

# Strengthening palliative care

## Palliative care volunteer standards

Sample resource documents



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## Introduction

The *Palliative care volunteer standards* provide program standards and volunteer standards for the Victorian palliative care sector. The program standards and volunteer standards are designed to:

- Foster greater awareness of the role of volunteers in palliative care
- Support and promote volunteers in palliative care
- Limit organisation legal liability with regard to volunteers in palliative care services.

The following sample resource documents have been designed to assist organisations compile volunteer policies and procedures.

Please refer to the applicable sections of the standards for a rationale on policy development and implementation.

## Sample resource document: Manager of volunteers position description

(Insert organisation name)

Position description

Title: Manager of Volunteers

Reports to: (insert applicable position title)

### 1. Organisation environment

(Insert organisation name) provides a program of care enabling clients to live in dignity and comfort throughout the palliative stage of illness. The program of care is delivered in (insert applicable location) and provides physical, functional, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual support to the client, carer and family. The (insert organisation name) program of care assesses the cultural and lifestyle values of the client, carer and family and incorporates consideration of these into the program of care wherever possible.

### 2. Purpose

- Recruit, train, supervise, coordinate and support volunteers from the local community participating in (insert organisation name) program of care
- Provide input into policies and procedures that impact on the work of volunteers with regard to current standards in volunteer engagement, legislative requirements and service demands
- Liaise with clients, carers, families, volunteers and members of palliative care interdisciplinary teams to ensure volunteers are matched to appropriate roles

### 3. Responsibilities

- Coordinate the recruitment, orientation and training of volunteers
- Provide ongoing support, supervision, training, direction and assistance to volunteers in relation to their roles and responsibilities
- Coordinate the matching of volunteers to clients in accordance with organisation volunteer placement policy
- Liaise with members of the palliative care interdisciplinary team to monitor volunteer placements
- Monitor the caseload of each volunteer
- Provide debriefing opportunities for all volunteers
- Liaise with volunteers and act on concerns they have with regard to their work with clients, carers, families and paid staff

- Facilitate volunteer team meetings to ensure that volunteers have a forum to share their experiences and receive regular feedback and encouragement
- Develop and review training and orientation programs in accordance with current standards in volunteer engagement, legislative requirements and service demands

#### **4. Key selection criteria**

- A relevant tertiary qualification or experience in managing or supervising volunteers in the health sector
- Knowledge and understanding of government legislation, policies and procedures relating to volunteer engagement, risk management and occupational health and safety within the palliative care sector
- Demonstrated high level of written and oral communication skills including liaison, negotiation and conflict resolution with people from a wide range of cultural and social backgrounds including volunteers, medical specialists, allied professionals, senior management, clients, families and carers
- Demonstrated ability to recruit, train, supervise and work effectively with volunteers
- Demonstrated ability to contribute to the development of policy, standards and operational procedures within the palliative care sector
- Experience managing a diverse team of volunteers in a challenging environment
- Understanding of interpersonal support strategies and skills and understanding of issues pertaining to palliative care
- Demonstrated experience in program development, implementation and review

#### **5. Additional requirements**

Some evening and weekend work may be required.

## Sample resource document: Palliative care volunteer position description

(Insert organisation name)

Position description

Title: Palliative Care Volunteer

Reports to: Manager of Volunteers

### 1. Organisation environment

(Insert organisation name) provides a program of care enabling clients to live in dignity and comfort throughout the palliative stage of their illness. The program of care is delivered in (insert applicable location) and provides physical, functional, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual support to the client, carer and family. The (insert organisation name) program of care assesses the cultural and lifestyle values of the client, carer and family and incorporates consideration of these into the program of care wherever possible.

### 2. Purpose

Volunteers provide direct support to clients, carers and families as part of an interdisciplinary team. The volunteer fulfils support requirements identified by clients, carers and families in consultation with members of the interdisciplinary team and the manager of volunteers.

### 3. Responsibilities

- Participate in a wide range of services including companionship, providing respite care for family or carers, transporting clients to appointments, and reading and answering letters
- Provide complementary therapies such as beauty treatments, gentle massage and aromatherapy as directed
- Complete any documentation at the commencement or completion of a home visit as specified by the manager of volunteers
- Communicate any concerns about client, family or carer to the manager of volunteers and members of the interdisciplinary team
- Participate in team meetings, client reviews and debriefing sessions with other volunteers and the manager of volunteers as directed
- Maintain accurate records of out-of-pocket expenses for reimbursement.
- Manage collection of statistics as required
- Participate in ongoing education activities relevant to the role

- Meet organisation volunteer policies

#### **4. Key selection criteria**

- Demonstrable commitment to servicing the needs of palliative care clients
- A current Victorian driver's licence (essential) and motor vehicle covered by comprehensive insurance (strongly recommended) for transport related activities
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Flexible, reliable and responsible with an understanding of confidentiality issues
- A willingness to work as part of a team and accept supervision and direction from the manager of volunteers
- Ability to work under limited supervision as required
- Ability to exercise discretion and judgement and work in sensitive situations

## Sample resource document: Volunteer participation boundaries

(Insert organisation name)

### Volunteer participation boundaries

As a palliative care volunteer, your primary role is to provide support to the client as part of a palliative care interdisciplinary team. From time to time, you may be asked by the client, carer or family to perform tasks that are not appropriate to your role and need to be referred to other members of your team. The following list of examples is designed to give you a guide as to the boundaries of your role.

