



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

We make a better world together



Table of Contents

Welcome	3
About Us	3
Our Mission	4
Our Goal	4
Volunteering at Connections	4
Our Programs	4
Roles and Responsibilities	5
Recruitment and Selection	5
Orientation and Training	6
Volunteer Hours and Reference Letters	6
<i>How to Log Your Volunteer Hours</i>	6
<i>Approval and Records</i>	7
<i>Requesting a Reference</i>	7
Policies and Conduct	8
Code of Ethics	8
Client Rights and Confidentiality	9
Harassment and Inclusion	10
Media Contact and Publicity	10
Safety	11
Emergency Procedures	11
<i>General Emergency Guidelines</i>	11
<i>Medical Emergencies</i>	11
<i>Fire or Evacuation</i>	12
Incident Reporting	12
Health and Safety Practices	12
Practical Information	13
Dress Code	13
Personal Belongings	13
Attendance	13
Vacation or Leave of Absence	13
Resignation	13
Problems, Concerns or Questions	14
Tracking of Volunteer Hours	14
Gifts to Volunteers	14
Severe Weather Conditions	14
Contact Us	15

Welcome

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Connections Community Services Society (CCSS)! Volunteers are at the heart of what we do. You bring a wide variety of skills and fresh perspectives that help us offer meaningful support to the people we serve. We're grateful that you're dedicating your time and energy to our agency, and we hope that your experience with us is fun, fulfilling and full of connection.

About Us

Connections Community Services Society is a registered charitable organization. We began in 1974 as "Richmond Youth Services Agency," created by a group of committed and passionate community members with support from United Way. Richmond Youth Services Agency strived to ensure that the youth in our community received support, resources and opportunities needed to succeed and achieve their dreams.

Over the past 50 years, our work has expanded alongside the community's needs. Today, we serve children, families, newcomers, seniors and specialized populations, while still supporting the youths who were part of our original mission. We've grown into an organization dedicated to strengthening the whole community.

At Connections, we believe that no one should have to navigate challenges alone. Our work is guided by the belief that strong communities are built through connection, support and shared responsibility.

Our Mission

We strive to provide accessible, responsive programs and services that support the wellbeing of children, youth, families and the broader community.

Our Goal

By creating connections and supporting our community, we help the children, youth and families grow, thrive and move confidently toward their goals.

Volunteering at Connections

Connections Community Services Society values volunteers as essential partners in our programs and services. Volunteers play an active role in supporting our work and strengthening the community.

Our Programs

- ▶ Digital Literacy for Seniors
- ▶ Generations Homework Club
- ▶ Indigenous Program
- ▶ Kids Camp
- ▶ Marketing/ Fundraising
- ▶ Super Seniors Support Group
- ▶ Tax Clinic
- ▶ Youth Focus Group
- ▶ and many more!

Roles and Responsibilities

All programs require volunteers to take on different roles and responsibilities. It is best to talk to your supervisor to make sure you understand all your roles clearly.

Generally, volunteers are expected to:

- ▶ Contribute positively as part of a team.
- ▶ Be reliable and communicate clearly about availability.
- ▶ Carry out assigned duties as outlined in your role description.
- ▶ Participate in required orientation and training.
- ▶ Uphold organizational policies, including confidentiality and professional conduct.

Recruitment and Selection

Connections Community Services Society welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds. An application and screening process is used to ensure safe, appropriate and positive placements.

Applicants are required to submit:

- ▶ A completed volunteer application
- ▶ A current resume
- ▶ A criminal record check (when required)

Interviews help determine the best match between the volunteer and available roles. Screening requirements vary depending on the level of responsibility and contact with vulnerable populations. Only selected candidates will be contacted further for interviews.

Orientation and Training

All volunteers will receive program-specific training that includes:

- ▶ Review of this Volunteer Handbook
- ▶ Overview of volunteer roles and expectations
- ▶ Health and safety information
- ▶ Introduction to staff and fellow volunteers

Volunteer Hours and Reference Letters

CCSS uses an online tracking system to record all volunteer hours. Logged hours may be used for university, school or employment purposes.

