

Good Shepherd Volunteers Handbook



Embrace the World!

25-30 21st Ave, Astoria, NY 11105
Tel: 718-943-7489 Fax: 718-777-1928
gsv@gsvolunteers.org
www.gsvolunteers.org

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I. GSV Mission Statement

Good Shepherd Volunteers recruits, educates, and supports full-time volunteers who use their God-given talents to serve women, adolescents, and children affected by poverty, violence, and neglect in domestic and international placements. Our volunteers live out the four tenets of Social Justice, Simplicity, Spirituality, and Community, and are encouraged to maintain a commitment to these principles for a lifetime. Good Shepherd Volunteers, founded by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, is dedicated to honoring the sisters' core values of Individual Dignity, Mercy, Reconciliation, and Zeal.

II. Program Philosophy/Tenets

During their time of service, volunteers focus on the four tenets of Social Justice, Community, Simplicity, and Spirituality.

Social Justice: We encourage volunteers to become agents of engaged compassion by living out the Good Shepherd values of individual dignity, mercy, reconciliation, and zeal. Volunteers have the opportunity to better understand the realities of poverty in our community and world through developing relationships with those they serve. Through increased knowledge and understanding of systemic challenges, volunteers will be a voice for positive change in our world.

Community: We invite volunteers to learn how to work together, address conflict, and engage both locally and globally. Volunteers live in an intentional community where they provide support to one another, share their experiences of service, challenge each other to grow in each of the four tenets, and commit to building open and honest relationships. Volunteers work together to set community goals and challenge one another to live a life of simplicity in solidarity with those they serve.

Simplicity: We empower volunteers to live in solidarity with those they serve by living on a limited budget and being intentional about their time, resources, and relationships. Through personal commitment and creative use of resources, volunteers have the opportunity to develop a lifestyle that is socially and economically responsible. Volunteers may challenge one another to redefine their needs and live a conscientious lifestyle.

Spirituality: We inspire volunteers to respond to Saint Mary Euphrasia's call to "just love" and to explore their personal faith journey. Volunteers have the opportunity to enhance their spirituality through reflection and action throughout their service experience. Through retreats, community reflection and other gatherings, volunteers can challenge themselves to put their faith into action.

III. History of Good Shepherd Volunteers

The congregation of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd was founded in France in 1835 by Saint Mary Euphrasia and has grown into an international religious community, living and working in sixty-seven countries. St. Mary Euphrasia knew the pain and brokenness of humanity. Her vision was of human wholeness and insight into the dignity and worth of each person. This vision and insight inspires the worldwide efforts of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd mission today that extends mercy and care to people suffering injustice, oppression and alienation. Their spirit of reconciliation seeks to heal broken relationships and promote peace and justice despite the many conflicts in our worldwide community.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd collaborates with a variety of professionals and those who share their values and commitment to uphold the dignity of each person. In this work, the sisters and volunteers have the opportunity to express their faith and spirituality through action while sharing in the compassion and care of those most in need.

In this spirit, Good Shepherd Volunteers (GSV) was established in 1992 to invite lay volunteers to share in the charism of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd by working in social service programs in the United States founded and/or managed by them. From its early stages Good Shepherd Volunteers has been international, attracting volunteers from Europe and Africa. In 1996, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd challenged themselves to “make full use of our internationality. . . by networking with local, national, and international interfaith organizations in order to influence and change structures that create an ever-widening gap between the poor and rich.” With the support and encouragement of the congregation, Good Shepherd Volunteers extended its outreach internationally. Today, Good Shepherd Volunteers collaborates with sisters and lay collaborators in the U.S., South America, and Asia.

The growth of GSV has responded to St. Mary Euphrasia’s call to “embrace the world” and assist women, adolescents, and children most in need. Collaborating with lay people to provide community care and outreach around the world strengthens the sisters’ mission and identity. Today, GSV has over 300 alumni throughout the U.S. and overseas. Many GSV alumni continue to share in the charism of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd through work in Good Shepherd-sponsored programs and in the fields of social work, education, and advocacy.

IV. Criteria and Responsibilities for Placement

Good Shepherd volunteers are placed in agencies either founded or sponsored by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, or by agencies that employ one or more members of the congregation.

