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RISKY BUSINESS  
UNE AFFAIRE DE RISQUE

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## EDITORIAL

We have decided to use a suggestive title for this issue, not with the intention of minimizing the importance of the theme but merely to catch your attention. Perhaps, by innuendo, we really mean the risky business of attempting to solicit articles, four times a year, from authors across this great country so we can continue to give you a glimpse into what your fellow peers are thinking and how they are managing. The Editorial Team welcomes two new risk takers who have accepted this challenge, Jennifer Campbell and our new Regional Representative from Québec, Rosemary Byrne.

Risky Business does not mean getting your adrenalin pumping but rather it is about minimizing and managing the everyday risks that are intrinsic to running a not-for-profit organization.

Our Canadian risk management specialist, Linda Graff, has been passionate on this subject for a long time now. We did an edition on "Legal Issues" in the summer of 1995 when Linda wrote on why risk management was indispensable and that the risks were bigger and more prevalent than ever before. Now 12 years later, Linda is still telling us "risk management should not be considered optional" and "best practices that were considered adequate a few years ago could be judged as woefully sub-standard if not wholly negligent today".

Increasingly, volunteers have taken on more responsibility often with less direct supervision. When something goes wrong it will ultimately find its way to the board table. Allison Felker takes our conventional thinking of what risks are and frames the subject in a new light by challenging boards to expand their connotation of risk. Sandra Woloschuk gives us some very clear steps to take "to deter, detect and reduce instances of fraud". With the growing trend in episodic volunteering we felt that it was important to bring your attention to a report produced by The Canadian Red Cross Society recognizing that valuable volunteer help is needed and available when there is a health emergency and that risks are effectively dealt with to avoid or prevent losing the volunteer.

Most professional organizations provide for certification, which demonstrates the competency of its members while recognizing their accomplishments. Professional credibility is enhanced and when professional papers are published there is an increase in the knowledge available to all in the profession. We are fortunate to have a condensed version of Clare O'Kelly's certification paper "Setting Effective Boundaries for Volunteers" for inclusion in this issue. Hopefully it will encourage those that have been thinking about becoming certified to "take the risk".

Chris Jarvis  
Editorial Team

## **BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY - MANAGING RISKS IN VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS**

by Linda L. Graff

*This article is excerpted from the author's new book: Best of All: The Quick Reference Guide to Best Practices in Volunteer Involvement. Available at: [www.lindagraff.ca](http://www.lindagraff.ca)*

Life is full of risks. So are volunteer programs. The degree of risk related to volunteering varies by things like the nature of the work, the environment, the level of vulnerability of the people volunteers work with and the effectiveness of the management systems in place to guide and support volunteers' efforts. The mere presence of risks related to volunteer involvement should be neither the focus of attention nor a cause for alarm. What is important is how risks are managed. The more attention given to risks at a conscious level, the greater the likelihood of identifying their presence early and managing them appropriately.

In general, the more demanding the work and/or the more direct the contact between the volunteer and the "client" (patron, student, patient, athlete, resident, etc.), the greater the potential risk. Significant risks can exist even in what appear to be straightforward and relatively safe volunteer positions. Harm may arise when even some of the simplest tasks are not performed to standard.

Non-profit organizations have both a legal and a moral responsibility to attend to the safety and well being of those they serve, those who work for them and others who come into contact with their operations. As a result, nonprofit organizations must integrate risk management into all of their planning and decision making activities. This applies broadly to all aspects of an organization's activities.

### **Rising Standards**

Recent high profile cases of abuse of trust have dramatically increased legal standards as well as the public's demand for accountability. While some non-profits have implemented formal risk management initiatives, rising expectations and standards have caught many organizations off-guard. I still receive questions such as, "We have volunteers working with children - do you think we should screen them?" and "We have 2,000 volunteers on the front lines of our service delivery across the province - do you think we need a manager of volunteers to oversee their work?" and the now classic comment from board members, "We know everyone in our organization - it couldn't happen here".

If you have not implemented a formal risk management process in your volunteer program in the last three to five years, it is quite possible that both volunteers and clients are being exposed to an untenable degree of risk of harm and your organization may very well be exposed to more liability than you know about. Best practices that were considered adequate just a few years ago could be judged as woefully sub-standard if not wholly negligent today. Risk management should not be considered optional in the management of volunteer resources.

Risks and liabilities related to volunteer involvement are exacerbated by two associated trends.

1. Most western societies have become significantly more "litigational". Suits are more prevalent, non-profit organizations are not immune and volunteers' actions can be the source of legal action.
2. Organizations are asking volunteers to take on increasingly responsible positions. Tighter budgets mean fewer supervisory employees to oversee volunteer performance standards. In many organizations, volunteer involvement has expanded faster than resources have been allocated for appropriate volunteer program oversight.

### **The Aims of Risk Management**

There are two central and distinct aims of every risk management process.

