



## Resource Sharing Project Rural Training & Technical Assistance

### **Volunteer Program Guide**

This Volunteer Program Guide will assist you with creating and sustaining a meaningful volunteer program within a rural dual/multi service agency. We have created sample documents and provided you with options to think about as your agency creates your own documents. Each program should create unique documents that reflect the vision of their agency. We suggest this be a conversation with all staff about your volunteer program so the entire agency can contribute and agree on your plan.

Volunteers are an important part of the work we do with survivors. Volunteers are dedicated community members who care about our mission. With the help of volunteers we are able to provide services to our entire community, prevent burnout and reduce vicarious trauma, and increase our fundraising efforts. A sustainable and strong sexual violence advocacy program is difficult to maintain without a thriving volunteer program.

Putting time and effort into training volunteers is a valuable way to provide education to our community about sexual violence. Training and volunteer supervision creates more educated, dedicated, and passionate members of our rural communities. Sometimes volunteer are unable to continue volunteering with our agencies due to scheduling conflicts, life events, or personal reasons. Even in these circumstances, we have formed a relationship with a community member who is passionate about the work we do and is able to educate the community and refer friends and family for services.

What kinds of opportunities could exist for volunteers at your agency? Examples of volunteer duties could include direct service opportunities,

education and awareness raising, group volunteer opportunities, tasks that utilize special skills, and tasks that don't require transportation. Providing a variety of opportunities ensures that anyone interested in assisting your agency will be able to find a place that fits for them. No matter what duty they complete, the volunteer is still reducing the overall workload for your agency. Creating volunteer job descriptions can help volunteers understand their role and how the work they are doing benefits the overall mission of the agency.



Next, your agency should think about what you will require from volunteers. Most requirements are practical, useful, or legally necessary. However, some requirements simply add more barriers to who can volunteer or unwittingly send an unwelcoming message to marginalized communities. Requiring a volunteer to have a particular educational level or to have access to their own car can exclude those living in poverty, people of color or oppressed identities from your pool of volunteers. Requiring that a volunteer not be a survivor is inappropriate and antithetical to our movement. Having personal experiences with sexual violence should never preclude someone from being a direct service volunteer. Requirements for volunteers will ultimately be different for every agency but often include:

- **Age.** Many agencies choose to require volunteers to be over the age of 18. Depending on the tasks required of a volunteer there may be opportunities for volunteers under the age of 18 and those should be considered prior to making this a requirement. (i.e. mailings, awareness events, social media efforts)
- **Location.** For volunteers who will be providing in-person response to survivors most agencies require volunteers to live within 45 minutes of the hospital/law enforcement agency to which they would report. In particularly rural areas this may be unrealistic expectation and should be discussed prior to making this a requirement.
- **Ability to attend training(s).** Certainly some amount of training will be necessary for any volunteer working in our field. However, training can heavily depend upon the role of volunteer. A volunteer who will be working directly with survivors may need a different training and length of training hours than a volunteer who is helping run your Facebook page.
- **A willingness to give information and make referrals regarding abortion providers and reproductive options.** It should be made clear to volunteers that their personal values may not align with your agency, but while volunteering they need to be comfortable providing all options to survivors.
- **Make a significant time commitment.** Many agencies require volunteers to volunteer a minimum number of times or hours a month or to commit to volunteering with the agency for six months or a year. Depending on the role of the volunteer this may be an unnecessary requirement. This closes off the possibility of one-time volunteering opportunities or group volunteering opportunities.
- **Have an intersectional approach to ending sexual violence.** This means volunteers must have a commitment to ending racism, ableism, oppression, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia, while providing respectful victim centered services. Our volunteers don't need to walk through our doors understanding these terms, but they do need to be open to these principles and be willing to think critically. The volunteer interview is a great place to further explore this requirement.

**[Publicity for Rural Volunteer Programs](#)** examines requirements for volunteers, advertising the role of a volunteer, FAQs, where to publicize, and includes a **[sample volunteer flyer](#)** for inspiration.

**[Volunteer Application](#)** examines the necessary information on an application and includes a **[sample volunteer application](#)**.

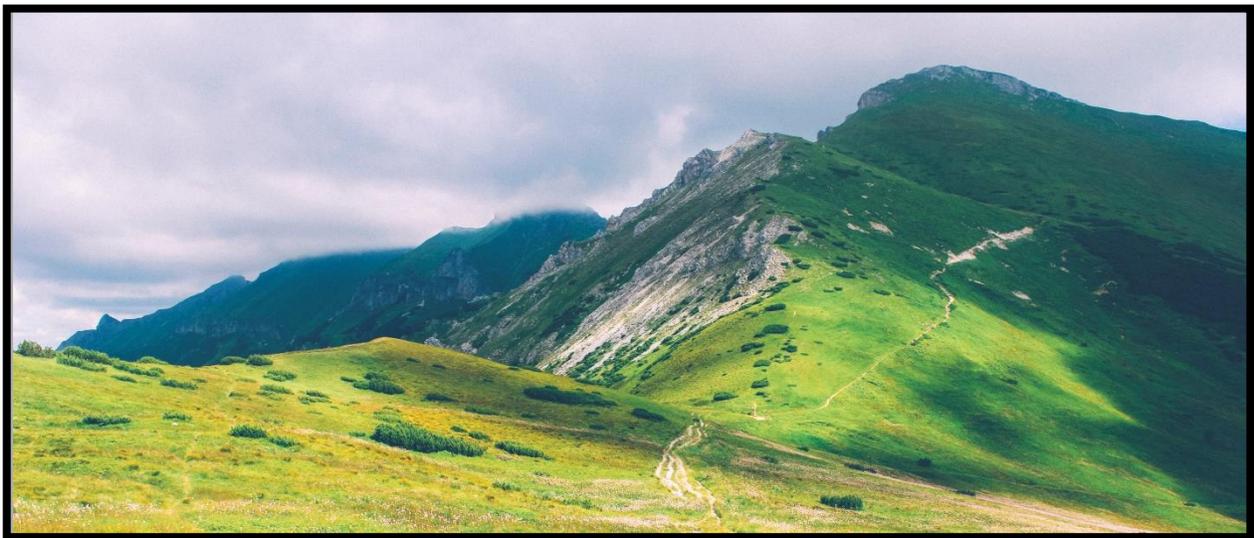
**[Volunteer Description](#)** outlines the need for descriptions of volunteer opportunities and includes a **[sample volunteer description](#)**.

