

Asian Community AIDS Services Volunteer Policies and Procedure

Background

On **World AIDS Day**, December 1, 1994, three of the AIDS services serving the Southeast Asian communities in Metro Toronto joined forces to form a new coalition agency. Gay Asian Toronto, Gay Asian AIDS Project, Southeast Asian Services Center, Vietnamese AIDS Project and the Toronto Chinese Health Education Committee AIDS Alert Project amalgamated to form the new coalition agency: **Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS)**

Our Mission Statement

ACAS is a non-profit, charitable, community-based organization. We provide education, prevention, and support services on HIV/AIDS to the East and Southeast Asian communities. These programs are based on a proactive and holistic approach to HIV/AIDS and are provided in a collaborative, empowering, and non-discriminatory manner.

1. What is a Volunteer?

Johnstone Training and Consultation publication the Law and Volunteers defines a Volunteer as " a person who gives his/her services without any expression or implied promise of remuneration." The Volunteer gives freely of their time and effort with no expectation of monetary compensation.

2. Code of Conduct

- Be honest with yourself about the time and energy you have available for this Commitment
- Honour all your commitments to ACAS and its Clients
- Respect the need for confidentiality in your contacts with Clients, Volunteers, and Staff as specified in the Oath of Confidentiality
- Provide service that respects the self-determination of the Client and support the work of his or her support network
- Contribute constructively to the efforts of staff and volunteers
- Abstain from participating in substance abuse or sexual activity with Clients
- Meet the attendance and training criteria of your particular assigned position
- Act as a responsible liaison between ACAS and the community at large

3. Volunteer Selection Criteria

All ACAS Volunteers must agree to the Code of Conduct sign the Oath of Confidentiality. In addition, ACAS actively seek Volunteers with the following qualities:

- Independent, self-starter
- Reliable
- Respectful of Client's rights
- Good listening and communication skills
- Sense of humour
- Open and motivated to learn new relevant skills
- Openness in dealing with complex issues including illness, death and sexuality
- Respects diversity of values and opinions
- Have a gay/lesbian affirmative attitude
- Respect and appreciate racial/cultural diversity
- Non-judgmental attitude towards sexuality, gender, ethnicity, spiritual beliefs, etc.

Responsibilities:

- Successfully completed the Volunteer Training Program as specified by the Staff Supervisor
- Maintain and hand in time sheets upon request
- Advise supervisor if unable to fulfill or attend to duties
- Provide adequate notice of termination, so replacement may be found (two weeks notice)

4. Selection of Volunteers

The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for the selection of volunteers for ACAS and may do so in consultation with Program Coordinators.

Procedure:

- Interested applicants will be supplied with a Volunteer Application Form, to be completed and returned to the Volunteer Coordinator
- Applicants will be interviewed and informed of the volunteer position available
- Placement will be determined by suitability and qualifications of applicant to be determined by Volunteer Coordinator and Program Coordinators
- Approved applicants will be notified of date and time of orientation/training sessions

5. Volunteer Training

ACAS will provide an orientation program to all volunteers before they are expected to assume responsibilities. ACAS's objective will be to provide ACAS volunteers with necessary information on issues of HIV/AIDS and opportunities to acquire the skills of providing the relevant ACAS services.

The Volunteer Training Program may include instruction and information in the following areas:

- The agency, its mission statement, objectives and principles, organizational structure
- Volunteer roles, positions, job description, responsibilities and expectations and expectations
- Volunteer commitment and how it applies to each individual
- The basics of HIV, transmission and infection control.

- The concept of holistic health and the principle of individual empowerment regarding treatment strategies
- HIV/AIDS phobia, racism, sexism, and heterosexism in themselves and others
- The reality of living with HIV/AIDS, from both clients's and volunteer's perspectives
- An awareness of and dialogues around death and dying
- Self-care strategies

5 A. Basic Training

All Volunteers will attend an orientation session and a basic training that covers the issues of ethics of Volunteer work, self-awareness, HIV/AIDS, diversity and confidentiality.

