

Disaster Volunteer Management & Volunteer Reception Centers

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Definitions

- **Volunteer:** willingly provides services without receiving financial compensation
- **Affiliated Volunteer:** affiliated with government agency or NGO and has been trained for a specific role or function in disaster relief or response during the preparedness phase; typically used first in disaster
- **Spontaneous Volunteer:** comes forward (at times without being requested) following a disaster to assist a governmental agency or NGO with disaster related activities during the response or recovery phase; not initially affiliated with a response or relief agency; also called convergent or unaffiliated volunteers

Currently

- Many jurisdictions across the state have started to plan for disaster volunteers
- Volunteer Centers are working in cooperation with local government to identify an appropriate role to play in managing disaster volunteers

Objectives of Disaster Volunteer Management

Before a Disaster:

- Encourage non-profit and governmental agencies to effectively involve volunteers in the four phases of disaster (mitigation, preparation, response & recovery)
- Encourage community members to become **affiliated volunteers** with existing disaster preparedness, response and recovery agencies (allows for training, best use of skills, credentialing as needed, etc.)

Objectives of Disaster Volunteer Management

Before a Disaster (continued):

- Plan and prepare for spontaneous volunteer management
- Train agencies unable to host affiliated volunteers how to access and manage spontaneous volunteers following an event

Objectives of Disaster Volunteer Management

After a Disaster

- Assist the local lead agency with the coordination and management of **spontaneous volunteers** in order to effectively complement response and recovery efforts

Spontaneous Volunteer Management

- Included in the National Response Framework
- Identified as a critical aspect of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery by FEMA, National VOAD and the Points of Light Foundation
- MUST be addressed prior to a disaster to maximize effectiveness
- The role of the Volunteer Center in local preparedness and response initiatives

Volunteers May be Called Upon to...





What is a VRC?

- Serves as a point of mobilization, registration and referral for spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers who emerge in response to a disaster or incident

Why are VRCs necessary?

- Help potential volunteers respond more effectively to critical needs of the community (as determined by coordinating agencies)
- Make the best possible use of spontaneous volunteers
- Serve as a buffer between first responders and well-intentioned, unaffiliated volunteers
- Many agencies are not able/willing to create and maintain relationships with affiliated disaster volunteers specific to disaster

continued

Why are VRCs necessary?

- Complement rather than complicate efforts of first responders (including those in disaster response organizations tasked with functions apart from spontaneous volunteer management)
- Ensure that urgent community needs are addressed in a timely manner
- Lay the foundation to rebuild community

Where will VRCs be located?

- Communities should identify several sites in the community as potential locations.
- Libraries, senior centers, faith communities may be considered.
- Locations will be determined after the event based upon the situation and need.