**[Volunteer Interview Questions](#)** provides some guidelines for volunteer interviews and includes volunteer interview questions that other rural programs have used.

**[Volunteer Supervision and Retention](#)** examines the need for training and communication and provides a **[checklist](#)** for staff.

**[Volunteer Appreciation](#)** addresses ways your staff can recognize and celebrate the work volunteers have done for your agency and survivors.

Collectively these resources will help your agency create a sustainable volunteer program in your rural community.



## Publicity for Rural Volunteer Programs

Creating publicity is the first step to creating our rural volunteer program.

No matter what kind of publicity we are creating for our community- a flyer, a brochure, or an entry on our website- we should first address what the volunteer will get out of the experience. We should show the positives of our volunteer program and how volunteers benefit from assisting our agency. Many rural agencies highlight the success of their volunteer program by including images of volunteers on their Facebook page or website. It is important to get permission from volunteer prior to using their image. Other rural agencies highlight the satisfaction of volunteering by including quotes from past or current volunteers in the publicity they distribute. It can be helpful to identify past or current volunteers who are willing to speak to their experience with your agency in the community or on social media.

As with all publicity, we need to include all the basic and necessary information, like how to contact the program. When advertising volunteer opportunities be sure to include what the volunteer needs to do next. Include where or how to pick up a volunteer application and who to contact to receive more information. See our [Sample Volunteer Flyer](#) and [Sample Volunteer Application](#) for inspiration.



When creating our rural volunteer publicity we often can't cover absolutely everything in a brochure or a flyer. It can be helpful to create a handout for potential volunteers that address FAQs. Even if you don't create a separate resource for FAQs it is helpful to think about how your agency might answer some of the following common questions:

- I identify as a man. Can I still be an advocate?
- I identify as a survivor. Can I still be an advocate?
- I received services at this agency. Can I still be an advocate?
- What kind of training will be provided to me or expected of me?
- Are there a minimum number of hours or times a month I am expected to volunteer?
- Am I expected to provide my own transportation? Am I expected to provide transportation to survivors?
- Will I ever know the survivor with which I am working? What do I do if this happens?
- What kind of support will I receive from staff or leadership at the agency?
- What is the role of an advocate? What are common situations I will be working in?

Advertising your volunteer opportunities on social media and your website can be a great way to make your needs known in the community. However, in rural communities there can be a number of unique spaces to advertise volunteer opportunities. We asked rural grantees from across the country where they advertised their volunteer opportunities. They said:

- "Word of mouth is always number one."
- "Health fairs are a big one."
- "From speaking engagements in the community."
- "Other community agencies, community events, and word of mouth."
- "Social media."
- "We partnered with an existing volunteer program and added duties to their normal duties."
- "Career Fairs, professors, church, and social media."

"Past board members, social media, e-newsletters, newspaper, and service clubs like Rotary, Lions."

# SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES OF RURAL COUNTY



*"My favorite part of volunteering with SADVSRC was the opportunity to be with other volunteers and community members. It was so fun to get to give back to my community!"*

*-Helen*

Our volunteers have told us they get so much out of volunteering for us. Some of the reasons people have enjoyed volunteering for us:

- *Contributing to a mission they believe in*
- *Gaining professional experience*
- *Getting to use a special skill*
- *Meeting new people and having fun!*

Volunteers for SADVSRC have many roles and we are excited to provide a variety of opportunities to help support our mission. Most volunteers need to complete training provided by our agency, fill out an application, and submit to a background check.

**We'd love to have you volunteer with us- once a week, once a month, once a year- all participation is valued!**

If you are interested in a volunteer position or have more questions, contact Leah Green at [leah@sadvsrc.org](mailto:leah@sadvsrc.org)

Download a volunteer application at [sadvservicesofruralcounty.org](http://sadvservicesofruralcounty.org)

## Volunteer Application

A volunteer application provides contact information and the interest level of potential volunteers. It is not necessary to include essay questions on an application or to attempt to assess a volunteer's ability to provide direct service. A [volunteer interview](#) is the best way to get to know a potential volunteer and what they can offer your agency.

Always provide multiple options for how a potential volunteer fills out the volunteer application. This is inclusive of all community members including those for whom English is not their first language, or have limited literacy. It can be helpful to post the application online, provide a printed copy, and offer to assist volunteers in filling out the application in person or over the phone. It is best practice to make the application available in the most commonly spoken languages of your service area.



# SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES OF RURAL COUNTY

## VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Full Name

Phone number:

Email address:

Street address:

County:

Languages fluently spoken:

Birthday:

Accessibility Accommodations:

Do you have access to a vehicle? **Yes** or **No**

Area(s) of interest: *Group Volunteering* *Peer Support Advocate*

*Community Educator* *Special Skill Educator* *Agency Support Specialist*

Other:

General availability: S M T W T F S Daytime Evening

Reference:

Name:

Phone number:

Relationship:

Reference:

Name:

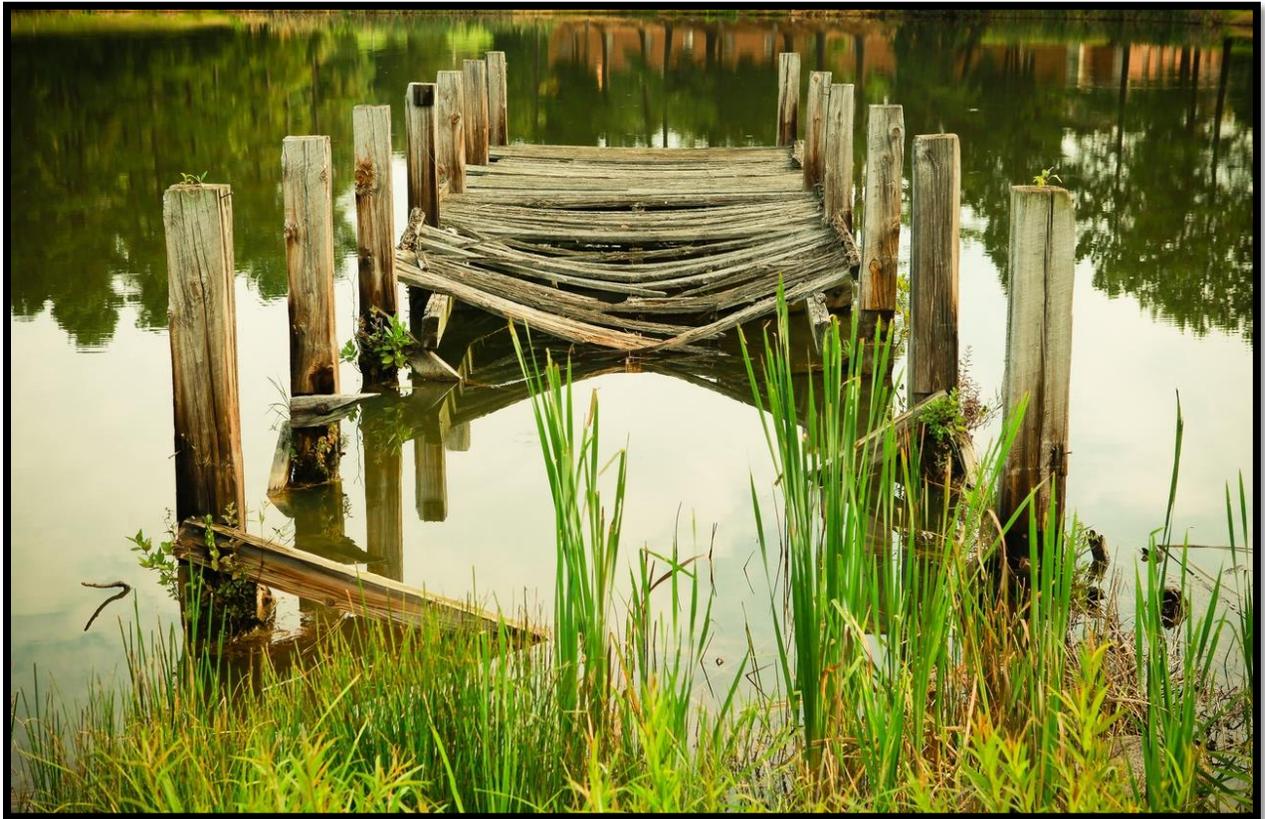
Phone number:

Relationship:

For questions and follow up contact Leah Green at [leah@sadvsrc.org](mailto:leah@sadvsrc.org)

## Volunteer Description

Volunteers play an important role in the work of our agencies. Volunteers help us ensure we can provide 24-hour coverage of our crisis and support lines, accompany survivors to the hospital and law enforcement, and other work that helps us provide services to survivors. The kind of work volunteers can do is specific and different from what paid staff do. Volunteers do small, concise, and immediate work. For example, volunteers can answer the crisis and support line to help a survivor talk through a recent trigger, provide grounding techniques, answer questions about services, and lay the foundation for paid advocates to follow up. Volunteers shouldn't carry a caseload or have regular and ongoing interactions with survivors. Paid advocates are able to complete more training, seek ongoing education opportunities on a regular basis, and maintain relationships with other service providers, supervisors, and coworkers.



Volunteers and paid advocates have a very different relationship to the work. Volunteers provide support maybe a few days a month and then return to being a full time parent, student, or worker. However, our paid staff think about and practice confidentiality, best practices, and our philosophy full time. When we provide [volunteer supervision](#), we need to think about how their role as a volunteer impacts the work they are doing. This can mean spending more time training them, outlining the philosophy of our movement, and reframing experiences with survivors.



