



Volunteer Handbook Starter Template

Conduct, safety, confidentiality, boundaries, and endings — the volunteer program's rules, written before they're needed.

WHAT THIS HELPS YOU DO

Use this template to give your volunteer program written rules — expectations, safety, confidentiality, boundaries with clients and staff, and a dignified way to end volunteer service when needed.

WHEN TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

- When the volunteer program has rules only in oral tradition
- Before onboarding any new volunteer class
- After any volunteer incident — conduct, safety, or boundary
- When volunteers work with clients, minors, or sensitive data
- When someone finally asks 'can we actually dismiss a volunteer?'

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT HELPS PREVENT

- Volunteer conduct problems with no standard to point to
- Confidentiality breaches by people who never signed anything
- Boundary violations with clients nobody defined as violations
- Safety incidents involving untrained, unwaivered volunteers
- Volunteer 'firings' that turn into community relations disasters

Faulkner HR Solutions focuses on the system behind the people problem. This tool is designed to help employers slow down the decision, identify the risk, and create proof before the issue becomes a claim, complaint, turnover event, or credibility problem.

BEFORE YOU START: READINESS CHECKLIST

Gather the following before working through this document. Incomplete inputs are one of the most common reasons employer decisions fail under later scrutiny.

Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Employee name and role	
☐	Date of incident, request, or separation	



Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Supervisor involved	
☐	Policy or handbook section that applies	
☐	Prior documentation on file	
☐	Pay records, if applicable	
☐	Relevant emails, texts, notes, or complaints	
☐	Decision-maker name	
☐	Deadline, if applicable	



HANDBOOK STARTER SECTIONS

Adapt each section, keep the whole thing under ten pages, and pair it with a signed acknowledgment. A volunteer handbook is a kindness: people serve better when the expectations are visible.

Section 1 — Welcome and Program Purpose

Welcome to [Organization]. Volunteers extend our mission — [mission statement] — and this handbook explains how we work together: what you can expect from us, what we ask of you, and how we keep the people we serve safe. Volunteering here is voluntary and unpaid; this handbook is not an employment contract and does not create an employment relationship.

Section 2 — Conduct Standards

Included	Standard (edit to fit)	Notes
☐	Treat clients, staff, and fellow volunteers with respect; harassment and discrimination are never tolerated	
☐	Follow staff direction on site — volunteers support, staff decide	
☐	No alcohol or impairing substances during service	
☐	Dress and language appropriate to the setting and the people served	
☐	Represent the organization accurately; no public statements or social posts about clients or internal matters without approval	
☐	Report concerns rather than handling them solo	

Section 3 — Safety

Included	Safety provision	Notes
☐	Required orientation/training before first shift (list by role)	
☐	Task limits: what volunteers may not do (equipment, driving clients, medical tasks — edit)	
☐	Incident and injury reporting: to whom, how fast, in writing	
☐	Emergency procedures location and review	
☐	Waivers and, where applicable, background checks by role (especially minors/vulnerable populations)	
☐	Minors as volunteers: supervision ratios and parental consent	



Section 4 — Confidentiality

Volunteers may see or hear personal information about the people we serve — names, situations, health, family, finances. All of it is confidential. Do not share client information outside your service role, do not photograph clients without written authorization, and do not confirm to anyone outside the organization that a specific person receives services here. Confidentiality continues after your volunteer service ends. Violations end volunteer service and may carry legal consequences. A signed confidentiality acknowledgment is required before client contact.