Good Shepherd volunteers are not meant to be permanent staff at an organization. Because GSV does not guarantee the return of a volunteer in subsequent years, organizations are expected to have a working plan to staff the position without volunteer assistance.

Agency Financial Guidelines

Housing:

The agency (or agencies) must provide volunteers with appropriate housing and simple furnishings. The volunteers live in an *intentional community* and living expenses are shared equally by agencies. Housing should be simple and preferably located near the people served. It is to be safe, secure, and ready for occupancy when the GS volunteers arrive at the end of August orientation.

Rent:

The agency is responsible for providing and paying for housing for the volunteers. Rent varies by living site; each agency pays an equal share of the rent based upon the number of volunteers working at agency. If all volunteers work at the same agency, the full cost of rent is allocated to the host agency.

Utilities:

All utility expenses must be covered by the agency. This includes: electricity, heat, water, internet, etc. Each agency will pay an equal share of the utility costs based upon number of volunteers serving at given agency.

Repairs and Maintenance:

All repairs and maintenance must be covered by the agency (unless it is covered by the landlord of the property). This includes minor and major repairs, ongoing maintenance such as painting, extermination, new furniture or furnishings needed, etc.

Volunteer Compensation:*Stipend and Transportation*

The agency is responsible for paying the stipend, transportation, and health/dental benefits while the volunteer is working at an agency site. Each month, the volunteer should receive a total of **\$230**.

All work related transportation costs are the responsibility of the agency. If the volunteer needs a car for her/his work, the agency must supply a car to the volunteer for work-related transportation; in addition, the agency is responsible for car insurance and gas. In situations where the volunteers will use public transportation, the volunteers should be given the means, in addition to the stipend and food allowance, to cover the cost of their monthly commuter transportation card. In instances where the GSV lives at the placement site, a travel stipend should be given to them to allow them to buy groceries and personal items, leave the site in their free time for recreation opportunities, self-care, etc.

Health and Dental Insurance

Volunteers are eligible to enroll in a basic GSV administered health insurance plan with Christian Brothers. This plan will cover the volunteer beginning on the first day of the start of service and continue on through the end of the month of the last day of service. Volunteers will be responsible for the first \$5 of any medical, counseling, or prescription expense. The placement agency is responsible for reimbursing the volunteer for the rest of the co-pays and prescriptions (not to exceed \$750 for the year). The volunteer should use only in-network physicians; any out-of-network medical care will not be covered unless it has been pre-approved by the placement site. Elective surgeries are not the responsibility of the agency; volunteers will not receive any reimbursement for expenses related to elective surgeries.

If a volunteer chooses to remain on his/her previous (or family's) insurance plan, the placement agency will reimburse for the co-payments and prescription costs associated with any medical care received, not to exceed the reimbursement allotted by the GSV issued insurance plan. The volunteer themselves are responsible for the first \$5 and any medical expenses exceeding the covered costs, and they are also responsible for the premium of their own insurance plan.

Health and dental insurance costs are covered in most cases. However, the agency will not be responsible for exorbitant costs, costs for significant dental work while in (volunteer) service, or costs related to a chronic or pre-existing condition. These must be discussed with GSV staff and the placement agency supervisor/human resources personnel prior to care.

In the event of termination from the Good Shepherd Volunteer Program, health coverage associated with the program will also be terminated, effective the date of termination from the volunteer program.

Taxes and additional benefits

The agency is not required to pay FICA taxes or offer additional benefits such as life insurance, long-term disability insurance, etc. to the volunteer as the volunteer is contracted on a volunteer and a limited basis (i.e. for one year). GSV recommends that the placement agency have an adequate liability coverage policy to ensure that a volunteer will have access to benefits if injured or harmed in the workplace. GSV recommends that the agency consult with their human resources professionals and/or insurance representatives to provide adequate compensation for the volunteers in addition to the stipend, transportation and health/dental benefits.

If the agency chooses to pay into FICA or additional benefits, the agency must tax the individual volunteer so that he/she receives \$230 a month (as mentioned above) after any deductions are withheld.

For more information, please consult the Department of Labor website at www.dol.gov and the state where the agency resides regarding compensation of volunteers. In addition, specific information regarding compensation of volunteers can be found below. Please refer to the Code of Federal Regulation, Section 553.106, for more information.