Approved volunteer hours can be used to request:

- ▶ Proof of volunteer hours at CCSS for a specific time period
- ▶ Reference letters (a minimum of 30 approved volunteer hours is required)
- ▶ Endorsement or verification of volunteer hours for school programs or employment

How to Log Your Volunteer Hours

Volunteers are responsible for accurately logging their own hours.

Log your hours by visiting hours.ccssociety.ca after completing each volunteer shift, activity, event or program.

How you log your hours depends on your role:

- ▶ For programs with regular shifts (such as Homework Club, Tech Class, or Youth Focus Group), log the total number of hours as advised by your program leader at the end of the term.
- ▶ For single-day or special events (such as holiday events or community celebrations), log the hours based on your scheduled shift or attendance.
- ▶ For office administration, tax clinic or backend support roles with irregular hours, you may log hours after each shift or submit the total number of hours worked over a period of time.

If you volunteer in more than one role or program, hours must be submitted separately for each role. Be sure to include time spent on orientation, meetings, preparation, debriefing and approved work completed at home.

Approval and Records

Your tracking file will show your total approved volunteer hours from your first submission onward. Volunteers are encouraged to bookmark their tracking files for easy access and ongoing record keeping.

Requesting a Reference

You may need to invite CCSS staff to be your reference when you apply for other positions, programs/universities or jobs. Always ask for permission before giving the name and the contact of the reference to external parties. Please request by writing an email or talk to your reference in person about the program you are applying. Allow at least three week's time for your reference to respond.

Policies and Conduct

Code of Ethics

Connections Community Services Society expects all volunteers to act in a way that reflects the values of respect, responsibility and community care. Volunteers are representatives of the organization and play an important role in creating a safe, inclusive and supportive environment.

Volunteers are expected to:

- ▶ Notify your supervisor as soon as possible if you cannot attend a shift.
- ▶ Act with honesty, professionalism and respect toward clients, staff and fellow volunteers.
- ▶ Place the wellbeing and safety of clients and the community first.
- ▶ Maintain professional boundaries and accountability for their actions.
- ▶ Follow organizational policies, procedures and instructions from supervisors.
- ▶ Protect the confidentiality of all client, staff and organizational information.
- ▶ Use respectful language and behaviour at all times.
- ▶ Use English as the primary language during volunteer activities to ensure inclusion.
- ▶ Be reliable and communicate promptly if unable to attend a scheduled shift.
- ▶ Participate in required orientation and training.

Volunteers are encouraged to report any situation where they feel uncomfortable, unsafe or harassed. Failure to follow the Code of Ethics may result in disciplinary action, including termination of volunteer service.

Client Rights and Confidentiality

Clients receiving services through CCSS have the rights to:

- ▶ Respect, dignity and confidentiality.
- ▶ Safe, non-coercive and supportive services.
- ▶ Informed choice and access to appropriate care.
- ▶ Emotional and physical wellbeing.
- ▶ Access to responsible guidance, grievance procedures and family supports.
- ▶ Opportunities for personal growth, creativity and development.

Volunteers must always uphold and respect these rights. Additionally, volunteers may have access to personal or sensitive information about clients, staff or other volunteers. All such information must remain confidential.

Information may only be disclosed when:

- ▶ Written consent has been provided.
- ▶ Disclosure is required for service delivery or administration.
- ▶ Disclosure is required by law.
- ▶ There is a medical or safety emergency.

Breaches of confidentiality may result in immediate termination of volunteer service.

Harassment and Inclusion

Connections Community Services Society is committed to providing a respectful, inclusive and harassment-free environment.

Harassment or discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. This includes:

- ▶ Unwelcome verbal, physical, visual or written conduct.
- ▶ Sexual comments, advances or unwanted physical contact.
- ▶ Intimidating, discriminatory or offensive behaviour.

Volunteers are expected to:

- ▶ Respect cultural, social, and personal differences.
- ▶ Promote equity and inclusion.
- ▶ Report conduct that violates this policy.

Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Media Contact and Publicity

Volunteers may not speak to the media or make public statements on behalf of CCSS without approval from the Executive Director.