1. **You may not initiate or assist with any work that involves strenuous physical activity.** If you are working in the home of a client, requests to perform tasks such as moving household furniture or clearing rubbish from a backyard may be politely declined and referred to the manager of volunteers if requests persist.
2. **You may not initiate moving the client.** Requests may be politely declined and referred to the manager of volunteers if requests persist. You may assist moving the client in the presence of appropriately trained medical or nursing staff.
3. **You may not initiate the dispensing of medication in the absence of appropriately trained medical or nursing staff.** You may assist the client taking their medication during carer or family respite by identifying the correct time of day or assisting vision-impaired clients locate their medication. You may pour a glass of water and hold this as the client takes the medication.
4. **You may not assist the client with any appliances that can cause injury in the absence of appropriately trained medical or nursing staff.** If you are asked to cut nails, hair or shave the client with a razor blade, you may politely decline and refer subsequent requests to the manager of volunteers.
5. **You may not administer any first aid treatment to the client unless you are qualified to do so and your qualification has been verified by the manager of volunteers.** In the event you are alone with the client in their home and they become ill or distressed, please telephone the nominated emergency contacts immediately. In the event that emergency contacts are not available or do not respond, call an ambulance immediately. In the event that the client experiences a fall, make them as comfortable as possible (without extensively moving them) and follow the procedure as above. If you have a first aid qualification verified by the manager of volunteers, you may administer first aid procedures that you have been formally trained to perform, if appropriate.

6. **You may not use any of the belongings or assets of the client, carer or family for personal reasons.** For example, if you are working in the home of the client, use of their telephone for personal calls or motor vehicle for personal reasons is inappropriate unless in demonstrable emergency situations.
7. **Please refrain from offering medical advice to the client, family or carer.** If you are asked for your opinion about medical or nursing treatments devised for the client, you may politely decline to offer any opinion and refer concerns that have been raised to other team members and the manager of volunteers. Suggestions from several individuals about medical or nursing arrangements may confuse the client and evoke anxiety from the family or carer.
8. **Please refrain from offering your personal views regarding ethnicity, religion or lifestyle choices to the client, carer or family.** You must respect client, carer or family ethnicity, religion or lifestyle choices without question. In the event you are uncomfortable with the interpersonal dynamic between yourself and the client, carer or family, please discuss your concerns with the manager of volunteers.
9. **Please refrain from discussing the medical condition, ethnicity, religion or lifestyle choices of the client, carer or family with anyone outside of your interdisciplinary team and the manager of volunteers.** Clients, carers and families must be assured their privacy will be respected and protected.
10. **You may not accept any money, material gifts or gifts in kind from the client, carer or family.** Remind them you are a volunteer on behalf of [\(insert organisation name\)](#) and do not require compensation for your efforts.
11. **Please remember that you are not authorised to witness wills or other documentation.** As a volunteer of [\(insert organisation name\)](#), you are not permitted to sign as witness to documentation concerning the private affairs of the client, carer or family. Any requests to do so need to be referred to the manager of volunteers.

## Sample resource document: Organisation philosophy and mission statement

(Insert organisation name)

Organisation philosophy and mission statement

### 1. The concept of palliative care

The World Health Organisation defines palliative care as an integrated system of care that:

*'improves the quality of life of patients and their families who face life threatening illness, by providing pain and symptom relief, spiritual and psychosocial support from diagnosis to the end of life and bereavement.*

*Palliative care:*

- *provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms*
- *affirms life and regards dying as a normal process*
- *intends neither to hasten nor to postpone death*
- *integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care*
- *offers a support system to help patients live as actively as possible until death*
- *offers a support system to help the family cope during the patient's illness and in their own bereavement*
- *uses a team approach to address the needs of patients and their families, including bereavement counselling, if indicated*
- *will enhance quality of life and may also positively influence the course of illness*
- *is applicable early in the course of illness, in conjunction with other therapies that are intended to prolong life, such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy, and includes those investigations needed to better understand and manage distressing clinical complications'* (The World Health Organisation 2005, [www.who.int](http://www.who.int))

This integrated system of care is the basis of the palliative approach that (insert organisation name) ascribes to.

### 2. Organisation structure

The staffing profile of (insert organisation name) consists of:  
(insert organisation position titles)

### 3. Service overview

The primary aim of (insert organisation name) is to facilitate a program of care enabling clients to live in dignity and comfort throughout the palliative stage of their illness. The program of care is delivered in (insert applicable location) and provides physical, functional, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual support to the client, carer and family.

The (insert organisation name) program of care assesses the cultural and lifestyle values of the client, carer and family and incorporates consideration of these into the program of care wherever possible.

The (insert organisation name) program of care is supportive care for the client, carer and family provided by an interdisciplinary team of medical, nursing, allied health staff and volunteers.

The interdisciplinary approach encourages clients, carers and families to participate in decisions about care and daily activities. The (insert organisation name) program may provide bereavement support to family and carers for a period of up to 12 months.

### 4. Volunteers

The engagement of volunteers at (insert organisation name) brings together a diverse mix of cultural and life experiences and expertise from the local community. This allows clients, carers and families to be actively supported from within their local community. (Insert organisation name) is committed to providing volunteer opportunities that enhance the program of care offered and address the developmental needs of volunteers.

Volunteers are entitled to the same conditions of service as paid staff excluding salary. Volunteers are engaged to add value to – not replace – the services provided by paid staff. Potential volunteers should note that volunteering is not a precursor to paid employment at (insert organisation name). At (insert organisation name) volunteering is viewed as an activity that is:

- Of benefit to clients, carers, families, paid staff and volunteers
- Undertaken of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion
- In designated volunteer positions only. In this way, volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to their job security.

All volunteers are provided with our volunteer management policies on commencement. Clients, carers and families are made aware of these policies to ensure that the role of volunteers in the palliative care interdisciplinary team is clearly established and understood by everyone.

