

Informal Staff Defuser

ROLE. Informally connect with volunteers as they are arriving or leaving the reception centre.

PURPOSE: To provide volunteers an opportunity to “get grounded” with a co-worker who understand the nature of their work prior to leaving from and returning to the centre.

RATIONALE: For most staff, volunteering is a rewarding experience. At times, however, volunteers encounter situations that can be heart rendering. Asking volunteers how their day went often brings out these experiences. Talking helps work through potential problems.

LOCATION: By the volunteer sign-in and sign-out station in the volunteer room.

PROCESS:

1. “Hang-out” by the sign-in/sign-out area.
2. Greet volunteers as they arrive.
3. Find out if they are new or returning volunteers. If new, simply thank them for coming and indicate that the (Agency Taking on this role – ESS, Salvation Army), folks like you, are available for support. Give them a prepared stress management handout.
4. If they are **returning**, welcome them back and, in a non-intrusive fashion, find out how their last shift went and how they are as they are about to start today. Make sure they received the stress management handout. If not, give them one.
5. If they seem “resilient” wish them a good day.
6. If they seem overly stressed, help them decide if today is a good day to be volunteering. Help them set appropriate boundaries (e.g. if they have been working too many days or hours, suggest a break).
7. If you are concerned about their ability to function and they choose to volunteer, discreetly talk to their supervisor so they can keep an eye on them or place them in a role appropriate for their stress level.
8. If they are **leaving**, find out how their shift went.
9. If they seem “resilient” thank them for coming and wish them a good day or night.
10. If they seem overly stressed, keep talking to them in a discrete fashion (away from others if they are upset. Perhaps walk them to their car as you chat):
 - a. Listen to what they went through on their shift – their story;
 - b. Find out what impact it has had on them. Normalize their reactions (e.g. feeling emotional about the stories they have heard) and validate their feelings;
 - c. Don’t start to do therapy. Your role is empathetic listening;
 - d. Once they have discussed their thoughts and feelings with you, see how they are doing now (having had a chance to talk it out), as they are about to leave the reception centre;
 - e. If they remain stressed, help them decide how they can take care of themselves over the next few hours;
11. Make sure you “defuse” yourself at the end of your shift.