




St Patrick's Mental Health Services

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Authorisation/Signature:  SARAH SURGENOR, COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING		

1. Policy

Volunteer Charter

St. Patrick's Mental Health Services (SPMHS) is committed to providing a professional and efficient environment to support volunteerism in the organization. We regard volunteers as a valuable resource. We aim to train, support and supervise our volunteers to the best of our abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise.

2. Objectives

All staff managing volunteers are responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers including voluntary Board Governors are expected to facilitate this process.

People wishing to volunteer must be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the organization and may only be accepted if their needs as volunteers match the needs of the organization. No person who has a conflict of interest with any aspect of the organization will be accepted as a volunteer.

Voluntary Board Governors may not undertake other voluntary work within SPMHS itself, but will be encouraged and supported by SPMHS if they wish to volunteer elsewhere.

3. Rights & Responsibilities of Volunteers

Relationship with paid staff

Volunteers are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff. Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships. SPMHS will not utilize volunteers in place of paid staff.

Volunteers are treated as full members of the SPMHS team. They are treated as equally and fairly as paid staff and are included in the organizations, functions and decision-making processes wherever practical. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites and have

access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably. A volunteer will be allocated a manager who will be responsible for managing and supervising the volunteer.

Working conditions

Working times are negotiated between the SPMHS Manager and the volunteer and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organizational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their supervisor as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Appropriate Behavior

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of SPMHS and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the organization, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of SPMHS.

Volunteers must seek prior approval from the SPMHS Manager before undertaking anything that might affect the organization. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

Confidentiality

SPMHS respects the volunteer's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while volunteering with SPMHS.

Records

A system of records is maintained on all volunteers, including dates and times of service, duties performed, evaluation of work, etc. Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff records.

Service at the discretion of SPMHS

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of SPMHS. The organization may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate a volunteer's relationship with the organization. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with SPMHS. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

Recruitment

Role Descriptions & person specifications

Like paid staff, volunteers require a clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description is developed for each voluntary opportunity. This includes a title of the volunteering role, starting and finishing dates, hours and place of work, name of supervisor and tasks to be undertaken. If appropriate, a brief person specification may also be drawn up. The role description may be amended in joint agreement with the volunteer and the SPMHS Manager. A copy of the final version is given to the volunteer before commencing voluntary work, as it is used in supervision and evaluation sessions. Role descriptions define a time limit for voluntary involvement, after which time it is reviewed, and updated if appropriate.

Applications

Volunteers are recruited on a pro-active basis by the organization using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Potential volunteers may also apply speculatively. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with the SPMHS equal opportunities

policy. All volunteers are required to complete an application form. If necessary, applications are short listed and suitable candidates are invited to attend an interview to ascertain their interest in and suitability for the role.

Interviews

Written records of all interviews are kept for a period of 12 months. All unsuccessful candidates are thanked for applying and encouraged to reapply for other volunteering opportunities, either current or in the future. References are always taken up. If the role requires it Garda vetting is sought. Other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications). Volunteers are always warned in advance of the intention to make these checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason they are not selected. Formal appointments are made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary checks have proved acceptable.

Appointment

No placements are made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteer's supervisor can be met. All placements are subject to an initial trial period of one month. At the end of this period, the SPMHS Manager meets with the volunteer to discuss the volunteer's suitability for their role. At this point, volunteers may continue in their current role, be reassigned to a more suitable role, or be asked to leave.

All volunteers receive induction when they begin voluntary work with SPMHS. This consists of a general introduction to the organization, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role.

Training

Volunteers receive initial and ongoing on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training is appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

Volunteers are actively encouraged to identify training courses, seminars, conferences, and so on, which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development. Approval to undertake such training free-of-charge must be given by the SPMHS Manager and this will only be done if sufficient funds are available. Priority is given to long standing volunteers and those who have received little or no training in the past. If additional training is paid for by SPMHS, any course or other materials belong to the organization and must be filed in the SPMHS office. Training information must be disseminated to relevant people within the organization.

Supervision

Lines of communication operate in both directions and exist formally and informally. Volunteers have access to all appropriate information, memos, materials and meetings relevant to their assignments. Volunteers are consulted on all decisions that substantially affect their volunteering conditions.

Each volunteer has a clearly identified manager who is responsible for the day-to-day management and supervision of the volunteer. Volunteers receive regular appraisals of their work, based on their role descriptions. Evaluation sessions take place at least once a month between the volunteer and his or her manager. These review the performance of the volunteer, suggest any changes in work style, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the SPMHS, convey appreciation to the volunteer and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in his or her role. The sessions also serve as an opportunity to plan future tasks.

Corrective Action

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following evaluation sessions. Examples include the organization of training for an identified training need, the reassignment of a volunteer, or the dismissal of a volunteer. Volunteers who do not adhere to the organization's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteers' involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their supervisor. Grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct, being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol), theft, misuse of equipment and materials, abuse of clients and co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide by SPMHS policies and procedures, breach of communication policy and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by a member of the Senior Management Team ("SMT"). The SMT will discuss the issue as soon as practical after receiving a written complaint, and take appropriate action.

Where possible, informal exit interviews are held with any volunteers who are leaving the organization, either because they have reached the end of their project, or are leaving for some other reason. Interviews are usually conducted with the volunteer's ex-manager and written records are kept. The session ascertains why the volunteer is leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and what suggestions they offer to improve the way the organization operates.

Support

SPMHS endeavors to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. Support forms part of the regular management/supervision sessions and gives volunteers a safe setting in which to express themselves, let off steam and discuss how they feel about volunteering. The SPMHS manager will always try to be available to volunteers who require support in other areas that are affecting their performance.

Recognition

Volunteers provide a unique service to SPMHS, the benefits of which are immense. It is essential that their efforts are recognized and rewarded. SPMHS staff are responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organization. The SPMHS Manager is responsible for ensuring that more formalized recognition takes place at key times.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge, so SPMHS offers to reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses they may incur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the organization. The costs of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage those on low incomes. Current rates and procedures for claiming expenses are agreed by the Senior Management Team and publicized to all volunteers.

Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while involved with the organization and are assisted into assuming additional and greater responsibilities over time, if they desire this. SPMHS monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the organization on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements.

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome. It should be given to the SPMHS HR Department who will ensure that it is considered fully.

Insurance

Insurance is provided by SPMHS to cover all volunteers working on behalf of and at the direction of the organization.

SPMHS currently has the following insurances in place:

- (a) Employers Liability – Limit of Indemnity €13,000,000 any one occurrence
- (b) Public Liability – Limit of Indemnity €13,000,000 any one occurrence

Volunteers working on behalf of SPMHS are covered under both of these policies.

4. Organsational Policies

All staff members and volunteers of SPMHS are obligated to adhere to the procedures and practices as outlined in the following SPMHS policies;

- *GLD 0014 Complaints Policy*
- *GOV 0020 Incident Reporting*
- *GOV 0019 Child Protection*
- *GOV 0030 Confidentiality in the Workplace*
- *GOV 0024 Management of allegations of abuse of a SU by an employee*

- *HRP 39 Obligation to Report*
- *HRP 09 Corrective Action Procedure*
- *HRP 12 Grievance Policy*
- *HRP 38 Speak up Policy*
- *HRP 29 Dignity at Work*

- *FMFSP 0001 Fire Safety*
- *FM0017 Emergency Evacuation Plan*

- *QMI 0008 SPMHS Charter*

- *Any additional department policies as agreed with the Department Manager*

It is each individual's responsibility to familiarize themselves with the content of the above listed SPMHS policies which are available from the Clinical Governance Manual.