

14 April 2020

Guidelines for Volunteer Management During COVID-19 Pandemic

1. On 3 April 2020, MOH issued an advisory on “Circuit Breaker to Minimise Further Spread of COVID-19” which outlined an elevated set of safe distancing measures to reduce the risk of further local transmission of COVID-19. The measures aim to significantly reduce the movement and interaction of people in public and private places and to only leave home for essential purposes.

Community Involvement and Volunteers

2. The community and volunteers continue to play a key role in the fight against COVID-19. Their activities include promoting social responsibility, supporting essential services and caring for the vulnerable segments.

3. This document elaborates on the management of volunteers and precautionary measures to guide volunteer host organisations (VHOs)¹ in safeguarding the health and safety of your staff, volunteers and beneficiaries and preventing further spread of the virus:

- a. **Volunteers can be enlisted to support essential services²**, as long as they take the necessary precautionary measures under MOH advisories (e.g. safe distancing, temperature monitoring, maintaining personal hygiene, etc.). However, VHOs should deploy only the minimum number of volunteers to carry out the essential activities;
- b. **Volunteers can be enlisted to provide essential aid³ to vulnerable persons and families.** Activities shall be calibrated with a small number of volunteers for a limited period of time, with the necessary precautionary measures;
- c. **For other non-essential services and aid, volunteers can be enlisted if they are able to operate remotely from home;** and
- d. **VHOs shall ensure that the safety and well-being of their volunteers are being looked after**, as they have stepped up to contribute to the overall effort to fight COVID-19 and are not financially compensated for their efforts.

¹ VHOs include organisations that involve volunteers in their activities such as Social Service Agencies (SSAs), ground up groups, religious organisations and other community groups.

² The definition of ‘essential services’ is as approved by the relevant authorities for the respective sectors. They include: [MSF’s Essential Services for Vulnerable Groups](#), [MTI’s list of Essential Services for Health and Social Services](#), [MOH’s list of Essential Community Care Services](#). For full list of sector-specific advisories, please see [here](#).

³ Supplies necessary for daily sustenance, e.g. cooked food and food rations, and urgent financial aid.

Volunteers Supporting Essential Services and Aid

4. VHOs that provide essential services and aid **are required to submit their plans to the relevant authorities and only continue their activities after their plans are reviewed by the relevant authorities. For essential aid to vulnerable persons and families, VHOs shall refer to MSF's advisory on Essential Aid Distribution (13 Apr 2020)**, and submit to National Council of Social Service (NCSS) the following information via this link www.go.gov.sg/distributioncontact at least 2 days before VHOs commence their activities

- a. Name of VHO
- b. Person-in-charge and contact details
- c. Region served (by planning area/ postal code/ blocks etc)
- d. Number of beneficiaries served
- e. Type of essential aid (e.g. cooked meals, personal care products, vouchers)
- f. Modality and frequency of essential aid distribution
- g. Number of staff/ volunteers needed to distribute essential aid

5. VHOs shall comply with the advisories issued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) on measures for workplace premises on the 3 April 2020 and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) for residential and community-based facilities, and other relevant advisories issued by other authorities. These include:

- a. Activities that can take place through telecommuting must be done from home.
- b. Safe distancing and precautionary measures to be implemented to reduce physical interactions and safeguard safety of volunteers.
 - Reducing the need for and duration of physical interactions;
 - Staggering working hours;
 - Postponing all group events;
 - Implementing shift work and/or split arrangements;
 - Ensuring clear physical spacing of at least 1m apart;
 - Implementing baseline sanitation and hygiene measures; and
 - Providing mask to those who are unable to avoid close contact with others.

6. These advisories are regularly updated and VHOs can check for updates through the gov.sg and msf.gov.sg websites.

7. VHOs shall **ensure no social mixing among different groups of volunteers** and schedule their volunteer activities, if possible, in fixed teams, to minimise interactions between volunteers and staff.

