



You and the agency: Steering the Course

Facilitator Guide

Abstract

Toronto HIV/AIDS Network You & the Agency: Steering the Course: Volunteering as a PHA or affected by HIV. See volunteering within their own life journey as individuals living with and affected by HIV

Brian Dopson Ph D.

Brian@torontohivaidsnetwork.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Target Audience:.....	3
Duration:.....	3
Objectives:	3
Session outline:.....	4
Facilitators' Technical expertise.....	4
Opportunities for PHA input and involvement	4
Training.....	5
[Introductory breathing exercise –	5
Acknowledgements	5
Introductory Mindfulness, Meditation Breathing.....	5
Volunteering:	5
Working in an organization and taking care of yourself - max of 60 minutes	6
Facilitator role.....	6
Steering Through:	6
Obligations and Agreements	7
Being a Volunteer and a PHA:.....	8
When Being HIV+ is part of your Volunteer Role:.....	9
Being an Ally as a Volunteer:	9
Question (for chat or reflection – based on timing)	10
Self Care as a Volunteer:.....	10
Boundaries:.....	11
Ownership:.....	13
ADDENDUM/SCENARIOS:	14
Closing: time available 10-15 minutes	15
Participatory Exercise –	16

TARGET AUDIENCE:

This module is intended for all potential volunteers, including people living with and affected by, as well as ASO staff.

A pre-requisite for this course is GIPA/MIPA training.

DURATION:

Approx.1 hour, 45 minutes including 10 break

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the session the participants will be able to:

1. See volunteering within their own life journey as individuals living with and affected by HIV
2. Have an understanding of the complexities of volunteering in the HIV sector for people living with or affected by HIV
3. Knowledge of key self-care issues (boundaries, disclosure, confidentiality)
4. Learn about volunteer-agency relationship (including seeking help/information and self-advocacy)
5. Understand that the volunteer/agency/client relationship is a life journey for all of us.

SESSION OUTLINE:

slide 5

FACILITATORS' TECHNICAL EXPERTISE:

- Knowledge of Living with HIV/AIDS
- Have worked in an ASO, preferably as a Volunteer Coordinator
- Adult education skills, particularly on empowerment
- Public speaking and facilitation of groups
- Non-judgmental and motivational approaches
- Able to lead a meditation or a simple breathing exercise

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHA INPUT AND INVOLVEMENT

- **PHAs and Volunteer Coordinators led the development and writing of this training**

TRAINING

1: Welcome, Meaningful Land Acknowledgement, Intro – 10 min max

[INTRODUCTORY BREATHING EXERCISE –

TO RELAX, CLEAR THE MIND AND BE READY TO FOCUS ON THIS FINAL MODULE. (NOTE: THIS CAN BE SAVED FOR THE IN-PERSON VERSION OF THE TRAINING; LESS USEFUL IN THE ONLINE FORMAT.)]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS –

slide #2

INTRODUCTORY MINDFULNESS, MEDITATION BREATHING

VOLUNTEERING:

Open Zoom chat - 10 minutes

Options: unmute or write in chat for others to see

How does being a volunteer add to your life?

and.../...or

What are your hopes for being a volunteer now?

and.../...or

How has your volunteer experience changed because of the pandemic/CoVID 19?

Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants may respond as a new volunteer, or continuing volunteer role or perhaps as volunteer in a new role • Acknowledge the sharing • <i>(Maybe ask group what strikes them about the responses in the room; responses are fewer and slower online)</i> 	
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WORKING IN AN ORGANIZATION AND TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF - MAX OF 60 MINUTES

Power point – review topic list on slide 4 and go through slides

FACILITATOR ROLE

- Hold safe space and pace
- Position volunteering as opportunity for growth and learning
- Be encouraging about how to handle challenges

STEERING THROUGH:

Slide 4 -

These are the main areas where attention is really useful and important.

- You are entering into a relationship with an agency and its work

- *The agency is far from perfect and is always evolving: they will fall short, and so will you. Be understanding and stay open to communicating.*
- These main topics will probably need attention many times during your time as a volunteer.
- It is important to understand that the volunteer/client/agency relationship is a life journey for all of us

OBLIGATIONS AND AGREEMENTS:

Slide 5 –

- The clearer you and the agency are on your role and the agency's role the better it will be *for everyone!*
- If you come across some areas that are not comfortable for you, then continue through the discussion until you **find a mutual agreement**
- When discussing these areas, it is the best time to ask questions of your volunteer coordinator. Are there any pressing questions about this now that might help other people to understand your shared concerns?
- Your agency's Volunteer Coordinator and/or a Program Coordinator will probably be the person going through these with you
- If you have preferences for such things as how to get feedback, make those preferences clear with your volunteer coordinator; that should never come as a surprise to other staff or volunteers.
- **Mutual respect with peers, agency staff and the people being served is key.**
- Your agency will share with you its policies and practices that its volunteers need to follow.

