



Volunteering During COVID-19

Guidelines for
Visiting and
Resident
Volunteers



Volunteer Victoria

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Acknowledgement and Gratitude

- Volunteer Victoria serves in the traditional territory of the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱sáneč Nations. To the Lekwungen speaking people we offer our thanks and respect. This is an astonishing space to live, to work, and to volunteer.
- We also want to thank each of you for participating in this training. We appreciate that you have taken the time to learn how to stay safe, to connect, and to serve your neighbours and community. Thank you!

About this Training

This training has been developed by Volunteer Victoria, a volunteer centre serving people of all ages and organizations of all kinds across Greater Victoria. Our thanks to our partners at the Humboldt Valley Residents Association Neighbour-2-Neighbour Project and the Victoria Foundation Jake Fund.

Thanks to Volunteer Canada, Volunteer Toronto, Volunteer Ireland, and Volunteer Israel, and the BC Ministry of Health, BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, and the Public Health Agency of Canada for creating materials we have referenced in this training.

Volunteer Victoria and the Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association are literal neighbours. We share an office space and a desire to provide relevant, timely information to help our communities. Thanks VISOA!



“Volunteer Victoria recruits and advises thousands of volunteers each year. But this year, volunteering has changed.

COVID-19 has changed the way we physically connect with others, and this changes the ways that everyone must volunteer.

What has not changed is the power and abundance of volunteerism. Neighbours are helping neighbours more and people are getting to know each other better. We remain connected through volunteerism even though we are physically apart.”

Lisa Mort-Putland, Executive Director
Volunteer Victoria





The Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association (VISOA) is an independent, non-profit organization supported solely by membership fees. Formed in 1973, it is the longest-running society of its kind in Canada providing information, education and support. VISOA membership is open to any resident of B.C., strata corporations (such as condominiums, town homes, bare land and commercial stratas) and businesses that provide goods and services to stratas.

- Provides information and support to assist strata lot owners and strata councils.
- Offers educational seminars and workshops on all aspects of ownership and management.
- Advocates for strata corporations and strata lot owners to provincial, regional and municipal governments.

Telephone: 250-920-0688 or Toll Free at 1-855-38-VISOA (855-388-4762) | administrator@visoa.bc.ca | Facebook: @VISOA.BC | Twitter: @VISOA_BC | www.visoa.bc.ca



Types of Volunteers You Might Find in Shared Buildings

- **Formal volunteers:** Individuals who give unpaid help to groups, clubs or organizations. Formal volunteers are normally assessed and monitored as they are assigned to help vulnerable or medically fragile clients on an ongoing basis. Volunteers help reduce isolation and support needs and may deliver food/medicines, run errands etc.
- **Informal volunteers:** Individuals who give unpaid help to people who are not relatives. Informal volunteers can be neighbours or people who connect via networks or social media. Volunteers are not assessed or monitored. The support is often one-time and transactional in nature.
- **Resident volunteers:** owners or tenants who live in your building who volunteer to help their neighbours.
- **Visiting volunteers:** individuals who visit your building to volunteer formally or informally.