## Sample resource document: Volunteer placement policy

(Insert organisation name)

### Volunteer placement policy

1. A volunteer will be briefed about a particular client by the manager of volunteers. The briefing will include details of the client's condition, services the client receives, family or carer responsibilities and location of the client's home. The briefing may include details of the client's ethnicity, religious beliefs and lifestyle choices.
2. During the briefing, the manager of volunteers will discuss any specific requirements the client has and the volunteer's envisaged role in the interdisciplinary team. This will include details of time commitment and notional timeframe based on given circumstances. The manager of volunteers will outline reasons why the volunteer is suitable for placement with the client.
3. At the conclusion of the briefing, the volunteer may choose to accept or decline the placement with the client for any reason. In the event the volunteer declines the placement, the volunteer agrees not to discuss details of the briefing with anyone and will wait until informed of another placement opportunity by the manager of volunteers.
4. In the event the volunteer chooses to accept the placement, the manager of volunteers will contact the client, carer or family and provide details of the volunteer. The client, carer or family may choose to accept or decline the volunteer placement for any reason. In the event they choose to decline the volunteer placement, they agree not to discuss the personal details of the volunteer with anyone and wait until informed of another volunteer placement opportunity by the manager of volunteers.
5. In the event that the client, carer or family choose to accept the volunteer placement, the manager of volunteers will ensure the volunteer policies of (insert organisation name) are understood and agreed to. The manager of volunteers will then facilitate the volunteer's first meeting.
6. In the event that the placement is the volunteer's first with (insert organisation name), or the volunteer's first volunteering experience, the manager of volunteers may decide to be present to introduce the volunteer and assist with initial rapport building.

## Sample resource document: Volunteer occupational health and safety policy

(Insert organisation name)

Volunteer occupational health and safety policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish health and safety parameters for volunteers and outline related procedures to be followed in the course of service for (insert organisation name).

### General

1. At (insert organisation name) all staff are required to take adequate steps to ensure the health and safety of themselves and others in the (insert organisation name) workplace and client home. This includes travelling to and from (insert organisation name) and transporting clients to and from appointments.
2. At (insert organisation name) all staff are required to follow the policies and procedures of (insert organisation name) in relation to occupational health and safety.
3. (Insert organisation name) is a smoke-free environment and volunteers are not permitted to smoke in the home of a client or inside a motor vehicle while transporting clients.

### Transport

4. Prior to commencement, all volunteers using their own motor vehicle for the purposes of transporting clients must present evidence of current registration and insurance. Purchasing comprehensive motor vehicle insurance is strongly recommended, as (insert organisation name) does not accept any financial liability in the event of accident or other misfortune.
5. To ensure a safe journey, volunteers must ensure passengers wear seat belts and are properly secured before the journey.
6. To ensure a safe journey, consumption of alcohol is **strongly discouraged**.
7. To ensure a safe journey, using hands-free mobile phones while driving a motor vehicle is **discouraged**.
8. Volunteers must observe Victorian road laws and local government by-laws with regard to speed limits and parking. (Insert organisation name) does not accept any liability for financial penalties incurred by volunteers in violation of Victorian road laws or local government by-laws.

9. With regard to points 6 and 7 above, the manager of volunteers may exercise discretion in administering this policy provided that evidence of demonstrable emergency circumstances is presented and this would be in the best interests of the volunteer and (insert organisation name).

### **Hazard, accident and injury reporting**

10. Volunteers are required to report any hazard, accident or injury to the manager of volunteers. Hazard, accident and injury reporting encompasses anything that affects the volunteer, other members of staff or client, carer or family in the (insert organisation name) workplace or client home. Volunteers are required to complete the accompanying hazard, accident and injury report form as required and forward it to the manager of volunteers.

### **Manual handling**

11. Volunteers may not initiate any work that involves strenuous physical activity. Requests to perform tasks such as moving household furniture or clearing rubbish from a backyard should be politely declined and referred to the manager of volunteers if requests persist. Volunteers may not attempt to move clients unless ably assisted by medical or nursing staff.

### **Personal safety**

12. All volunteers must report any suspicious activity around the (insert organisation name) workplace or client home (including concerns about risk to client's safety) to the manager of volunteers or police as appropriate.
13. Volunteers must leave the (insert organisation name) workplace or client home in the event they feel physically threatened or endangered and contact the manager of volunteers or police as appropriate.

### **Working alone**

14. When volunteers are working alone with a client, carer, family member, paid staffer or member of the general public, they may consider the following safety precautions:
  - make sure their presence is known when entering the (insert organisation name) workplace or client home – volunteers need to wear their identification name tag when on duty
  - make sure they observe any signing in or out procedures as directed by the manager of volunteers or security staff
  - try to avoid confrontation – if a situation with a client, carer, family member, paid staffer or member of the general public becomes heated, volunteers need to remain calm and attempt to remove themselves from the situation without

inflaming it further. Situations of this type need to be reported to the manager of volunteers as soon as possible

- be aware of the location of first aid resources in the (insert organisation name) workplace or client home
- be aware of the location of medical facilities and police stations in the general vicinity of (insert organisation name) or the client's home
- be aware of the location of petrol stations and contact details of roadside assistance services in the general vicinity of (insert organisation name) workplace or client home in the event of accident or other misfortune
- carry a mobile telephone or familiarise themselves with the location of public telephones close to the (insert organisation name) or the client's home in the event of emergency or other misfortune.

## Sample resource document: Volunteer hazard, accident and injury report form

(Insert organisation name)

Volunteer hazard, accident and injury report form

Volunteer name: .....

Date: .....

Time (am/pm): .....

Location: .....

Please circle: Is this a            hazard            accident            injury

Please provide details of the hazard, accident or injury.

Please provide details of the names of affected individuals (as applicable).

Please provide details of the steps you took (as applicable).

What action do you recommend?

Signature of volunteer:

Date:

## Sample resource document: Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses policy

(Insert organisation name)

Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses policy

1. (Insert organisation name) recognises that volunteers may incur out-of-pocket expenses from time to time in the course of their work with clients, carers and families. Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses is available for petrol costs and train, tram or bus fares consistent with paid staff reimbursement rates.

Reimbursement of out of pocket expenses will be available provided that receipts for proof of purchase or original train, tram or bus tickets are retained and presented to (insert organisation name and position) with a request for reimbursement.