5 B. Specific Skills Development Training

Please refer to the appendix

5 C. Placement Training

After Volunteers have completed the specific skills training required for their program service area, they will be given a job description outlining the major responsibilities of their placement. When Volunteers are placed, staff and experienced volunteer will provide on-the-job training to new Volunteers assigned to their area.

6. Volunteer Placement

The placement of an individual volunteer is a collaborative decision between the Volunteer Coordinator, Program Coordinator and Volunteer. The wishes of the volunteer will be given due consideration.

Procedure:

1. The Volunteer will be asked to identify their placement wishes in the application form.
2. The Volunteer Coordinator will discuss with the Volunteer his/her preferred placement at the intake interview
3. The Volunteer Coordinator will notify the Volunteer of all appropriate training opportunities
4. After the Volunteer has completed all required training, the Volunteer Coordinator will confirm his/her initial placement either verbally or in writing.
5. The supervisor may offer an alternative placement where the initial placement is not acceptable to the Volunteer
6. When a mutually acceptable placement is not possible, there will be no placement

7. Scheduling Changes and Cancellations

When a Volunteer must change or cancel a commitment, it is the Volunteer's responsibility to ensure that the Volunteer Coordinator/Program Coordinator is aware of the changes.

Procedure:

Last Minute Cancellations

- In cases of sickness, accident or other emergency, the Volunteer should inform his/her

immediate supervisor as soon as possible

Anticipated Changes

- The Volunteer initiating the change is expected to give 48 hours notice to his/her immediate supervisor /Volunteer Coordinator or ACAS staff.
- Arrange for another qualified Volunteer to cover the shift and ensure that the Volunteer/Program Coordinator is aware of the change
- Contact the Coordinator and ensure awareness of the need

8. Reporting /Supervision

Volunteers will report to the Program Coordinator
Program Coordinator will report to the Executive Director/Committee
The Executive Director will report to the Board of Directors

9. Job Performance

Volunteers are expected to observe certain standards of job performance and good conduct. The purpose of these rules is not to restrict volunteer's rights but to make sure that volunteer understands what conduct is expected and the following are areas for considerations regarding volunteer's performance.

- Quantity or quality of work
- Attitude
- Ability to follow established safety regulations
- Attendance, ability to cooperate with ACAS policies and procedures
- Cooperation with staff and fellow volunteer(s) to maintain a comfortable working environment

Misconduct:

- Insubordination or refusing to follow instructions properly issued by the immediate supervisor
- Dishonesty; willful falsification or misrepresentation on intake for volunteering or other volunteer records; alteration of agency records or other agency documents
- Theft of agency property or the property of fellow volunteers, staff, or clients
- Discourtesy-engaging in any offensive behavior designed to create discord and lack of harmony, such as gossiping and/or spreading rumors; and engaging in immoral or indecency on agency property
- Misusing or destroying ACAS property or the property of another
- Engaging in unprofessional conduct, including, but not limited to, unprofessional interactions with clients
- Interfering with the work performance of others
- Altercations-engaging in verbal and /or physical acts of violence, such as threatening or fighting with fellow volunteers, staff members or clients
- Gambling on ACAS premises or while conducting agency business
- Possessing a dangerous or illegal firearm, weapon or explosives on agency property or while on duty

- Being convicted of a crime that indicates unfitness for the job or raises threat to the safety or well-being of ACAS, its staff, clients, volunteers, or property; or failing to report to the agency within five days, any conviction under any criminal statute
- Removing any item belonging to ACAS, including records of documents, without prior consent of the applicable supervisor
- Refusing to work with or withholding services from a person with HIV
- No volunteer may knowingly, directly or indirectly, borrow from, lend to, investing, buy from, sell to or engage in any financial transaction with any ACAS client without written permission from their supervisor or the Executive Director. Volunteers shall not charge fees nor solicit financial compensation from any ACAS client.

Disciplinary Action:

When performance or conduct does not meet ACAS standards, the agency will provide the volunteers a reasonable opportunity to improve performance, when deemed appropriate. If, however, the volunteer fails to make the correction, she or he will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the agency.

If a volunteer's conduct does not abide by agency standards and policies, disciplinary action will be taken. Disciplinary action can take one or more of the following forms, depending on the severity of the problem, as well as the judgment of ACAS staff.