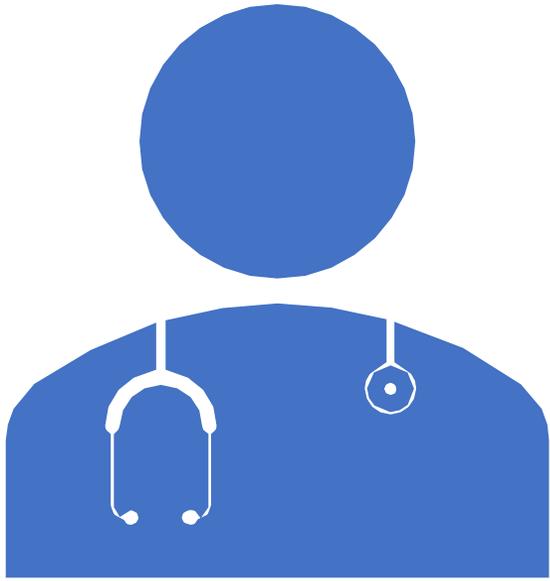
Volunteering Since COVID-19

Formal Volunteering

- Vulnerable residents and tenants who needed help before COVID-19 may still be connected to existing formal volunteering programs. Some services have moved online or via phone.
- Organizations normally assign the same volunteer or group of volunteers to a client.
- Volunteers are trained to follow health and safety guidelines and they report back to staff in organizations if they, or their clients, need help.
- As more residents experience isolation and loneliness we expect to see more people experiencing mental health challenges.

Informal Volunteering

- Informal volunteerism rates have sky-rocketed!
- Many people are volunteering in new ways or for the first time. Everyone can be a volunteer.
- Anyone can ask for help from a volunteer.
- Informal volunteers & clients may be meeting for the first time in your building or in a client's residence. Volunteers & clients are responsible for creating safe boundaries and negotiating terms for engagement. There is no supervision.
- Informal volunteers help residents with a range of services including, but not limited to, running errands, caring for pets, and dropping off goods.



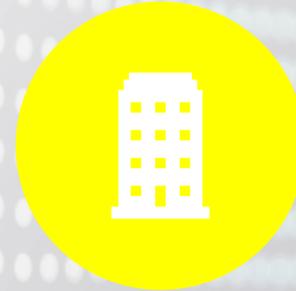
We Cannot Say This Enough

- All volunteers must practice safe physical distancing and excellent hygiene practices before, during, and after every volunteer activity.
- Volunteers who act independently can have liability if they harm someone else while volunteering. All volunteers **MUST** follow best practice and health and safety guidelines.

Different Ways to Approach Volunteerism



Strata Councils or Residents Associations might actively recruit volunteers and coordinate volunteering opportunities for their owners and tenants. Examples: volunteers are members of the Strata Council, join a building committee, or coordinate activities with/for neighbours etc.



Strata Councils or Residents Associations might restrict formal volunteer roles to council positions but provide residents who volunteer with access to shared gathering spaces and encourage neighbours to share contact information so that they can help each other.

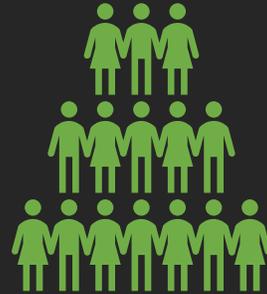


Strata Councils or Residents Associations might provide the support of a staff member such as a resident manager, building manager, or concierge to help coordinate activities for residents and tenants. Resident and visiting volunteers receive the benefit of staff oversight.



Strata Councils or Residents Associations might not have previously articulated their thoughts on formal and informal volunteerism in their building/grounds. These groups have no existing bylaws, guidelines, or protocols regarding volunteers or volunteerism.

Mitigating the Risks: Volunteerism Works When...



People: Visiting and Resident Volunteers and Clients

Follow all health and safety measures before, during, and after every volunteer activity

Remain mindful while travelling through buildings, common property, parking lots, or grounds

Understand any policies or protocols put in place by the Strata Council or Residents Association to help track, coordinate, or manage visiting or resident volunteers during COVID-19 in order to mitigate risks

Report incidents AND share successes with the Strata Council or Residents Association

Work together to promote human rights and protect privacy and confidentiality

Work together to ensure the safe delivery of goods, help lift spirits, and reduce isolation

Mitigating the Risks: Volunteerism Works When...



Environment

Shared spaces and shared tools used by volunteers and clients are sanitized after every use e.g. sign-up or check-in sheets, pens/pencils, mail boxes, resident front doors, notice boards etc.