2. Reimbursement for any other expense is only available when pre-arranged with the manager of volunteers.
3. Reimbursement for expenses incurred on behalf of the client, carer or family is not available. If the volunteer is asked to purchase anything on behalf of the client, carer or family, the volunteer should politely decline unless provided with the money to do so prior to purchase. Persistent requests to purchase anything by the client, carer or family should be referred to the manager of volunteers.
4. With regard to point 3, the manager of volunteers may exercise discretion in administering this policy provided that evidence of demonstrable emergency circumstances is presented and this would be in the best interests of the volunteer and (insert organisation name).

## Sample resource document: Volunteer performance review policy

(Insert organisation name)

### Volunteer performance review policy

1. All volunteers will have their performance reviewed on a regular basis to ensure their compliance with (insert organisation name) policies and assess any support or development needs they have. Performance review is designed to assist volunteers achieve their personal and professional potential.
2. Volunteer performance will be reviewed on completion of their first client placement and then at 12-month intervals. However, the frequency of performance review may be determined by other factors including the envisaged tenure of the volunteer or the receipt of any complaints regarding work performance by the manager of volunteers.
3. A performance review will consist of a planned one-on-one discussion between the volunteer and the manager of volunteers. (Insert organisation name) views performance review as a supportive interaction that encourages the volunteer to be reflective about their work and its effectiveness and be self-evaluative. This is empowering for the volunteer and enables identification of their strengths and opportunities for personal and professional development. In turn, the manager of volunteers will provide feedback to the volunteer on their achievements and any concerns that have come to light.
4. In the event of acceptable performance, this will be formally noted by the manager of volunteers on behalf of (insert organisation name) and written up as a file note. This will be given to the volunteer and a copy placed on the volunteer's personal file.
5. In the event of unacceptable performance, this will be formally noted by the manager of volunteers on behalf of (insert organisation name) and written up as a file note. The file note will detail any tips or suggestions by the manager of volunteers to address performance shortfalls. It will also nominate a mutually agreed timeframe for the volunteer to implement tips or suggestions to improve their performance. This will be given to the volunteer and a copy placed on the volunteer's personal file for ongoing monitoring by the manager of volunteers.
6. In the event that the volunteer does not improve their performance within the nominated timeframe, the manager of volunteers may consider a number of measures including further performance counselling, discipline or dismissal action if this would be in the best interests of (insert organisation name).

## Sample resource document: Volunteer grievance resolution policy

(Insert organisation name)

### Volunteer grievance resolution policy

The (insert organisation name) grievance resolution process is an open and transparent forum for volunteers to raise any concerns they have arising from their role in our workplace.

#### **Informal grievance resolution**

1. In the event a volunteer is dissatisfied with any aspect of their role, the volunteer should raise their concerns with the manager of volunteers immediately. The issue(s) of concern may be communicated verbally and informally.
2. The manager of volunteers and volunteer will agree to a timeframe for the manager of volunteers to investigate the issue(s) of concern. This may involve the manager of volunteers talking to other members of staff or the client, carer or family as appropriate. During the investigation, the work of the volunteer will continue under the direction of the manager of volunteers. However, depending on the severity of the issue(s) concerned, the manager of volunteers may suspend the volunteer from service until the investigation has concluded if the manager of volunteers believes this would be in the best interests of the volunteer and (insert organisation name).
3. The manager of volunteers will advise the volunteer of the outcome of the investigation and will collaborate with the volunteer to broker a solution beneficial to the volunteer and (insert organisation name). The manager of volunteers will make a file note detailing the issues raised, steps taken to investigate them and details of the agreement reached with the volunteer. The file note will be provided to the volunteer and a copy placed on the volunteer's personal file.

**Note:** Any staff member or volunteer found to have raised a grievance informally that can be readily proven malicious or vexatious will be subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. In the event that informal grievance resolution does not produce a mutually beneficial solution, the manager of volunteers may recommend other modes of volunteering to the volunteer if this would be in the best interests of the volunteer and (insert organisation name).

#### **Formal grievance resolution**

4. In the event that informal grievance resolution does not produce a beneficial solution to the volunteer, the volunteer may lodge a formal written grievance. In this instance, the volunteer will need to address a letter to the manager of volunteers detailing the issue(s) of concern and reasons why they are dissatisfied.

5. The manager of volunteers and volunteer will agree to a timeframe for the manager of volunteers to investigate the issue(s) of concern. This may involve the manager of volunteers talking to other members of staff or the client, carer or family and will include consideration of any related informal or formal grievance previously addressed. During the investigation, the work of the volunteer will continue under the direction of the manager of volunteers. However, depending on the severity of the issue(s) concerned, the manager of volunteers may suspend the volunteer from service until the investigation has concluded if the manager of volunteers believes this would be in the best interests of the volunteer and (insert organisation name).
6. The manager of volunteers will advise the volunteer of the outcome of the investigation and will collaborate with the volunteer to broker a solution beneficial to the volunteer and (insert organisation name). The manager of volunteers will make a file note detailing the issues raised, steps taken to investigate them and details of the agreement reached with the volunteer. The file note will be provided to the volunteer and a copy placed on the volunteer's personal file.

**Note:** Any staff member or volunteer found to have lodged a formal grievance that can be readily proven malicious or vexatious will be subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. In the event that formal grievance resolution does not produce a mutually beneficial solution, the manager of volunteers may recommend other modes of volunteering to the volunteer if this would be in the best interests of the volunteer and (insert organisation name).

**Note:** In the event that the issue(s) raised by the volunteer directly involves the manager of volunteers, informal and formal grievances should be raised with (insert organisation contact name and position title). (Insert name) will assume the responsibilities of the manager of volunteers outlined in this policy.