Verbal Warning

The immediate supervisor meets with the volunteer to discuss the issue at hand. Depending on the problem, this may lead to a written warning, an investigation to determine the issue, suspension, or dismissal from the agency.

Written Warning

Written warnings will include the reasons for the volunteer supervisor's dissatisfaction and any supporting evidence. Volunteers will have an opportunity to defend their actions and rebut the opinion of their supervisor in writing at the time the warning is issued.

Disciplinary Suspension

Full Investigation to Determine the Problem

With few exceptions (for example, harm to clients, theft, etc.), volunteers will not be dismissed until the agency has had an opportunity to conduct an in-depth investigation, making certain that the agency has proof that the volunteer has violated agency policies or performance standards. The volunteer may be temporarily suspended while this investigation is taking place.

Investigation:

All pertinent facts will be carefully reviewed, and the volunteer will be given a full opportunity to explain his or her conduct before any decision is reached. Documentation of the investigation will be filed in the personnel record of the volunteer. Any dismissal will be made in writing to the concerned volunteer.

Dismissal of Volunteers

ACAS reserves the right to suspend or dismiss any volunteer for any reason. Normally, such dismissal is for failure to meet the standards of acceptable performance, misconduct, breach of confidentiality or failure to adhere to the volunteer policies and procedures. The dismissal of volunteers is the responsibility and prerogative of the supervisor. Dismissals are to be carried out with respect for the individual's dignity.

Procedure:

The supervisor will meet with the volunteer to outline any problem that is deemed as grounds for dismissal

The supervisor may specify needed changes to remedy the problem and will also give a time limit within which the change needs to be made

If the problem persists, the volunteer will be informed and given a final deadline to demonstrate a positive change

If the volunteer is unable to achieve the required improvements, the supervisor will dismiss the volunteer in writing

A volunteer may be summarily dismissed at the discretion of the supervisor.

10. Grievances

ACAS seeks to provide a pleasant and harmonious environment for all volunteers, but problems and misunderstandings sometimes happen. The agency has established a formal grievance procedure for resolving these conflicts.

A grievance is any event, condition, rule or practice which you, as a volunteer, believes violates your civil rights, treats you unfairly, or causes you any degree of unpleasantness or unhappiness in the job. A grievance may also deal with an attitude, a statement, or an opinion held by a staff member, client or fellow volunteer.

Procedure:

The supervisor must be informed of the grievance in writing

The supervisor must respond to the volunteer within ten days in writing

When appropriate, a meeting should be arranged between the volunteer and the supervisor.

Either party may choose to have another person present

When the grievance cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties, the volunteer may take the grievance to the Volunteer Coordinator. If again, the conflict is not resolved it shall be taken for discussion with the Volunteer Program Committee.

If the Volunteer Program Committee is unable to resolve the issue and all attempts are unsuccessful, the Executive Director should be contacted in writing, which will try to resolve the issue within ten (10) working days.

If the volunteer(s) is unsatisfied with the Executive Director's decision, the volunteer may request a review hearing, in writing, from the Board of Directors. The Board will set up a hearing and notify the volunteer within ten (10) working days of the schedule. The decision of the Board will be final.

ACAS encourages that all grievances are resolved informally, only in exceptional cases these process should be taken if all attempts to resolve the issue have failed

Resignation:

This is a mutually agreed understanding between the agency and the volunteer that he or she has to discontinue volunteering. However, it is anticipated that the volunteer should notify the agency no less than a month and make arrangement for an exit interview.

Exit Interview:

When a volunteer voluntarily leaves ACAS, the agency would like to discuss your reason for leaving and any other impressions that you may have about the agency. If you decide to leave, you will ask to participate in an exit interview with the Volunteer Coordinator. During the interview, you can discuss your volunteer experience and suggest any changes in the program and hopefully will provide the agency with possible improvements.

11. Accepting Gifts

Volunteers are not allowed to accept gifts or money from clients, their families or partners. Accepting other gifts, particularly valuable ones, is strongly discouraged. Similarly, Volunteers must not allow themselves to be named as either beneficiary or executor in a client's will.