1. Prevention of harm and loss must always be the first priority of every risk manager. It is clearly preferable to keep things from going wrong in the first place than it is to deal with the consequences of tragedies and disasters after the fact.
2. Liability reduction is a close second aim of every risk manager. Given that things can and do go wrong, even with the best prevention mechanisms in place, it is entirely appropriate to undertake measures that reduce personal and organizational liability exposure.

### **Risk Management Means Much More than Buying Insurance**

One of the most prevalent and most serious risk-related errors committed by non-profit boards and senior staff is to think that risk management is synonymous with buying insurance and that buying insurance somehow manages risks. This erroneous assumption can increase risks rather than decrease them!

Risk management involves identifying risks and then setting about to control them. Insurance is merely the financial band-aid that is applied after a risk has actually materialized and the organization is facing a financial obligation as a result. Buying insurance neither diminishes the likelihood that a risk will materialize nor lessens the potential magnitude of harm should it do so. In fact, the focus on insurance more typically diverts decision makers from doing due diligence. Adequate insurance is important but to assume that insurance is either the best or only response to risk is

foolhardy at best and negligent at worst.

One additional note about what risk management is not. Organizations often think that increasing screening standards is the same as “doing risk management”. Appropriately thorough screening is but one aspect of risk management. Screening is typically so ineffective that it is but one minuscule element of an overall risk management initiative.

### **Using a Risk Management System**

Risk management is not difficult. It does take time and an organizational commitment to implement appropriate risk mitigation strategies, but most risk management is common sense. Using a risk management system to help identify, assess and manage risks is highly recommended. A risk management system is a template that leads you through the steps of risk management in an orderly way, helping to ensure that you do not miss anything. The checklists and worksheets that accompany many risk management systems prompt documentation of the effort, thereby creating proof of due diligence. There are several good risk management systems available in the public domain. The one I prefer<sup>1</sup> not only leads you step-by-step through a simple four-step process, but provides good prompting about the full range of risk management approaches available.

Risk management may sound intimidating but it does not have to be difficult or complex. The real danger lies in ignoring risks in the hope that they will not materialize. That is neither legally nor morally defensible. The best news is that the close scrutiny that a well-done risk management process demands invariably generates a great by-product: better programs and service. If you are already doing risk management, ‘good on you’. If you have not yet attended to risks in a conscious and deliberate manner, right now is the best time to begin the process. Better safe ... is the lesson.

1. The model is outlined fully, along with step by step instructions and accompanying worksheets, checklists and many other tips and tools in the author’s risk management manual, *Better Safe ... Risk Management In Volunteer Programs & Community Service*. Available at [www.lindagraff.ca](http://www.lindagraff.ca)

*Linda L. Graff has been working and consulting in the non-profit sector since 1980. She is a voluntary sector and risk management specialist, an impassioned advocate for the field of volunteer program management and a dynamic and in-demand international trainer. Linda Graff and Associates Inc. can be found at: [www.lindagraff.ca](http://www.lindagraff.ca)*

*FRENCH TRANSLATION OF THIS ARTICLE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST*

## **HOW CAN BOARDS BETTER MANAGE RISK?**

by Allison Felker

When a board asks this question, those of us in the board training business can usually provide some straight forward answers. Risk management is common sense and standard practice and it is mandatory work for every not-for-profit today. We will talk about the steps of identifying, evaluating, controlling and monitoring risks. We will suggest boards seek legal, insurance or human resources expertise. In the end, board members will likely sleep more soundly thinking their organization is protected from ‘what ifs’.

Is this really all there is to risk management? If you define risk management narrowly, yes. But, before checking ‘risk management’ off their to-do list, boards must step back to see the risks they are missing. Boards have focused on developing clear policies and procedures, including risk management. In the end, more organizations are running more legally and financially sound programs. However, many of the problems our communities face and those organizations were created to address, still exist. Sadly, there are organizations that have stagnated despite changes in the political, social and demographic landscape. In an environment where some organizations are not fulfilling their missions, one of the biggest risks may be the way boards govern.

Almost every board knows they have a fiduciary function: the responsibility to act in good faith and in the best interests of the organization. Fulfilling fiduciary responsibilities is a central part of good risk management. Boards are also engaged in a strategic role – setting priorities and monitoring results. There are a myriad of resources and consultants to help boards with strategic planning.

By focusing exclusively on these two modes of board governance and zeroing in on risk management, boards often overlook a third and equally important role they can play. Chait, Ryan and Taylor call this third role the ‘generative mode’ of board governance.<sup>1</sup> The authors state that most boards understand their requirement to fulfill fiduciary and strategic functions, even if they lack resources or ability to do so. The problem instead is that boards are not asking the questions that will help them consider how and if the work of their organization is making a real difference. When boards are in a ‘generative mode’ they look at the issues their organizations face from a multitude of perspectives, including their organizational values and culture. The generative work of boards is not only finding a solution but framing the problem correctly. It involves examining long-held assumptions and practices with fresh eyes.