## Sample resource document: Volunteer discipline and dismissal policy

(Insert organisation name)

Volunteer discipline and dismissal policy

### **Discipline**

1. Disciplinary action is required in the event that a volunteer has seriously breached (insert organisation name) service delivery standards set out in our policies. Disciplinary action may occur after thorough investigation of claims and circumstances has been made by the manager of volunteers.
2. Although disciplinary action is not appropriate when service delivery standards have been inadvertently breached due to inexperience or misfortune, the manager of volunteers may take the nature and severity of the breach into account and determine that disciplinary action is appropriate.
3. Disciplinary action will be recommended by the manager of volunteers and supported by the chief executive officer of (insert organisation name). The form of disciplinary action is at the discretion of the manager of volunteers and can involve:
  - Moving the volunteer to a different work area
  - Restricting the volunteer's contact with staff, clients, families or carers
  - Suspending the volunteer from service for a defined period.
4. Disciplinary action will be accompanied by written notification from the manager of volunteers specifying reasons and accompanying timeframe. Written notification will also include suggestions that the volunteer can use to improve their future performance. A copy of written notification will also be placed on the volunteer's personal file.

### **Dismissal**

5. Dismissal is required in the event a volunteer has knowingly and wilfully breached (insert organisation name) service delivery standards set out in our policies. Dismissal may occur after thorough investigation of claims and circumstances has been made by the manager of volunteers.
6. Dismissal can occur without disciplinary action as a prerequisite. Sufficient reasons for dismissal include:
  - Failure to address poor performance or other circumstances after disciplinary action has occurred

- Criminal activity including theft, intoxication at work, use of illegal drugs and assault
  - Gross misconduct or insubordination (such as verbal abuse of staff or patients, wilful misuse of equipment endangering safety of staff and patients)
  - Breach of patient privacy.
7. Dismissal will be accompanied by written notification specifying reasons and the volunteer will be banned from subsequent employment with (insert organisation name).

## Sample resource document: Palliative care volunteer training program

(Insert organisation name)

Palliative care volunteer training program

### **Module one: Introduction to palliative care**

Core competencies

On completion of this module participants will be able to demonstrate knowledge of (1) the organisation, (2) key organisation staff and (3) the philosophy and objectives of palliative care

Suggested content

- Introduce the organisation and key staff
- Introduce the philosophy and objectives of palliative care
- Overview of organisation specific and palliative care service delivery standards

### **Module two: The palliative care volunteer's role**

Core competencies

On completion of this module participants will be able to demonstrate their understanding of (1) nature and ethics of volunteering (2) participant's interest and motivation for becoming a palliative care volunteer (3) an understanding of the volunteer role and its place within the interdisciplinary palliative care team (4) an understanding of the meaning of, rationale for, and the typical roles within an interdisciplinary palliative care team and (5) beginning knowledge of professional, legal and ethical obligations with regard to their interaction with clients, carers and families, team members and the organisation.

Suggested content

- Examine motivations for palliative care volunteering and encourage participants to reflect on and discuss their own motivations
- Introduce information and generate discussion on the nature and ethics of volunteering
- Introduce the meaning of and rationale for an interdisciplinary palliative care team, and the types of roles that are typical in these teams
- Introduce members of the team to explain their role and its functions, and how their role fits with other roles within the team

- Overview of the volunteer role and professional obligations of volunteers addressing the responsibilities of the volunteer as a representative of the organisation and the volunteer's interaction with other members of the palliative care interdisciplinary team
- Overview of the ethical and legal obligations of volunteers with regard to their interaction with clients, carers and families and the general public, with focus on volunteer rights and responsibilities with regard to privacy issues and volunteer role boundaries

### **Module three: Diversity: values and beliefs, and the cultural, social and spiritual dimensions in palliative care**

#### Core competencies

On completion of this module participants will be able to demonstrate understanding of (1) their own values and beliefs around death, dying and grief (2) the concept of diversity and the cultural, social and spiritual dimensions that influence the development and maintenance of values, beliefs and behaviours and (3) knowledge of interactions with clients, carers and families and members of the team that incorporate and respond to diversity.

#### Suggested content

- Explore personal values and beliefs, and their origins and maintenance
- Introduce the concept of diversity, with a focus on cultural, social and spiritual dimensions of diversity and their place in palliative care
- Introduce the cultural dimension of diversity, highlighting the importance of listening, to learn about different and specific cultural beliefs, values, rituals and attitudes particularly around death, dying and grief
- Introduce the social dimension of diversity, highlighting the importance of respecting differences in individual values, beliefs, behaviours and attitudes that are based on socialisation, life experiences and preferences
- Introduce the spiritual dimension of diversity, highlighting the importance of respecting differences in individual spiritual beliefs and religious practices, and the link between spiritual and overall health and wellbeing

## **Module four: Interpersonal communication skills**

### Core competencies

On completion of this module participants will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of (1) what is meant by effective interpersonal communication (2) the barriers to effective interpersonal communication (3) strategies for improving interpersonal communication and (4) the importance of listening and empathy in the context of effective communication within palliative care.

### Suggested content

- Introduce the concept of effective interpersonal communication
- Identify and examine barriers to effective communication
- Identify strategies for addressing these barriers and improving interpersonal communication
- Introduce the concept of empathy and its connection to listening and effective interpersonal communication within the palliative care context
- An overview of alternate communication with the use of communication aids when the client can no longer speak

## **Module five: Responding to loss and grief**

### Core competencies

On completion of this module participants will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of (1) grief as a normal part of life (2) the many losses experienced by people living with a life limiting illness as well as those of their carers, families, friends and communities (3) the diversity and complexity of the grief experience and how people manage their grief and (4) current grief and bereavement theory and practice

### Suggested content

- Encourage and support participants to reflect on their own losses and experience of grief across their life span, and their coping mechanisms
- Identify and explore the many losses experienced by people living with a life-limiting illness as well as those of their carers, families, friends and communities, both before and after death
- Identify and explore the social, emotional, psychological, spiritual, physical, behavioural and cultural aspects of the grief experience
- Introduce information on current grief and bereavement theory and practice

## **Module six: Self care of the volunteer**

### Core competencies

On completion of this module participants will be able to demonstrate an understanding of (1) the rewards and challenges of working in the field of death, dying and grief and the impact on workers (2) the stress response and its impact on health and wellbeing (3) learned strategies for managing stress that are useful or not useful, and ideas about other constructive strategies and (4) the importance of self-care for palliative care workers.

