

Don't Go Hungry Food Support Program

Volunteer Misconduct and Conflict Management Process

Purpose:

This process aims to ensure a safe, respectful, and positive environment for all volunteers, clients, and community members involved in the Don't Go Hungry Food Support Program. It outlines a clear, fair process to address any behaviour that does not align with our organization's values and Code of Conduct.

Scope

This process, like the Anti-Harassment Policy upon which it rests, applies to all volunteers and covers behaviours that could negatively impact others, including disrespect, aggression, inappropriate language, harassment, and unauthorised use of program resources. This process coordinates with the DGH Anti-Harassment Policy and details the process for handling behaviours that do not result in a formal complaint under the Anti-Harassment Policy. Regarding any conduct that potentially constitutes harassment and that warrants a formal complaint, volunteers should refer to that full policy.

Types of Misconduct

Under the DGH Anti-Harassment policy, every person has the right to expect to be treated with respect and to be safe in a harassment-free environment. Every person is expected to behave in ways that offer the same respect and safety to others. Under that policy, harassment means physical or verbal behaviours that are directed against a member, adherent, volunteer or employee and that are unwelcome or should be known to be unwelcome.

Harassment occurs when someone behaves in the following ways:

- makes unwelcome remarks or jokes about a person,
- threatens or intimidates a person,
- makes unwelcome physical contact with a person.

Harassment is usually behaviour that persists over time. However, serious one-time incidents can also create a *toxic environment* and be considered harassment.

Misconduct can range in severity, from minor infractions to severe incidents. The following are examples of behaviours that would be considered misconduct:

- Disrespectful or rude language directed toward clients, volunteers, or staff.
- Threatening or aggressive behaviour toward any individual.
- Unauthorized taking or misuse of program resources or donations.
- Any behaviour that compromises the safety, respect, or comfort of others.

Misconduct Handling Process

Step 1: Initial Incident Review

- **Private Discussion:** If a volunteer is reported or observed engaging in misconduct, a member of the leadership team should promptly address the volunteer in a private, respectful setting. This initial meeting aims to understand the volunteer's perspective, clarify the behaviour in question, and provide feedback on expected conduct.
- **Immediate Apology:** In many cases, direct communication between the parties can resolve a misunderstanding, and this will be suggested in the initial incident review. Other times, a verbal apology to the affected individuals is needed and may be requested, provided the volunteer acknowledges the behaviour and understands its impact.
- **Immediate Temporary Suspension:** In particular circumstances, a volunteer may be suspended from volunteering pending the outcome of the misconduct process.

Step 2: Progressive Discipline Approach

- **Verbal Warning:** If the behaviour persists or is slightly more serious, a verbal warning is issued. Leadership will document this warning to establish a record of the incident.
- **Written Warning:** For repeated behaviour, the volunteer receives a written warning. This document will outline the incident, explain why it is unacceptable, and clarify future expectations.
- **Temporary Suspension:** If the behaviour continues despite previous warnings or is particularly severe, the volunteer may be temporarily suspended from their duties; the suspension and its length will be confirmed in writing. This suspension allows time for reflection and emphasizes the seriousness of maintaining a respectful environment.

Step 3: Consequences for Severe Misconduct

- **Dismissal:** In cases of repeated violations or severe incidents (e.g., harassment, physical aggression), a volunteer may face dismissal. The Site Coordinator Team will meet to review the situation before making this decision.
- **Formal complaint:** the person against whom the severe misconduct was directed may decide at any point to lodge a formal complaint under the DGH Anti-Harassment policy. At that point, that policy is followed.

Conflict Resolution Protocol

When conflict arises between volunteers or with clients, leadership will follow these steps:

- **Direct communication:** often it is possible for people in conflict to work out an agreed resolution to their conflict. A first step in this process is direct communication and that is encouraged when possible.

- **Mediation Meeting:** The leadership team will arrange a confidential meeting with all parties involved to understand their perspectives and facilitate a respectful discussion. The goal is to reach an agreement on how to prevent similar incidents.
- **Follow-Up:** After the mediation, a follow-up meeting may be scheduled to ensure ongoing positive interactions and address any remaining concerns.

Documentation and Record-Keeping

All incidents of misconduct, including warnings and resolutions, should be documented and securely stored in the volunteer management system to ensure accountability and transparency. Any time an incident is responded to by using this Misconduct Process, it should be logged. [“When in doubt, log it.”]

Recognition and Reintegration

After disciplinary action, leadership will offer a reintegration meeting, focusing on mutual understanding and re-establishing positive behavior. Volunteers who demonstrate commitment to growth and improvement will be recognized for their contributions and dedication.

Volunteer Recognition Program

To celebrate the positive impact of our volunteers, we will track hours contributed using our volunteer management system and recognize milestones (e.g., 50, 100 hours) with certificates, thank-you letters, or small appreciation gifts. Volunteers’ stories may be shared with their consent to highlight their contributions.

Policy Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it meets the needs of our organization and reflects our commitment to a respectful, inclusive environment.