# Volunteer Dismissal Procedures (Template)

Participation as an SHIPvolunteer is a privilege, not a right. The SHIPprogram has an obligation to honor the contributions of the many good volunteers by directly and expeditiously monitoring and correcting the behavior of volunteers whose actions are not consistent with the high standards expected of all SHIPvolunteers.

In rare cases, this obligation may lead to a decision to dismiss a volunteer from service. Do this carefully and systematically. Consider the following as you dismiss a volunteer:

1. Dismissal of a volunteer is often a sign that the volunteer management system has failed. This failure might have arisen in recruitment of an unsuitable volunteer, in a failure to adequately interview and screen a prospective volunteer, in placing a volunteer in an incompatible role, in insufficient training as to the knowledge and behaviors expected of volunteers, or in providing insufficient supervision. It might also indicate failures on the part of the volunteer. In any case, it is a situation that you should approach carefully, with a particular aim of learning from the experience so that it does not happen again. Following dismissal of an SHIPvolunteer, staff should conduct a de-briefing to discuss what might be changed or improved in the SHIPvolunteer management system to prevent similar problems from occurring in the future.
2. Dismissal is an action of last resort except in cases where the volunteer has exhibited the totally unacceptable behaviors outlined in [Volunteer Risk and Program Management (VRPM)](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02236.pdf) Policy 3.66: Immediate dismissal and as outlined in agency-established guidelines.
3. Volunteer supervisors are the primary means for both avoiding behaviors leading to dismissal of a volunteer and for intervening early to channel mis-performing volunteers back to acceptable behaviors and conduct. Supervisors should:
* Maintain regular contact with volunteers
* Regularly monitor the actions and performance of volunteers
* Provide on-going feedback to volunteers so they can better perform their roles
* Develop plans for improving volunteer performance and monitor progress on these plans

Coordinators of volunteers should work with volunteer supervisors in developing corrective action plans and carrying out dismissal actions.

Written records should be kept to indicate supervisor activity on all of the above items. These records should include:

* Records of feedback and data on volunteer work performance and behavior
* Records of conversations with volunteers regarding needed improvement or change in behavior and records of the results of such conversations
* Any written communication with the volunteer indicating the need for improved performance or any written performance improvement plan
* Copies of the [Dismissal Report Form](#_Volunteer_Dismissal_Report), [Dismissal Letter to the Volunteer](#_Dismissal_Letter_to) and [Dismissal Letters about the Volunteer](#_Dismissal_Letter_About) to other affected parties

Templates for volunteer evaluations are available on the [GWAAR Volunteer Resources webpage](https://gwaar.org/volunteer-resources).

1. Some incidents leading to dismissal result from observations of volunteers engaging in a significant breach of SHIPprogram rules of volunteer behavior and performance. Consider the following procedures when investigating and reacting to these reported incidents:
2. Where there is persistent *rumor* regarding the performance or behavior of a volunteer:
* Handle the situation as discretely as possible, involving only those directly connected to the reported incident or directly charged with supervising the volunteer.
* Take no formal action until you have investigated the rumor and determined if it has any substance.
* Gather as much data as possible. This would include determining the source of the rumor and evaluating the source’s credibility. It would also include conducting a check of the volunteer’s history and performance. It might include conversations with other persons who have pertinent information regarding the reported incident or conduct. The intent of this investigation is to determine whether the conduct in question actually occurred. Do not expect to always have definitive evidence. Be prepared to make a determination based on what is most likely given any pattern that emerges from the evidence.
* Keep a written, dated, confidential record of all findings.
* Consider discussing the reported conduct with the volunteer. This will depend on the nature of the reported conduct. In cases of extreme suspected misconduct, you may choose not to discuss the situation with the volunteer until you have gathered all available data and evidence. If such a discussion is held, have another staff representative present and invite the volunteer to bring a representative to the meeting.

If no derogatory facts are discovered, make it clear to the volunteer that the SHIPprogram does not listen to mere gossip or rumor. Give the volunteer who has been accused assurance that the program values his or her continued service. Inform those who were the source of the rumor that it has been found baseless and that continuing to spread the rumor violates the SHIPrules of volunteer conduct.

