



North Country
HEALTH CONSORTIUM



Volunteer Manual

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1.1 WELCOME

We welcome you to the Northern New Hampshire Medical Reserve Corps Unit at North Country Health Consortium and appreciate your desire to become a volunteer.

Volunteers are an important asset and part of any organization. Volunteers help to increase responsiveness, service delivery, and information input, and they provide new program opportunities. In addition, Volunteers can bring new skills and expertise to the job and prompt new enthusiasm. It is the policy of NCHC to offer opportunities to qualified Volunteers ages 18 and over for specified tasks and duties that can create efficiencies for the organization and improve services to clients and the community. Volunteers are intended to supplement and support NCHC staff and programs.

We believe that each volunteer contributes to our growth and achievement, and we hope you will take pride in being a member of our team.

The North Country Health Consortium expects the highest standard of ethical conduct and fair dealing from each volunteer, and all others associated with the organization. Our reputation is a valuable asset, and we must continually earn the trust, confidence, and respect of our partners, our clients, and our community.

This handbook describes your responsibilities as a North Country Health Consortium (NCHC)/Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteer. The terms North Country Health Consortium, "NCHC," and "organization" are used interchangeably in this document.

Because the handbook provides answers to many questions about NCHC, the volunteer should familiarize themselves with the contents of the volunteer handbook before beginning volunteer service. We hope that your experience here will be challenging, enjoyable, and rewarding.

This document replaces all previous versions of the volunteer handbook.

1.2 HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Mission: "North Country Health Consortium leads innovative collaboration to improve the health status of the region."

The North Country Health Consortium (NCHC) is a rural health network, created in 1997, as a vehicle for addressing common issues through



collaboration among health and human service providers serving Northern New Hampshire. NCHC is engaged in activities for:

- solving common problems and facilitating regional solutions
- creating and facilitating services and programs to improve population health status
- health professional training, continuing education and management services to encourage sustainability of the health care infrastructure
- increasing capacity for local public health essential services
- increasing access to health care for underserved and uninsured residents of Northern New Hampshire

The North Country Health Consortium has many programs and works with partners throughout Northern New Hampshire. Please visit our website at NCHCNH.org to learn more.

Mailing Address and Administrative Office:

North Country Health Consortium
262 Cottage Street, Suite 230
Littleton, NH 03561
Office hours: 8am-4:30pm Monday-Friday
(603) 259-3700

1.3 BECOMING an MRC VOLUNTEER AT NCHC

All potential MRC volunteers must fill out a volunteer application on the New Hampshire Responds website www.nhresponds.org. Professional licensing credentials are verified on the NH Responds site and volunteer information is saved in the NH Responds database. A criminal background check will be completed once consent for the background check has been signed and returned by the applicant to the MRC volunteer manager. The volunteer application will be reviewed and if there is a fit for the volunteer's skill set, schedule and availability of volunteer positions in the MRC, the volunteer may be invited for a screening and/or placement interview(s). A signed Volunteer Agreement between NCHC and the volunteer will be followed by an Orientation to the organization, the position, and careful review of the policies in this handbook.

1.4 ATTENDANCE

Every volunteer is important. Volunteers are expected to meet their commitments to their scheduled service hours. Scheduled service hours are tracked for time volunteered and missed time. The volunteer manager must be notified of any absences in advance or as soon as possible. The



volunteer manager should be notified of any extensive absences. After 3 consecutive unexcused absences without notification, the volunteer manager and/or the Human Resources reserve the right to terminate a volunteer. All volunteers must sign in and out and record their hours on the tracking sheet.

1.5 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The North Country Health Consortium and Medical Reserve Corps expects all volunteers to conduct themselves and organization business in a manner that reflects the highest standards of ethical conduct, and in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. This includes avoiding actual and potential conflicts of interests.

An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when a volunteer is in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for that volunteer or for a relative as a result of NCHC's business dealings. For the purposes of this policy, a relative is any person who is related by blood or marriage, or whose relationship with the volunteer is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage.

