



Cal Corps Public Service Center

Education for Justice

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Volunteer Orientation

Orientation plays an important role in retaining the volunteers you worked so hard to recruit. Through a formal orientation, you welcome the volunteers, communicate expectations, train them, and connect them with the larger picture of their work with the group.

There are two areas of orientation for the volunteer. One is introducing them to your organization and the other is introducing them to the community agency. Familiarizing the volunteers with both will equip them with the appropriate background and skills to work in your program. Communicate to the community agency how the volunteer has been oriented to work with them. Keep clear, consistent communication with the agency. See the Community Partner Relations section below.

Goals for an Effective Orientation:

- Don't overwhelm them; inspire them.
- Get to know one another and familiarize them with the organization.
- Make it fun! Move away from lecture style when possible.
- Train them in any specific skills necessary, especially communication skills
- Connect them to the larger level picture of their work
 - Include other programs coordinated by the agency

How to Conduct an Effective Orientation:

- Welcome everyone
- Include a team-building exercise and getting to know you opportunities
- Student Leader/ Agency Staff Introduction
- Explicitly state and discuss the mission statement of the student group and agency partner
- Give background and history of organizations)
- Agree on expectations for one another
- Share the timeline and/or work plan
- Do the logistic essentials
 - Directions and method of transportation
 - Discussion of safety precautions and steps
 - Collect and provide all needed contacts, materials, resources to move forward
- Collect the needed background of the volunteers
- Host a tour of the work place
- Train as necessary for specific skills, like diversity/sensitivity issues
- Open the floor for questions and answers
- Be respectful with their time. Make it a good use of it and never end late.

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Don't Forget! Disengagement:

At the end of the volunteer term, have a celebration, closing advising session and intentional discussion with the volunteer about “now what”. Include questions such as how the volunteer will spend time now that they will be volunteering, especially if close relationships have been formed with a particular person at site. Encourage an appropriate way for the volunteer to continue relationships and remain active in the community.

"A volunteer is a person who can see what others cannot see; who can feel what most do not feel. Often, such gifted persons do not think of themselves as volunteers, but as citizens - citizens in the fullest sense: partners in civilization."

— Geroge H. W. Bush

