

# Including CALD Volunteers

## Guide

Chances are you, or the people that support you, are already involved in 'informal' volunteering in one way or another. In fact, up to [60% of all the volunteering that happens in Victoria happens informally](#), or on an ad-hoc, uncoordinated basis. Informal volunteering generally happens between people rather than organisations and volunteers and tends to be focused foremost on the immediate needs of the recipient rather than the volunteer.

Examples of informal volunteering are common and generally unstructured; from helping your neighbour with their shopping, looking after your neighbours' pets while they are away, or stepping in to help out in an emergency, they are the vital and priceless actions of a strong and resilient community.

### For volunteers

While the beauty of informal volunteering may be in the spontaneous, unplanned nature of it, it is important that your informal volunteering benefits all involved and doesn't put you at risk. Your safety - your number one priority.

### Emergencies

Particularly in the case of emergencies where others are in danger, it is imperative that you do not risk your own life in helping others. Mitigate the risk to yourself (and therefore your ability to provide help) by making sure that you:

Assess the situation before jumping in – emergencies often involve dangers that are not always obvious and generally out of your control. Examples of these include violence, heatwaves and fire, storms, flooding and other natural disasters, infectious disease, electrical mishap and building malfunction to name a few. You need to be confident that you understand what has happened (and is happening) including the unpredictability of the scenario and how to keep yourself safe. Your safety is the first thing you need to think of before anyone else's. before you can save anyone else.

If you witness harm or abuse or need to refer an issue you cannot deal with, contact [Victoria Police](#) or call 000.

### Sickness and infection

If you are feeling un-well, do not help others. The possibility that your sickness is brought on by an infectious disease is too high to risk sharing this with those you are trying to help. By protecting yourself, you are already supporting your community by reducing the spread. Follow government guidelines for infection control around hand washing and social distancing. For more information on these guidelines, visit the [Victorian Government's physical distancing page](#).

### Be clear about your activities

Be clear about what activities you will be doing and what the expectations and boundaries are around the role. Consider starting small so that you can understand the scale of your undertaking and how best to sustain your volunteering efforts.

### Identify yourself

Offer to show people you are helping around your community a form of ID with photograph and clearly presented name, especially if you are interacting with vulnerable people.

### Consider joining already established groups

While you might just want to get out there and get volunteering, consider joining already established groups operating in your area. [Local Volunteer Resources Centres](#)

### Volunteering hygiene

You may need to access and wear protective clothing and gloves, carry water and hand-wash, especially if you are handling shopping/money.

### Set expectations

Be aware that not everyone will want help and may be wary of people they are unfamiliar with. In the current situation, there are many limitations; age, health, location and varied.

## Using the experience to support your career

While its easier to put formal volunteer roles on your CV when applying for a job, its not impossible to talk about the skills you've gained from informal volunteering in an interview setting. Consider what transferrable skills you might be building through your informal volunteering (such as leadership, initiative, communication and problem solving to name a few) and consider talking about these in a cover letter or interview.

## Talk to a volunteer-involving organisation

If you are looking for further support in your area about informal volunteering and questions, [get support in your area](#).

## Informal volunteer Initiatives

Here are a few volunteer management practices to consider if you are working to get an initiative together.

### Prepare for the unexpected

At times, people will express a desire to informally volunteer with your initiative but not actually come through. A lot of these people might have not volunteered before. Consider how you will manage this and how it will affect your plans.

### Do not involve sick volunteers

Volunteers should be encouraged to be aware of their own circumstances and any underlying health condition. These may be mild but can be exacerbated by volunteering or may in risk other members of the communities.

### Consider writing a short role description

This ensures that everyone is on the same page. This provides clarity when deciding who is or isn't suitable for the volunteer role. A simple role description will include the following: role/title, approximate number of hours required, location, purpose, supervision, duties, skills.

### Managing excess/shortage of volunteers

Sometimes, the number of volunteers available might be greater than what is needed, or vice versa. Volunteers often complain about "not having enough for me to do". Consider how you will manage these variables.

## Volunteer burn-out and your duty of care

We all want to do the right thing, but sometimes, the right thing is to take a break. As they help people that are often the most vulnerable in our community, volunteers may become more keenly aware of the adversity, isolation and loneliness that some people experience and take this on board emotionally.

It is therefore essential that you, or any volunteer you work with feels able to:

- Freely express how they are feeling without the threat of being judged
- Seek emotional support be it from colleagues, counsellors or professionals
- Withdraw their volunteer commitment should their emotional and psychological health feel threatened

Training resources such as Psychological First Aid and Accidental Counselling courses can equip volunteers, particularly those who support the vulnerable or are often 'first responders' to emergencies, with the skills to deal with immediate emotional needs and situations.

## Managing risk

it's more likely that you're not volunteering under the supervision of an organisation that has appropriate insurance, it's important to manage any risks that this may bring so it doesn't lead to a dispute. This can include, but is not limited to, clarifying who is responsible for your safety and who you can go to for help. Establishing this upfront can possibly divert conflict or issues further down the line. Insurance may also be less than you think. To investigate insurance eligibility for your volunteer activities, see [VV Guide - 'Insurance and Liability'](#) and consider contacting Volunteering Australia insurance broker [AON](#).

### More information

For more information on volunteering during COVID-19 go to <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/covid19forvolunteers/>

For more information on volunteer management during COVID-10 go to <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/covid19volunteermanagers/>