8. VHOs shall **not deploy seniors, children, persons with chronic or underlying conditions, and pregnant women for direct, physical, volunteer roles**

as these are vulnerable groups in the current pandemic. However, these individuals can take on volunteer roles that allow them to operate from home.

9. VHOs shall have a **volunteer activity risk assessment matrix** for essential services and aid, which can include the following considerations (See [Table 1](#) for an illustration):

- a. Nature of volunteer activity;
- b. Location of volunteer activity;
- c. Number of volunteers and service users involved (small or large groups);
- d. Level of interaction with service users and among volunteers (e.g. physical distance, minimal or face-to-face sustained contact); and
- e. Type of service users (vulnerable⁴ or non-vulnerable groups).

Table 1: Volunteer Activity Risk Assessment Matrix

Criteria	Risk Level		
	Low	Moderate	High
a. Nature of volunteer activity	Backend (i.e. no direct interaction with community/beneficiaries or items for their consumption/use)	Front – facing (i.e. direct interaction with community/beneficiaries or items for their consumption/use)	
b. Location of volunteer activity	Open-air	Well ventilated	Enclosed
c. Number of volunteers and service users involved	Small-sized groups (i.e. 10 persons or less), or activities with at least 1 person in 16 sqm usable space		Large-size groups (i.e. 10 persons or more), or activities with more than 1 person in 16 sqm usable space
d. Level of interaction between volunteers and service users	No contact	Face-to-face contact up to 15 mins	Face-to-face sustained contact, beyond 15 mins
e. Type of service users	Non-vulnerable groups	Vulnerable groups	

10. VHOs shall adjust their volunteer management and deployment based on the assessed risk level, and take additional precautionary measures if volunteers are still necessary to provide the essential services and aid. See [Annex A](#) for a list of volunteering activities and proposed continuity plan, and [Annex B](#) for precautionary measures.

⁴ For example, frail elderly, who may be more severely impacted if affected by COVID-19.

11. VHOs shall ensure that **the safety and well-being of their volunteers are being looked after. The volunteers should also be** informed about the risks, and the measures taken by the VHO to protect them. This can include a briefing on the volunteer activity and precautionary measures, and shall be conducted remotely online, where possible. VHOs are to provide a contact number for volunteers to call in case of emergency or if they feel distressed. VHOs shall also actively seek feedback from volunteers and help to address their concerns, if any.

12. Even with stringent mitigation measures, there is a risk that COVID-19 transmission may happen. VHOs shall **be prepared to help volunteers who have contracted COVID-19 in the line of duty**. This can include helping them to apply for relief under The Courage Fund⁵, and to extend support for their families during this period of time. VHOs shall also provide emotional support to any volunteer that needs it, and can tap on the National Care hotline.

13. VHOs shall also find ways to **appreciate volunteers for their support**, which can include sharing positive stories, providing words of encouragement, and tokens of appreciation.

Engagement of Supporters and Volunteers

14. VHOs are strongly encouraged to continue to communicate and engage their supporters and volunteers during this period if they are not deployed. This will allow the VHO to activate volunteer resources quickly when the situation improves. Activities by VHOs can include doing the following remotely:

- a. Keep supporters informed of the current happenings and initiatives;
- b. Share stories to motivate volunteers to step up;
- c. Encourage creative and safe ways to volunteer, both remotely and on-site;
- d. Build online communities and social networks; and
- e. Leverage online volunteer opportunities portals, communication tools and learning resources (See Annex C for a list of resources).

For Enquires

15. For clarifications or enquires, VHOs can write in to SGCares@mccy.gov.sg.

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⁵ The Courage Fund provides a relief of \$3,000 to community volunteers (non-healthcare workers who stepped up to contribute to the overall effort to fight COVID-19 and are not financially compensated for their efforts) who have contracted COVID-19 while providing services.

