

## 10 points to cover in volunteer orientation

The beauty of a church community is the abundance of committed people with a passion for helping the church achieve its vision and mission. Volunteers drive the church by donating the hours required to ensure that everything gets done. Many people use the volunteer experience to get to know other church community members. Creating a well-run program ensures a great experience for those volunteers, and a structured orientation process prepares them for their new responsibilities.

## 10 Points to Cover in Volunteer Orientation

### 1. *History of the church*

People who have attended the same church for a long time can typically recite its history. New volunteers should also know when and how the church started. To provide volunteers with a historical perspective, share pertinent statistics such as how many people attended the first service, where early services were held and how the church has progressed.

### 2. *Mission, vision and values*

A church is steered by its mission, vision and values. Volunteers must understand why the church exists and what it hopes to achieve. Sharing this valuable information forges an intimate connection between the volunteer and the church mission.

### 3. *Information about the pastor(s)*

New volunteers should know who all the pastors are, what churches they have served, where they were educated, what their family situations are and what responsibilities they bear in the church. This will help volunteers understand whom to approach for additional information or for assistance with church-related issues.

### 4. *Church culture*

Every organization's culture affects how information is communicated, decisions are made and people interact. A synopsis of church culture can help volunteers understand the *unwritten rules* of behavior. For example, if the culture is very traditional, people may be less tolerant of talking in church.

### 5. *Do's and don'ts of volunteers*

Because people come from diverse backgrounds, we each have our own frame of reference and life experiences. Volunteers should be given specific instructions on expected behavior when they represent the church in their volunteer role. For example, a volunteer should report for their job at the scheduled time (do) but not park in the reserved parking area (don't). Communicating with the volunteer both in the job description and during orientation helps them understand expectations and minimizes problems.

### 6. *Customer service standards*

Anyone who works in the service industry understands customer service standards. A church volunteer is no different and should become familiar with the expectations for serving church customers (staff, congregation members, other volunteers). Reviewing these standards helps the volunteer understand the basic service expectations.

For example, volunteers should know your expectations for their work with children — specifically, how they should manage difficult children or respond to challenging parents. These sensitive situations can

explode if not handled properly. Take the time to set up your volunteers for success by teaching them exactly how to respond to any situation.

#### *7. Dress code*

Communicate what sort of dress is appropriate for serving in a volunteer capacity. Some churches have formal dress codes (suits, ties, skirts, jackets) whereas others are less formal (business casual, jeans) — it just depends on the culture and tradition of the church.

#### *8. Chain of command*

Volunteers need to understand the church's chain of command so they can bring problems to the right people; then the volunteer who finds the restroom out of hand soap won't approach the pastor as he's preparing to deliver a sermon. A printed organizational chart can also help in this regard.

#### *9. Communication process*

Volunteers need to know where they can find information about events, last-minute changes or other things going on in the church. For example, volunteers should know whom to call if they will miss their scheduled shift. If volunteer schedules are posted on the church website, then volunteers should know where to go for that information.

#### *10. Volunteer program*

Orientation is a great time to explain the program and how it supports volunteers. Taking a few minutes to explain how to contact the volunteer office and what services it provides will help the volunteer understand how, when and with whom they should communicate.

### **Volunteers are a church's greatest asset**

Volunteers are the greatest asset a church has. Ensuring that volunteers are managed well, receive thorough communication and understand their role will set the stage for a fulfilling experience. Isn't that the goal?