1.6 Non- Disclosure

Any information that a volunteer learns about the North Country Health Consortium, the MRC, its volunteers, employees or trustees, or its members or donors, as a result of volunteering for the North Country Health Consortium and MRC, that is not otherwise publicly available, constitutes confidential information. Volunteers may not disclose confidential information to anyone who is not employed by the North Country Health Consortium or to other persons employed by the North Country Health Consortium who do not need to know such information to assist in rendering services.

The protection of privileged and confidential information is vital to the interests and the success of the North Country Health Consortium and MRC. The disclosure, distribution, electronic transmission or copying of the organization's confidential information is prohibited. Such information includes but is not limited to the following examples: compensation data, program and financial information, including information related to donors/funders, and pending projects and proposals.

Any volunteer who discloses confidential information of the organization will be subject to disciplinary action (including possible termination), even if they do not actually benefit from the disclosure of such information.



Discussions involving sensitive information should always be held in confidential settings to safeguard the confidentiality of the information. Conversations regarding confidential information generally should not be conducted in public areas, in elevators, restrooms, restaurants, or other places where conversations might be overheard.

1.7 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The volunteer manager, supervisors, and volunteers are encouraged to discuss performance and goals on an informal, day to day basis. After action discussions or hot washes are performed after most missions to support evaluation and improvement of the MRC unit's mission response. Volunteers are expected to participate in these sessions to contribute to the ongoing improvement of the unit. Special performance appraisals may be performed when the supervisor determines that a volunteer's performance is either much superior to what was expected or for unsatisfactory performance.

Volunteer job descriptions and mission-specific job action sheets are considered working documents and may be updated more frequently if duties and responsibilities are substantially changed during the year or activation period.

1.8 TIMEKEEPING

Accurately recording time worked is the responsibility of every volunteer.

Volunteers will be supplied with volunteer time sheets on which they can record activities and hours spent. This record is important to NCHC and the MRC because each volunteer's time has a dollar value (set by the Federal government) that can be used to leverage grant funds in the future for NCHC and MRC activities, and for the activities of our partner agencies promoting health and safety in the community. Recording the volunteer hours contributed also gives NCHC and the MRC a way to recognize those who provide outstanding service.

1.9 DRUG FREE WORKPLACE

The North Country Health Consortium is a drug-free workplace. The North Country Health Consortium does not tolerate the presence of illegal drugs or the illegal use of legal drugs in our workplace. The use, possession, distribution, or sale of controlled substances such as drugs or alcohol or being under the influence of such controlled substances is strictly prohibited while on duty or while on the organization's premises or worksites. If you



need to take a prescription drug that affects your ability to perform your duties, including medical marijuana as a holder of a medical marijuana registration card pursuant to New Hampshire law, you are required to discuss possible accommodations with your supervisor. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

1.10 COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

The North Country Health Consortium is committed to creating and maintaining a workplace in which all volunteers have an opportunity to participate and contribute to the success of the business and are valued for their skills, experience, and unique perspectives. This commitment is embodied in organization policy and the way we do business and is an important principle of sound business management.

1.11 WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The North Country Health Consortium is committed to providing a safe, violence-free workplace for our volunteers. Due to this commitment, we discourage volunteers from engaging in any physical confrontation with a violent or potentially violent individual or from behaving in a threatening or violent manner. Threats, threatening language, or any other acts of aggression or violence made toward or by any volunteer will not be tolerated. A threat may include any verbal or physical harassment or abuse, attempts to intimidate others, menacing gestures, stalking, or any other hostile, aggressive, and/or destructive actions taken for the purposes of intimidation. This policy covers any violent or potentially violent behavior that occurs in the workplace or at organization-sponsored functions.

All North Country Health Consortium and MRC volunteers, and employees bear the responsibility of keeping our work environment free from violence or potential violence. Any volunteer who witnesses or is the recipient of violent behavior should promptly inform their supervisor. All threats will be promptly investigated. No volunteer will be subject to retaliation, intimidation, or discipline as a result of reporting a threat in good faith under this guideline.

