



Code of Conduct & Ethics

VOLUNTEERS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

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VOLUNTEERS FOR MENTAL HEALTH
Informed by Data, Inspired to Care

Code of Conduct and Ethics for Volunteers for Mental Health

1. Introduction:

This Code of Conduct and Ethics outlines the ethical standards and behavioral expectations for all volunteers of our organization. Our mission is to gather data that bridges the gap in mental health care and influences evidence-based policies, and our volunteers are at the forefront of this effort. The success of our mission relies on volunteers maintaining professionalism, respect, and adherence to ethical guidelines in all interactions.

2. Guiding Principles:

- **Respect:** Volunteers must treat all individuals with dignity, respect, and empathy. Valuing the dignity, rights, and perspectives of all individuals, including participants, fellow volunteers, and staff.
- **Confidentiality:** Volunteers are required to maintain the confidentiality of all personal information shared by participants. No identifying information should be disclosed without explicit consent.
- **Integrity and Honesty:** Volunteers must act with integrity, ensuring all collected data is accurately recorded without alteration or misrepresentation. Volunteers are expected to communicate openly and honestly with participants, supervisors, and team members.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Volunteers must not discriminate against any person based on race, gender, age, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status.
- **Accountability:** Volunteers are expected to be reliable, punctual, and responsible. They should be committed to the agreed schedules and fulfill their duties as outlined during training and orientation.
- **Integrity:** Upholding honesty and transparency in all interactions and data collection efforts.
- **Compassion:** Demonstrating empathy and understanding towards individuals dealing with mental health challenges.
- **Collaboration:** Working effectively with diverse stakeholders to achieve common goals.

3. Professional Behavior and Boundaries:

- **Maintain Professionalism:** Volunteers should maintain a professional demeanor when interacting with participants, community members, or stakeholders. This includes dressing appropriately for community events and being courteous and respectful at all times.
- **Avoid Dual Relationships:** Volunteers should avoid engaging in dual relationships that could impair their ability to remain objective or create a conflict of interest. This includes relationships that may compromise the volunteer's ability to gather data impartially.
- **Reporting Issues:** If volunteers encounter situations that involve ethical dilemmas, unprofessional behavior, or incidents of harm, they must report them promptly to their supervisor for guidance and resolution.

4. Ethical Data Collection:

- **Informed Consent:** Volunteers must ensure participants are fully informed about the nature of the study, their rights, and the intended use of collected data before obtaining their consent. Participation must be voluntary, and participants must be free to withdraw at any time.
- **No Coercion or Influence:** Volunteers must not use force, coercion, or undue influence to encourage participation in data collection. Participants should feel free to refuse or stop at any time without any negative consequences.
- **Accuracy and Honesty in Data Collection:** Volunteers are expected to accurately collect and record data without altering or manipulating it. If discrepancies occur, they should be communicated to the supervisor immediately.
- **Data Security:** Volunteers must take all necessary precautions to protect collected data. This includes safe storage, using secure methods for transferring data and avoiding unauthorized sharing of information.

5. Respect for Participants:

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Volunteers must be sensitive to the cultural context of each participant and approach their work with a culturally aware mindset. This includes adapting questions and behaviors to respect local customs and norms.
- **Empathy and Support:** Volunteers must listen attentively to participants and show empathy, particularly when addressing sensitive mental health issues. They should avoid being judgmental and refrain from offering unsolicited advice.
- **Protection from Harm:** Volunteers must not put participants at risk of harm. They must act immediately if a participant shows signs of distress, ensuring they receive appropriate support and, if necessary, connecting them with mental health professionals.

6. Volunteer Rights:

- **Support and Guidance:** Volunteers have the right to adequate training, supervision, and support throughout their engagement with the organization. Supervisors will provide ongoing support and be available for consultations whenever required.
- **Safe Environment:** Volunteers have the right to work in an environment free from discrimination, harassment, and abuse. They should feel comfortable reporting any incidents of misconduct or unethical behavior.
- **Opportunity for Feedback:** Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback on their experiences, the training, and the data collection process. Constructive feedback will help improve volunteer experiences and organizational processes.

7. Cultural Sensitivity:

- **Approach all interactions with cultural humility and respect, recognizing and valuing diverse backgrounds and perspectives.**
- **Adapt communication styles and data collection methods to be culturally appropriate and inclusive.**

8. Conflict of Interest:

Volunteers must disclose any conflicts of interest that may impact their work. Conflicts may arise if a volunteer has personal relationships or interests that may interfere with their impartiality or the data collection process.

9. Communication and Collaboration:

- **Effective Communication:** Volunteers should maintain open lines of communication with their supervisor, colleagues, and participants. They should raise any concerns, ask questions, or request support whenever needed.
- **Teamwork:** Volunteers are expected to work collaboratively with other team members, respecting different perspectives and contributions. A positive and supportive atmosphere is essential for achieving shared goals.

10. Safety and Well-being:

- **Personal Safety:** Volunteers are encouraged to prioritize their safety during fieldwork and data collection activities. Any safety concerns should be immediately communicated to the supervisor.
- **Emotional Well-being:** Given the sensitive nature of mental health work, volunteers may encounter emotionally challenging situations. Volunteers are encouraged to seek support from supervisors or mental health professionals to address any emotional difficulties they may face.

11. Use of Organizational Resources:

- **Responsible Use:** Volunteers must use organizational resources responsibly, including any materials, equipment, or information provided for data collection purposes. These resources must be used strictly for their intended purposes and must not be misused for personal benefit.

12. Compliance with Laws and Regulations:

- **Adherence to Legal Standards:** Volunteers must comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including data protection, privacy, and ethical guidelines. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action, including termination of the volunteer relationship.
- **Mandatory Reporting:** If a volunteer becomes aware of any participant being at risk of harm (e.g., abuse or suicidal ideation), they are required to report this information to the appropriate authority while ensuring participant confidentiality is preserved as much as possible.

13. Disciplinary Actions:

Any violation of this Code of Conduct and Ethics may result in corrective actions, including training, suspension, or termination of volunteer status, depending on the severity of the

violation. Such actions will be taken to uphold the integrity and mission of the organization and ensure the safety and well-being of participants.

14. Acknowledgment:

All volunteers are required to sign an acknowledgment form stating that they have read, understood, and agree to comply with this Code of Conduct and Ethics.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read, understood, and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct and Ethics for Volunteers at VMH.

Volunteer Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

15. Conclusion:

This Code of Conduct and Ethics is designed to guide volunteers as they contribute to bridging the gap in mental health care. Upholding these principles is essential for creating a supportive environment, ensuring data integrity, and influencing meaningful, evidence-based mental health policy changes. Volunteers are the backbone of our mission, and by following this Code, they help promote respect, dignity, and positive change in the mental health sector.

Thank you for your commitment to improving mental health services and your role in shaping evidence-based policies.

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