempt to manipulate the volunteer for their own benefit. The following are suggestions to help you reduce the chance of being manipulated:

- Realize that some offenders will take advantage of you if you let them.
- Do not do anything you would be ashamed to share with the appropriate volunteer authority.
- Keep everything out in the open. If an offender's actions are questionable, ask for advice and assistance.
- Know the policies and procedures you are required to follow. Ask for help to review and understand these policies and procedures.
- Learn to be assertive and use the word "NO" appropriately.
- Be aware of verbal and non-verbal messages you send out, particularly body language.
- Always report and document any attempt at manipulation or game-playing.
- Confront manipulative behavior and take action as the issues arise. Verify information before you take action.
- Know your personal goals and ethical limitations.
- Understand your value system.
- Understand your strengths and weaknesses.
- Be firm, fair, and consistent.
- Realize that offenders view themselves as the victim.
- Realize that when an offender is told "maybe", they often regard it as a promise.

How can you tell if an offender is getting to you?

- You feel **anger** towards the system and see yourself as an advocate for the offender. You should maintain an emotional detachment.
- You are usually **irritated** at the staff to the exclusion of considering that there may be valid reasons for delays. You presume that a delay is caused by staff, and do not consider that an offender may be responsible for the delay.
- You begin **favoring** an offender, or some offenders, over others and show it by spending more time with them or by **sharing** personal information with some, but not others.

- You begin to **enjoy** hearing stories of how other volunteers or staff are awful and you are wonderful.
- You feel **good** because offenders like you.
- You begin to think about **bending a rule** for an offender, or you do **bend a rule** for an offender.
- You feel a strong sense of **pity** for offenders, often to the point of wanting to rescue them from the natural consequences of their actions.
- You feel **superior** to other volunteers and have an inflated view of what impact you can have on an offender.
- You **fail** to report questionable behavior or requests because you do not want to get an offender into trouble.
- You unquestionably **believe** stories about cruel officers and find yourself buying into the "gossip".
- Offenders begin emphasizing **common interests**. For example, an offender may engage you in a long conversation about what you like, dislike or other personal matters. Be aware of personal probing to see where you stand. There may be an ulterior motive behind this behavior.
- Offenders begin soliciting **empathy** or **sympathy**. Offenders will tell you truthfully and sometimes untruthfully about the many problems that they have, such as a sick child, a dying mother, bankruptcy problems, etc.
- Offenders exhibit the **we/they syndrome**. Offenders will try to pit you and them against the system, especially if they can determine that someone or some organization has treated you unfairly. They will point out a similar thing has happened to them and try to establish a commonality. Try to recognize this so you can make a response that promotes personal accountability.
- Offenders begin testing your **limits**. Offenders will ask for certain things, some of which may be acceptable and others which may be illegal, to see what you will allow them to do. Offenders will break minor rules to see how you react. Report all infractions.
- The offender will suddenly **offer favors**, do extra work, be excessively **nice** and/or overly **complimentary**.
- Offenders offer comments such as, "You're the only one who understands." "You're the best teacher, preacher, counselor, etc. they have ever had." "You're the only one who can help."

BECOME A SKILLED VOLUNTEER

The following is provided to assist you in becoming an effective and skilled volunteer.

- ✓ Practice active listening skills when dealing with offenders.
- ✓ Ensure you have time; do not act as if you are in a hurry.
- ✓ Do not act as if you want to help and then provide none. Offenders are good at detecting a lack of sincerity; it is one of their common traits.

- ✓ Know your physical, emotional, and personal boundaries when working with offenders.
- ✓ Set your boundaries. The prevalent downfall of volunteers is inappropriate relationships with offenders.
- ✓ Have a positive affect on the offenders you are working with. Encourage them to share feelings and become more open. Empower them to have self-direction, independence, autonomy, personal growth, and self-development.
- ✓ Do not take the offender's side against the agency. They will use manipulation and deceit to try and turn you towards them.
- ✓ Do not undermine staff. If your group gets interrupted for court, sit patiently and wait for the officer to perform their duties. You are there to support staff in the agency's mission and you are a guest. If offenders see an inappropriate attitude on your part they will use this to further manipulate the situation to their advantage.
- ✓ Do not make plans with offenders before coordinating things with the appropriate volunteer authority. This will increase your effectiveness by not having to change plans if something you propose is not in accordance with regulations or policies.
- ✓ There is no need to establish a facade or to create some kind of special status for yourself in relation to the offender. Express your feelings genuinely. An honest and unmasked expression of feelings is one important way for the volunteer to show concern.
- ✓ Review what you know of the offender you will meet.
- ✓ Never make a promise unless you've thought it through first and are prepared to carry it out. The offender will test you, call your bluff, and see if you will deliver. This is an important part of the offender's learning to trust you.
- ✓ Be honest and objective, disapproving when it is warranted, as well as praising, supporting, and encouraging when it is warranted.
- ✓ There is a mechanism in place for offenders to receive what they need and are lawfully entitled to. If they ask for something, you can assist within the appropriate mechanism. If no mechanism exists, it is probably illegal.
- ✓ Be familiar with signs/triggers of the relapse process and who to contact for assistance.
- ✓ Respect is the keystone. The offender will not be open with you until respect and a rapport is developed. Conversely, you must respect the offender's individuality and basic rights as a human being. There is no room for narrow prejudices or feelings of superiority. Respond to the offender's needs and interests, not to your own.
- ✓ Let the offender tell you in their own good time about the offense committed, the family left behind or any other deeply held guilt-associated matters. Accept him or her as an individual who is no better or no worse than anyone else. To pigeonhole or categorize a person is, in a way, to dehumanize the person.
- ✓ Do not expect overnight miracles. When things have been going wrong for years and years with a person, these things cannot be corrected in a few weeks or months. The positive effects of your relationship with the offender may not have a decisive effect until long after you've stopped working with the person.
- ✓ The offender will never respect you until it is clear that you cannot be conned or manipulated. The offender's manipulations may be expressed in a request for you to influence correctional officers, for a witness, or for you to bring something in or out of the