Any individual engaging in violence against the organization, its volunteers, or its property will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. All acts will be investigated, and the appropriate action will be taken. Any such act or threatening behavior may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The North Country Health Consortium prohibits the possession of weapons on its property at all times including our parking lots or organization vehicles.



Additionally, while on duty, volunteers may not carry a weapon of any type. Weapons include, but are not limited to, firearms and knives or other implements intended to cause harm or that can be used as weapons. Any volunteer violating this policy is subject to discipline up to and including dismissal for the first offense.

The organization reserves the right to inspect all belongings of volunteers on its premises, including packages, briefcases, purses and handbags, and gym bags. In addition, the North Country Health Consortium may inspect the contents of lockers, storage areas, file cabinets, desks, and work stations at any time and may remove all organization property and other items that are in violation of NCHC rules and policies.

1.12 COMMITMENT TO SAFETY AND SECURITY

Protecting the safety of our volunteers, employees, clients, and visitors is the most important aspect of running our organization. All locations have Safety representatives and/or safety committees who perform monthly facility inspections and review safety concerns at each site. Each location also has Emergency Action Plans onsite and evacuation maps posted that identify room numbers, evacuation routes and locations of first aid kits and AEDs. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to become familiar with these plans and maps to be prepared in the event of an emergency. Each location also performs routine safety drills for fire, natural disasters, bomb threats, power/utility failures, medical emergencies, and responding to violence for each shift.

Any incident involving a volunteer, employee, client, or visitor must be reported. Incidents may include injuries, medication errors, use of seclusion, communicable disease, infection control, aggression or violence, use and unauthorized possession of weapons, vehicular accidents, wandering, elopement, biohazardous accidents, unauthorized use and possession of legal or illegal substances, abuse, neglect, suicide or attempted suicide, sexual assault, or other events. **Incident reporting forms are kept at all sites in an orange folder near the first aid kit.** Instructions on how to submit the report is in the folder.

Incident reporting forms are kept at all volunteer locations in an orange folder with the volunteer manager, or if volunteering individually, in the MRC deployment backpack. Instructions on how to submit the report is in the folder.

All volunteers have the opportunity and responsibility to contribute to a safe work environment by using commonsense rules and safe practices and by notifying management when any health or safety issues are present. All volunteers are encouraged to partner with management to ensure maximum



safety for all.

“Company property” is defined as all organization-owned or leased buildings. This policy applies to all organization-owned or leased vehicles.

In the event of an emergency, notify the appropriate emergency personnel by dialing 911 to activate the medical emergency services.

1.13 TRANSPORTING

Due to legal and safety issues, volunteers are prohibited from transporting individuals receiving services from NCHC under any circumstances.

MRC volunteers may not transport individuals receiving services unless otherwise tasked through an emergency response.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE AND LIABILITY

Volunteers who opt to participate in volunteer missions requiring driving must show proof a valid, unexpired driver’s license as well as proof of automobile insurance.

1.14 SMOKE FREE WORKPLACE

Smoking is not allowed in organization buildings or work areas at any time. “Smoking” includes the use of any tobacco products (including chewing tobacco), electronic smoking devices, and e-cigarettes.

1.15 DRESS CODE

To present a professional image to our clients and the public, all volunteers are required to wear appropriate clothing at the workplace. By necessity, the dress standards for the organization’s offices are somewhat different than for off-site events. For the workplace, business-casual dress is appropriate. Volunteers should be neatly groomed, and clothes should be clean and in good repair. Leisure clothes, such as shorts, jeans, hooded sweatshirts, flip flops, and other casual items are not acceptable attire for the office. Certain jobs may require additional specific or alternate dress code requirements and may be approved on a case-by-case basis by the supervisor.

Reasonable accommodation of religious beliefs - NCHC recognizes the importance of individually held religious beliefs to persons within its workforce. NCHC will reasonably accommodate a volunteer’s religious beliefs in terms of workplace attire unless the accommodation creates an undue hardship. Volunteers requesting a workplace attire accommodation based on religious beliefs should be referred to the CEO.



