



victoria film festival  
BRING FILM TO LIFE

## **Volunteer Policy Manual**

Updated for VFF 2021

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## **1. STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

The Victoria Film Festival (VFF) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1995 to introduce local and international independent films to a broader audience in Victoria, BC. The mission of our Festival is to design vibrant film events and accessible programming by supporting unique artistic voices to forge meaningful connections with art, ideas, and communities.

We believe in a Festival that offers high quality films and events, encourages artistic innovation and creativity, provides access for a broad audience segment and is committed to cooperation and collaboration with other arts organizations as well as the business community. Our programs are interactive, entertaining, enjoyable, educational and good value for money.

The Festival is committed to the principle of equal opportunity in employment and volunteer placements, and does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its employment and volunteer policies.

We consider volunteers and staff our most valuable asset and we want them to be friendly, open, proactive and committed to skills development in order to provide high quality service to our stakeholders. Thus, we believe that a clear understanding of the working agreement between the organization, staff and volunteers is the basis for a harmonious and productive environment.

This document has been developed in order to explain in detail what the Festival offers to and asks of its volunteers. Policies are not immutable, conditions and attitudes do change and, therefore, suggestions are always welcome.

## **2. DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEER**

Volunteers are individuals who, without expectation of payment, contribute time and service to VFF in the belief that their activity will be both beneficial to the community and satisfying to themselves. They are considered to be team members working alongside paid staff and other volunteers fulfilling VFF's mission.

## **3. WORK EXPERIENCE STUDENTS**

Providing placement for work experience students gives VFF the opportunity to strengthen its ties to the education system and the broader community. To graduate, all BC Secondary students must complete a mandatory work experience component. The timing and type of placement will vary with each student, however in accordance with the curriculum guidelines, agencies providing work experience placement must be able to offer students the opportunity:

- To observe and practice employable skills required in the work place
- To observe and practice attitudes required in the work place
- To use the work place to reflect upon possible career directions

As VFF will be expected to evaluate a student's performance as well, we can only accept students when timing and staffing allows adequate supervision. First contact will be with the Volunteer Coordinator, who will coordinate information from other staff about possible placements. Students may be accepted for work experience in the months leading up to the festival in administration or clerical positions. For placements during the festival, special arrangements may be made between the appropriate staff and the student. If there is a suitable position available at the time of inquiry, students will complete a volunteer application form and be interviewed by the Volunteer Coordinator.

## **4. RECRUITMENT**

VFF screens potential volunteers to most effectively make use of their skills and experiences and match them with the needs of the organization for the mutual benefit of both volunteers and festival. Screening tools assist VFF staff in selecting appropriate volunteers, reduce the risk of liability exposure to VFF, and increase the probability of a positive experience for the volunteer.

Some volunteer positions will require extra screening and/or other measures to ensure the safety of VFF patrons and a suitable placement. Examples of such positions include those that involve: working with children, serving alcohol, driving guests and rental vehicles, handling cash and supervising other volunteers.

## **5. ORIENTATION**

Festival volunteers will receive team-specific orientations to VFF and its mission, all pertinent policies and procedures, festival program information or other year-round event information, introductions to relevant staff, and an outline of expectations and rights.

## **6. INTERVIEWS & PLACEMENT**

The Volunteer Coordinator, Volunteer Team Leader and/or if necessary the Staff member with whom the volunteer will be working most closely may interview potential volunteers. If arrangements are satisfactory to both parties, the volunteer will be placed on a team. Suitable volunteers unable to be placed because positions are full will be placed on a waiting list.

The Volunteer Coordinator and any other relevant staff member will interview candidates for Team Leaders. Based on the screening policies of VFF, the best candidates will be placed as Team Leaders. Applicants not selected as Team Leaders will be assigned to teams where this is appropriate.

Once Team Leaders are selected the process of selecting volunteers for teams begins. The Team Leaders, in collaboration with the Volunteer Coordinator, will supervise, instruct, and assist all volunteers under their care.

## **7. TEAM TRAINING**

At the start of volunteer placement, all volunteers will receive team training to ensure that they are fully informed to perform their assigned duties. Ongoing training will be provided in new technologies or when a volunteer undertakes new tasks or increased responsibilities.

The type and length of training differs between teams. Some teams require only an introductory meeting and sign up for shifts; whereas others will involve training on how to perform all the tasks of that team. This is because volunteers on those teams may be required to move around in positions and must be familiar with all the jobs.

## **8. DRESS CODE**

During the festival, volunteers working with the public and festival guests, are asked to wear dark pants and their VFF Volunteer T-shirt. Volunteer T-shirts must be worn during every shift. Volunteers must also wear a volunteer badge on a lanyard.

## **9. CUSTOMER CARE POLICY**

The Victoria Film Festival strives to be recognized as a positive promoter of community arts. The VFF is a not-for-profit charitable arts organization founded under the principles of giving back to the community and developing the arts scene within the Victoria area. The VFF's healthy existence and thriving success relies on a good customer experience, therefore, quality customer care is of the highest priority.