### Suggested content

- Explore the rewards and challenges of working in the field of death, dying and grief and the impact this work can have on workers
- Introduce the concept of stress and how it can impact on overall health and wellbeing
- Identify and explore strategies for managing stress that are useful or not useful to participants, and offer ideas about other constructive strategies
- Reinforce the importance of self-care for palliative care workers, including information about accessing support, debriefing and supervision mechanisms, and operating within the boundaries of the volunteer role

## **Module seven: Basic introduction and information on illnesses and their symptoms**

### Core competencies

On completion of this module participants should be able to demonstrate knowledge of (1) the most common types of end stage illness, (2) the curative and palliative treatments available and (3) the role of the volunteer in symptom identification and management.

### Suggested content

- Provide a definition of cancer and examine common types of cancer
- Examine the differences between primary and secondary cancer
- Provide an overview of other end-stage illnesses seen in palliative care
- Provide an overview of the curative and palliative treatments available
- Examine the common side effects of radiotherapy and chemotherapy
- Examine common symptoms and various factors that impact on symptom control

## **Module eight: Death and dying**

### Core competencies

On completion of this module participants should be able to demonstrate (1) knowledge of the physical, spiritual and psychological aspects of death and dying and (2) the impact of the dying process on the palliative care volunteer and strategies to manage this.

### Suggested content

- Explore individual or group personal experiences and responses to death and dying
- Explore the potential physical, spiritual and psychological needs of the dying person and carers and families and ways these can be supported by the interdisciplinary team throughout the dying process
- Examine the volunteer role in the interdisciplinary team throughout the dying process and explore ways the volunteer can manage the impact of death on themselves
- Explore the potential role of the volunteer in the bereavement process examining the needs of carers and families and ways the volunteer can support themselves, carers and families in the immediate aftermath of death

Sample resource document:  
Volunteer certificate of service

(insert organisation name)

Certificate of service

Awarded to

(insert volunteer name)

in recognition of (insert gender) contribution as a  
palliative care volunteer to the services of  
(insert organisation name).

January 200X to December 200X

(insert signature)

Manager of Volunteers

(insert signature)

Chief Executive Officer

## Sample resource document: Volunteer letter of recognition

(Insert volunteer name  
and address)

(Insert date)

Dear (insert given name)

On behalf of the staff and management of (insert organisation name), I am writing to thank you for your recent work with one of our clients.

You have shown great dedication and commitment in your role as a palliative care volunteer under often trying circumstances.

Your dedication and commitment are a great asset to (insert organisation name). I look forward to working with you again on future placements.

Yours sincerely

(Insert name)  
Manager of Volunteers

## Sample resource document: Home visiting reporting criteria for volunteers

(Insert organisation name)

Home visiting reporting criteria for volunteers

For (insert organisation name) to monitor its performance and efficiency, we need to maintain records of all contact between members of the palliative care interdisciplinary team and the client, carer or family. As a volunteer, there are a number of factors you need to take into consideration with regard to the frequency and duration of visits to a client home.

1. **It is imperative that you honour any commitment you make to the client, carer or family.** If you agree to visit a client twice a week for a total of four hours, the client, carer and family will grow to rely on you and may experience distress in the event that you do not honour your commitment.
2. **Please be punctual and refrain from calling on a client unannounced.** Always call beforehand and check with the client, carer or family if you need to alter your visiting schedule.
3. **Initiating contact with the client, carer or family outside of agreed visiting times is discouraged.** If you are asked for your telephone number and address details, you may politely decline and refer this request to the manager of volunteers. Any increase or decrease in contact hours with the client, carer or family needs to be approved by the manager of volunteers.
4. **Please note your arrival and departure times at the client's home in the (insert organisation name) home diary.** The diary is used by all members of the interdisciplinary team and helps everyone keep track of visits and any actions taken. Any concerns you have about the client's wellbeing can be noted in the diary and actioned by phoning the relevant emergency contacts or manager of volunteers immediately. The names and telephone contact information for emergency personnel are located in the diary.

## Sample resource document: Volunteer bullying policy

(Insert organisation name)

### Volunteer bullying policy

Bullying is any repeated verbal or physical behaviour that demeans, humiliates, intimidates or threatens others in a way that is unwelcome and unwarranted. Bullying usually occurs for arbitrary reasons and can take a number of forms including:

- Direct or indirect negative comments or gossip about someone's capacity to work, religious beliefs, ethnicity or lifestyle choices
- Abuse of authority
- Assuming authority without proper delegation
- Preferential treatment of one person over another for personal reasons
- Placing someone in a stressful position with unreasonable work demands
- Exploiting someone's lack of experience or knowledge
- Distribution of 'joke' emails or text messages (text or pictures) that others may find offensive.

Bullying creates a hostile and stressful atmosphere that is not conducive to a safe, healthy and harmonious work environment. When assessing someone's behaviour towards you, please take careful note of the following.

1. Bullying is prolonged and systematic behaviour usually designed to undermine someone's capacity in the workplace. Be careful not to confuse bullying with 'one-off' incidents that may have resulted from poor communication or lack of understanding of a particular situation. These type of incidents may be unpleasant but do not constitute bullying.
2. Bullying can be difficult to prove. If you feel you are subject to bullying-type behaviour, make careful note of dates, times, places, incidents and the names of people you believe are involved. Vague recollections not tied to a particular place and time are difficult to investigate.
3. In the event of bullying, approach the person(s) directly and inform them that you are unhappy with their behaviour and request them to stop it. In the event that this does not correct the problem within a reasonable timeframe, you may raise your concerns directly with the manager of volunteers. If you do not feel comfortable about approaching someone, you may raise the matter with the manager of volunteers in the first instance and request assistance. However, in the event of physical bullying, you may contact the manager of volunteers or emergency assistance as appropriate.