1. If you determine that the rumors of misconduct are true or if there is a direct accusation regarding the conduct of a volunteer, follow the same pattern as outlined above, but:
* Discuss the situation with the person(s) raising the accusation or providing credible testimony as to the truth of rumored misconduct and compile a full report on the nature, timing, and all other aspects of the matter under consideration. Ask them to confirm your record of the substance of their accusations or testimony by signing a statement of the facts you have gathered from them.
* Discuss the situation with the volunteer, providing her or him with all the facts reported to you. Ask for their view of the situation, the accuracy of the report, and any other facts they believe are relevant. Strongly consider having another SHIPprogram representative present if the matter under discussion is one of extreme misconduct and invite the volunteer to have a representative present. You do not need to do this if you believe the situation can be corrected by normal supervisory intervention.
* If the accusation involves serious or extreme misconduct, consider suspending the volunteer from service pending the results of your investigation.
* If the facts of the situation or the volunteer’s direct admission show that the volunteer has failed to meet required standards of behavior in this instance but you believe that the volunteer is capable of complying with required standards by changing the behavior(s) in question, then deal with the situation as part of the normal supervisory feedback process, including development of an agreed-upon plan for corrective action. See #6, below, for more information on this course of action.
* If the facts of the situation or the volunteer’s direct admission show that the volunteer has failed to meet required standards of behavior and you believe that this failure disqualifies the person from continuing as an SHIPvolunteer, then hold a conference with the volunteer to report your conclusions. Offer the option of voluntary resignation. Before holding this conference, consult with and inform other staff who need to be involved in this decision.

If the volunteer does not resign, then conduct a formal dismissal session to inform the volunteer of the termination of her or his volunteer status. Inform the volunteer of any available appeal procedures. Request the prompt return of SHIPprogram materials such as identification badges, keys, equipment or information.

* Follow-up this session with a written [Dismissal Letter to the Volunteer](#_Dismissal_Letter_to) that is sent to the volunteer by registered mail. Retain a copy of the letter for the volunteer’s personnel file. Send a [Dismissal Letter about the Volunteer](#_Dismissal_Letter_About) to all affected parties, including volunteer host organization staff and beneficiaries with whom the volunteer worked directly.
* If questions are raised by volunteers, beneficiaries or other parties regarding this action, answer courteously but without revealing any of the specifics of the situation other than that the volunteer is no longer serving with the SHIPprogram. Do not disclose any confidential information and do not apologize for any action taken to uphold the policies and practices of the SHIPprogram.
1. In some cases, dismissal is the result of a pattern of continued under-performance rather than a single significant incident. These might include:
* Unacceptable work performance, such as chronic problems in reliability, punctuality, or accurate transmission of information
* Failure to follow supervisory directions or to comply with SHIPprogram policies and procedures
* Inappropriate conduct toward beneficiaries, co-workers, or others

In these cases, consider the following actions, which would normally be carried out by the supervisor of the volunteer in consultation with the coordinator of volunteers:

* Record information about any concerns or transgressions and about actions at each stage discussed below.
* Seek resolution as early as possible following any problem behavior. Discuss the situation with the volunteer by asking for an explanation of the lapse in proper behavior. Reinforce the need for compliance. This conversation can be conducted as an informal discussion and will often simply serve to remind the volunteer about expectations to comply with applicable rules and procedures. Accompany this with a verbal warning to the volunteer of the consequences of failure to comply. At this point you might also consider changes in the role performed by the volunteer or other minor changes in requirements.

Upon re-occurrence of the unacceptable behavior, develop a written plan for corrective action and present it to the volunteer. If the volunteer does not agree to the plan, then move to dismiss the volunteer for failure to follow supervisory instructions. Accompany this action with a written warning to the volunteer of failure to correct their behavior as indicated in the corrective action plan.

* If the volunteer initially agrees to the plan for corrective action but fails to comply, follow up with a written warning. If the volunteer does comply, then praise them for their progress. If the volunteer has partially complied, then praise them for what they have corrected and emphasize the need to comply with the other expectations. Respond to substantial non-compliance with a final warning indicating that failure to meet expectations will result in dismissal. Indicate a date for expected compliance in the warning.
* If the volunteer fails to meet performance expectations following the final warning, then convene a meeting to inform them that they face dismissal. Offer the option of resigning voluntarily and with dignity. If the person refuses, then either suspend the volunteer pending final dismissal or inform them of their termination from SHIPprogram service. Inform them of any available appeal procedures. Request the prompt return of SHIPmaterials such as identification badges, keys, equipment, or information.
* Notify all affected parties with a [Dismissal Letter about the Volunteer](#_Dismissal_Letter_About) and follow-up with a written [Dismissal Letter to the Volunteer](#_Dismissal_Letter_to).
* If questions are raised by volunteers, beneficiaries or other parties regarding this action, answer courteously but without revealing any of the specifics of the situation other than that the volunteer is no longer serving with the SHIPprogram. Do not disclose any confidential information and do not apologize for any action taken to uphold the policies and practices of the SHIPprogram.