Quality customer service is characterized by: being well-groomed and dressed according to the needs and standards of the event at hand, polite and courteous behavior to patrons and the general public, ability to give informative answers to questions, and having an overall positive and honest approach to festival tasks.

Volunteers and staff are expected to treat every customer with equal and unbiased care. It is vital to be polite and courteous when communicating with the public in every situation. If a situation arises in which you are unable to deal with a person on the same level and in a responsible manner, please refer them to your Team Lead or nearest staff member. If any serious problems arise, or a customer would like to make a formal complaint, they may fill out a Formal Complaint Form that will then be passed on to management.

## **10. PATRON COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

If a patron or member of the general public wishes to express a complaint, volunteers or staff members for the Victoria Film Festival shall follow this guideline.

- 1) Politely listen to the customer's complaint without interrupting.
- 2) Repeat the complaint back to them in your own words and ask them if you understand it correctly.
- 3) If you are able to resolve the issue yourself, please do so.
- 4) If you do not feel comfortable doing so, or are unable to make any progress with the customer, there are two ways to deal with the situation. If it needs to be resolved immediately please contact your Team Lead, or the Volunteer Coordinator or Operations Manager if they are available. If it is not an urgent issue, explain to the customer that you are a volunteer and that management can only resolve the situation. Politely ask them to fill out a Formal Complaint Form. Please then pass this completed form on to your Team Lead.
- 5) Assure the customer that the Formal Complaint Form will be reviewed within 24 hours. Let them know they will be contacted regarding the issue if they have indicated on the form that they would like a reply.

Team Leads will notify the Operations Manager of the Formal Complaint Form before the end of the day the complaint was made. The Operations Manager will review the Formal Complaints Form as soon as possible. A letter will be written to the customer that explains the problem and how it has been rectified, apologizes if necessary, and closes the matter. This letter will use positive language and should be personalized to the specific situation and recipient. Any other actions deemed necessary will be taken to rectify the situation.

**If a customer is getting unreasonably out of control either verbally or physically, call venue security immediately for assistance. If there is no security team on the premises, contact the Victoria Police (911) at your discretion.**

## **11. SHIFT CANCELLATION**

Volunteers unable to make their shift will contact their Team Lead or the Volunteer Coordinator at least one week before their shift. In the event of an emergency or unforeseen circumstances, volunteers will contact their Team Lead or the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. If you do not adhere to this alert policy, or miss a shift completely, you will be subject to the disciplinary actions in Section 15.

## **12. EATING AND DRINKING WHILE ON SHIFT**

Volunteers working at events where food and beverages are available to patrons are not allowed to consume any of the provided food or drink. Volunteer beverages and snacks will be provided depending on length of shift/location.

## **13. ALCOHOL POLICY**

Volunteers are strictly prohibited from consuming alcohol during their shift. Volunteers who arrive at their shifts smelling of alcohol will be replaced and may face disciplinary action.

## **14. EVALUATION**

The Volunteer Coordinator may complete volunteer evaluation forms. The purpose of the form is to document behaviour and job performance, so that valuable feedback can be offered to the volunteer. At the end of each festival, departing volunteers will be asked to complete a Volunteer Survey to offer the VFF feedback on their experience as a volunteer. In addition, the Volunteer Coordinator will meet in person with volunteer Team Leads for exit interviews and feedback.

## **15. DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

In the event that a volunteer does not adhere to the principles, policies and procedures of VFF or fails to perform his/her/their volunteer assignment he/she/they may be subject to the same disciplinary action as a staff member.

This will take the form of progressive discipline and will included the following steps:

- 1) A verbal warning i.e. the Volunteer Coordinator will discuss the situation with the volunteer and offer suitable help in correcting it (e.g. training, re-assignment, a probationary period etc.)

- 2) A written warning. A copy of this document will be placed in the volunteer's confidential file.
- 3) Termination of the volunteer's services. This is regarded as a last resort and applied only when other appropriate and available approaches have been tried and failed.
- 4) Immediate Dismissal. A volunteer may be dismissed without warning for just cause. Grounds for this may include but are not limited to: gross misconduct, theft, abuse of clients or co-workers etc.

The volunteer will be required to surrender any equipment, property, keys or records belonging to VFF and will be required to leave whichever building they are working in at the time of the offence.

If a volunteer fails to alert their Team Lead or the Volunteer Coordinator within 24 hours of a shift cancellation, but do still alert them (less than 24-hours ahead), they will have one of their complimentary films taken away. A film voucher will be taken away for each offense until the third, in which the Volunteer Coordinator will remove that person from volunteering.

If a volunteer fails to alert their team leader or the Volunteer Coordinator that they will be missing a shift, and then miss it, they will be removed from volunteering. There is no excuse for not alerting the people in charge that you will not be there. For extenuating circumstances, the decision will defer to the Volunteer Coordinator.