“...Volunteers may be paid expenses, reasonable benefits, a nominal fee, or any combination thereof, for their service without losing their status as volunteers. (b) An individual who performs hours of service as a volunteer for a public agency may receive payment for expenses without being deemed an employee for purposes of the FLSA....(c) Individuals do not lose their status as volunteers because they are reimbursed for tuition, transportation and meal costs involved in their attending classes intended to teach them to perform efficiently the services they provide or will provide as volunteers. Likewise, the volunteer status of such individuals is not lost if they are provided books, supplies, or other materials essential to their volunteer training or reimbursement for the cost thereof. (d) Individuals do not lose their volunteer status if they are provided reasonable benefits by a public agency for whom they perform volunteer services. Benefits would be considered reasonable, for example, when they involve inclusion of individual volunteers in group insurance plans (such as liability, health, life, disability, workers' compensation) or pension plans or “length of service” awards, commonly or traditionally provided to volunteers of State and local government agencies, which meet the additional test in paragraph (f) of this section...”

This text taken from the Department of Labor website:

http://www.dol.gov/dol/allcfr/Title_29/Part_553/29CFR553.106.htm

Additional Travel:

GS volunteers are responsible for travel costs to the GSV Orientation at the beginning of the GSV year. The agency is responsible for travel costs from orientation to the location of the agency and back home at the end of the year of service. In addition, host agencies are to cover travel costs to GSV events such as retreats, workshops, etc. If this is not geographically possible, alternative opportunities need to be provided for by the agency in consultation with the GSV staff.

Relocation Expenses upon completion of service commitment:

The placement agency will be responsible for covering the costs of the volunteer's transportation home upon successful completion of the service commitment from the GSV Re-Orientation. For example, if a volunteer is returning home and requires a flight, the agency will reimburse the volunteer for a one-way ticket home. If the volunteer is not returning home and will remain in the area where he/she serves or

in the area of the GSV final Retreat, the agency will be responsible for offering a flat fee, not to exceed \$250 to assist the volunteer with his/her relocation expenses. If the volunteer will be using his/her own vehicle to return home, the agency will be responsible for gas and toll expenses and the volunteer must submit receipts for those expenses in accordance with the agency accepted policy.

Good Shepherd volunteers who are non-US citizens will receive a maximum of \$500 toward return trip home; and Good Shepherd volunteers who are US citizens will receive a maximum of \$375 to assist with transportation expenses home. This maximum includes cost of the flight as well as baggage fees.

Administrative Fee:

Placement agencies are assessed an administrative fee for each GS volunteer to cover recruiting, screening, placing, and preparing GS volunteers for service. The administrative fee is payable to Good Shepherd Volunteers.

Agency Professional Guidelines

The GSV staff will recruit, screen, interview and recommend a volunteer for a placement site. Upon review of the volunteer's application, the agency supervisor will interview the candidate. The GSV staff will follow up with the supervisor and the candidate to ensure appropriate placement of the candidate.

Position Description

Each volunteer is to have a written position description with clearly defined expectations, responsibilities, and hours. The position description should cover an eleven-month period. Agencies that have years which end earlier (such as schools) should have concrete suggestions for summer work for the volunteer, and are expected to pay expenses for the volunteer through the end of July.

Orientation

The agency and or work site should provide the volunteer with a local orientation upon his/her arrival. This should include sharing the philosophy and goals of the agency/program with the volunteer, introducing the volunteer to the rest of the staff, and introducing the resources and services available in the area that relates to the volunteer's work.

Supervision (please see further explanation under GSV Site Supervisor Guidelines)

The volunteer must have a supervisor at the placement site. The supervisor must schedule regular supervision meetings (at least bi-weekly) with the volunteer to provide ongoing support for the GSVs in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. The supervisor is expected to connect with the GSV staff regularly.

Evaluation

The supervisor is expected to complete a written evaluation of the volunteer after the first six months of work experience. GSV will perform site visits within the first six months of the volunteer's commitment to ensure adequate adaptation, troubleshoot challenges, and work with the supervisor and volunteer to devise goals for the volunteer's progress. At the completion of the volunteer's service, the supervisor is responsible for a final evaluation.