Volunteers and clients know who is responsible for cleaning shared spaces and shared tools. They also know how and when to clean shared items so that they can keep everyone safe

Volunteers and the people who are served know how to exchange goods in common areas to avoid cross contamination and over-touching of common property such as a resident's front door

Volunteers and clients know where, how, and if they can dispose of used gloves, tissues, and masks that are used during volunteer activities

Mitigating the Risks: Volunteerism Works When...



Assets

Visiting and resident volunteers respect, value, and protect the building, common property, and grounds and apply the applicable bylaws, policies, and protocols of the Strata Council or Residents Association

Mitigating the Risks: Volunteerism Works When...



Reputation

Strata Councils or Residents Associations balance their duty to protect buildings, common assets, and gardens and grounds with their desire to ensure that owners and tenants who need help from a resident or visiting volunteer remain safe, healthy, supported, and cared for. The protection of human rights, dignity, and confidentiality are essential.

No one wants to leave a neighbour behind on this journey through COVID-19.

Mitigating the Risks: Volunteerism Works When...



Systems and Security

- Resident and visiting volunteers and the people who are served articulate and maintain safe boundaries
- Resident volunteers do not have unrestricted access to confidential information about their neighbours
 - Visiting volunteers have time-limited or restricted access to common areas and shared spaces
- Formal and informal visiting volunteers sign-in or check-in upon arrival for each volunteering activity



What is Right In Your Building?

- Volunteering is an optional activity and there are ways to help owners and tenants without meeting people in person.
- We invite Strata Councils, Residents Associations, and resident and visiting volunteers to think about 3 types of volunteering opportunities – no contact volunteering, low contact volunteering, and higher contact volunteering.
- We want everyone to be prepared for all the ways that volunteering has changed, and to understand what must happen each time someone volunteers to mitigate risk and keep everyone safe and healthy.

Examples of Volunteerism in Buildings



Higher Contact Volunteer Activities – Volunteers enter residential units, have frequent visits to provide services, or engage in tasks that require time to complete while using risk mitigation tools, protocols, and practices

- Visiting volunteers provide support services to vulnerable or home-bound owners or tenants on an on-going basis
- Resident volunteers provide in-person, in-unit services to a vulnerable or home-bound neighbour
- Any activity where a volunteer drives a non family member during COVID-19



Low Contact Volunteer Activities – Volunteers never enter residential units or volunteers enter just once for a minimal time using risk mitigation tools, protocols, and practices

- Resident or visiting volunteers pick up mail, groceries, or goods and deliver them to the doorstep of an owner or tenant
- Resident or visiting volunteers help with occasional pet care or run errands for an owner or tenant
- Resident volunteers help solve immediate in-unit challenges e.g. helping to reconnect a neighbour to the Internet



No Contact Volunteer Activities

- Resident or visiting volunteers provide reassurance or friendly visiting phone calls
- Resident or visiting volunteers help fill in paperwork, support IT challenges, provide services over the phone or online
- Resident volunteers attend virtual meetings, AGM's, and participate in activities or events online or over the phone

Consider personal risk tolerances

If you are an owner or tenant with underlying health concerns, we strongly recommend that you only volunteer for no-contact volunteer positions, and that you know how to mitigate risks from contact with resident or visiting volunteers who visit your unit to provide services.

If you are not vulnerable in any way and you are risk tolerant, you might choose to volunteer in a position where you serve neighbours in-person from a safe distance. We encourage you to consider how you will mitigate risks to your own health and to the health of your family, and to any neighbours who you serve, and how you will protect the shared spaces.

If you volunteer in a position where you have lots of safe, but sustained contact with many neighbours you should consider volunteering less frequently. You must multiply the amount of time (impact) by the number of times you volunteer (frequency) and volunteer in ways that support everyone's best health.

A volunteer activity such as delivering groceries is considered low risk as it requires short, safe contact with 2 or more other people. You must be willing to take every precaution when you shop, transfer groceries from the shopping cart to your vehicle, deliver groceries to your neighbours doorstep and communicate from a safe physical distance, and return home to your unit.