Here is an example. Think back to the middle of the last century and imagine a school board considering physical injury among students. Many boards reduced risk in physical education classes by investing in better sports equipment; others started to build safer playgrounds. But somewhere, other questions were raised: Is physical

activity always the cause of student injury? What if other factors are involved? Some school boards began to talk more openly about the incidence of child abuse in students' families. One can only imagine the heated discussion regarding the issue – a discussion that continues today. Yet the ability to frame the problem differently meant a new perspective began to emerge and schools began to consider their role in students' lives outside of the classroom.

New ways of framing problems and issues requires new perspectives around boardroom tables. Boards often recruit for professional backgrounds and specific skill sets. While specific professional backgrounds, such as law and accounting, can help fulfill fiduciary and strategic responsibilities, it is the ability of boards to frame issues differently that will help them fulfill their generative role. Recruiting with the generative responsibility in mind means boards must engage multiple and diverse perspectives to do their governance work.

I do not want to diminish the importance of standard risk management practice for every not-for-profit organization or to overstate its simplicity. Risk management takes considerable time and expertise. If organizations are going to make a real difference in powerful ways, it is critical for boards to expand their notion of risk. Good risk management involves the board asking new questions about their organization and its role. It is important that boards really consider the value of their organization to the community. The hidden risk of boards sticking to the familiar is a risk not only to our organizations but to the communities we all want to build.

1. Chait, Richard P., William P. Ryan and Barbara E. Taylor. *Governance As Leadership: Reframing the Work of NonProfit Boards*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey, 2003.

*Allison Felker is a Program Director for Volunteer Vancouver, where she manages training and consultation services for the not-for-profit sector.*

## **FRAUD PREVENTION IN VOLUNTARY AND NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

by Sandra Woloschuk

Last summer, a high profile fraud case was widely reported by the media when police in Atlanta, Georgia charged three individuals, including one who worked for the Coca-Cola Company, with stealing and intending to sell some of the soft drink company's trade secrets to corporate rival Pepsi. In this case, it was Pepsi officials who reported the fraud to officers of the Coca-Cola Company and to authorities. While our volunteer driven organizations may not hold secrets as

financially valuable as the formula for Coca-Cola, we, too, want our privacy and other assets to be protected from fraud. Historically, occupational fraud and abuse has referred to the corporate world but similar situations arise in the not-for-profit and charitable arenas as well.

When an employee steals from a company, commits fraud for personal gain or shares a company's confidential information, the employer most likely has a discipline plan to deal with the employee's action. Often these plans include progressive steps from warnings for smaller infractions to immediate dismissal for serious violations or referral to authorities in cases of possible criminal acts. The same threat of fraud exists in volunteer organizations and not-for-profit corporations, however many of these types of organizations do not have adequate internal controls for identifying fraudulent activities or for dealing with the perpetrators. In both cases, internal controls can provide the structure and process needed to deter, detect and reduce instances of fraud.

Any organization can conduct an audit or fraud examination to determine its risk of fraud and to examine internal controls. In order to conduct an audit, consider creating a committee representing a cross section of your organization including board members, staff and volunteers. The purpose of the audit committee is to examine procedures and processes in order to protect all those involved and to ensure the good reputation of the organization. The cross section of membership will help reassure both staff and volunteers that the true purpose of the audit is not to seek evidence of employee or volunteer indiscretion.

The audit committee

- reviews policies and procedures with particular attention to the routing of financial statements, cheques and invoice payment processing.
- looks at specific items, such as how petty cash or blank cheques are stored and also general processes such as how payments flow into the organization and how they are receipted.
- ensures that more than one person is involved in financial transactions. (For example, if one volunteer works the cash register for a shift, a different volunteer should balance the receipts at the shift's end. Similar methods should exist regarding access to petty cash and to monitor the appropriate reimbursement of legitimate expenses.)
- examines the orientation programs for both staff and volunteers. (Makes certain that the organization's procedures for reporting of suspicious activity are clearly written in plain language and fully explained during the orientation process.)
- creates a code of conduct or ensures the existing code is current. (This code should reference and describe potential conflict of interest situations, current legislation and how the organization's building and technology are to be used

and accessed.)

- defines who is permitted to accept or give gifts or gratuities and provides examples of situations where this would or would not be appropriate.
- makes fraud examination audits a regular activity so that discussions regarding risk assessment and current issues remain ongoing among volunteers, board members and other stakeholders.

In conducting their daily business, organizations must often rely on the personal integrity of their volunteers, thus, it is imperative to reduce instances of personal temptation. Temptation could be as simple as leaving one volunteer to work alone at a charity table where receipts are not required for donations of \$25 or less. Without requiring that all donations be logged, or ensuring that another volunteer witness transactions, it is possible that the otherwise reliable volunteer may not be able to resist the apparent open opportunity to skim some of these cash donations.