Work Schedule, Vacation, Sick Time, GSV events

The Good Shepherd volunteers' work schedule should be a typical 35-40 hour work week, following the general schedule of agency's employed professionals. The work week should not exceed 40 hours in a

given week. If a volunteer is asked to work over these allotted hours, s/he must be compensated with time off. The volunteer should be given time for personal and community needs. Volunteers must be able to make a twice weekly commitment to a night at home for “community night” and “spirituality night”. GSV may ask agencies to conform work schedules to certain hours. GSVs should not be scheduled to work past 5:30pm on Sunday and Tuesday evenings.

Agencies are expected to allow time for the volunteers to attend retreats and other GSV related gatherings. It will be necessary for the volunteers to take some Thursdays and all Fridays before retreat weekends off for travel time to the retreats, which occur three to four times per year. In addition to retreats, the GSV program will periodically host events throughout the year that the volunteers are encouraged to attend; some of these may be day-long events. Time that the volunteer needs in order to attend GSV sponsored events is *not* to be considered vacation time. Volunteers will need to utilize an agency vehicle to attend these events, and must be responsible for signing out any cars or vans well in advance of events. The placement agency may be asked to cover travel related costs for volunteers to attend additional GSV gatherings throughout the year as the events are intended to help the volunteer’s growth and development throughout the year of service.

If a volunteer feels that s/he is working too many/too few hours, it is the volunteer’s responsibility to advocate for him/herself by speaking with his/her supervisor.

Each Good Shepherd volunteer will be given a two-week vacation that does not need to be accrued. If the agency follows an alternative calendar (such as a school calendar), the volunteer will be allowed to use school breaks as vacation time. The volunteer must communicate with his/her supervisor to arrange a vacation that is acceptable to both the placement agency and Good Shepherd volunteer. The volunteer does not accrue sick time, but should be given appropriate sick time. If the volunteer becomes gravely ill, or the volunteer takes inappropriate advantage of using sick days, the GSV staff must be contacted immediately.

GSV Site Supervisor Guidelines:

The role of the GSV Supervisor is **essential** in enabling the Good Shepherd volunteer to deliver the best possible service to clients in Good Shepherd agencies. GSV views supervision as **critical** to the success of the volunteer’s placement. Through supervision the volunteer can acquire the skills needed for better work performance and for his/her own professional learning and growth. It is expected that the GSV Supervisor will provide the volunteer with supervision appropriate for a beginning worker in the human services field. This would include the following:

- An orientation and training program that will provide the volunteer with a sense of the agency’s commitment to its mission and clients. The program can vary at each particular placement site, but should include the following: the agency’s mission and policies; overview of persons and/or structures with whom the volunteer will be working; initial skills needed to perform his/her work; and the resources and agencies in the community.
- Regular supervision. **The most critical element of GSV Supervision, GSV requires that supervisory meetings be held at least bi-weekly (usually at least for 30-60 minutes per supervision).** Supervisory meetings should touch on administrative, educational, and supportive needs that the both the volunteer and the agency/program have. Administrative: ensuring the volunteer has acknowledge of administrative tasks and structure necessary to complete appropriate responsibilities; Educational: training the volunteer to meet work-related learning

needs; Supportive: helping the volunteer deal with work-related stress while developing attitudes and feelings conducive to maximum work performance.

- A written evaluation of volunteer's work performance. There is a mid-year and end-year evaluation completed by both the volunteer and supervisor that should assess the progress of the volunteer's work, how the volunteer has excelled and/or encountered challenges in the work. Each evaluation will be signed by the volunteer and his/her supervisor and returned to the GSV office to be kept on file.
- GSV encourages the supervisor to get to know the volunteer's commitment to GSV and his/her interest and desire to embody the four tenets of the program: the conviction to work for **social justice**, the desire to live in an intentional **community**, the dedication to living a **simple lifestyle**, and the commitment to grow **spiritually**.

V. Responsibilities of the Volunteer

All Good Shepherd volunteers are expected to, at all times, demonstrate mutual respect towards others, and act in a manner which is compatible with the values promoted by GSV. GSV reserves the right to dismiss the volunteer from GSV if, in the opinion of the director, the volunteer's conduct undermines the effectiveness of the program, site placement, or community to which the volunteer is assigned.