A volunteer description is a helpful way for volunteers to understand their role at the agency. A well written volunteer description, like a job description, outlines the work they will be doing, provides contact information for a staff member who they will report to and receive support from, and the time commitment expected. It can be helpful to collaborate with current volunteers to develop these descriptions.

Create volunteer titles that align with paid staff titles and fit with volunteering activities. The word “volunteer” doesn’t need to be in the title. Some examples of titles are: ambassador, community liaison, peer support advocate, art instructor, etc.

Volunteer descriptions need to be tailored to the individual desires and motivations of volunteers. The range of opportunities we can provide them should be reflected in the various volunteer descriptions. For some agencies this may mean there are several different volunteer descriptions to choose from, some may write volunteer descriptions tailored to each individual volunteer, and some may choose to create one long volunteer

description that encompasses all of the options they provide. Below are just some of the duties volunteers could complete:

**Direct Service:**

- Answer the crisis and support line
- Emergency hospital/law enforcement response
- Accompaniment for scheduled medical and dental appointments, or civil and criminal justice accompaniments
- Lead or co-facilitate support groups
- Transportation assistance
- Assistance with finding local resources
- Language assistance
- Childcare for support group participants

**Administrative Assistance:**

- Filing and organizing file system
- Data entry
- Organizing craft/art supplies, training materials, clothing and toiletries
- Creating or updating resource and referral lists
- Assist with social media efforts
- Research new concepts for service delivery

**Awareness:**

- Assist with organizing, promoting, and attending fundraising events
- Staff booths at fairs or community events
- Engage in community education and prevention efforts

**Utilize Special Skills for Support Groups and Events:**

- Art, music, and writing
- Cooking, baking and nutrition
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Yoga, exercise and movement
- Outdoors
- Doula work and midwifery

# SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES OF RURAL COUNTY

## VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION

Thank you for your interest in being a volunteer for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Services of Rural County (SADVSRC)! Volunteers fulfill such an important role in the mission of our agency. Through hard work and dedication we can accomplish our goal of ending sexual violence in our community.

Every task, no matter how small or mundane, supports the work we do and strengthens the services we provide to sexual assault and domestic violence survivors in our community. This is why we are so proud to offer a variety of volunteer opportunities to our community.

The role of a volunteer at SADVSRC can look quite different depending on what you wish to get out of your volunteer experience. Whether you are a survivor or not, have access to transportation or not, or want to do direct service or not we can find a role for you.

Every volunteer must complete a minimum number of training hours - as few as 4 and as many as 40. Depending on the volunteer position you would like, you may need to complete a shadowing experience or work with a staff member. No matter what role you fulfill at our agency you should expect our staff to communicate frequently to answer questions, provide support, and help find the right fit for you at our agency. Requirements to volunteer:

- complete a volunteer application
- complete a volunteer interview
- complete a background check
- direct service volunteers need to be at least 18 years old

# SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES OF RURAL COUNTY

---

**Group Volunteers:** Painting, cleaning, organizing, fundraising, and event planning are all examples of ways groups can volunteer together. Whether you are a church group, scout troop, or a group of friends we can always find ways to put you to work! We do ask that volunteer groups complete 4 hours of training prior to volunteering.

**Peer Support Advocate:** Provide crisis intervention, information, referrals, and support to sexual assault survivors after hours. This may be in-person support during forensic exams or while making a police report, or this may be over the phone on our 24 hour crisis/support line. This volunteer position requires a 40 hour training provided by our agency and a shadowing experience. You will also be expected to attend monthly volunteer meetings to receive continued education and support from staff.

**Community Educator:** Promote the mission of SADVSRC through awareness and prevention education efforts around our entire service area. This is often done at community events, schools, health fairs, and sometimes fundraising events. This volunteer position requires a 20 hour training provided by our agency. The time commitment necessary is very flexible and you will often co-present with staff.

**Special Skill Instructor:** Utilize a special skills (art, music, yoga, cooking, etc) to provide education and support to survivors. This volunteer position requires a 40-hour training and the Special Skill Events will be co-facilitated by a staff member of DVSASF. We encourage creativity and fun with this position.

**Agency Support Specialist:** Answer the phone, organize office supplies, assist with social media efforts, and assist in creating resources for the agency. This volunteer position requires a 40 hour training provided by our agency and some portions of this position can be completed at home. This position is very flexible.

---

**If you are interested in a volunteer position that is not listed above, contact Leah Green at [leah@dvsasfk.org](mailto:leah@dvsasfk.org) to create a unique position for you!**

