

**Program Guidelines
for
Literacy Volunteers
in a
Correctional Center**



**Compiled by
The John Howard Society of Newfoundland**

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Introduction

This training package outlines policies, procedures and guidelines for volunteer program development, training and delivery in a correctional setting. It is intended to provide a common framework for trainers and volunteers, with a focus on literacy. It is comprised of a Training Manual, with appendices, and a Volunteer Handbook, to provide an addendum to training.

These resources are designed to assist staff, trainers, Laubach Tutors, Literacy Volunteers and Computer Mentors, working as a team in a Correctional setting.

Note: To avoid the awkward use of “him/her”, he/she”, throughout the text, the male person has been used. All references can be applied equally to the female person.

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Existing Volunteer Manuals and materials from the West Coast Correctional Center, Birchy House, West-Bridge House, Howard House and the Carlton Centre.

Training materials and general information from Laubach Literacy of Canada.

Modules from **Training to Go: Making the Most of Volunteer Resources**, provided by the Volunteer Centre, Community Services Council.

Helping Hands: A Handbook for Volunteers in Prisons and Jails, by Daniel J. Bayse, American Corrections Association, 1993.

A Primer on Residential Services: From a Criminal Justice Perspective, Canadian Training Institute, 1987.

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Role of Volunteers in a Correctional Setting

Although community colleges have successfully delivered programs to inmates in Adult Basic Education in Correctional Centers, there are as many inmates who require services in the areas of basic literacy. Since education is known to reduce recidivism, programs must focus on raising the profile of education to improve levels of basic literacy and academic upgrading. This can be accomplished by maximizing resources through volunteering.

Volunteers enhance educational programs, providing services that would not be otherwise available to inmates. They provide assistance to inmates requiring support in the areas of reading, writing, and numeracy, using computers as educational tools, as required.

Volunteers play an important role in the delivery of programs in correctional centers. They are directly involved in the rehabilitation of offenders. Volunteers assist inmates beyond the area of literacy and academics. They provide guided friendships, positive role models, and are sometimes the inmate's only connection to the outside world. They play an important part in helping the offender to be reintegrated in society. The presence of volunteers has a positive influence on inmates.

Because volunteers do not have the responsibilities of paid staff, they can focus their attention on the delivery of services, without the obligations of maintaining security and other duties associated with working in a correctional center. They provide support to inmates, working in cooperation with Correctional Centers.

Volunteer Community Agencies

Community resources must be fully accessed and utilized, since no one individual or institution can provide all the necessary services to an inmate. Furthermore, the presence of community agencies in the correctional setting provides links to resources and assists offenders in reintegrating in the community. Liaison with community agencies maximizes resources and fosters mutually beneficial relationships between the prison and the community.

The John Howard Society

The John Howard Society of Newfoundland is a voluntary, non-governmental organization which works to reduce crime primarily by providing program opportunities for the rehabilitation of offenders. It is governed by citizens who accept responsibility for understanding and dealing with the problems of crime and the criminal justice system in a creative, humane and progressive manner. The John Howard Society fulfills this responsibility through reform advocacy, direct service and public education.

The John Howard Society provides services to inmates in correctional centers and to offenders and families living in the area including: Computer Based Literacy, Prison Services, Employment and Cognitive Skills Programs, Residential Services, Public Education, special project initiatives and reform activities.

Many of these activities, especially the Literacy Program, involve the active participation of volunteers in the delivery of services.

Imprisonment is a difficult and traumatic experience. A return to the community also requires a readjustment. The John Howard Society advocates for clients to help them to adjust to community living and prosocial lifestyles.

Laubach Literacy of Canada

Laubach Literacy of Canada, (L.L.C.), is a community based volunteer literacy organization which follows the tradition of Frank C. Laubach, literacy pioneer. In 1930, he developed a method of teaching adults to read and write in their own language. Eventually, his method was used in over 300 languages.

L.L.C. is the nation's largest literacy volunteer organization delivering adult literacy programs. L.L.C. provides material, training and organizational support to Literacy Councils, students and tutors.

Motto "Each One Teach One"

For more information on Laubach Literacy of Canada, contact the Literacy Council in your area.

Please Note:

There are other community agencies in your area that are valuable resources. Additional information can be obtained through your local volunteer centre, or by consulting **A Directory of Literacy Services**, compiled by the John Howard Society of Newfoundland.

Volunteer Program Development

Acceptance by Staff

A volunteer program needs the complete support and approval of the staff in order for it to be effective and sustainable. Therefore, staff should be included at all levels of the volunteer program.