This includes:

- ▶ Media interviews
- ▶ Press releases
- ▶ Public statements about clients, staff or internal matters
- ▶ Posting client-related content on social media

No photographs of clients are to be taken for publicity purposes unless a release is signed and obtained from that individual.

Failure to follow this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Safety

Emergency Procedures

Emergencies can happen at any time. Volunteers are expected to remain calm, follow instructions and prioritize safety. If you are unsure what to do, contact your supervisor immediately.

General Emergency Guidelines

- ▶ Follow directions from CCSS staff or emergency responders at all times.
- ▶ Do not put yourself or others at risk.
- ▶ Stay with clients until staff or emergency services arrive, unless instructed otherwise.
- ▶ Know the location of emergency exits, first aid kits and fire extinguishers at your site.

Medical Emergencies

- ▶ Call 911 immediately if there is a serious injury, loss of consciousness, breathing difficulty or other urgent medical concern.
- ▶ Notify your supervisor or the most senior staff member on site as soon as possible.
- ▶ Do not administer medication unless you are trained and authorized to do so.
- ▶ Stay with the individual until help arrives.

Fire or Evacuation

- ▶ Activate the nearest fire alarm if required.
- ▶ Evacuate the building calmly using the nearest safe exit.
- ▶ Do not use elevators.
- ▶ Assist clients as directed by staff.
- ▶ Proceed to the designated meeting point and wait for further instructions.
- ▶ Do not re-enter the building until cleared by emergency personnel.

Incident Reporting

- ▶ Report injuries, accidents or near-miss incidents immediately.
- ▶ Complete a Critical Incident Report within 24 hours.
- ▶ Follow universal health precautions at all times.
- ▶ Use protective equipment provided when administering first aid.

Health and Safety Practices

Volunteers share responsibility for maintaining a safe and healthy environment for clients, staff and fellow volunteers.

Volunteers are expected to:

- ▶ Follow all health and safety policies and instructions from supervisors.
- ▶ Work within the limits of their role, training and comfort level.
- ▶ Report hazards, unsafe conditions or damaged equipment immediately.
- ▶ Practice good hygiene, including regular handwashing and sanitizing shared spaces.

- ▶ Stay home and notify a supervisor if feeling unwell or experiencing symptoms of illness.
- ▶ Keep program areas, exits and walkways clear and safe.
- ▶ Know the location of emergency exits, first aid kits and safety equipment.

Practical Information

Dress Code

Wear clean, appropriate and comfortable clothing suitable for your role.

Personal Belongings

Volunteers are responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings while on site.

Attendance

If you are unable to volunteer due to illness or other reasons, notify your direct supervisor or if they are unavailable, contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Vacation or Leave of Absence

If you are going on vacation or taking a leave of absence, please notify your direct supervisor, or if they are unavailable, contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Resignation

If possible, please provide two weeks' notice in writing to your direct supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator if you are unable to continue volunteering.

Problems, Concerns or Questions

Any problems, concerns or questions pertaining to the operation of the Connections Community Services Society may be referred to your direct supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator.

Gifts to Volunteers

Infrequently, clients may wish to repay the kindness and help they receive from volunteers with a gift or money. Our main concern is not to offend, embarrass or upset the clients. The offer of a gift or money should be discouraged and graciously refused. If the client is overly insistent, please refer them to your direct supervisor or to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Severe Weather Conditions

During severe winter weather or other hazardous conditions, programs may be canceled for safety reasons. Always check for updates from staff before leaving to avoid unnecessary travel.

Contact Us

Connections Community Services Society (CCSS)

Address: 7580 River Rd #110, Richmond, BC, V6X 1X6

Phone (Office Front Desk): (604) 271-7600

Hours: 9 AM - 4:30 PM on Mondays to Fridays

Access to CCSS

If you are driving, there are free parking spots available in the covered area at the back of the building. Access us through the metal gate at the front entrance.

The nearest SkyTrain station is Aberdeen Station, which is also the main hub for local bus routes. The walk from the station to CCSS is approximately five minutes toward the dyke.

*For more information and enquires, please contact **Volunteer Leadership & Management Team** at volunteer@ccssociety.ca*