## Volunteer Interview Questions

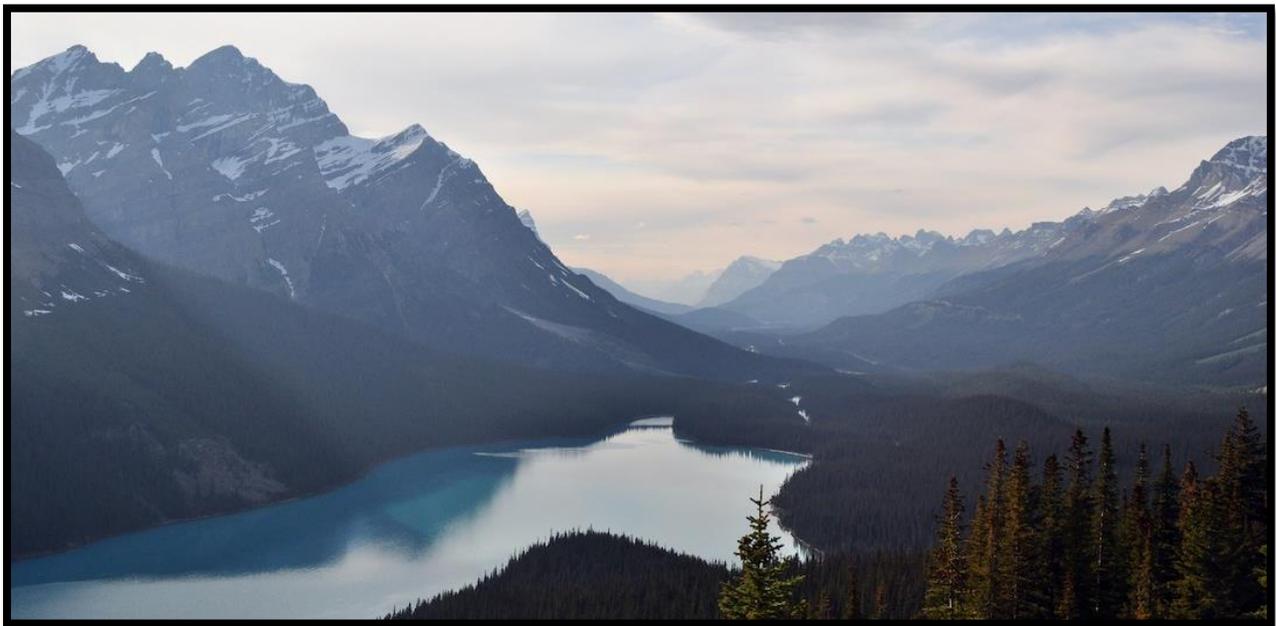
Conducting in-person interviews with potential volunteers is an important way to ensure the success and sustainability of a volunteer program. Interviews provide an opportunity for the potential volunteer to get to know the agency and the possible positions available while also giving us an opportunity to get to know the potential volunteer. This is when we can make decisions about who is a right fit for our agency and how we can make the volunteer feel most supported.

Many programs interview potential volunteers on a rolling basis, while others choose to interview only when they have new volunteer training coming up. Either way, it's important to contact everyone who has expressed interest in volunteering and let them know what the next steps are. Interviews should start with more information about the position and the agency. Some agencies even provide a tour and introduce potential volunteers to the staff. This is a chance for the potential volunteer to learn more about how the agency functions and provides some context to the volunteer opportunity.

Some agencies choose to interview volunteers in a group setting. This can be helpful when there is not a volunteer coordinator and instead the agency as a whole is responsible for the volunteer program. If you choose to interview volunteers in a group make sure the group has a good rapport with one another. Prior to the interviews the group should discuss the questions so there is consensus about the kind of answers you are looking for. Having more than three staff member present may be intimidating to the volunteer so you might need to limit the number of staff who attend.

Interview questions should be open-ended and provide space for the volunteer to explain why they would like to volunteer. Think of this interview as facilitating a conversation. Use the facilitation skills you already possess from leading support groups and conducting intakes with survivors. Be sure to take notes of the answers to include in the volunteer file.

Remember that most potential volunteers won't use the same language we use to describe the work we do or the underlying causes of sexual violence. Language, structure, and history can all be taught in training. For some questions, like the definition of sexual violence, the volunteer may struggle to answer or fumble over their words. Encourage them to try to answer the question even if they can't find all the right words. This will show the volunteer's foundational understanding of the subject and which areas they may need specific training.



Below are some examples of questions rural programs have used in volunteer interviews:

- What skills or personal qualities would you bring to your volunteer work with our agency?
- What do you think about or feel when you hear about sexual assault?
- Please give specific examples of how you have addressed the issues of racism, homophobia, and other oppressions?
- Why does sexual assault happen?
- Are there tasks that you do not want to do as a volunteer?
- What are three of your strengths?
- Why are you excited to volunteer with our agency?
- What work are you most interested in doing for our agency?

- What forms of self-care do you currently use to take care of yourself?
- What do you need from this volunteer experience? What are your expectations about volunteering with our agency?
- Please explain your working style. Do you work best on your own, in a group, or with a partner?
- Tell us about a time you had to separate your personal feelings or opinions about a situation in order to support a friend or loved one.
- What questions do you have about our agency or the volunteer experience?
- How did you become aware of our services?
- What kind of support do you need from us or our agency in order for you to have a successful volunteering experience?
- How do you feel about the possibility of giving information about abortion and other reproductive options to the survivors you may work with?
- What questions do you have in regards to volunteering for our agency?
- Have you volunteered anywhere in the past?
  - Yes- What have you enjoyed most about previous volunteer work?
  - No- What have you enjoyed most about previous paid work or other activities?
- What other organized activities are you involved in?
- How do you set boundaries between your personal life and school/work environment?

When the interview is over, everyone who facilitated the interview should review the notes taken and discuss the answers. Take time to discuss any answers that were concerning during the interview. Some concerning answers might automatically cause your agency to deny the volunteer a position at your agency. For example:

*Interviewer: Are there tasks that you do not want to do as a volunteer?*

*Potential Volunteer: Oh, I am up for just about anything. I guess the only thing I'm not interested in is working with any clients that are like gay or whatever. I'm not just okay with that. But otherwise I'm down for anything really. Whatever you guys need.*

This is an example of a concerning answer that might cause your agency to deny the volunteer. This potential volunteer is uninterested in working with anyone who identifies as part of the LGBTQ community which is a group of people who experience sexual violence at a higher rate. Even with more training and supervision, this volunteer will most likely not be able to represent your agency.