A committee consisting of the Volunteer Coordinator and Correctional Staff would ensure staff are aware of the goals and objectives of the program. Staff must understand why volunteers are being used and in what areas they will be working. The roles and responsibilities of Correctional Staff must be clearly defined.

Recruitment

Develop guidelines and determine the most suitable techniques to recruit the best volunteers.

Determine Needs

The first step in recruiting volunteers is to determine the program needs. Know how many volunteers you need and what type of work they will be assigned. For programs that are ongoing, current volunteers can help to guide and augment the program.

Sources

Determine the volunteer potential in your area. Sources for volunteers should be determined as soon as possible, so that you can readily attract them. Recognize the needs of the institution and the needs of volunteers. Recruitment should be targeted to attract volunteers with specific skills.

Job Descriptions

Be specific about the volunteer positions available at the institution. Develop a concise job description to target the desired skills you need in a volunteer. Each position should have a title, which will be the volunteer's identification.

See **Appendix B** for Job Descriptions.

Suggested Qualifications for a Volunteer

Literacy Tutor/Computer Mentor

The following criteria may prove to be helpful in finding skilled volunteers:

1. Possess a GED or High School Diploma.
2. Post Secondary Education an asset.
3. Trained Laubach Tutor or willingness to receive training.
4. Computer skills an asset i.e. Wordprocessing, Keyboarding.
5. Dependable.
6. Responsible.
7. Demonstrate positive attitude.
8. Work well with others .
9. Patient.
10. Good communication and interpersonal skills.

Inmate Tutors

Inmates can sometimes provide Peer Tutoring to other inmates. This situation can benefit both parties if suitable tutors are available.

Inmate tutors will be selected at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator, through consultation with Correctional Staff.

Inmate tutors should meet the following criteria, some of which is similar to Correctional Volunteers:

1. Posses a GED or High School Diploma.
2. Dependable.
3. Responsible.
4. Capable of performing intellectually challenging tasks.
5. Able to follow directions.
6. Demonstrate positive attitude.
7. Good Communication Skills.
8. Positive references from Correctional Staff.
9. Work well with others.
10. Patient.

Inmate Volunteering

Inmates will sometimes take on a positive leadership role in the institution. In certain situations, they can provide volunteer services for the community. This can play an important role in the inmate's rehabilitation and allow the institution and the inmate to contribute to the community in a positive way.

Inmate volunteering will make the Correctional Center an extension of the community. The introduction of computers has made possible inmates providing a variety of technical and clerical supports to agencies such as Laubach Literacy, Literacy Councils and other volunteer agencies that provide services to inmates.

The Correctional Centers and inmates have the potential to become valued community resources, through the development of mutually beneficial relationships with volunteer community agencies.

Publicity

Correctional Centers are often perceived by the public as institutions for punishment and not rehabilitation. Institutions must invite the community to volunteer. Volunteer campaigns can attract suitable volunteers, while at the same time improving public perceptions.

Motivation

People respond positively when the volunteer position fits their own personal motivation. Each position should be challenging and satisfying to the volunteer and be meaningful to the inmate. Motivated volunteers work better and will usually remain longer. There is never one reason to volunteer. It is usually a combination of reasons.

Recognition

Volunteers remain committed when they feel appreciated and they can see that their presence makes a difference. Private and public recognition is important in that it gives volunteers a sense of belonging. When we focus on their achievements, we recognize that something significant is happening with regards to the program, the inmate, staff and the institution.

Benefits of Being a Volunteer

Each person will have his own motivation for becoming a volunteer. Therefore benefits will be different for each volunteer.

Tangible Benefits

1. References
2. Work Experience
3. Future Employment Contacts
4. Career Exploration
5. Skills Development
6. Training
7. Social Contacts

Intangible Benefits

1. Personal Growth
2. Life Experience
3. Community Involvement

Materials

In order to deliver programs in basic literacy, academic upgrading and computer skills, materials must be readily available to inmates and volunteers. Correctional Centers will have designated classroom space and the latest in computer hardware and software. Further requirements, not limited the following include:

1. Printer paper.
2. Printer ribbons.
3. GED books.
4. Consumables i.e. workbooks, paper, writing materials.
5. Laubach Way to Reading materials.
6. Ample space for tutors.
7. Study rooms for inmates.
8. Computer disks.

Interviewing and Screening Volunteers

Each Correctional Center should ensure the most effective selection and retention of volunteers. Prospective volunteers will be screened and interviewed to determine their suitability.

Note: It is important to have the ability to turn down volunteers who are found to be unsuitable.

Interviewing

All perspective volunteers will undergo a personal interview to determine suitability as a Correctional Volunteer, and to discuss volunteer opportunities.