Volunteers should enter into the GSV experience interested in exploring the four tenets of social justice, community, simplicity, and spirituality (please see Section II above). Volunteers should be committed to open dialogue with their community members, working out conflicts, and being open to compromise.

Volunteers will also be expected to plan and implement at least one community dinner and one tenet night each week at a mutually designated time in each week and/or month, throughout the duration of their commitment to GSV. These evenings of reflection and discussion are intended to build community, openness and trust, and provide an outlet for sharing individual experiences of working with women, adolescents, and children in need.

Responsibility for Self Disclosure

During the application process, the applicant must disclose any medical information that may affect his/her term of service *prior* to placement in an agency.

In the case of a pre-existing medical condition, mental health need, or dental consideration that is not covered by a site's medical plan, and that was not made known to the placement agency prior to the beginning of the year of service, which requires prescriptive medicine, surgery, or any other form of care, the volunteer is responsible for the costs of the prescription(s) or appointments.

Staying within Stipend

The volunteer's conduct and lifestyle are expected to reflect the mission of GSV and each volunteer is expected to **live within the stipend allocated each month** (for food and personal items). The volunteer communities must pool their resources for food and household expenses each month. All Good Shepherd volunteers are expected to remain within the boundaries of the stipend provided for them by their placement agencies for the duration of their volunteer tenure.

Visitor Policy

For the first month of living in GSV community residences it is expected that volunteers should not have overnight guests. After this period of time, if volunteers want to invite someone to visit with their community, they are expected to discuss it with the community beforehand and provide adequate notice. Guest are to stay for no longer than 1 week and communities should avoid have guests visit consecutively. This is to help everyone feel comfortable, allow time and space for community relationships to develop, and for guests of volunteers to feel welcome.

Appropriate Relationships and Boundaries

Good Shepherd Volunteers requires its volunteers to maintain professional and ethical boundaries in all dealings and interactions with participants both at the service site and outside of work. Good Shepherd Volunteers prohibits volunteers from engaging in any type of dating and/or sexual/intimate relationship with participants in Good Shepherd clinical, counseling, and other programs. Such involvements interfere with service delivery and are considered serious conflicts of interest.

Additional Work and Continued Education

Any type of additional paid employment or stipend, along with any type of additional education, aside from supervisor-approved trainings to aid the volunteer in his/her placement, are not permitted.

Pets

Pets are not permitted in Good Shepherd volunteer communities.

Personal Belongings

The volunteers are responsible to secure their personal items. GSV is not liable for loss, theft, or damage of personal items. Volunteers should be mindful of living a simple lifestyle when packing and bringing belongings into their new communities.

Honoring a Year Commitment

All Good Shepherd volunteers are expected to commit to GSV for the *full duration* of the program, which is from Orientation to Re-Orientation.

Loan Deferment/Forbearance

It is the volunteer's responsibility to complete all loan deferment and/or loan forbearance paperwork with all of their lenders. If a volunteer would like to defer his/her loans must inform GSV staff **before** orientation about any steps need to be taken by GSV to assist in the deferment. We recommend calling lenders one month prior to the start of GSV to begin the loan deferment process.

GSV Program Assistance

Volunteers are asked in different points of the year to be involved in developing and sustaining GSV as an organization. This includes sharing one's story of his/her work on the GSV website, helping GSV staff with fundraising or board events, contributing to a newsletter, speaking with applicants to GSV via phone or email, assisting with recruiting and promotion of GSV to potential applicants (such as college fairs), and/or hosting visiting college student groups who are on service trips. GSV staff works with volunteers to ensure that these tasks are not overwhelming and fit into the overall schedule and commitment of the volunteers.

VI. Additional GSV Policies and Procedures

Early Termination

The volunteer is responsible for notifying GSV staff of anticipated situations that significantly change at work or in community that would result in an early termination. If a volunteer is considering leaving the program he or she should first talk to a GSV staff member before discussing this with their supervisors or community members. We want each of our Good Shepherd Volunteers to successfully complete their yearlong commitment. Before leaving we would first explore if there are any accommodations or adjustments that can be made. If the volunteer does choose to leave the placement and GSV program, **two weeks written notice must be given to GSV program staff and the placement site.**

GSV staff retains the right to release a volunteer from his/her term of service at any time, effective immediately upon termination. If a volunteer chooses to leave GSV prior to Re-Oriented, whether by the volunteer's initiative, the site placement's initiative, or GSV staff's initiative, the volunteer forfeits their entitlement to Loan Deferment/Forbearance status and the any end-year financial allowances, if applicable.