However, many concerning answers can be addressed during training and supervision. For example:

*Interviewer: Are there tasks that you do not want to do as a volunteer?*

*Potential Volunteer: Well, I already told you I am really interested in working with survivors in the hospital. But I guess I am just really not interested in working with people that are like transgendered and stuff. I just don't know a lot about that and it would make me uncomfortable. A lot of my friends are gay and bi but I just don't know anyone like that. I mean, what if I say something wrong? I worry about that a lot.*

This is an example of a concerning answer that requires further conversation, training, and supervision. This potential volunteer expressed not having enough information about transgender survivors. Through training and shadowing experiences your agency can help this potential volunteer feel more comfortable and confident in their ability work with the entire LGBTQ community.

Always decide together if the concerning answer can be addressed in training and supervision. Make a concrete a plan for how to move forward with the volunteer.

## **Volunteer Supervision and Retention**

Many agencies struggle not just with recruiting volunteers but also with retaining them. Supervision and consistent communication are the two best methods of retaining volunteers. This resource will provide many ideas for how to implement these methods, some from rural programs themselves.

As your agency brings in new volunteers, explore multiple ways to communicate with volunteers and learn what brought them to this work. Utilize the interview and subsequent communication as an opportunity to understand their motivations for volunteering. When we know what each volunteer hopes to get out of their volunteer experience, then we can provide the best experience for them. Some agencies have used this information as a template for creating the individualized duties listed in their job description.

When volunteers first come to your agency, make sure you are prepared to host them. This makes volunteers feel welcome and necessary. Provide an orientation, give a tour, and introduce them to staff members. Consider creating a welcome orientation packet where the volunteer can keep important and helpful handouts, include their personal notes, and a directory of employees at the agency. The more professional the experience feels to the volunteer, the more likely they are to take the experience seriously.

Keeping volunteers invested in their work can be a challenge for rural agencies. Providing volunteers with interesting work is the best way to do this. Try allowing volunteers to assist in the planning of the work, not just the “grunt work.” For example, instead of assigning volunteers to a Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) activity, invite volunteers into the planning group for SAAM so they can contribute their own ideas. As with all job and responsibilities, there most likely will be some “grunt work.” However, we shouldn’t save the tasks no one else wants to do for the volunteer.

Help volunteers prepare for the work they will do by providing training and shadowing opportunities. Volunteers often feel nervous or anxious about the work they will do for advocacy agencies, even if they won't be doing direct service work. Providing training helps put them at ease and provides context to the work they will be doing for your organization. It is unethical and can be harmful to send volunteers out to work with survivors if they have not had training. During training, provide materials they can keep for future reference and consider bringing current volunteers into the training to speak about the work they have done. Be sure to also provide continued education for volunteers.



During training, provide information on policies outlining when it is necessary or required to seek support from staff. For some agencies this is after each shift or after a hospital response. This practice models for volunteers the importance of seeking support and ensures quality services are being provided by volunteers.

Training is an important time to address potential concerns that came from the volunteer interviews. The concerning answers that came from the volunteer interview can serve as an outline for the topics staff need to address thoroughly during training. Staff should continue to look for

concerning questions and statements from potential volunteers during the training. Staff should follow up with volunteers during and after the training. Most concerning beliefs and statements can be addressed simply by providing more education. However, there may be times when a volunteer is deemed unable to provide direct services once training is completed. This can be a difficult conversation to have, but it is important to let the person know they are not a good fit for your program. Connect with your supervisor for support in having that conversation.

Once volunteers begin to volunteer for your agency be sure to provide follow up communications and offer ongoing support. As staff, we have supervisors and co-workers to lean on and not feel alone in the work we do. Providing this same kind of support to volunteers will help them feel like they are part of a larger movement to end sexual violence.

Ongoing supervision is something that all volunteers, like staff, should be offered. Some agencies have a volunteer coordinator who is tasked with many of these duties; however most agencies do not have the funds to support that position. Supervision and support of volunteers often becomes to duty of the entire staff and should be planned.