Frequency Multiplied by Impact

Incident: Connecting with neighbours who are medically fragile Risk: Spreading the virus	Never happens when I volunteer	Happens infrequently <once a year	Happens <Once a Month	Happens < Once a Day	Happens > Once a Day
zero risk					
slight risk					
limited risk					
considerable risk					
major risk					
extreme risk					

Place yourself on this chart by choosing a column and a row. If you are very risk tolerant you might fall on the lower right-hand side of the chart and if you are very risk adverse you would fall on the top left-hand side, or you may fall somewhere in between. Choose a volunteer position that matches your risk tolerance. We never want volunteers to cross personal boundaries.

Safety is the Priority

We cannot volunteer in groups anymore.

Community safety guidelines are constantly changing. As a volunteer, you must check and understand the guidelines.

You **MUST** ask yourself every time you volunteer away from your home:

- Am I well? If the answer is no. **DO NOT** volunteer.
- Did I have contact with someone who is unwell? If the answer is yes, **DO NOT** volunteer.



Every Time You Volunteer You Need To:



- Volunteering is always meaningful and rewarding, but volunteering during COVID-19 is more complex than normal. It can be triggering.

- You must have strategies to reduce the risk to yourself and others and keep safe any items you exchange with the neighbours you serve.

- You must follow all COVID-19 prevention strategies every time you volunteer with others. Lives are literally on the line.

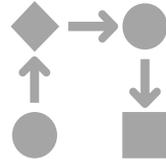
- If volunteering during COVID-19 works for you, please consider if and how you will volunteer again safely. Thank you!!

Resident and Visiting Volunteers Must



Prepare

Don't assume who will or will not need help, vulnerabilities and disabilities are often hidden;
Do not call unannounced. People are anxious about meeting others, particularly if they have a medical condition or live alone;
Leave a sanitized note telling residents that you are a neighbour and volunteer. Ask them to call or email you to arrange a mutually convenient time to help.



Minimize

Avoid travelling by public transit during your volunteering activities;
Do not to ride in a vehicle with more than one other person;
Bring a personal supply of hand sanitizer, tissues, a mask & gloves when volunteering in your building;
Bring your own food/water, do not share food/plates/cutlery;
Help one person, wash your hands, change your clothes, wash your hands.



Clarify

Wash your hands before and after EVERY interaction;
Sanitize everything you bring to your volunteer activity and everything you pick up during your volunteer activity;
Don't make physical contact with others or touch items such as door handles or elevator buttons;
Do not use public washrooms;
Follow the Strata Council or Resident Association policies and guidelines.



Reasonable Expectations

- Volunteers should prepare both physically and emotionally for volunteering. Everyone is grateful to receive help, but some neighbours are also frightened, anxious, or even angry when volunteers arrive on their doorstep. This can be triggering for everyone.
- Volunteers cannot change how neighbours feel in that moment, but you can be nonjudgmental and supportive, so they know that you care.
- Plan enough time to complete your volunteering tasks – particularly if visiting a grocery store, food bank, or pharmacy for a neighbour.
- Neighbours may be hard of hearing, have English as another language, feel confused etc. Communicating 2m apart can be more challenging.
- If you feel overwhelmed by something that happened while volunteering, please connect with Volunteer Victoria. We can help.



Keeping Neighbours and Volunteers Safe



If a neighbour needs more help than you can give, or they need a service that you cannot provide, please tell someone. Community organizations have trained staff to support clients in additional ways.