# Volunteer Dismissal Report Form (Template)

Volunteer name:

Volunteer position:

Supervisor name:

1. Nature of difficulty regarding volunteer (check all that apply):

[ ] Providing false or misleading information on application

[ ] Conflict of interest

[ ] Absenteeism

[ ] Tardiness

[ ] Insubordination

[ ] Physically or mentally unable to work

[ ] Failure to follow program policies and procedures

[ ] Intoxication or drug use

[ ] Inability to work with staff, clients, or other volunteers

[ ] Failure to meet work performance standards

[ ] Breach of confidentiality

[ ] Other:

2. Explain and give examples of behavior in areas checked above:

3. Dates and nature of relevant warnings and attempts to correct behavior:

Date volunteer was discharged: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Person conducting discharge session:

Written notice of discharge of volunteer provided to:

[ ] Volunteer [ ] Appropriate staff [ ] Appropriate clients

[ ] Other:

Please attach copies of appropriate records and materials related to dismissal.

# Dismissal Letter to Volunteer (Template)

*This letter is intended to be sent to a volunteer who is being dismissed from the SHIP program. The reasons for dismissal should be set out very briefly and tie to the* [*VRPM policies*](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02236.pdf)*: “failure to follow program rules of volunteer behavior,” “conflict of interest,” “failure to perform program work to required standards,” etc. Before sending this letter you will already have discussed all of the reasons with the volunteer and taken steps with the volunteer to correct the behavior. This letter is not intended to re-argue any of the reasons for dismissal. It is simply a written record of the fact that the volunteer has been separated from the program. SHIP program materials mentioned in the letter could include business cards, other program identification, any beneficiary information, etc. If you conduct an in-person dismissal of the volunteer, you should ask for the return of these items as part of that conversation since it is easier to collect them then instead of after the volunteer has departed.*

[Date]

Dear [Volunteer name]

As a follow up to our conversation on [date], this letterofficially notifies you that you are no longer a volunteer with the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) as of that date.

The reasons for your dismissal are:

All efforts to rectify these issues have not been successful. Dismissal as a volunteer from the SHIP program is our only recourse at this time.

Please note that you are not to participate in any SHIP-related events or activities, to interact with beneficiaries of SHIP services, or to represent yourself in any way as an SHIP volunteer.

We ask you to please return all SHIP-related materials to us, specifically:

We will be contacting you about these items.

While your behavior has not met with our standards of acceptable behavior, we would still like to thank you for your contributions in the past and for your support for the SHIP program. We are truly sorry that this has not worked out as well as we both had hoped.

Please communicate any questions or issues regarding your dismissal to [name] at [phone and email].

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name][Title]

# Dismissal Letter About the Volunteer (Template)

*This letter is intended to be sent to those who may be affected by the dismissal of a volunteer. This includes a volunteer host organization with whom the volunteer serves, any beneficiaries with whom the volunteer has worked directly, and representatives of other community agencies who have had significant interaction with the volunteer, such as when a volunteer presents frequently at their venue. The letter’s intent is simply to inform the recipient of the change in the former volunteer’s status and to encourage them to work with a designated replacement. Modify the letter to fit the specific situation. In no case should the letter discuss the reasons for dismissal, unless the volunteer has resigned voluntarily or retired in which case this may be mentioned. This notification can also be conducted via a telephone conversation but a written record should be kept to indicate that the conversation occurred.*

[Date]

Dear [Recipient],

This is to inform you that, effective immediately, [dismissed volunteer’s name] is no longer acting in the capacity of an SHIP volunteer.

Their replacement is [replacement volunteer name], who will contact you shortly to discuss continued work. *[Note: if no replacement is immediately available, then simply inform the recipient that they will be contacted when a replacement is available.]*

We value your relationship with the SHIP program and look forward to continuing our work with you. If you have any questions, please contact [name] at [phone & email].

Regards,

[Signature]

[Name][Title]