In 2004, the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) published the Report to the Nation on Occupational Fraud and Abuse, which examined over 500 occupational fraud cases that represented over \$761 million (US) in total losses. The ACFE is a global organization sponsoring over 100 chapters worldwide. The Report is an analysis of the findings of the Certified Fraud Examiners (CFE) who investigated the cases. Their research found that most fraud perpetrators are first time offenders. In fact, individuals with a prior fraud conviction committed only 12% of the reviewed fraud cases; apparently honest individuals committed the remainder. This is a frightening statistic for organizations that count on criminal background checks or other reference checking practices to weed out potentially dishonest employees and volunteers. As fraud is clearly a crime of opportunity and circumstance, reducing temptation is integral to reducing organizational fraud.

While an audit committee can reduce their organization's risk of fraud, there are other steps that the leadership of any organization can take to create a climate that encourages increased personal integrity.

- Inform staff and volunteers of internal controls that are in place, ensuring that individuals understand that the controls exist to protect the organization and, by extension, the reputation of its staff, volunteers, members and clients, from the impact of fraudulent activities.
- Involve representatives of all levels of stakeholders in discussions on how to reduce the opportunity for fraudulent activity.
- Foster an environment that assures protection and anonymity for those who report instances of fraudulent activities or breaches of the Code of Conduct.
- Continue to educate staff and volunteers on current issues relating to fraud.

- Screen all staff and volunteer applicants, including directors and check their references.
- Cross-train staff and volunteers so that duties can be shared. If an individual is using inappropriate practices, their actions may become known when a different person is asked to complete the same task.
- Ensure that individuals understand their personal responsibility in protecting the organization from fraud and are aware of the disciplinary action that will be taken against those who commit a fraudulent act.

It is clear that specific steps can be taken to protect our organizations and their reputations from incidents of fraud. In particular, sending the message to all stakeholders to monitor and be cautious about inventory and financial transactions stresses the importance of avoiding opportunities for volunteers and others to be tempted to commit fraud. Establishing appropriate controls and ensuring that proper practices are followed regarding reporting and the auditing of operations will create the best possible environment for the continued success of our organizations.

#### *Resources*

Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, "2004 Report to the Nation on Occupational Fraud and Abuse", 2004. Retrieved March, 2006. [www.CFEnet.com](http://www.CFEnet.com).

Amundson, Wayne. "Fraud – How to Prevent it in Your Association". Association Xpertise Inc., September, 2002. Retrieved July 26, 2006. [www.axi.ca](http://www.axi.ca)

Wells, Joseph T., Principles of Fraud Examination, Wiley and Sons Inc., Hoboken, NJ, 2005. "Three Charged with Stealing Coca-Cola Secrets", Associated Press, 2006. Retrieved July 5, 2006. [www.cnn.com/2006/LAW/07/05/coke.secrets.ap/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2006/LAW/07/05/coke.secrets.ap/index.html)

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## **MAINTAINING THE PASSION – SUSTAINING THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE EPISODIC VOLUNTEER**

*Adapted from the resource published by the Canadian Red Cross, the Salvation Army and St. John Ambulance. Reprinted with permission.*

Public health authorities are rightfully concerned about the impact a health emergency could have on Canadians. Planning for this circumstance involves mitigation of avoidable risks. A pandemic of the H5N1 avian influenza virus is currently the focal point and the most potentially dangerous health emergency facing Canadians today. Public health authorities can limit the effects of a health emergency by involving the voluntary sector.

A number of voluntary organizations actively participate in disaster response operations according to pre-established plans and designated roles. One aspect of the present system continues to pose a challenge: the phenomenon of volunteers who spontaneously offer their services to help a specific emergency for a limited period of time. These volunteers often arrive on site at a disaster ready to help. However, because they may not have been previously associated with any part of the existing disaster response system, offers of help are often under-utilized and even create new challenges for professional responders<sup>1</sup>. If the system lacks the capacity to utilize this surge of volunteers effectively, not only could they lose a valuable opportunity, but also it could even create a situation with serious negative repercussions on service delivery during a health emergency.

While episodic volunteering is a real phenomenon, very little hard data exists to substantiate it. To ensure an effective overall voluntary sector response to a health emergency, voluntary agencies need to be able to continue to deliver their primary services while mobilizing and incorporating the surge of volunteers.

Background research on episodic volunteers found that there is a marked increase in this type of volunteerism in Canada. It is connected to volunteer trends indicating that volunteers now tend toward short-term rather than long-term commitments. Further, this category of volunteerism is particularly relevant to emergency preparedness, as the emergency volunteer may not be continuously involved in an emergency service organization<sup>2</sup>.

Voluntary sector organizations call on their reserves of established volunteers to fill gaps in service delivery. However, during major disasters there are valuable and appropriate roles for episodic volunteers in mitigation, preparedness,

response and recovery.

A few observations have been drawn from Canadian data on volunteers that step forward during a time of disaster, whether a health emergency or another type of emergency.

- The highest average levels of volunteering per person were found in youth and middle-aged adults, though those over 65 contributed twice as many hours overall.
- Women were slightly more likely to volunteer than men, though men contributed significantly more hours and invested more time in the social services organizations.
- Those with the highest levels of income and education were the most likely to volunteer. However, the number of hours contributed tended to decrease as income increased.

