

TAMIL INFORMATION CENTRE

VOLUNTEER POLICY STATEMENT

January 2009

Tamil Information Centre

Volunteer Policy

- **About us**

The Tamil Information Centre (TIC) was established in 1981 to provide information, resources and instruction to promote human rights, peace and development and cultures of the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka.

- **Utilisation of Volunteers**

Volunteers are an established part of the TIC. The goals of the TIC are best achieved by the active participation of people committed to the objectives of the TIC. To this end, the TIC accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers at all levels of the organisation and within all its appropriate programmes and activities. The Board members of TIC and staff are encouraged to assist in the creation of meaningful and productive roles in which volunteers might serve and to assist in recruitment of volunteers.

We believe that getting volunteers involved enables a valuable interchange of ideas, skills and knowledge, and forms important and mutually beneficial relationships which contribute to the building of a more cohesive society.

- **Definition of “Volunteer”**

The TIC defines a “Volunteer” as anyone, by choice, performs a task, without financial remuneration at the direction of and on behalf of the organisations and for the benefit of the community. A “volunteer” must be officially accepted and enrolled by the organisation prior to performance of the tasks. Volunteers shall not be considered as “employees” of the organisation.

- **Volunteer/Staff Relationships**

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

- **Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities**

Volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource to the organisation, its staff, and its users. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated as equal co-workers, the right to effective supervision, the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to recognition of work done.

In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the goals, policies and procedures of the organisation.

- **Service at the Discretion of the Organisation**

The organisation accepts the service of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the organisation. Volunteers agree that the organisation may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer’s relationship with the organisation.

The volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever the volunteer’s relationship with the organisation. Notice of such a decision should be communicated, as soon as possible, to the volunteer Co-ordinator.

- **Scope of Volunteer Involvement**

Volunteers may be utilised in all programmes, projects and activities of the organisation, and serve at all levels of skill and decision making. Volunteers will not, however, be utilised to displace any paid employees from their positions.

- **Lines of Communication**

Volunteers are entitled to all necessary information pertinent to the performance of their work assignments. Accordingly, volunteers will be included in and have access to all appropriate memos, materials, and meetings relevant to work assignments. In order to facilitate the receipt of this information on a timely basis, volunteers will be included on all distribution schedules and if necessary, will be assigned a mail box or e-mail for receipt of information distributed in their absence. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives such information will rest with the direct supervisor of the volunteer. Lines of communication will operate in both directions, and should exist both formally and informally.

- **Conflict of Interest**

No person who has a conflict of interest with any activity or programme of the organisation, whether personal or financial will be accepted or serve as a volunteer with the organisation.

- **Volunteer Supervision**

Each volunteer who is accepted to a position with the organisation will have a clearly identified supervisor who will be responsible for the direct management of the volunteer. This supervisor shall be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the work of the volunteer, and shall be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance.

A volunteer may act as a supervisor of other volunteers, provided that the supervising volunteer is under the direct supervision of a staff member.

Staff, who are supervising volunteers, are responsible for maintaining regular communication with the Volunteer Co-ordinator on the status of volunteers, and are responsible for the timely provision of all necessary paperwork to the Administration. The Executive Secretary should be informed immediately of any substantial change in the work or status of a volunteer and should be consulted in advance before any corrective action is taken.

- **Representation of the Organisation**

Volunteers should seek prior consultation and approval from appropriate staff, prior to any action or statement which might significantly affect or obligate the organisation. Volunteers are authorised to act as representatives of the organisation with prior consultation and approval from appropriate staff. When representing the organisation, volunteers would be expected to have in mind the objects, policies and procedures of the organisation.

- **Confidentiality**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a single staff, volunteer, client, or other person or involves overall organisation business.

Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with the organisation or other corrective action.

- **Access to Office and Materials**

As appropriate, volunteers will have access to the office and materials necessary to fulfil their duties, and shall receive training in the operation

of any equipment. The office and materials shall be utilized only when directly required for the purpose of the organisation.

- **Support to Volunteers**

Every effort will be made to provide necessary facilities, equipment, and space to enable the volunteers to effectively and comfortably perform their duties.

Volunteers will receive specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment. It may be necessary for volunteers to attend external training to improve their skills necessary for the tasks or during their terms of service.