1.16 VISITORS IN THE WORKPLACE

To provide for the safety and security of volunteers and the facilities at NCHC, only authorized visitors are allowed in the workplace. Restricting unauthorized visitors helps maintain safety standards, protects against theft, ensures security of equipment, protects confidential information, safeguards volunteer welfare, and avoids potential distractions and disturbances. If an unauthorized individual is observed on NCHC's premises, volunteers should immediately notify their supervisor or, if necessary, direct the individual to the reception area.

1.17 COMPUTERS, INTERNET, EMAIL AND OTHER RESOURCES

All use of organization-provided communications systems, including e-mail and internet use, should conform to our organization guidelines/policies, including but not limited to the Equal Opportunity, Harassment, Confidential Information, and Conflicts of Interest. The organization's systems must not be used to transmit personal comments or statements through e-mail, or to post information to news groups that may be mistaken as the position of the organization. Similarly, the organization's systems must not be used to solicit or proselytize others for commercial purposes, causes, outside organizations, chain messages, or other non-job-related purposes.



1.18 HARASSMENT, BULLYING AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Sexual and other unlawful harassment is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), as amended, as well as many state laws. Harassment based on a characteristic protected by law, such as race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, religion, age, physical and mental disability, veteran status, or other characteristic protected by state or federal law, is prohibited.

As a matter of The North Country Health Consortium, volunteers are asked to adhere to set standards for harassment. Harassment includes: Threats, demands, retaliation, or other conduct that results in the creation of a hostile workplace, whether that conduct is verbal, non-verbal, physical or visual. Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Any volunteer found to have engaged in harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual or other harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated. The North Country Health Consortium will take all steps necessary to prevent and eliminate unlawful harassment.

Complaint Procedure. Any volunteer who believes he or she has been subject to or witnessed illegal discrimination, including sexual or other forms of unlawful harassment, is requested and encouraged to make a complaint. You may report directly to your immediate supervisor or volunteer manager, or any other member of management with whom you feel comfortable bringing such a complaint. Similarly, if you observe acts of discrimination



toward or harassment of another volunteer, you are requested and encouraged to report this to one of the individuals listed above.

All complaints will be investigated promptly and, to the extent possible, with regard for confidentiality.

1.19 WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

Federal and state laws protect volunteers who, in good faith, (1) report conduct that the volunteer reasonably believes is a violation of any state or federal law or rule, (2) object to or refuse to participate in activity the volunteer believes violates the law, or (3) participate in a government investigation of allegations that the employer has violated any state or federal law or rule.

No person who in good faith engages in such protected activity shall be subject to harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequence. Any volunteer, including a Director or the CEO, who retaliates against someone who has made a good faith report under this Policy, or who has provided information or assistance in connection with an investigation, is subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination of service or employment.

Investigations under this Policy will be conducted promptly and as discretely as possible.

Documentation regarding an investigation under this Policy shall be forwarded to and maintained by the North Country Health Consortium for a period of no less than seven (7) years. The alteration or destruction of documents relating to such an investigation is strictly prohibited and is subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination of service or employment.

1.20 NCHC EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers who are employees of The North Country Health Consortium must adhere to the Fair Labor Standards Act. The following restrictions apply:

- A. An employee cannot volunteer his/her services to an employer to perform the same type of service performed as an employee.
- B. The tasks performed by the volunteer may not be similar to those performed by an employee.



1.21 NCHC'S ETHICAL CODE OF CONDUCT

All volunteers are expected to maintain acceptable job performance and to conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner. Professional service providers are expected to comply with any codes for professional conduct or ethical behaviors adopted by their respective licensure or certification authorities.