Appendix A provides some questions/topics that may be useful when interviewing a potential volunteer. These materials may be used as interview questions, if needed.

The Volunteer Coordinator will be responsible for providing sufficient information to applicants and conveying the expectations of the institution. The Coordinator will provide applicants with the necessary applications and forms to be processed.

At the interview, applicants should provide the following information:

1. Personal resume, outlining education and experience.
2. Names of three references.
3. Type of volunteer work preferred.

All applicants must complete an application. (See **Appendix C: Volunteer Application Form.**)

Screening

Volunteers must be 19 years of age and deemed to be mature and responsible to handle the responsibilities of working in a Correctional setting. Volunteers will have to meet the previously outlined criteria to be considered for volunteer placements.

Applicants must provide a recent Certificate of Conduct from the RCMP.

Confidentiality

The importance of confidentiality must be stressed to all volunteers. A **Confidentiality Agreement** should be read and signed by each new volunteer to ensure confidential information is properly managed. (See **Appendix D.**)

Orientation

A new volunteer needs an introduction to the Correctional Center. It is an opportunity to communicate the expected standards of correctional volunteers, as well as introduce staff and volunteers.

Formal Orientation

Volunteers will undergo an orientation and ongoing support to ensure their effectiveness within the Correctional environment. During the formal orientation process, the basic policies of the organization should be outlined, with emphasis on rules and regulations, security, performance, behaviour and confidentiality.

Orientation will be provided by a team consisting of the Volunteer Coordinator, Classification Officer, Correctional Officer and a current Volunteer.

The following components should be covered during orientation:

1. Structure of the institution.
2. Philosophy and objectives of the Correctional Center.
3. Role of volunteers.

4. Rules and regulations.
5. Security.
6. Tour of the facility.
7. Introduction of staff.
8. Ethical standards.
9. Relationships with inmates.
10. Review of Volunteer Handbook. (See Part 2.)
11. Answer questions.

The orientation is not limited to the preceding components.

Placement

Volunteers will be assigned to a specific placement, taking into account their stated preference as well as the needs of inmates.

Note: An individual file should be set up for each volunteer.

Training

Volunteers will already possess a variety of skills. To ensure their continued effectiveness, they will be afforded opportunities for further training. This will depend on available resources and the needs of volunteers and inmates.

Note: Laubach Literacy of Canada provides Tutor Training Workshops on a regular basis through the local Literacy Councils.

Volunteer Management

Coordinator

The Volunteer Coordinator will administer the volunteer program with the support and cooperation of institutional staff. The Volunteer Coordinator will be responsible for the recruitment, training, placement and supervision of volunteers. The position will depend on availability of staff and resources at each site.

Supervision

Volunteers are immediately responsible to the Correctional Staff on duty, when reporting for work, when in need of advice, or when they are unable to work their scheduled time.

Correctional Officers will provide supervision of volunteers and will have the most contact with them.

Institutional Access

The extent of institutional access will be determined by the Officer-In-Charge, taking into consideration the security classification of the institution and other related factors.

Volunteers do not have unrestricted access to all sections of the facility. They will be permitted to areas in which they perform their duties i.e. classroom, study rooms, library.

Access will depend on the security classification of the building, the character of the inmate population, and the availability of supervision by staff.

Volunteers will be escorted by staff to and from their assigned program location.

There will be times when security will require that volunteer activities be cancelled. It is important that volunteers be contacted, when possible, to inform them of such changes.

Security

The institution has the discretionary authority to deny access to volunteers who are considered to be unsuitable.

Volunteers may be denied access to the institution for any of the following violations:

1. Breach of confidentiality.
2. Unlawful conduct.
3. Breach of rules.
4. Any activities which threaten the security of the institution.

Any problems arising with volunteers should be directed to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Termination of Volunteer Services

Volunteers who wish to resign from their volunteer position are asked to forward a letter of resignation to the Volunteer Coordinator. It is asked that a minimum of two weeks notice be given, in order to find a suitable replacement.

Recognition

Volunteers in the institution will be identified through name tags so that staff and inmates may know who they are and why they are there. Volunteers are part of the agency.

It is important for volunteers to be told, in some way, that their efforts are appreciated. This can be achieved in a variety of ways such as informally and personally, or in some formal and public way. Volunteer achievements should be recognized and rewarded. Don't forget to say "Thank you".

Evaluation

Volunteers will be required to keep records of their time and the nature of their contacts with inmates. Volunteer hours can be determined by routine calls to volunteers, or by simply checking the institution's log. Accurate records of volunteer hours and inmate

participation are essential to measure the success of the program.

Volunteers require regular feedback of their performance. Performance reports and volunteer input will certainly help the volunteer and the program to grow and improve.