These findings suggest that seniors, men and middle or lower income individuals may tend to contribute the most hours per person, but the majority of the volunteer workforce will likely be drawn from the other groups.

While many emergencies have a health component, certain aspects of health emergencies, including the risks of infection, cross-contamination, stress, mental health and psychological impacts, might affect episodic volunteers' behaviour. During a health emergency, volunteers will probably naturally migrate towards agencies, which have a history in disaster response. These agencies already have recruitment, screening, training and management programs in place. However, during a health emergency, they may need to incorporate health and safety modules into standard training programs.

When episodic volunteering and regular volunteer management practices are compared, few differences in best practices are found. First, whether looking at episodic volunteering or standard volunteering, the primary management parameters remain constant: recruitment, screening, processing, training, placement, continuous evaluation, retention and motivation. Second, an organization's policies and procedures for conventional volunteers remain applicable with regards to episodic volunteers. Lastly, larger organizations, which already practice volunteer management, tend to attract more episodic volunteers.

The growing trend of episodic volunteering appears to be the result of our fast paced world. The working environment lends little time for individuals to contribute in their community as full time affiliated volunteers; thus, many seek

short term volunteering opportunities. Engaging episodic volunteers effectively during a health emergency presents certain challenges, such as mobilizing the masses without hindering the efficiency of the agencies' core services. Conversely, episodic volunteers may bring with them specialized skills, a unique outlook and can therefore provide valuable information and resources to an organization.

1. Adapted from: Miller, Ande, comp. *Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster: The Synergy of Structure and Good Intentions*. National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, The UPS Foundation, The Points of Light Foundation. 2003.

2. Kates, Adam "Maintaining the Passion – Retaining the Emergency Response 'Episodic' Volunteer" pg 1-5. September 2005

*This report was produced by The Canadian Red Cross Society, thanks to financial support from the Financial Assistance to National Voluntary Health Organization Program, Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policy of the Public Health Agency of Canada. To read this report in its entirety, visit: [www.redcross.ca/cmslib/general/crc\\_disastermanagement\\_maintaining\\_e.pdf](http://www.redcross.ca/cmslib/general/crc_disastermanagement_maintaining_e.pdf)*

## **SETTING EFFECTIVE BOUNDARIES FOR VOLUNTEERS**

by Clare O'Kelly

Defining boundaries is not an easy task. There are many different types of boundaries: personal boundaries, role boundaries, verbal and/or physical boundaries. Organizational boundaries reflect the culture and history of the organization. Even "burnout", which most in our profession have experienced to varying degrees, is a result of an individual's inability to set personal boundaries. Complicating the definition of boundaries is the fact that what one person defines as a boundary may not be seen as such by others. Our personal boundaries are unique to each of us, reflecting our life experiences, fears and defences. Social, cultural and gender influences also play a part in our interpretation of boundaries. It is a complex subject but worthy of serious consideration because the repercussions of disregard of appropriate boundaries may affect not only the volunteer but also paid staff, clients and the organization itself.

Why is boundary setting important in the field of management of volunteer resources? According to Catherine Latham in her publication, *The Straight Talk on Boundaries*, the answer is: "risk management, risk management, risk management." 1

Who are we protecting when we set firm boundaries? The client, the volunteer and the organization; all three entities are vulnerable. Limiting the risk to each party is the purpose of identifying, setting and communicating to volunteers the clear limits and boundaries with respect to their volunteer assignments.

Sometimes it is difficult to clearly distinguish when a boundary is being crossed. Steve McCurley examines the motivational needs that prompt volunteers to give of their time in his article, "Why Good Volunteers Do Bad Things: A Look at the Subtleties of Volunteer Motivation". He provides a diagram, which illustrates the convergence of need between a volunteer, client and organization. When the balance shifts too heavily towards the needs of one entity, a situation of risk results, often involving overstepping appropriate boundaries. One must always ask the question: "Whose needs are being met?" The primary responsibility of a manager of volunteer resources is to ensure that the needs of all three entities are appropriately balanced and that the scales do not tip out of balance in any one direction.<sup>2</sup>

Establishing clear boundaries when the subject is so broad and multi-faceted can be a challenge. How and when does one start to address boundaries? Boundaries must be considered at every step of the volunteer management cycle. When creating position descriptions, for example, roles should be clearly identified and a clear distinction drawn between paid staff and volunteer duties. These boundaries can only be identified once an assessment has been completed identifying the vulnerability of the client and any risks to the volunteer or organization.