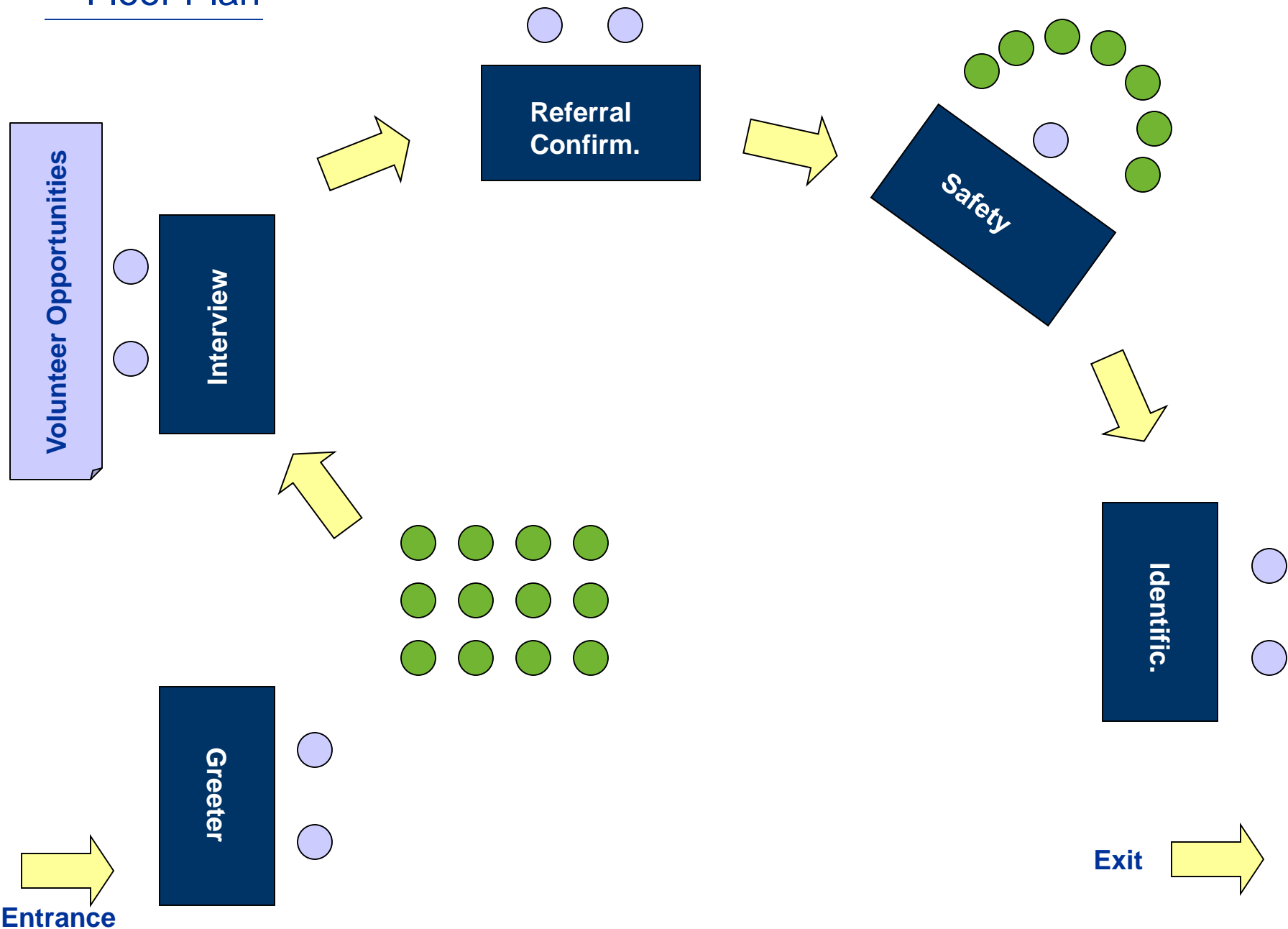
When are VRCs activated?

- Volunteer Reception Centers **DO NOT** self deploy.
- Normally, a request comes into the VEOC for assistance with handling the volunteer surge. Localities can also have a prearranged agreement with their local volunteer center or other agency.

Who staffs VRCs?

- Members of the Volunteer Center Staff
- Volunteer Coordinators from local non-profit and governmental agencies
- Community Members trained in the process, procedures and paperwork of registering and referring spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers
- Select SUVs who appear at VRCs

VRC Sample
Floor Plan



Registering Spontaneous, Unaffiliated Volunteers

Step 1
Upon Arrival

Upon Arrival

Incoming Volunteers will:

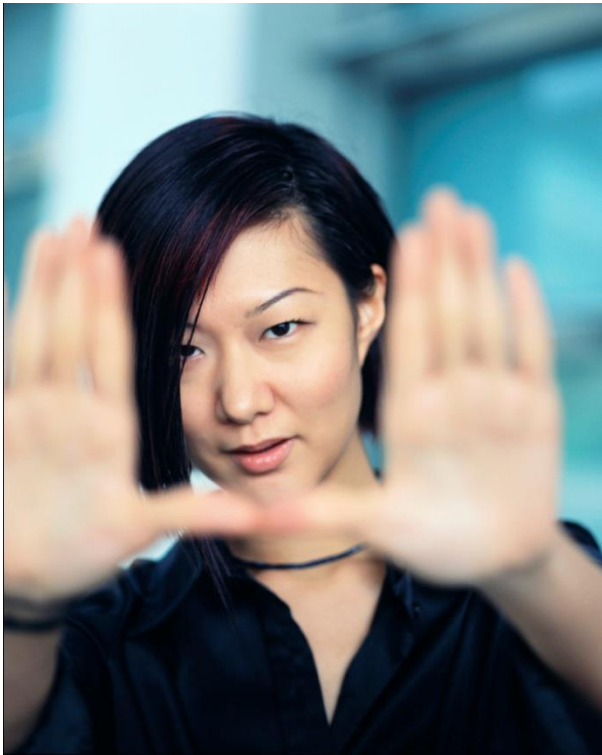
- Be met by a **Greeter**
- **Sign-in** on the Volunteer Tracking Sheet
- **Receive:**
 - **Volunteer Instructions**
 - Volunteer Intake Form
- **Be asked** to review the list of volunteer opportunities available
- **All** incoming volunteers should be told that photo identification is **required** for registration!