- ✓ There will be a time when the offender, overwhelmed by troubles, will confront you with hostility. At such times, do not force conversation upon the offender and above all, do not respond in a hostile, sarcastic, or anxious manner. Do not act shocked. Retain your composure, ignore the hostility, or withdraw for awhile. Chances are that the offender will regain their composure.
- ✓ Remember that every contact with an offender has the potential for aggression. Delay, interrupt, stop or terminate the contact if you feel it is necessary.
- ✓ You cannot take the burden of the other person's problems on yourself. They are the offender's problems, not yours.
- ✓ You may not receive thanks or any show of gratitude from the offender. They may feel it but may not know how to express it and may actually feel embarrassed by it. You may never hear "thank you" but your effort will be, in the long run, appreciated.
- ✓ Be familiar with criminal thinking errors and ways to redirect that thinking. It is how we think that determines how we behave. When dealing with the offender population, there are criminal patterns or thinking errors that must be acknowledged and changed before significant, long lasting change can be made.
- ✓ Get offenders to ask questions of themselves such as:
 - Did I do anything to bring about or cause this situation?
 - Did I respond to a situation and make it better or worse?
 - Does blaming someone or something else make the situation better?

Be Aware and Not Complacent!

Awareness promotes safety.

Complacency promotes trouble.

Stay "tuned in" to your environment.

Subtle changes may alert you to trouble.

VOLUNTEER INDEMNIFICATION/REPRESENTATION

In the event that a volunteer is sued as a result of performing services as a volunteer/intern, the State of Texas will not indemnify the volunteer and will not provide a defense for such litigation.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Volunteers are required to participate in a refresher volunteer training session every two years. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to maintain this training requirement. Failure to do so will impact your volunteer status. You may contact Volunteer Services or the appropriate volunteer authority on the facility you serve to determine if it is time to retrain. You may request a training schedule from Volunteer Services.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM ASSESSMENTS/COMPLAINTS

Volunteers should report complaints or concerns directly to the unit volunteer authority. If the issue cannot be resolved at the facility level, contact Volunteer Services or the appropriate divisional authority (e.g., Parole Division for parole volunteer program concerns).

Volunteers may provide input or submit suggestions regarding the volunteer program and/or their experience as a volunteer. Volunteers may request a Volunteer Program Assessment/Suggestion form from their volunteer coordinator (e.g., unit chaplain or unit volunteer coordinator). The form should be submitted to Volunteer Services.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All approved volunteers shall agree in writing by signing the Volunteer Training/Orientation form to abide by agency policies relating to security and confidentiality of all records and information, both written and verbal, which pertains to employees, offenders, and releasees. A volunteer may have access to confidential information on an as needed basis and as approved by the appropriate department and applicable facility administrator or their designee. Approved volunteers that are granted access to the TDCJ data (e.g., mainframe system) will be required to be fingerprinted. Failure of the volunteer to maintain confidentiality as stated may incur a penalty for disclosure of such information, i.e., criminal prosecution or civil suit.

CONTACT /SERVICE INFORMATION

Volunteer Services
1060 Highway 190 North
Huntsville, Texas 77340
936-437-4961

Training information/questions shall be directed to:
Volunteer Services 936-437-4983

Chaplaincy

Approved volunteers who are interested in the chaplaincy volunteer program shall contact the chaplain at the facility where they wish to serve to schedule a visit. The contact information for the TDCJ facilities may be found on the TDCJ website under Quick Links, Find a TDCJ Unit or by contacting Volunteer Services.

Parole Division

Approved Parole Division volunteers will receive additional orientation at the office where they will provide services. Approved volunteers shall contact the parole office at which they wish to serve to schedule a visit. The contact information for the TDCJ parole offices is available on the TDCJ website under Contact, TDCJ Web Directory, Parole Directory. You may also contact the Parole Division volunteer coordinator at 512-406-5750.

Substance Abuse Treatment Program

Approved volunteers that are interested in the substance abuse treatment volunteer program shall contact the unit volunteer coordinator at the facility at which they wish to serve to schedule a visit. The contact information for the TDCJ facilities may be found on the TDCJ website under Quick Links, Find a TDCJ Unit or by contacting Volunteer Services.

Sex Offender Treatment Program

Approved volunteers that are interested in the sex offender treatment volunteer program shall contact the Sex Offender Treatment Program administrative staff at 936-437-2870 or Volunteer Services staff.

Victim Services

Approved volunteers for the Victim Services Division shall contact the unit chaplain to schedule a visit. The contact information for the TDCJ facilities is available on the TDCJ website under Quick Links, Find a TDCJ Unit. You may also contact the Victim Services volunteer coordinator at 512-406-5908.

If you are interested in participating in a Bridges To Life (BTL) project in your area of Texas, please contact your BTL Regional Coordinator or call the BTL office in Houston. Contact information is available on the BTL web-site – www.bridgestolife.org.

Windham School District

Approved volunteers for Windham School District shall contact the principal of the unit at which they are interested in volunteering to schedule a meeting to discuss their potential volunteer assignment. It is up to the unit principal to determine if there is a significant educational need for approved volunteers. The contact information for the TDCJ facilities is available on the TDCJ website under Quick Links, Find a TDCJ Unit. You may also contact the Windham School District volunteer coordinator at 936-291-5357.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Helping Hands
A Handbook for Volunteers in Prisons and Jails
By Daniel J. Bayse

Games Criminals Play
By Bud Allen and Diana Bosta

Notes