Section 5 — Scheduling and Reliability

Included	Provision	Notes
☐	How shifts are scheduled and how to cancel (with how much notice)	
☐	Reliability matters — clients and staff plan around you — but volunteering is voluntary; life happens, tell us	
☐	Extended absence: how to pause and return	
☐	Hour logging, if the program tracks hours (for grants and recognition)	

Section 6 — Boundaries

Included	Boundary rule (edit for your services)	Notes
☐	No gifts, loans, or money exchanged with clients	
☐	No contact with clients outside the program without staff approval	
☐	No transporting clients unless specifically authorized, licensed, and insured	
☐	Personal relationships with clients: disclose to staff; some services require distance	
☐	Volunteers do not discipline, diagnose, counsel, or make promises on the organization's behalf	
☐	Social media: no friending/following clients from service relationships (edit to your policy)	

Section 7 — Raising Concerns

If you see something concerning — safety, ethics, treatment of clients, another volunteer's conduct, or a staff member's behavior — report it to [volunteer coordinator] or [ED] promptly. You will not face retaliation for raising a concern in good faith. If your concern involves the person you would normally report to, go to [alternate].



Section 8 — Ending Volunteer Service

Volunteers may step away at any time — we appreciate whatever service you can give. The organization may also end or redirect a volunteer's service at its discretion: for conduct, safety, or confidentiality issues; for program changes; or for fit with the role. Where appropriate, the volunteer coordinator will discuss concerns and alternatives first, but client safety and program integrity always come first. Ending volunteer service is not an accusation; it is program management, and we aim to do it with the same respect we ask volunteers to show.

Acknowledgment Page

I received and read the Volunteer Handbook (version/date)	
I understand volunteering is voluntary, unpaid, and not employment	
I agree to the confidentiality and boundary provisions	
Volunteer signature and date	
Emergency contact	

STOP AND REVIEW BEFORE ACTING

If any statement below is true, pause. Get the decision reviewed by HR, counsel, or Faulkner HR Solutions before you act.

- ☐ Volunteers currently have client contact with nothing signed.
- ☐ A volunteer is transporting clients in a personal vehicle with no authorization or insurance check.
- ☐ There's a volunteer everyone tiptoes around because nobody believes they can be dismissed.
- ☐ Photos of clients are on volunteers' personal social media right now.
- ☐ Minors volunteer alongside adults with no supervision structure.

MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION STANDARD

Before this file is closed, the employer should be able to answer every question below and point to where the proof lives.

Question	Your answer / where the proof is stored
What happened?	
When did it happen?	
Who observed or reported it?	



Question	Your answer / where the proof is stored
What policy, standard, deadline, or expectation applies?	
What decision was made?	
Who had authority to make the decision?	
What alternatives were considered?	
What risk was reviewed?	
What follow-up is required?	
Where is the proof stored?	

COMMON MISTAKES

1. Writing the handbook after the incident it would have prevented.
2. Copying an employee handbook and swapping the word 'employee' for 'volunteer' — the legal frames differ.
3. Making the handbook so long nobody reads it; ten pages beats forty.
4. Skipping the ending-service section because it feels unkind (it's the kindest section in the document).
5. Collecting no acknowledgments, so the rules exist but bind no one.
6. Never training coordinators to enforce it evenly.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Adapt the sections, have someone with HR or legal eyes review the confidentiality and safety pieces for your service type, and roll it out with signed acknowledgments at the next volunteer orientation — current volunteers included. Review annually with the volunteer coordinator.

Before you terminate, deduct, discipline, classify, or respond, get the decision reviewed.

Call 210.446.8730 or email thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info.



Mission does not replace infrastructure. If the same people problem keeps coming back, the system needs to be rebuilt.

Need help applying this to a real workplace decision?

Faulkner HR Solutions helps Texas employers, nonprofits, municipalities, and growing businesses fix the people systems behind recurring workplace problems.

If this document raised a risk flag, do not guess your way through the next step.

Call: 210.446.8730

Email: thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info

Website: faulknerhrsolutions.info

DISCLAIMER

This resource is provided for general employer education and planning purposes. It is not legal advice and does not create an attorney-client relationship. Employment laws, agency guidance, and local requirements may change. Employers should review the facts of each situation before acting and consult appropriate HR or legal counsel when needed.