## **16. RECOGNITION**

For the purpose of volunteer recognition and future fundraising, volunteer hours will be recorded starting at the first team training session. In recognition of their work for the Festival, some of the benefits that volunteers will receive include:

- Invitation to the Endfest party;
- A Victoria Film Festival volunteer T-shirt;
- In appreciation of 15 hours of volunteer work volunteers will receive (5) film vouchers.
- Letters of reference (if requested and justified by performance).

## **17. RELATIONSHIP TO PAID STAFF**

Volunteers and paid staff are considered partners in implementing the mission and programs of VFF, with each having an equal but complementary role to play. It is essential to the proper operation of this relationship that each partner understands and respects the needs and abilities of the other.

## **18. FAMILY MEMBER OF PAID STAFF**

Family members of paid staff are welcomed as volunteers, but to avoid the possibility of conflict of interest, will never be placed under the direct supervision of their family member.

## **19. INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

The Society is committed to providing a safe working environment and will take all measure within its power to create one.

The Society will not tolerate harassment or discrimination against a staff member or volunteer because of any infectious disease, including HIV.

Volunteers diagnosed with any infectious disease have the right to continue to work as long as their condition permits and to be accorded complete confidentiality concerning their health status. Wherever possible, their duties will be modified to accommodate their current condition.

It is also recognized that other volunteers and staff have the right to a safe and healthy working environment. Any volunteer diagnosed with an infectious disease should assume the responsibility of taking all reasonable personal measures to prevent the spread of infection among others with whom they come in contact while they are working.

## **20. INSURANCE**

In the event of injury the VFF's Third Party Insurance covers all volunteers.

## **21. SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

The VFF is committed to providing its employees and volunteers with an environment that is free from sexual harassment in any form. Sexual harassment of employees and volunteers occurring in the workplace or in other settings in which employees and volunteers may find themselves in connection with their

employment or volunteer placement is unlawful and will not be tolerated by the Festival.

Sexual harassment can occur between individuals of the same or opposite sex and is defined as any means of sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. The definition of sexual harassment is broad and sexually oriented conduct whether it is intended or not, that has an effect on creating a workplace that is hostile, offensive, intimidating or humiliating to male or female employees including volunteers is unacceptable. The Festival will act promptly to any complaints and eliminate the conduct and impose corrective actions including disciplinary actions where appropriate.

While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples, if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending on the totality of the circumstances, including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances – whether they involve physical touching or not
- Sexual epithets or jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life, comments on an individual's body, comments about an individual's sexual activity
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments
- Inquiries into an individual's sexual experiences
- Discussion of one's sexual activities

### Complaints Procedures

If any volunteer believes that he or she has been subject to sexual harassment, the volunteer has the right to file a complaint with our organization. This may be done in writing or orally in the first instance to the Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator is also available to discuss any concerns you have about filing a complaint.

Upon receiving a complaint the management will promptly investigate the allegations in a fair manner and maintain confidentiality. The investigations will include an interview with the person filing a complaint and with witnesses but also with the person alleged to have committed sexual harassment.

After a thorough review of the case the outcome will be shared with the individuals involved. If it is determined that an inappropriate conduct has

occurred a disciplinary action, as the Festival deems appropriate, will follow promptly.

The person filing a complaint may also file a formal complaint with government agencies.

## **22. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Volunteers will agree to keep all matters relating to the work of VFF completely confidential and are not to disclose or use such information without the consent of the President or Festival Director. Breach of confidentiality is regarded as a very serious matter and may result in the termination of the volunteer's services.

## **23. VOLUNTEER RECORDS**

Volunteer records will be kept in a secure location. All requests for information about a volunteer will be passed to the Volunteer Coordinator, who will consider volunteer files confidential.

Upon request to the Volunteer Coordinator, volunteers may examine their own files. Inactive files will be maintained for a minimum of one year after which they will be destroyed in a responsible manner.

## **24. VOLUNTEERS & THE MEDIA**

The Festival Director, the Communications Coordinator, and the Operations Manager are the sole spokespersons for the VFF. Volunteers may speak on behalf of the VFF in public if their job assignment specifically allows it. In all other circumstances, volunteers will make it clear that they speak solely for themselves as individuals.

## **25. VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

All volunteers will be asked to acknowledge in writing that they have read the Code of Conduct and will comply with the policies contained in it. By signing up for a volunteer shift, the volunteer declares they have read and understand the Volunteer Code of Conduct.

## **26. VOLUNTEER ACCESS POLICY**

A volunteer only has access to festival events, films or other festival activities during that individual's scheduled shifts. The exception is if a volunteer has exchanged a volunteer voucher for a specific film ticket. Volunteers found at any events, films or festival activities without having been scheduled and/or using their T-shirt and/or pass for access will be removed immediately and may have all future volunteer shifts terminated.

## **27. FILM ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Volunteers on shift may not enter the theaters to watch films during their shift.

## **28. INTERPRETATION OF ITEMS IN THIS DOCUMENT**

Should any of the items in these policies conflict with any federal or provincial legislation; the provisions of the legislation will supersede them.