Clear policies also are important in establishing boundaries for volunteers. Most organizations have policies around issues such as sexual abuse, dishonest acts, etc. These policies should be covered in training and should be available for volunteers to access. The establishment of policies directly related to the volunteer program itself will guide volunteers in their day-to-day tasks and identify and address issues, which affect risk management. Clear policies explain the "why" of established boundaries. Linda L. Graff recommends a sample statement on volunteer-client relationships:

Volunteers in this program are considered as non-paid, part-time staff and it is expected that volunteer relationships with clients will have the same boundaries as those of paid staff. Our role is therapeutic in nature. It is not appropriate to become friends with clients. This is not to say that volunteers cannot be friendly, caring or supportive....<sup>3</sup>

She goes on to explain that the relationship between volunteer and client is not equal because volunteers are privileged to personal information and have more



power by virtue of their association with the organization. Therefore, the client needs protection through establishment of clear boundaries.

During recruitment it is important to begin the process of communicating boundaries by clearly explaining the purpose of the position and the needs to be met. When identifying target groups one must keep in mind the vulnerabilities of each party and the probable motivations of target groups.

Careful thought is needed to ensure that you have considered where volunteers might overstep boundaries. Once you have clear policies in place to address boundary issues you can plan how to communicate them to your volunteers. Screening and training offer the best opportunities to establish and communicate boundaries to prospective volunteers. In the interview, behavioural or situational questions can be structured to draw out the interviewee's awareness of boundary issues.

The orientation process should always involve training around the issue of boundaries. This is an important opportunity to assess a volunteer's understanding of boundary awareness. The Planned Parenthood website provides a lesson plan for addressing personal boundaries which involves a group brainstorming several personal questions such as, "How old are you?" or "Are you straight or gay?" The participants then pair up and take turns asking these questions of each other, raising their hand and shouting, "stop!" when questions arise which they consider to be outside their comfort zone.<sup>4</sup>

In my orientation session I have developed a process using actual scenarios from my experience in volunteer management. In small groups the prospective volunteers discuss each scenario and then identify what kind of boundaries are being crossed (physical, verbal, emotional, organizational), the associated risk on a scale of 1–5 and for whom the risk is greatest, i.e. client, volunteer or organization. Through small group discussion and later discussion within the larger group as we debrief, we cover in detail many actual situations which volunteers are apt to encounter.

When volunteers do overstep established boundaries or experience their own boundaries being violated, the manager must take action. That action will vary depending on the situation and the individuals involved. Effective action sends a clear message that maintaining respectful boundaries by all parties is expected and supported in your organization.

Once volunteers know what the boundaries are, understand the reasons behind them and are supported in their efforts to maintain those boundaries, the risk to your organization, its volunteers and clients, is greatly reduced.

1. Latham, Catherine. *The Straight Talk on Boundaries for Managers of Volunteers*. P. 9. Carp, Ontario: Johnstone Training & Consultation (JTC) Inc., 2000.
2. McCurley, Steve. *Why Good Volunteers Do Bad Things: A Look at the Subtleties of Volunteer Motivation*. Feb 24, 2006. [www.casenet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/motivation.htm](http://www.casenet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/motivation.htm).
3. Graff, Linda L. *By Definition: Policies for Volunteer Programs*, p. 36. Dundas, Ontario. Graff & Associates, 1997.
4. Planned Parenthood Edmonton Alberta website. Oct. 19, 2005. Feb. 24, 2006.

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This is a condensed version of Clare's paper that was submitted to CAVR as part of the certification process. The designation, Certified Administrator of Volunteer Resources is awarded to CAVR members who fulfil the CAVR certification criteria. Members are asked to submit two papers one on current trends in the field of volunteer management and the other which will outline the member's knowledge and how it has been applied in the administration of volunteer resources by initiating a new volunteer program, evaluating a volunteer program and improving any aspect of the volunteer management process. See the CAVR website for more information: [www.cavr.ca](http://www.cavr.ca)

## PEER EXPERT

By Rosemary Byrne

### Scenario:

*An older volunteer has given years of valuable service to our institution. Everyone is concerned because her behaviour has changed and she seems disoriented. The staff complains that she can no longer fulfill her duties. How do you proceed?*

### Response:

This is a true test of the people skills of the manager of volunteer resources. We are concerned about the individual volunteer but, we cannot be sentimental about where our responsibility lies. As the manager of volunteer resources, our first duty is to our organization or institution. We have a responsibility to assure that volunteers are competent and effective because they are essential to the quality of care given the patients/clients. Managers of volunteer resources constantly balance the needs of the institution with the needs of the volunteers. As much as we may dread confronting the volunteer about their failing performance or questionable behaviour, it has to be done. When there is any chance of risk to the welfare of the patients/clients or to the volunteers themselves, we must err on the side of caution; **safety is non-negotiable.**

The Community Council on Volunteerism in Montreal, linking 25 managers of volunteer resources from both community and institutions, identified the issue of failing volunteers as one of increasing concern. We recruited experts on dementia and Alzheimer's and organized a half-day workshop. The workshop began with an exchange and there were several surprises. Managers of volunteer resources working in community settings had greater flexibility to create alternative placements for failing volunteers. For one thing, the other volunteers were usually willing to accommodate those who had become more "decorative" than helpful. A creative approach is doable when the scale is small and there are alternative placements available.