If at any time a Volunteer is unsure of a gift offering they should ask the Volunteer Coordinator/Program Coordinator for clarification. Common sense plays a big role here. There is obviously a difference between a gift of a dozen home-baked cookies and 10 shares of common stock, for example.

Any gifts must be reported to the Volunteer/Program Coordinator for approval.

12. Lending or Giving Money to Clients

Volunteers are not permitted to lend or give money to clients, their families, or partners. Volunteers should forward the request to the Program Coordinator.

13. Sick Leave

Volunteers who are ill are encouraged to stay home and take care of themselves. Sickness or emotional distress is a legitimate reason for canceling commitment. If it will be a lengthy illness/distress, the Volunteer should inform the Volunteer/Program Coordinator.

14. Leave of Absence for Bereavement

ACAS requires all Volunteers who experience personal loss to take an extended leave of absence from their responsibilities.

Volunteer experiencing a close personal loss, particularly the death of a partner or family member, is expected to share this information with the Volunteer/Program Coordinator. The Coordinator, in conjunction with the Volunteer, will plan a leave of absence, during which time the Volunteer will be relieved of all responsibilities. The forms for the leave may

include agreed-upon means for ACAS and Volunteer to maintain a connection including, but not exclusive to, attending Volunteer meetings. ACAS counseling and bereavement services will be made available to the Volunteer and be involved in the assessment if necessary.

15. Volunteer Recognition

ACAS, through the initiative of the Volunteer Coordinator and in consultation with the Program Coordinators, will recognize and show appreciation for the contribution of Volunteers.

- All Volunteers will be invited to Volunteer Appreciation Events held least bi-annually
- The Volunteer Coordinator/Program Coordinator is responsible for sending "thank you" cards and acknowledging Volunteer contributions on a
- continuing basis, as appropriate.
- Volunteers who have fulfilled-worth of service satisfactorily will be provided with verbal/or written reference upon her/his request
- Volunteer will be acknowledged every year in writing in ACAS' Annual report to the membership
- Volunteers will be able to access ACAS' services as needed and upon approval of Coordinators
- Volunteers will be notified of and invited to continuous skills development training opportunities and care for the caregiver
- workshops/events as appropriate and when available
- Volunteers who complete the complete series of ACAS Volunteer skill development training will be presented with a certificate recognizing
- their participation and training completion.

Appendix Training Requirements

Volunteer Orientation and LAFS

All volunteers have to attend the Volunteer Orientation and the volunteer basic training-LAFS (Learning, Awareness, Fun and Sharing). The objective of LAFS is to provide an environment for volunteers to share their own comfort level, their ideas, feelings, hopes and perception of volunteer work at ACAS through sharing, learning and awareness on issues about HIV/AIDS, self awareness, cultural competency and confidentiality.

Specific Skills Development Training

Volunteers are required to complete the training for the specific program that they want to do volunteer work. Each program requires specific skills training which are indicated in the volunteer job description. The following is the training description and requirement.

Working in Diversity

Required for all ACAS volunteers

Learn about cultural competence and how to recognize the values, knowledge and skills required because one of the challenges to this work is how we relate to clients and colleagues across our differences. In this workshop, we will look at some challenges when working cross-culturally and some strategies to address those challenges.

Living with HIV/AIDS

Required for Support volunteers/recommended for all other volunteers

Learn about how the many complex issues faced by some Asian living with HIV/AIDS, impact their lives mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually within a holistic framework.

Communication, Introduction to Crisis Intervention and Referral

Required for all ACAS Education and Support program volunteers

Learn practical ways to enhance your communication skills and active listening; practical opportunities for basic counseling, to understand crisis intervention and learn the basic knowledge on referral.

Outreach Technique

Required for Education and outreach volunteers

Learn how to overcome the challenges outreaching to the Asian communities, especially at bars, baths and community events. Meet people and have fun!

Language Interpretation

Required for all volunteers who provide interpretation

Learn how to provide culturally appropriate language interpretation to the Asian service users, the principles and concepts, common issues and problems, and the interpreter's code of ethics.

Loss, Grief and Bereavement

Required for support program volunteers and recommended for all volunteers

Learn the language, theory, and framework of grief and loss and how it impacts on us as individuals, our work, and in our communities.