The Interview

Step 2

Determining Referral

The Interview



- Each incoming volunteer will be seen by an **Interviewer** who will review the Intake Form for completeness.
- The Interviewer will confirm if the volunteer can meet an immediate need or would prefer to wait.

The Interview

- If volunteer **prefers to wait**, confirm methods of contact.
- Registered volunteers can choose to wait at VRC IF appropriate or wait elsewhere.
- Intake Form is held at VRC.

- If volunteer **elects to provide a service**, the Interviewer will complete a Referral Form.
- The Referral Form contains site contact information and service(s) requested.

Agency Referral Confirmation

Step 3

**Confirming Agency Need &
Contact Information**

Agency Referral Confirmation



- The Referral Form is reviewed for completeness.
- Site Directions are verified.
- Volunteer's Name is documented on an Agency Tracking Form.
- Filled & Incoming requests are relayed to the volunteer opportunity board.

Safety Briefing

Step 4

General Safety Orientation

Safety Briefing



- A general orientation to the situation with basic safety instructions will be presented.
- Confidentiality is critical.
- Following directions is a must.
- Additional training may be available at site.
- Provided orally and in written form
- Volunteer sign-in to document attendance.

Volunteer Identification

Step 5

Verification of Identity

Volunteer Identification

- The volunteer's **Referral Form** and **form of identification** will be compared and documented.
- A Volunteer Center **wristband** will be attached to the volunteer, its number recorded next to the volunteer's name.



***May vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction**

VRC Support Staff

- **VRC Media Coordinator**
Responds to ALL media requests
- **Logistics**
Coordinates setup and supplies
- **Security**
Ensures safety measures are implemented and followed
- **Data Entry Staff**
Accurately records all VRC information into a database
- **Communication Staff**
 - **Phone Bank**
 - **Agency Liaison**
Collects and delivers accurate information to callers or e-mailers
- **Runners**
Carry information from station-to-station as needed.

VRC Management

- **VRC Director**
- **VRC Manager/s**

VRC Director

- Serves as Incident Commander for VRCs
- Maintains direct communications with local EOC
- Requests support services from locality
- Locates VRC Manager
- Assists with location's logistics
- Determines VRC hours of operation (in conjunction with EOC)

VRC Manager/s

- Serves as VRC Operations Manager
- Oversees the smooth operation of an individual VRC
- Maintains regular communications with VRC Director
- Provide VRC staff with regular updates
- Establish shift & rotation schedules
- Determines a plan for closing VRC (in conjunction with local EOC)

VRC Training Manual

- Developed to allow VRC staff to train spontaneous volunteers to assist as needed
- Contains general information, forms, and resources
- Presents information in context so volunteers gain an overview of the process in addition to position specific information
- Agencies may wish to use it to develop their own volunteer training manual for use in disaster (overview available upon request)

Agencies

How to access volunteers through a VRC

- Agency must be **registered** with Volunteer Reception Center
- Complete and submit **Disaster Volunteer Request Forms**
- **Submit new/updated requests as needed**
(Procedure determined by event: may be via online submission, phone, fax, or physically going to a VRC to report needs)
- **Point of Contact:** Communication Staff, Agency Liaison

Volunteer Management – the basics

- The non-profit/governmental agency requesting volunteers is responsible for volunteers' compliance with any and all agency regulations and/or requirements
- Plan for disaster volunteers – create forms, checklists, and procedures in advance (*intake form, liability form, safety training, volunteer log, position descriptions, written policies and procedures, etc.*)
- Designate individual to supervise volunteers
- Determine process by which volunteers will be selected (*Please note: agencies may decline volunteers and volunteers may decline agency referral. The VRC is not responsible for a complete screening volunteers.*)
- Track hours for potential reimbursement from state or FEMA

continued

Volunteer Management – the basics

- Volunteer training & supervision
- Volunteer dismissal – always an option, easier to manage with written position description, policies and procedures
- Volunteer recognition

Lessons Learned

- Planning for disaster volunteers is essential
- Liability and risk management needs to be addressed early
- Communities outside of the affected area may play a role in disaster volunteer management

Providing direct or indirect service upon request and/or

Helping to educate the public regarding effective volunteer and donations protocol

Lessons Learned con'd

- Common Messaging is CRITICAL
- Value of tracking volunteer hours for potential use as matching for federal and state reimbursements
- Models for disaster volunteer management will vary from place to place and will look different in a pandemic situation

Final Thoughts & Questions