slide 6

- Being a PHA in an organization for HIV brings the personal and the professional together. Because you have a volunteer role, it is *this role* that comes first when you are on your shift.
- What you share about yourself is yours to share and it may get passed on.
- This includes disclosing your status or anything about your story
 - You will find many times that people may ask you questions because you are a PHA; you do not have to know the answers, nor speak for all PHAs
 - Your right to privacy is yours to hold
 - Being a PHA may have brought you to this work, but it is not your *whole* identity. You are a person with many gifts, talents and experiences and interests for the future. It is this that you are bringing and giving.
 - Being a PHA means that you will encounter people and stories that will connect with your own. Sometimes this will affect you. This is being human. **At times like this it often is good to talk to another PHA or to a person you trust. However, share only your own feelings and story, not anyone else's.**
 - Sometimes the issue may trigger a strong emotional response from your own experience. This happens when we encounter something that relates to our own story: you notice you have strong feelings. At times like this you can go to the Volunteer Coordinator or Program Coordinator for the program you volunteer in, and get the support you want.
 - Sometimes, for non-PHAs, things may be triggered that you don't expect. Remember to talk to either your volunteer coordinator about that, or an outside trusted person. Don't "dump" on the clients or staff.
 - *Remember the things we talked about in the Communications module and the Boundaries module!*

WHEN BEING HIV+ IS PART OF YOUR VOLUNTEER ROLE:

Slide 7 –

Being a public PHA brings particular responsibilities and considerations:

- the release of privacy about being HIV+
- a readiness to set boundaries of what you are and are not willing to discuss publicly – Refer to their earlier discussion, the Confidentiality and Boundaries session
- a comfort with emotional vulnerability – this is very personal work
- the confidence of having your own support systems – there will always be something that challenges you
- a preparedness to receive and deal with others' opinions, sometimes stigmatizing or discriminating,
- a readiness to be the spark for someone to disclose to you and handle issues that may come up
- an ability to stay very closely in touch with all other parts of your life that bring you joy and connection – *this role is not your entire life*
- a readiness to say “I don’t know” when people assume ***you know everything about HIV and about living with HIV.***

BEING AN ALLY AS A VOLUNTEER:

Slide 8 –

The importance of AGENCY for clients - see notes about meaning of “agency”:

Re: Definitions of AGENCY (not an exhaustive list):

1. the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power

2. *an establishment engaged in doing business for another*

3. a person or thing through which power is exerted or an end is achieved
4. an establishment engaged in doing business for another

QUESTION (FOR CHAT OR REFLECTION – BASED ON TIMING)

Has anyone had the experience of thinking they were acting as an ally and learning that it wasn't received in the manner intended?

Examples:

- Ensuring client-centred (not taking away any person's AGENCY)
- Assumptions of how to be an ally focusing on one ally link but missing the many other key aspects
- Long-term survivors/newer diagnosis; COVID-19 loss; racial identity; gender identity
- Active listening

Asking and being open to learn:

- “How can I support you and what do you need?” rather than assuming I know what you need.

SELF CARE AS A VOLUNTEER:

Slide 9 –

***REFLECTION** - what have you done to care for someone else in the past year?

***INSERT POLL HERE:**

Which of the following Self-Care examples have you found helpful? 1) walking outside 2) meditation 3) a long bath 4) connecting with someone virtually 5) enjoying a new Netflix series 6) Other (please name it)

- It is true what they say about taking care so that you can take care of others

- Having good attention to your mind, body and spirit really is the base for bringing strong energy.
- If we ignore attentiveness to our own health, whether we are conscious of it or not, it will impact others
- You will come across lives and situations that are highly personal. Some will be wonderful and some will be stressful (or both!)
- Seek opportunities to debrief after difficult situations with the Volunteer Coordinator, or Program Coordinator, for the program area you are in. Perhaps also with volunteer peers, while attending to confidentiality.
- While the agency may support you to a certain extent, having supports outside the agency can also be very important; remember to share your own story and feelings, not the stories and feelings of others
- Taking care of **you** requires your attention. We can forget this sometimes. This includes not only your HIV/health care, but your energy and interests. This way you will be able to have a more fulfilled time as a volunteer.
- ***Sometimes you will come across something that you cannot respond to immediately and your work is not finished. For example: in the middle of the work you're doing, someone tells you something that you find upsetting and can take over your attention. Learn to hold this till later when you can get the support you need to discuss it with the Volunteer Coordinator. It may be a confidentiality issue.***
- *Disclosing your HIV status is entirely yours to decide. There is no guarantee that what you share with clients will remain confidential; always remember that this disclosure is your choice.*

BOUNDARIES:

- *Today we will only look at this topic very broadly since an earlier training session went into more depth on the issue.*