Managers of volunteer resources working in institutional settings have a more difficult task. They simply have less flexibility. In many Montreal institutions, one manager is responsible for hundreds of volunteers, working at several sites. When a volunteer appears to be losing ground, there are not a lot of options. Adjusting and adapting volunteer jobs in order to reduce the responsibility level or adding more supervision are obvious solutions but not always feasible. You want to respect the dignity of the volunteer, but, you cannot allow someone whose judgment seems impaired to work in a clinic or interact directly with patients/clients. It is just too risky.

### **Empathy and Diplomacy**

This situation requires discretion, empathy and diplomacy. You need to find out what is going on. The best thing to do is to speak directly with the volunteer; have a heart to heart discussion, in private. Begin by expressing your concern and build a dialogue based on that concern. Before jumping to conclusions, ask the volunteer directly if they are well, if they have noticed any changes. Try to avoid diagnosing the volunteer's problem; this is both dangerous and presumptuous. Remember that some memory loss is normal as we age. Do not assume, as several of us did, that the volunteer has Alzheimer's. The early stages of Alzheimer's are extremely difficult to diagnose and the volunteer may not know herself what is wrong. If it is Alzheimer's, the individual will most likely deny it.

### **Negotiate**

There are all kinds of factors, other than Alzheimer's, which can affect behaviour: the volunteer may be depressed; they may not be sleeping; they may be caring for someone at home whose health has deteriorated; they may have changed their medication; they may have a urinary tract infection. If the volunteer's behaviour or personality has changed significantly, chances are there are more serious reasons. The manager of volunteer resources needs to keep an eye on the target, which is quality care for the patients or clients. Negotiate the removal

of the volunteer either temporarily or permanently, but be up front, kind and honest about what you are doing. The other volunteers are watching.

*Rosemary Byrne is the Coordinator of Volunteer Services at St. Mary's Hospital Center in Montreal, President of the Community Council on Volunteerism and Vice-President of the Réseau de l'action bénévole du Québec. She has recently joined the Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resources Management as a Regional Representative.*

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### *Getting Praised, Raised and Recognized*

by Muriel Solomon

Reviewer: Ginette Johnstone

This book is full of good common sense suggestions for how to increase your perceived value to your agency and how to tune in to the needs of others. It is the type of book best kept on your shelf so that when you are faced with a problem involving your manager, a colleague or volunteer you can go to it for ideas.

The book is well structured, with clear sections, each addressing a specific area of workplace relations. The comprehensive table of contents is supported by a useful index.

When I began reading this book, I was disappointed. The first section presents the manager as always being in the wrong – either manipulative, self serving or simply unaware. There was no concession that perhaps the reader might be part of the problem. As one moves through the book however, the tone changes and Solomon encourages the reader to reflect on how they might be contributing to an unsatisfactory situation. She gives solid advice on turning a negative situation to a positive outcome. She promotes resolutions that are win-win and that ensure that your manager and colleagues keep a favourable perception of you and the work you are doing.

My main criticism of this book is that Solomon too often addresses issues that are much too complex for the cursory treatment she gives them. The sections dealing with media relations and diversity are good examples of this. They are complex topics and the brief suggestions made by Solomon lead to a simplistic view of areas that deserve much deeper consideration, undoubtedly beyond the scope of this book.

I would hope, perhaps unreasonably, that readers of *Getting Praised, Raised and Recognized* take Solomon's advice as a starting point for deeper reflection on how they affect their own success in the workplace. More importantly, I would hope that managers reading this book would go a step further and assess how their staff or volunteers might be struggling with the same issues and in so doing, discover great opportunities for coaching.

Overall, "Getting Raised, Praised and Recognized" is well worth the read.

*Ginette Johnstone was an integral member of the editorial team of 'The Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resources Management' for over 10 years. She is now living in London, England with her husband, Dave. For almost two years, she was the UK Director of Training for The Family Planning Association. Presently, Ginette is a Programme Manager in the Human Resources Department of Cerner Limited, a healthcare software company. In this position, Ginette manages newly hired graduates throughout their six month training programme.*

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

Further Resources on Risk Management

Graff, Linda L. (2003). *Better Safe ... Risk Management In Volunteer Programs & Community Service*. Dundas, Ontario: Linda Graff and Associates Inc.

Graff, Linda L. (1999). *Beyond Police Checks: The Definitive Volunteer And Employee Screening Guidebook*. Dundas, Ontario: Linda Graff and Associates Inc.

Graff, Linda L. (1997). *By Definition: Policies For Volunteer Programs*. Dundas, Ontario: Linda Graff and Associates Inc.

Check Out These Web Sites for information on risk management

[www.allianceonline.org](http://www.allianceonline.org)

[www.eriskcenter.org](http://www.eriskcenter.org)

<http://www.iciclesoftware.com/vlh7/>

<http://www.law-nonprofit.org/>

[www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org)

## Print Resources:

Available from JTC.Inc. ([www.jtcinc.ca](http://www.jtcinc.ca))

*The Law and Volunteers* by Mary Satterfield and Karla Gower.