While it is not practical to compile an inclusive summary of behavioral expectations, examples are provided:

- **Client and participant welfare:** All volunteers are expected to respect the integrity and protect the welfare of the person or group with whom the volunteer is working.
- **Confidentiality:** All volunteers are expected to maintain confidentiality of client identifying information, and to abide by all applicable federal, state, or local laws and regulations which address issues of privacy or confidentiality of records. Paramount among these laws is the Federal Confidentiality Regulations, 42 CFR Part 2, *Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Records*, and the HIPAA Privacy Regulations, 45 CFR Parts 160 and 164.
- **Nondiscrimination:** All volunteers are expected to refrain from discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, color, religion, creed, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, financial condition, handicap, developmental disability, and HIV infection, AIDS - related complex or AIDS. This includes discrimination against other agency volunteers, any current, former, or potential clients or service recipients, and others in the community with whom a volunteer may interact.
- **Witnessing of Documents**
 - Volunteers shall not act as a witness to documents such as Power of Attorney, guardianship, advance directives, and/or agency contracts without the expressed written approval of the Chief Executive Officer.
- **Exchanges of Gifts, Money and Gratuities**
 - No Personnel, volunteers, or other persons associated with North Country Health Consortium will accept gifts of money or material values, favors remuneration, or other consideration from any client, individual, or organization that does business with North Country Health Consortium.
- **Solicitation, Distribution and Personal Fund Raising**
 - To avoid unnecessary avoidances and work interruptions, solicitation and personal fundraising by a volunteer is prohibited on working time.



- Volunteer member distribution of literature, including handbills, in work areas during the work hours of any staff member involved is prohibited.
- Trespassing, soliciting or distribution of literature by non-staff member on these premises is prohibited at all times.
- **Personal Property**
 - All personnel and volunteers shall respect and safeguard the personal property of clients, visitors, and other personnel as well as the property of North Country Health Consortium. Volunteers will not use or allow the use of North Country Health Consortium property or equipment other than activities approved by the organization. North Country Health Consortium volunteers shall not exchange personal property with clients. North Country Health Consortium is not responsible for personal property that is not safeguarded or is left unattended.
- **Discipline and Mandatory Sanctions**
 - The standards of NCHCs Code of Ethics, policies within the Volunteer Handbook, as well as those of professional disciplines, are important to the NCHC and must be taken seriously by all volunteers. Accordingly, violations of these standards and/or of those of related disciplines will not be tolerated and, in accordance with NCHC's procedures outlined in the Volunteer Manual, may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.



1.22 VOLUNTEER LIABILITY

The Volunteer Protection Act

("VPA")(codified at 42 U.S.C. § 14501 et. seq.) Provides qualified immunity from liability for volunteers and, subject to exceptions, preempts inconsistent state laws on the subject, except for those that provide protections that are stronger than those contained in the VPA.

The VPA defines a volunteer as "an individual performing services for a nonprofit organization or a governmental entity which does not receive compensation" (other than reasonable reimbursement or allowance for expenses actually incurred); or any other thing of value in lieu of compensation, in excess of \$500 per year...." 42 U.S.C. § 14506(6).

Under the VPA, a volunteer of a nonprofit organization or governmental entity is immune from liability for harm caused by an act or omission of the volunteer on behalf of the organization or entity if: (1) the act or omission was within the scope of the volunteer's responsibilities in the organization or entity; (2) if required, the volunteer was properly licensed, certified, or authorized by the appropriate state authorities for the activities or practice giving rise to the claim; (3) the harm was not caused by "willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed by the volunteer," and (4) the harm was not caused by the volunteer's operation of a motor vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or other vehicle for which the state requires the operator to possess a license or maintain insurance. 42 U.S.C. § 14503(a).



1.23 VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECEIPT

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the volunteer handbook of Organization. I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies in the handbook.

I understand that the handbook and all other written and oral materials provided to me are intended for informational purposes only. Neither it, organization practices, nor other communications create an employment contract or term. I understand that the policies and benefits, both in the handbook and those communicated to me in any other fashion, are subject to interpretation, review, removal, and change by management at any time without notice.

I further understand that I am an at-will volunteer and that neither this document nor any other communication shall bind the organization to employ me now or hereafter and that my volunteer position may be terminated by me or the organization without reason at any time. I understand that no representative of the organization has any authority to enter into any agreement or to assure any other personnel action or make any agreement contrary to the foregoing, and that any modification must be made in writing and signed by the CEO.

Volunteer's Name in Print

Signature of Volunteer

Date Signed by Volunteer