- *Two areas are important. First is your self-care and second is your care of information of others*
- *Your self-care includes learning to make meaningful choices about the times you say “yes” and the times you say “no”. Your answer is best done in the service of your health and well-being and the rest of your life. This prevents burnout, resentment and fatigue. When you start you will agree to volunteer for certain things. It is highly likely, particularly if you are enjoying what you do, that you might be asked or you may volunteer for other tasks. **There is always a lot to do.** Always, always consider whether your “yes” is genuine and always maintain the right to say “no”. This will build a successful relationship with you and the agency and all of its people.*
- ***Creating boundaries takes practice***
- *All of these areas of workplace, your role in the agency and in the community are places where confidentiality is vital. It is highly likely you will meet people who are clients of the agency, learn information about them informally or as part of your work. Whatever you learn about someone as part of your volunteer role is to be kept to yourself, unless you are given permission. When in doubt, ask.*
- *Again, it is **your** right to privacy. Some people like to keep their private and work life separate but often, especially when living in a community, this becomes more difficult.*
- *As you consider and practice with boundaries – saying “yes” and saying “no”, being aware of what you do and do not want to commit to or share will start to enter your entire life. It is about the development of a way of seeing things and a way of being in the world that you will find that this practice starts to work for you in other ways at home and elsewhere.*
- ***This is not a passive framework; it will shift and evolve.***

Slide 13 –

- To work in something that directly is about your life as well as others' involves a willingness to engage in relationship on many levels
- It is easy to get attached to things because the work can become highly personal. This can be great to experience while in it, but sometimes we can get much too attached. There's a difference between being proud of the role or work and feeling you are responsible for how everything goes.
- It is common to have a relationship with the agency, rather like we do to a particular place to eat or shop. The "my agency" is an affection and we can sometimes take things personally when someone criticizes or when the agency changes something. It is important to remember that everything is always changing ***and ultimately it is up to you to work through changes.*** Attachments sometimes get very strong and if we feel a strong ownership we can sometimes feel as though we have to stay doing what we do, even if the interest has worn out. It is your life and you have the right to stop something when it no longer feeds you and to trust that others will continue addressing the needs. We, as volunteers, do not "own" the agency or its directions.

We are touched deeply by working in something that is about our lives. As we volunteer we will always be experiencing our own life and challenges and joys. This usually means a good thing. It is about being connected to yourself and to a community and its work. At the same time, it is important to remember that your life may outgrow this work or you may be touched deeply by something. **If you think it's time for a change or to leave your volunteer role, you can talk this over with the Volunteer Coordinator.**

Bring in experiences and examples you know, to illustrate and train - at any point in the module.

ADDENDUM/SCENARIOS:

(Optional resources) in case you find useful to create conversation with participants as you go through slides. Not all slides have a scenario.

Facilitator, then group discussion	<p>Slide 6 Obligations and agreements</p> <p><i>The new volunteer is really keen to start working. It is a small agency. The volunteer coordinator who also doubles as an outreach worker says, “we are so glad you are coming. It gets crazy here and I know you are agreeing to make condom packages on a Thursday, but hey, we may ask you to pitch in sometimes and do other things”</i></p>
Does anyone want to share an experience of this?	<p>Slide 7 Being a PHA</p> <p><i>You have been at the agency for some time and one of your fellow volunteer PHAs is going through a rough time. You’ve been through a similar rough time and you want to help. The PHA going through the rough time is also a client of the agency. What should you do?</i></p>
	<i>Slide 8 – no scenario for When HIV is part of your volunteer role</i>
	<i>Slide 9 – no scenario Being an Ally</i>
	<p>Slide 10 Self-Care</p> <p><i>You are going through a change of meds and are having drug reactions. You’ve committed to lead a peer support group that evening. What is the way to go?</i></p>

	<p>Slide 11 Confidentiality and Community (reinforce previous module)</p> <p><i>You are on the reception desk and someone you know comes in to see a support worker. This person did not know you were a volunteer. You both know that you will be with each other at a community event later that week. What is the way to go with this?</i></p>
	<p>Slide 12 Boundaries (reinforce previous module)</p> <p><i>You are out at a party and you hit it off with someone emotionally and maybe sexually. The next day you go to volunteer and that person is at the agency as a client. What do you do?</i></p>
<p>*Open this up to feedback/ conversation - hypothetical or otherwise*</p>	<p>Slide 13 Wearing hats of volunteer and service receiver</p> <p><i>Staff and volunteers have a monthly get together and you get personally close with a staff that is your support worker. After a good time one week you have a crisis and are in need of support. You realize that your relationship with the support worker has changed and you don't know what to do. What's next?</i></p>
	<p><i>Slide 14 – no scenario- Ownership</i></p>
	<p>Slide 16 - Maintaining Balance</p> <p><i>You are at a volunteer appreciation party and one of your best volunteer colleagues asks you to join him on a new project in the agency. As you are talking your supervisor who is thrilled with your work also ask you to join this new project. You really like her and feel like you are becoming friends. What comes up?</i></p>

CLOSING: TIME AVAILABLE 10-15 MINUTES

Facilitator Role

Time to tell the group that this is the end of the training and we will be closing with a last exercise

PARTICIPATORY EXERCISE –

If we have time, some last “group networking” time as we close

Group and facilitator	<p>[Small groups, then report back to large group –</p> <p>Note: could report individually if they are comfortable to do that</p> <p>- OR -</p> <p>someone report for their small group]</p>	<p>Save for in-person sessions</p>
Facilitator	<p>‘Is there anything that stands out for you that you want to remember, to take away with you into your volunteer work?’</p> <p>Thank the participants for their time and contributions</p> <p><i>Turn over to THN EVALUATION to finish</i></p>	<p>Especially for online sessions</p>