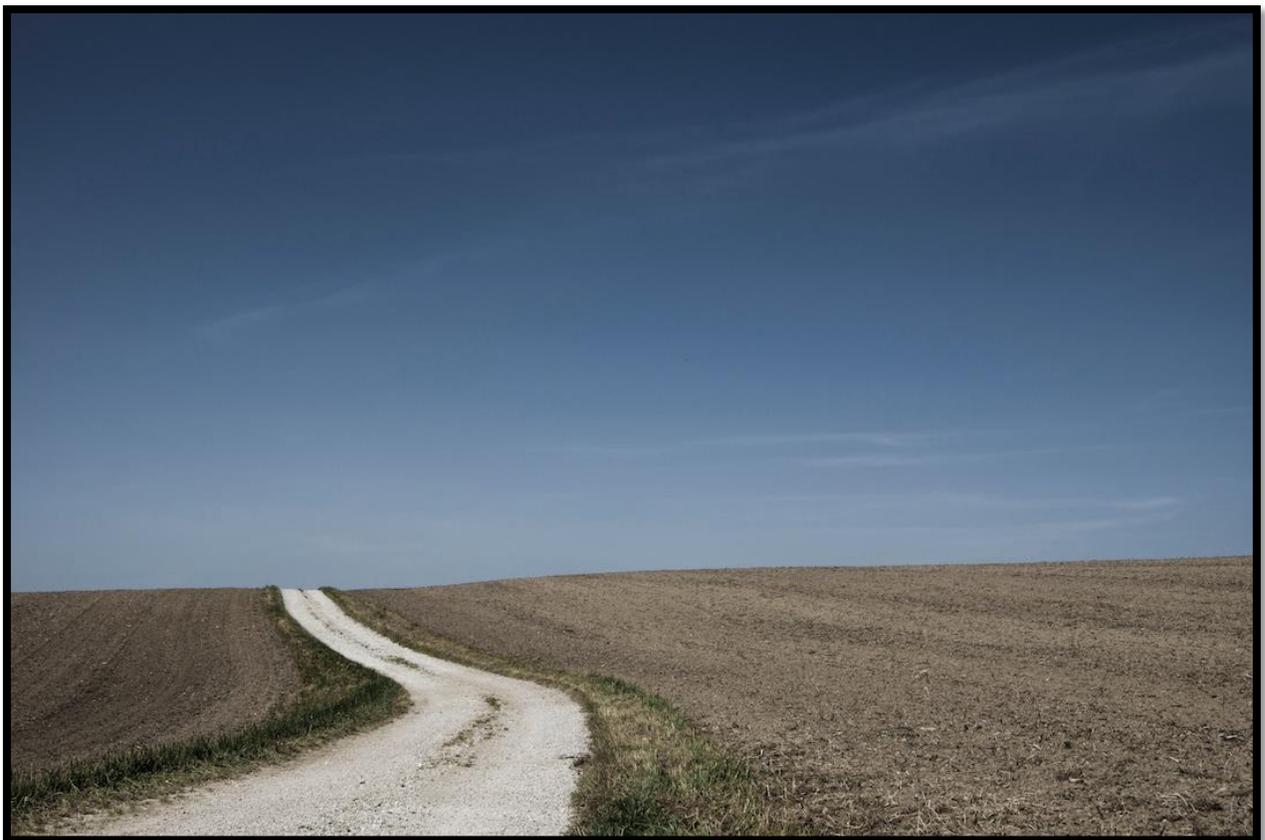
Use supervision to create an environment that encourages feedback and open dialogue. Be clear with volunteers about when and why they need to check in with staff. Encourage volunteers to check in and seek support and feedback from staff even when it is not required. These conversations can be used to guide volunteers towards strong service delivery and community support. Supervision is an opportunity to ensure high-quality services are being provided to survivors. These structured conversations will provide the time and space for volunteers to ask questions and share experiences working with survivors. As you listen to volunteers explain the work they have been doing, continue to pay attention to concerning behaviors or approaches to the work. For example:

*Staff: I heard you went with a survivor to the hospital last night. How did that go?*

*Volunteer: Well I was a little nervous since it was only my second call. But I think it went well. The nurse was very nice*

*and the survivor had family there. The survivor really didn't want to talk to law enforcement, but I encouraged her to think about who else he might rape if she doesn't tell someone. We talked about the important responsibility she had to the community. I think that changed her mind.*

This would be an opportunity for staff to clarify that the role of an advocate is to provide options for survivors and then respect the decisions they make. It is never the responsibility of a sexual violence survivor to prevent future assaults; only a perpetrator can choose not to assault. The role of an advocate is not to change a survivor's mind, but instead to help the survivor understand what they need. These are particularly important conversations to have with volunteers who get infrequent experience working with sexual violence survivors. There may be times when continued conversation and education does not correct the approach of a volunteer. It may become necessary to ask the volunteer to no longer provide direct services.



Supervision is also an important opportunity for volunteers to seek support, ask questions, and create a self-care plan. Creating a self-care plan is the perfect time to talk with volunteers about any personal experiences with sexual violence. Having personal experiences with sexual violence does not preclude someone from being a direct service volunteer. It is not necessary for staff to ask volunteers about survivorship during the interview or training, but it can be helpful to discuss during supervision. Supervision provides the opportunity to create plans for if the volunteer is triggered and to seek support from staff.

Agency supported self-care should always be included in each volunteer's self-care plan. Below are a few ways rural programs have offered self-care to volunteers:

- “We have included volunteers in staff retreats.”
- “We do a Monthly yoga class.”
- “We host out of office retreats.”
- “We have monthly volunteer meetings, and at least one per quarter is dedicated to self-care activities.”

Lastly, a key to creating a sustainable volunteer program is to seek evaluation from current and past volunteers. Evaluating the volunteer program allows you to hear from those in the program and find out what has gone right and what could be improved. Taking the time to understand how volunteers feel about their place at the agency makes them feel appreciated and heard.



# STAFF CHECKLIST

Volunteer supervision will look very different in our different agencies. Most rural agencies aren't able to have a Volunteer Coordinator and instead the agency as a whole is responsible for the volunteer program. To help rural agencies collectively create a successful volunteer program we have created this checklist. We suggest you sit down as a staff and discuss how you will implement your plan and divide your labor.