4. Please note that (insert organisation name) takes allegations of bullying seriously. Any staff member or volunteer found to have made a complaint about bullying behaviour that can be readily proven malicious or vexatious will be subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. Depending on the severity of circumstances, the manager of volunteers reserves the right to contact police if this would be in the best interests of (insert organisation name).
5. Any staff member or volunteer found to have breached (insert organisation name) bullying policy will be subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. However, depending on the severity of circumstances, the manager of volunteers reserves the right to contact police if this would be in the best interests of (insert organisation name).

**Note:** In the event that allegations of bullying directly involve the manager of volunteers, concerns can be raised with (insert organisation contact name and position title). (Insert name) will assume the responsibilities of the manager of volunteers outlined in this policy.

## Sample resource document: Volunteer sexual harassment policy

(Insert organisation name)

### Volunteer sexual harassment policy

Sexual harassment is any form of unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that offends, humiliates, demeans or threatens someone. Sexual harassment can be a 'one-off' incident or prolonged and systematic behaviour. Sexual harassment typically involves:

- Unnecessary physical contact
- Verbal propositions of a sexual nature
- Direct or indirect comments or gossip or direct questions about someone's sexual preferences
- Persistent invitations to attend parties or other activities outside of normal working hours that have been persistently rejected by the recipient
- Distribution of 'joke' emails or text messages of a sexual nature (text or pictures) that others may find offensive.

Sexual harassment laws in Australia cover the workplace and extend to work-related activities such as social gatherings where staff are present. At (insert organisation name), the 'workplace' includes the client home and any other location paid staff and volunteers are required to attend in the normal course of their work. When assessing someone's behaviour towards you, please take careful note of the following.

1. Sexual harassment is verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature that is unwelcome and not reciprocated. Any verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature that is welcomed and reciprocated is not sexual harassment.
2. Sexual harassment can occur between two people with same sex preferences. No one should assume that others will respond favorably to their behaviour on the basis of identical sexual preferences.
3. Sexual harassment can be difficult to prove. If you feel you have been or are being subject to sexual harassment, make careful note of dates, times, places, incidents and the name of the person(s) involved. Vague recollections not tied to a particular place and time are difficult to investigate.
4. In the event of sexual harassment, approach the person(s) directly and inform them that you are unhappy with their behaviour and request them to stop it. In the event that this does not correct the problem within a reasonable timeframe, you can raise your concerns directly with the manager of volunteers. If you do not feel comfortable about approaching someone, you may raise the matter with the manager of volunteers in the first instance and request assistance. However, depending on the

severity of the harassment, you may contact the manager of volunteers or emergency assistance as appropriate.

5. Please note that (insert organisation name) takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously. Any staff member or volunteer found to have made a complaint about sexual harassment that can be readily proven malicious or vexatious will be subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. Depending on the severity of circumstances, the manager of volunteers reserves the right to contact police if this would be in the best interests of (insert organisation name).
6. Any staff member or volunteer found to have breached (insert organisation name) sexual harassment policy will be subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. However, depending on the severity of circumstances, the manager of volunteers reserves the right to contact police if this would be in the best interests of (insert organisation name).

**Note:** In the event that allegations of sexual harassment directly involve the manager of volunteers, concerns should be raised with (insert organisation contact name and position title). (Insert name) will assume the responsibilities of the manager of volunteers outlined in this policy.

## Sample resource document: Volunteer equal employment opportunity policy

(Insert organisation name)

Volunteer equal employment opportunity policy

At (insert organisation name) all volunteers are entitled to the same professional considerations as paid staff – excluding salary. Our workplace policies are designed to provide a safe, healthy and harmonious work environment with equal access for all. At (insert organisation name), discrimination is unlawful on the following grounds:

- Gender
- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Sexual preferences
- Physical appearance
- Marital status
- Political beliefs and affiliations
- Religious beliefs and affiliations
- Pregnancy.

(Insert organisation name) undertakes that the principles of equal employment opportunity will apply to:

- Recruitment and selection of volunteers
- Requests for training from volunteers
- Volunteer performance review
- Administration of all policies governing the work of volunteers and paid staff.

At (insert organisation name), reasonable adjustment may be made for people with a disability or pregnant women requiring flexible work arrangements. Flexible work arrangements may also be available to others depending on given circumstances. Requests for reasonable adjustment should be raised with the manager of volunteers.

## Sample resource document: Volunteer continuous improvement and change management policy

(Insert organisation name)

Volunteer continuous improvement and change management policy

Your input into the services we provide and the work policies and practices we employ is valuable to us. Your suggestions for service improvements or initiatives are always welcome and can be used to improve service to our clients, carers, families, paid and volunteer staff.

You can raise any suggestions you have with the manager of volunteers in person, or can write them down and forward them to the manager of volunteers for consideration if you prefer.

You may find your ideas incorporated into our work policies and practices. In this event, the manager of volunteers or applicable staff member will outline the changes, reasons for the change and monitor implementation to ensure a harmonious and efficient workplace.

**Remember, our policies and work practices have been designed to ensure a safe, healthy and efficient workplace responsive to the needs of our clients and staff. Any positive changes to improve work policies and practices should always be collaborative and shared with others.**

## Sample resource document: Volunteer emergency and evacuation policy

(Insert organisation name)

Volunteer emergency and evacuation policy

### 1. General evacuation procedure

If you hear the emergency alarm system sounding, please observe the following steps:

- Cease work immediately and close all doors and windows in your immediate work area (if safe to do so). Do not lock them with keys
- Proceed to the nearest emergency evacuation exit. Leave your personal belongings behind and do not telephone or email others
- Do not use lifts under any circumstances
- Assemble outside the building at (insert local assembly location)
- Do not attempt to re-enter the building until informed it is safe to do so.