List of volunteering activities and proposed continuity plan

Category	Volunteer Activity	Risk Level	Response Measure
Helping neighbours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourliness efforts such as the purchase of food items or grocery for neighbours in need (drop off with no interaction) • Checking in on vulnerable neighbours and those living in the same block (no direct contact) 	Low	Proceed, with no contact
Advocacy and fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight community needs • Rally community support • Get people involved in volunteering • Call for donations 	Low	Proceed, but to operate remotely from home
Telephonic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Befriending vulnerable groups through phone check-ins • Outreach on personal hygiene, phone usage, etc. 	Low	
Backend support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packing of food, essential or care packages for vulnerable groups 	Moderate	Require approval of plans by relevant authorities. Limit activities to essential aid with the necessary precautionary and safe distancing measures
Home visits, distribution and outreach activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of daily essential items, meals or care packages (drop off with no interaction) • Medical escorts such as accompanying unwell service users to the clinics/hospital [on needs basis only] 	Moderate	
Large Group Communal Activities and External Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised excursions, outings and participation in external events for vulnerable groups • Large group communal activities and mass gatherings in Homes/ Centres involving large groups of external participants/ volunteers • External gatherings and events involving vulnerable groups and external participants/ volunteers regardless of size 	High	Suspend as activity is considered as non-essential and high risk

Precautionary and Safe Distancing Measures

VHOs to implement the following precautionary measures for on-site volunteer activities.

Precautionary Measures for Staff and Volunteers

- Volunteers must not engage in direct physical volunteering activities if they or anyone living in the same household, are unwell, have travelled overseas in the last 14 days or are under Quarantine, Leave of Absence (LOA)/Stay Home Notice (SHN) prior to the activity (pre-screening measures).
- Brief volunteers of the precautionary measures implemented by the VHO, and ensure that they are adhered to.
- Register volunteers to facilitate contact tracing.
- Administer temperature screening and health/travel declarations of volunteers.
- Turn away volunteers who are unwell, have recent travel history or are under Quarantine/LOA/SHN.
- Provide a clean and well-ventilated environment for volunteers and ensure safe distancing.
- Encourage personal social responsibility among volunteers
 - Practice good personal hygiene (i.e. washing of hands and using tissues when sneezing or coughing)
 - Adjust social norms (i.e. refrain from handshakes, hugs, high fives, and any forms of greeting that involve direct physical contact)
 - Wear a mask properly with clean hands (i.e. cover the mouth, nose and chin with the coloured side facing outwards and pinch the metal edge of the mask on the nose bridge)
- Advise volunteers to inform the VHO if they were later found to be in contact with confirmed COVID-19 cases or have fallen ill after the activity.

Online Resources for VHOs

All of us has a part to play to help Singapore overcome the COVID-19 situation. Here are some of the resources that VHOs can tap on to reach out to the community, learn, start an initiative and support their volunteers.

Connect

- Platforms to call for support and stay connected with the community:
 - SG United portal (<https://www.sgunited.gov.sg>)
 - Giving.sg portal (<https://www.giving.sg>)
 - SG Cares App
 - SG United Telegram

Learn

- Online training and e-learning courses to equip volunteer managers and volunteers with the necessary skillsets
(<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/GatewayPages/Donate-Volunteer/Volunteer>)

Resource Support

- Apply for the following funds (non-exhaustive) to initiate a community initiative to help those affected by the COVID-19 situation:
 - The Courage Fund under the NCSS
(<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/Our-Initiatives/The-Courage-Fund>)
 - The Sayang Sayang Fund under the Community Foundation of Singapore
(<https://cf.org.sg>)
 - Our Singapore Fund under the MCCY
(<https://www.sg/oursingaporefund>)
 - Singapore Strong Fund under the Majurity Trust
(<https://www.majurity.sg/sgstrong>)

Get Help

- Online counselling services that support mental health and wellness of individuals during COVID-19
 - National Care Hotline (Call the 24-hour hotline at 6202-6868)
 - eCounselling Centre (<https://eC2.sg>)