Create publicity for social media and around the community

Distribute publicity

Create a Volunteer Application and Volunteer Descriptions

Serve as a contact person, answer questions, and communicate with volunteers

Handle volunteer background checks

Interview potential volunteers

Provide initial training and continued education to volunteers

Create a monthly volunteer schedule

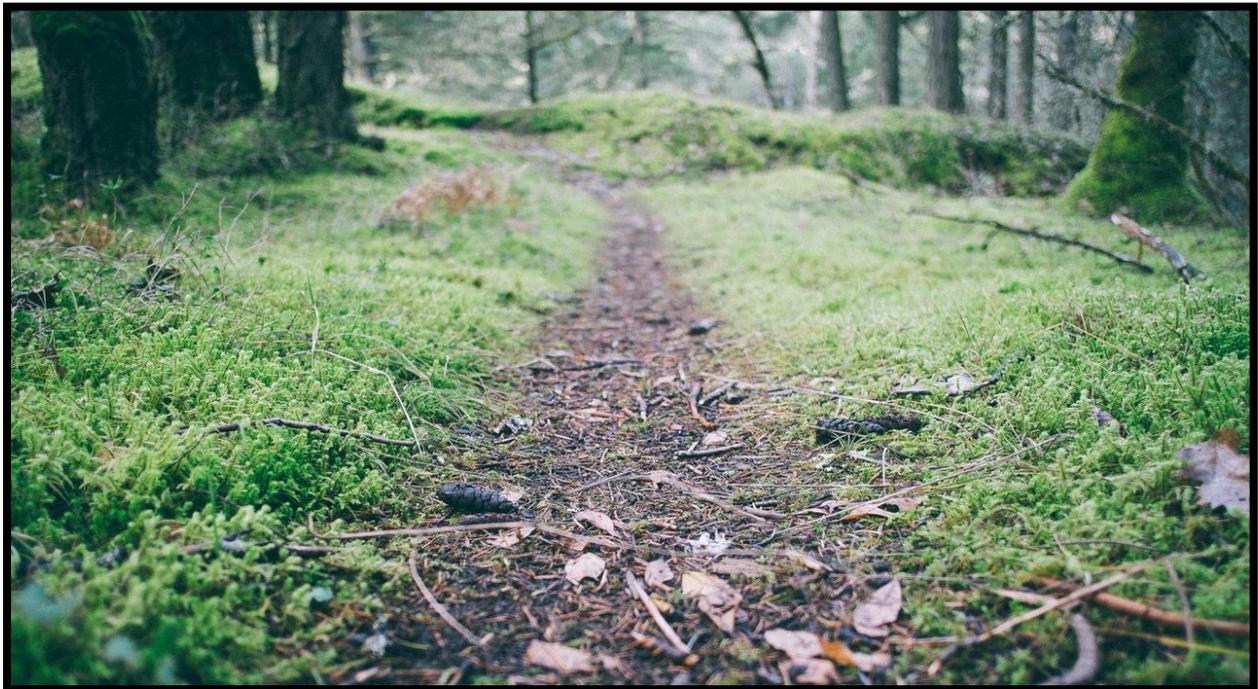
Create volunteer appreciate events and coordinator appreciation efforts

Provide on-going supervision

## Volunteer Appreciation

Volunteers are dedicated community members who are excited and grateful for the services we provide the community. The work these volunteers do for our agencies is important and meaningful. The best way to keep volunteers invested is to recognize and celebrate the work they have done for your agency.

Regularly recognize individual volunteer efforts in a variety of ways. This can be done by providing treats, gifts, cards, and handwritten notes on volunteer's birthdays or during big events like holidays. Ask your staff what has made them feel appreciated in the past and consider implementing those strategies. During [supervision](#) with volunteers find out what makes them feel appreciated. Some volunteers like public displays of appreciation like being recognized at a fundraising event. Others will appreciate small private gestures like a nice handwritten card. Be sure to note their preference in their volunteer file for future appreciation efforts.



Some agencies provide the opportunity for volunteers to get together for fun or to seek support. This can be especially important for the volunteers whose motivation was to meet new people or make community

connections. Fun get-togethers can be a great time for volunteers to break the isolation and meet other people also doing this important work. Get-togethers can also have a self-care focus and provide an opportunity to seek support with staff.

You may want to take advantage of opportunities to recognize volunteer efforts at community events or on social media. This can be important for volunteers who are motivated by public recognition. This can also be a great way to publicly advertise more volunteer opportunities or to highlight work being done by a well-respected community leader.

There are many ways to make volunteers feel appreciated. Below are a few ways rural programs have shared with us:

- “We do an annual volunteer appreciation brunch around the holidays where the staff cook and we honor volunteers. We give a small gift and announce the Volunteer of the Year. The volunteer of the year is announced via social media, newspaper and e-newsletter.”
- “We do birthday cards and give out random thank you cards from staff and the board of directors”
- “We have an annual yard work party in the spring where volunteers come and help us pull weeds, trim shrubs, plant flowers, spread mulch, etc. We supply food. People love it. We take silly photos and post online and in our e-newsletter.”
- “I’m excited to try a new idea soon where every month all volunteer names go into a drawing and the winner gets a gift card for a local restaurant. We also will give out another gift card for the volunteer who logs the most hours.”

No matter what method your agency chooses, be sure to show your volunteers just how grateful you are for their labor. Our movement was founded on the support of volunteers and community members and this work simply could not be done without them.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2015-TA-AX-K018 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.