Where possible, additional training and educational opportunities will be made available to volunteers during their connection with the organisation.

- **Volunteer Career Path**

Volunteers are encouraged to grow and develop their skills while serving with the organisation, and are to be assisted through promotion to new volunteer jobs to assume additional and greater responsibilities. If so desired by the volunteer, the organisation will assist the volunteer in maintaining appropriate records of volunteer experience that would assist the volunteer in future career opportunities, both paid and volunteer.

- **Conference Attendance**

Just as staff, volunteers will be encouraged to attend conferences and meetings, which are relevant to their volunteer assignments, including both those of the organisation and of other organisations. Prior approval from the volunteer's Co-ordinator should be obtained before attending any conferences or meetings if attendance will interfere with the volunteer's work schedule or if reimbursement of expenses is sought.

- **Absenteeism**

Volunteers are expected to perform their duties on an agreed regular scheduled and timely basis. If expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, volunteers should inform their immediate supervisor as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements may be made. Continual absenteeism will result in a review of the volunteer's work assignment or term of service.

- **Substitution**

Volunteers may be encouraged to find a substitute for any upcoming absence, which might be filled by another volunteer. Such substitution should only be taken following consultation with a supervisor and care should be taken to find a substitute who is qualified for the position. Substitutes may only be recruited from those who are currently enrolled as volunteers with the organisation.

- **Standards of Performance**

Standards of performance shall be established for each volunteer position. These standards should list the work to be done in that position, measurable indicators of whether the work was accomplished, and appropriate timelines for accomplishment of the work. Creation of these standards will be a joint function of staff and the volunteer assigned to the position, and a copy of the standards should be provided to the volunteer along with a copy of their job description at the beginning of their assignment.

- **Reimbursement of Expenses**

Volunteers may be eligible for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking work for the Organisation. The Management shall distribute information to all volunteers regarding specific reimbursable items. Prior approval

must be sought for any major expenditure.

- **Evaluation**

Volunteers shall receive periodic evaluations to review their work. The position description and standards of performance for a volunteer position should form the basis of an evaluation. A written record should be kept of each evaluation session. The evaluation session is utilized to review the performance of the volunteer, to suggest any changes in work style, to seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the organisation, to convey appreciation to the volunteer, and to ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in that position. Evaluations should include both an examination of the volunteer's performance of position responsibilities and a discussion of any suggestions that the volunteer may have concerning the position or project with which the volunteer is connected.

The evaluation session is an opportunity for both the volunteer and the organisation to examine and improve their relationship.

In appropriate situations, corrective actions will be taken following an evaluation. Examples of corrective action include the requirement of additional training or re-assignment of a volunteer to a new position.

- **Recognition**

Throughout the organisation it is recognised that volunteers play a very important role and their efforts contribute highly to the overall success of the organisation.

An annual volunteer recognition event will be conducted to highlight and reward the contribution of volunteers to the organisation. Volunteers will be consulted and involved in order to

develop an appropriate format for the event.

- **Termination of Services of a Volunteer**

The services of Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the organisation may be terminated. No volunteer will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with supervisory staff. Prior to any termination, staff should seek the consultation and assistance of the Executive Secretary.

Possible grounds for termination may include, but not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft of property or misuse of organisation resources, abuse or mistreatment of users (clients) or co-workers and failure to abide by objectives, policies and procedures of the organisation.

- **Notice of Departure or Re-Assignment of a Volunteer**

In the event that a volunteer leaves the Organisation, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, or is re-assigned to a new position, it shall be the responsibility of the Volunteer Co-ordinator to inform those affected staff and clients that the volunteer is no longer assigned to work with them. In cases of termination of service for cause, this notification should be given in writing and should clearly indicate that any further contact with the volunteer is outside any scope of relationship with the organisation.

- **Resignation**

Volunteers may resign from their volunteer service with the organisation at any time. It is requested that volunteers who intend to resign provide advance notice of their departure and a reason for their decision.

Volunteers who are leaving their positions will be encouraged to attend Exit interviews with the Volunteer Co-ordinator and Executive Secretary. The interview is to ascertain why the volunteer is leaving the position, suggestions the volunteer may have to improving the position, and the possibility of involving the volunteer in some other capacity with the organisation.

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For further information contact:

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