



DOs & DON'Ts FOR VOLUNTEERS

How to support refugees in a responsible and ethical manner



Be prepared and stay informed



Maintain up-to-date information on the services and support available to refugees.

Attend any trainings which can improve your knowledge and ability to support.

Know your role and the limits of your role.

Understand the referral mechanisms available for needed support.



Provide information you are unsure of or have no knowledge about.

Be unsure of what is expected from you and if in doubt refer to your organisations or UNHCR.

Wrongly present yourself as an employee with UNHCR or the government, instead explain that you are a volunteer and voluntarily chose to be of support to the refugee community.

Maintain confidentiality



Respect privacy.

Keep people's stories confidential.

Refer persons in safety and dignity, based on existing referral pathways.

Explain the meaning of confidentiality in the context of your role as focal point.

Alert the responsible authorities if other volunteers discuss or reveal confidential information.



Disclose or discuss information that could be harmful to refugees or their community.

Take pictures of persons - unless they invite you to do so.

Share people's stories publicly e.g. Facebook, web, media or with other persons - including your family and other volunteers.



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe
www.unhcr.org/europe

Treat people with dignity and respect



Introduce yourself stating your role as a volunteers.

Maintain a non-judgmental attitude.

Treat people equally and with respect.

Develop real, empathetic and mutually beneficial relationships.

Listen actively.

Be open and non-judgmental.

Treat people with respect (even if they may not share your traditions and social norms).

Respect a person's right to make his/her own decisions.

Respect the decisions of caregivers in their role as e.g. parents, guardians, etc.

Refer to the professional concerned if you are concerned about a certain risk to life and safety of a person or a caregiver.



Start doing things or talking to persons without them knowing who you are.

Judge the person for their actions or feelings (e.g. Don't say: "You shouldn't have done that. If I were you, I would have done so and so.")

Behave inappropriately without considering a person's culture, age and gender e.g. be careful not to touch a person of the opposite gender.

Assume that other people have the same beliefs or political views as you have.

Impose yourself on others or be pushy.

Make decisions to speak on behalf of persons.

Approach or touch children without permission from parents e.g. give parents the items intended for their children to reinforce their role as caregivers.

Start political discussions with volunteers.

Give accurate information



Provide accurate and updated information.

Be aware of the limits of your skills and knowledge.

Inform individuals you will ask for more information and get back to them if you do not have the information they request.



Give false information.

Make up things you don't know.

Give promises.

Show-off your skills.

Support people in helping themselves



Believe in people's capacities regardless of age, gender, mobility, health, education, culture, etc.

Support others and encourage them to take action. Ask the people what they would have done to make the situation better.



Assume that you know what people want

Do everything yourself.

Presume any information which is not given or said to you directly by the person in your community who you are assisting.

Listen



Listen in a supportive way.

Be patient and calm.

Acknowledge strengths and capacities.



Pressure persons to tell their stories.

Ask them to tell you specific stories of other persons.

Talk about someone else's story (gossip).

Become angry.

Ignore strengths and do things for other persons.

Think as if you must solve all problems.

Refer, Report and attend meetings



When someone approaches you and is interested to join the program.

Recognize that you have an impact on others in your role as volunteer.

Fill in requested reporting forms and keep notes.

Stop referring and reporting.

Skip meetings.



Underestimate the pressure of your role.

Stop referring and reporting.

Skip meetings.

Take care of yourself



Rest and take care of yourself.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Spend quality time with family and friends.

Share problems with someone you trust.



Spend a lot of time supporting others which leads you to become tired, irritated, ineffective and uncompassionate.

Isolate yourself from friends and family.

Neglect your health.

Become angry.

Resort to smoking, drugs and alcohol to cope with stress.

Forget to be responsible and that your actions in your private life may affect how you are perceived as a volunteer.