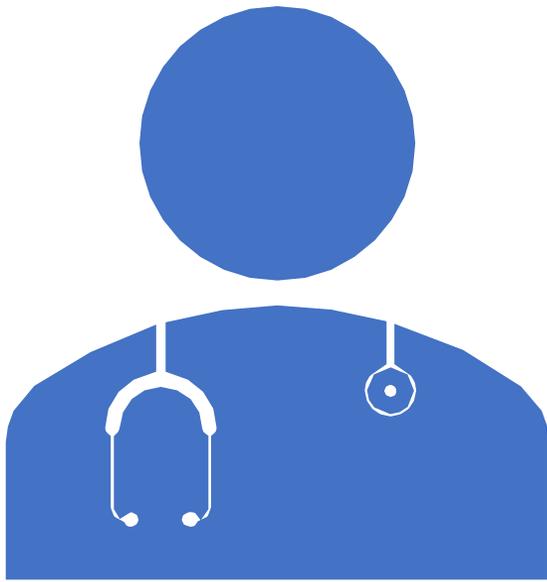
Volunteers may be given a client or neighbour's contact information or personal information to complete a task. All information needs to **remain strictly confidential**. Do not discuss neighbours or their circumstances with others.



Volunteers will need to exchange information with neighbours. Only share what is necessary to complete the volunteering task. Create and keep professional boundaries and report back to a community organization if you see or experience something that requires follow-up.



To reduce the number of in-person contacts, volunteers may need to pay for items at stores. Volunteers and neighbours must agree how they will transfer funds in advance of any purchases being made.



READ AND UNDERSTAND BEFORE VOLUNTEERING

- Vehicle Wipe-down Precautions (Volunteer Toronto)
<https://volunteervictoria.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Vehicle-Wipe-Down-Precautions-for-COVID-19.pdf>
- COVID-19 Handwashing (Public Health Agency of Canada)
<https://volunteervictoria.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/covid-19-handwashing-eng.pdf>
- COVID-19 Know the difference self-monitoring/Isolation (Public Health Agency of Canada)
<https://volunteervictoria.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/know-difference-self-monitoring-isolation-covid-19-eng.pdf>
- COVID-19 Human Rights (BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner)
<https://volunteervictoria.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Human-Rights-and-Covid-19.pdf>
- COVID-19 and Strata Housing (Government of BC)
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/strata-housing/covid-19-and-strata-housing>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- How do I know which of my neighbours need help? *You will need to ask them. Needs change. Please stay in touch with neighbours and don't assume that saying no to help once means that they will not need help in the future.*
- How should I exchange items with a neighbour? *Sanitize your hands, put sanitized items in a bag in the back of your vehicle (never the front seat). Put items on the doorstep for your neighbour using a tissue/gloves, knock on the door with your elbow or other item – never your hand. Step back 2m. Smile, say hello, and remind your neighbour of your name and that you are a volunteer. If you need to exchange payment for goods ask your neighbour to put the cash or cheque in a plastic bag. Sanitize your hands, the payment, and your vehicle.*
- Should I wear gloves or a mask to volunteer? *Volunteers should wear gloves and a mask. A cloth mask collects droplets, so if you cannot sneeze or cough into a tissue or sleeve it will help reduce the spread of germs in shared spaces. It will not protect you or others from COVID-19. You must also wash it after each use. Only touch items & surfaces with a tissue or gloves. Throw them away responsibly after use. Health professionals avoid touching their faces and remove their gloves and masks without cross-contamination, can you?*





The Good Stuff

You are bringing hope to your neighbours and helping them cope during this difficult time. Thank you!

People need help with transactional items such as picking up groceries, prescriptions etc. but we all need help to lift spirits and reduce isolation.

Think of fun ways to connect without physical contact. Here are some ideas from other local volunteers:

- 10-minute parking lot/driveway date. Bring your own chair and a beverage and meet a neighbour 6.6 ft apart
- Take a virtual visit to a museum/gallery with your neighbour
- Wear a costume – it makes everyone smile and wonder
- Learn a song, sing it from your own balcony. Sing a round robin with neighbours on other balconies and floors
- Call, email, talk to neighbours about nature, pets, first dates...just talk to people, listen to people, and keep safe