*Risk Management* by Dave Johnstone. (for Board level)

## Websites:

Addressing Liability Insurance Concerns of the Charitable and Nonprofit Sector:

- [http://www.imaginecanada.ca/page.asp?liability\\_background](http://www.imaginecanada.ca/page.asp?liability_background) (English)

- [http://www.imaginecanada.ca/page.asp?article\\_documentaire&fr=1](http://www.imaginecanada.ca/page.asp?article_documentaire&fr=1) (français)

[http://www.nonprofitscan.ca/page.asp?liability\\_insurance\\_toolkit](http://www.nonprofitscan.ca/page.asp?liability_insurance_toolkit) (English),

[http://www.nonprofitscan.ca/page.asp?trousse\\_doutils\\_de\\_lassurance&fr=1](http://www.nonprofitscan.ca/page.asp?trousse_doutils_de_lassurance&fr=1) (français)

Developing a Risk Management Strategy: Five Steps to Risk Management in Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations was developed by the Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan.

[http://www.kdc-cdc.ca/attachments/guide\\_kowalski\\_risk\\_eng.pdf](http://www.kdc-cdc.ca/attachments/guide_kowalski_risk_eng.pdf) (English)

[http://www.kdc-cdc.ca/attachments/spc\\_report\\_un\\_jeu\\_dangereux\\_fr.pdf](http://www.kdc-cdc.ca/attachments/spc_report_un_jeu_dangereux_fr.pdf) (français)

Volunteer Canada's Safe Steps Screening Program - a ten-step guide to screening volunteers and reducing risk for your organizations.

<http://www.volunteer.ca/volcan/eng/content/screening/safe-steps.php?display=3,2,3> (English)

<http://www.benevoles.ca/volcan/frn/content/screening/safe-steps.php?display=3,2,3&menutrail=> (français)

The Voluntary Sector Forum has many different resources and tools related to insurance for the voluntary sector.

<http://www.vsf-fsbc.ca/eng/liability/index.cfm> (English)

<http://www.vsf-fsbc.ca/fr/liability/index.cfm> (français)

# JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

## Editorial Process and Guidelines for Authors

### Objective

The Journal of Volunteer Resources Management is intended:

1. to serve as a credible source of information on the management of volunteers in Canada;
2. to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to encourage networking among managers of volunteers;
3. to provide a professional development tool for managers of volunteers;
4. to recognize and encourage Canadian talent in the field of management of volunteers;
5. to include in each issue at least two articles that will consider different views on a specific and predetermined theme.

### Target Audience

The Journal's intended audience includes managers of volunteers, educators, media and funders of not-for-profit organizations across the country.

### Submissions

All manuscripts will be accepted on diskette or via e-mail in either Microsoft Word or Word Perfect. Submissions should be written according to "Canadian Style - A Guide to Writing and Editing" - Secretary of State, Dundurn Press. External reviewers may be engaged to review content if deemed advisable by the committee.

The revised draft is edited for clarity and consistency by the Editorial Team.

The edited version is returned to the author for acceptance along with an approval form for signature.

The signed form is to be returned to the Editorial Team within a week along with any suggestions for final revisions.

### Format and Style

Authors are asked to respect the following word counts:

	Words	Pages
<b>Lead Article</b>	1000	5-6
<b>Secondary Article</b>	700-800	2-3
<b>Book Review</b>	150	1

The lead article will look at the topic in some depth and will normally require the author to conduct research into current trends and perspectives on the subject.

The secondary article will adopt a more practical approach, including personal experiences and opinions.

### Advertising

Limited advertising space will be allowed in the Journal, for materials of direct relevance to managers of volunteer service, and as long as it conforms to the guidelines set out by the Editorial Team.

### Guidelines:

1. Only ¼ page and ½ page ads will be accepted.
2. Ad must be camera-ready.
3. A maximum of one page of ads will be permitted per issue.
4. Job ads are not recommended.
5. Cost is to be determined by the Editorial Team.

## LOOKING AHEAD

### May 1-3, 2007

Professional Administrators of Volunteer Resources – Ontario  
(PAVR-O) Conference  
Toronto, Ontario  
[www.pavro.on.ca](http://www.pavro.on.ca)

### June 7-9, 2007

Wild Rose Foundation Conference - Vitalize 2007  
Calgary, Alberta  
[www.vitalizeconference.ca](http://www.vitalizeconference.ca)

### June 10-12, 2007

Canadian Administrators of Volunteer Resources (CAVR) Conference  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
[www.cavr.org/conference2007](http://www.cavr.org/conference2007)

## DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS & THEMES

Issue	Deadline	Theme
Volume 15.2	articles due on the 31st of March	International Volunteering
Volume 15.3	articles due on the 31st of May	Dollars and Sense
Volume 15.4	articles due on the 30th of September	Managing Conflict