If a volunteer leaves the program prior to their end date, they must leave GSV Community housing immediately following the two week notice period.

In the case where the volunteer is terminated by the placement agency, the agency will be responsible for transportation costs for relocating the volunteer in accordance with the "Relocation Expenses" guidelines provided within section III. The agency is additionally responsible for providing the volunteer with their full stipend until the effective termination date.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

Pursuant to the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988, volunteers are prohibited from unlawfully manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, possessing or using a controlled substance.

As further required under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, a volunteer, as a condition of employment with GSV, must notify GSV if he or she is convicted of any criminal drug statute violation occurring in the workplace no later than five days after the conviction.

Consumption of alcoholic beverages on the site placement property is prohibited.

Unlawful manufacturing, distribution, dispensing, possession, use of a controlled substance, or excessive use of alcohol, that may adversely affect a volunteer's site placement performance or participation in community life, or that may reflect unfavorably upon public or governmental confidence in the manner in which GSV carries out its activities is strictly prohibited. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary action, including termination from GSV.

Non-Discrimination and Non-Harassment Policy

Good Shepherd Volunteers does not discriminate in the selection and participation of members based on race, color, religion, sexual orientation, military discharge, sex, national origin, age, disability, medical information or any other characteristic unrelated to the ability to perform the essential functions or basic tenets of GSV.

Any member with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in their service site is encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of their immediate supervisor, superior, or GSV staff. If the service site is found to be engaging in such activities, removal of current member(s), and denial of future members at that service site, can result.

Good Shepherd Volunteers is committed to providing a safe work and community environment that is free of sexual harassment for all volunteers. Sexual harassment occurs when a person makes continued, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, to another person, against his or her wishes. Any incident of sexual harassment at a volunteer's placement is unacceptable and should be immediately reported through proper channels at the workplace and to the GSV staff. The GSV staff should be immediately informed if an incident of sexual harassment has occurred in community or at a GSV sponsored event. Any substantiated allegations of sexual harassment can result in the offender's expulsion from the program.

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

Good Shepherd Volunteers will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with known disabilities, as long as the accommodation does not impose an undue hardship on the program or its placement sites. This policy governs all aspects of the program, including selection, placement assignment, compensation, and access to benefits and training.

Programs and activities must be accessible to persons with disabilities, and the grantee must provide reasonable accommodation to the known mental or physical disabilities of otherwise qualified members, service recipients, applicants and program staff. All selections and project assignments must be made without regard to the need to provide reasonable accommodation.

Accommodations that impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the operation of the program or fundamentally alter its nature are not reasonable accommodations. However, the program must document and prove any undue burden. Similarly, a person who poses a direct threat to the health or safety to himself or herself or to others, where the threat cannot be eliminated by reasonable accommodation, is not a qualified individual with a disability.

Grievance Policy and Procedures

Good Shepherd Volunteer has a grievance procedure which is intended to apply to service-related issues, such as assignments, evaluations, suspensions, or release for cause. Whenever possible, members are encouraged to resolve the matter informally with the other party in question and/or the Good Shepherd Volunteers program. If informal resolution is not possible, volunteers may take the following steps in the grievance process:

1) Statement of grievance

The volunteer must set out the grievance in writing and send it to the program.

2) Meeting

The program will invite the volunteer to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance. The meeting must not take place unless:

- the volunteer has informed the employer in writing of the grievance
- the program has had a reasonable opportunity to consider a response.

The volunteer must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.

The program must inform the volunteer of their response to the grievance and notify him/her of the right to appeal against the decision if he/she is not satisfied with it.

3) Appeal

If the volunteer wishes to appeal the program's decision, he/she must inform the program. The program must then invite him/her to attend a further meeting. The volunteer must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. After the appeal meeting, the program must inform the employee of their final decision.