The Volunteer Coordinator should conduct periodic checks with volunteers in order to reinforce their efforts, identify training needs and/or to preclude potential difficulties.

Communication and Counselling Skills

Volunteers working with inmates will need well developed interpersonal communication skills. These skills can be learned if you put in the necessary time, effort and practice.

The Helping Relationship

The primary purpose of the helping relationship is to help clients in their growth and development. The relationship is built on mutual respect and trust. Certain skills are required in order to develop a positive helping relationship with inmates.

The common characteristics of effective counsellors are:

1. Empathy
2. Respect/Acceptance/Warmth
3. Genuineness
4. Concreteness
5. Immediacy
6. Stability
7. Objectivity

Facilitation Skills

Attending

This is a demonstration of the counsellor's concern through eye contact, body language, voice, tone and expression, and staying on topic.

Conveying an Open Invitation to Talk

The only way to understand a client is to listen, minimize interruptions, minimize judgemental responses and keep responses short.

Paraphrasing

Repeat what the client has said in your own words, so that he is assured that the intent of the message has been communicated.

Communication

Conditions for Effective Communication

- a) Awareness of self and other.
- b) Flexibility in sending messages.
- c) Verbal and non-verbal skills development.

Necessary Assumptions about Communication

- a) Communication is ongoing.
- b) All communication has content and a relational message.
- c) Meaning in communication is a matter of interpretation.

Components of the Communication Process

- a) Self
- b) Other
- c) Environment

Necessary Skills

- a) Attending/Listening
- b) Responding/Feedback

Conclusion

The materials presented in this manual are intended to assist in the development and management of your volunteer program. The approach each institution takes will depend on available resources. The program should be flexible and varied in order to meet the needs of clients and volunteers.

Collaboration with other community agencies, such as Laubach Literacy, will be necessary to recruit and sustain volunteers at all provincial institutions. With the support of these agencies and proper training, volunteers can be a great resource to corrections.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What do I want most out of working with this organization?
2. What other benefits would I like to have?
3. Do I want to work alone? ___ With others? ___ Why?
4. Do I want to assume a leadership position?
5. What would I like to accomplish as a volunteer with this organization?

Skills

"1" Skills I am competent in and enjoy using.

"2" Skills I am competent in but do not enjoy using.

"3" Skills I want to learn or to improve my level of competency.

Reading/Researching	1	2	3
Public Speaking	1	2	3
Writing	1	2	3
Problem Solving	1	2	3
Managing	1	2	3
Leading	1	2	3
Taking Responsibility	1	2	3
Influencing Others	1	2	3
Sensitivity to Others	1	2	3
Evaluating	1	2	3
Decision-making	1	2	3
Delegating	1	2	3
Creative Thinking	1	2	3

Activities

"1" Activities I am competent in and like doing.

"2" Activities I am competent in but do not like doing.

"3" Activities I want to learn or improve my level of competency.

Attend Meetings	1	2	3
Prepare Written Work	1	2	3
Communicate Information	1	2	3
Speak to Groups	1	2	3
Manage/Lead Others	1	2	3
Chair Meetings	1	2	3
Implement Programs	1	2	3
Research and Analyze Information	1	2	3
Administer Programs	1	2	3

Summary

1. Can I wholeheartedly endorse the cause and values of this organization?
2. The ideal volunteer job for me in this organization probably involves:
3. Am I prepared to put in as much time as is needed to do the job well?

Appendix B

Volunteer Job Description

Job Title:

Responsible to:

Duties:

Time Required:

Qualifications:

Appendix C

Volunteer Application Form

Name:

Address:

Telephone: (Home)

(Work)

Date of Birth:

Day / Month / Year

Education:

Work Experience:

Volunteer Experience:

Special Skills:

Preference for Volunteer Work:

Times Available:

Do you wish to team up with another volunteer? Yes / No

Name of volunteer you wish to team with:

Correctional Center:

Please provide three references.

Name	Telephone Number
-------------	-------------------------

- 1.**
- 2.**
- 3.**

Placement:

Job Title:

Duties:

Hours/Days:

Start Date:

Comments:

Checklist:

- Interview**
- Application**
- Resume**
- References Checked**
- Orientation**
- Received Volunteer Manual**
- Confidentiality Agreement**

Notes:

Appendix D

Confidentiality Agreement

I, the undersigned, do willingly promise to hold in confidence all matters that come to my attention as a Correctional Volunteer, including material about inmates, and matters regarding colleagues.

I will exercise all reasonable care and caution in protecting printed or written confidential information.

Signed _____

Dated _____

Witness _____

Supervisor _____