### 2. Emergency and evacuation procedures – bomb threat

In the event that you receive a telephone call advising of a bomb threat, please observe the following steps:

- Dial (insert applicable extension number) – this will alert security staff and the location of the call will be traced
- Attempt to gain as much information from the caller as possible with regard to the location of the bomb, what it looks like and when it is expected to go off
- Do not hang up the telephone (even if the caller hangs up) – this will assist the call being traced
- Try to keep the caller on the line. However, if you are advised the bomb is located in your immediate area, you may leave the area immediately but do not hang up the telephone (even if the caller hangs up)
- Cease work immediately. Close all doors and windows in your immediate work area (if safe to do so). Do not lock them with keys
- When evacuating your work area, leave all of your personal belongings behind and proceed to the nearest emergency exit. Do not use lifts under any circumstances.

In the event that you find a bomb (or think you may have), please observe the following steps:

- Do not touch or attempt to move it
- Advise all persons in the immediate area to evacuate to the nearest emergency exit

- Dial ([insert applicable extension number](#)) and advise security staff of the location of the bomb and steps you have taken to alert people within the immediate area
- Cease work immediately. Close all doors and windows in your immediate work area (if safe to do so). Do not lock them with keys
- Leave all of your personal belongings behind and proceed to the nearest emergency exit. Do not use lifts under any circumstances.

### 3. Emergency procedures – fire

In the event that you discover a fire, please observe the following procedures:

- Activate the nearest fire alarm to the location of the fire
- Advise all persons in the immediate area to evacuate to the nearest emergency exit
- Dial ([insert applicable extension number](#)) and advise security staff of the location and extent of the fire and steps you have taken to alert people within the immediate area. Provide details of any injuries to yourself or others
- You may attempt to extinguish the fire with the nearest applicable fire extinguisher if you know how to use it. However, you will need to make a judgement of your capability to do so with regard to the extent of the fire.
- In the event you are not able to extinguish the fire or do not feel comfortable to do so, close all doors and windows in your immediate work area (if safe to do so). Do not lock them with keys. Leave all of your personal belongings behind and proceed to the nearest emergency exit. Do not use lifts under any circumstances.

### 4. Emergency procedures – mobility-impaired people

All mobility-impaired volunteers and paid staff at ([insert organisation name](#)) are assigned an evacuation buddy on commencement. An evacuation buddy will assist mobility impaired persons evacuate the building in the event of emergency. In this event, evacuation buddy's and mobility-impaired people observe the following procedure:

- Pair up at the sounding of emergency alarm system or advice from staff of bomb threat or fire
- Proceed to the nearest emergency evacuation exit where the evacuation buddy will assist the mobility-impaired person downstairs and to their designated assembly location.

**Note:** In the event that an evacuation buddy or mobility-impaired person is absent from work, the affected person will be advised of this and other arrangements made as appropriate.

## 5. Emergency procedures – medical emergency

In the event that a client experiences a fall or becomes distressed, please observe the following procedures:

- In the event the client becomes distressed, dial (insert applicable telephone extension) for emergency medical assistance. Comfort the client as best as you can until assistance arrives
- In the event the client experiences a fall, make them as comfortable as possible (without extensively moving them) and dial (insert applicable telephone extension) for emergency medical assistance. Comfort the client as best as you can until assistance arrives
- In the event the client experiences a burn, cut or similar misfortune, apply first aid (if you are trained to do so) and dial (insert applicable telephone extension) for emergency medical assistance. If you have not been trained to administer first aid, dial (insert applicable telephone extension) immediately and comfort the client as best as you can until assistance arrives.

## Sample resource document: Working with suicidal clients policy

(Insert organisation name)

### Working with suicidal clients policy

As a palliative care volunteer, you will find yourself working with people (clients, carers and family members) who may be experiencing significant distress. This can occur during the course of the illness, when death is imminent, and also in bereavement. This distress can be due to a number of complex factors such as pain, changes in body image and function, loss of independence, loss of control or dignity and fear of both the unknown and the known. In some cases this distress can escalate to a point where people begin to think about suicide as a means of escape.

This is often evident by comments such as 'I don't have anything to live for anymore' or 'life isn't worth living now' or 'I can't live without (the person who is dying or has died)'. These comments are often made in despair and may not be an indication of suicide risk. However, comments such as these need to be acknowledged and responded to compassionately and skillfully. If you hear comments like these, there are ways you can gently explore their meaning in order to begin to establish if there is a real suicide risk.

1. Remain calm. Acknowledge the statement and the despair that is behind it (such as that it is not uncommon for people in situations such as theirs to have thoughts like these).
2. Gently and supportively question the client further, to gather information relevant to suicide risk (such as have they had these thoughts or feelings before, do they really want to die or do they just want their suffering to stop, have they thought about **how** they would end their life, do they have those means readily available).
3. Offer the client the opportunity to speak to another member of the interdisciplinary team about what is happening to them.
4. Before ending the client contact, talk about what the client will do after you leave, for the rest of the day, what might be happening tomorrow, and when you or another team member will next make contact with them.
5. In the event of the client remaining visibly distressed and focused on thoughts of suicide, you need to call the manager of volunteers or another member of the interdisciplinary team, and stay with the client until assistance arrives provided it is safe to do so. In the event that you cannot contact the manager of volunteers or another member of the interdisciplinary team, it is recommended you call a carer, family member or emergency service immediately.

6. Regardless of how the visit ends, the details of the contact need to be reported to the manager of volunteers or another member of the interdisciplinary team as soon as possible.

During follow-up interaction with the client, acknowledge the discussion and happenings that took place during the previous contact and continue to gently explore with the client what it was like for them then and what it is like now. Is there a difference? If you are concerned about the client's thoughts, feelings or behaviour, report your concerns to the appropriate member of the interdisciplinary team and the manager of volunteers immediately.

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