

Engaging People with Disabilities in Volunteering

Many community groups are benefiting by involving and utilising the skills of people with disabilities within their organisations.

This fact sheet provides information to help your organisation to also recruit volunteers with a disability.

Volunteers with disabilities are like any other volunteers - they want to give their time and energy to improve their community. People with disabilities are active and visible in many fields including the arts, the media, sport and education.

Every volunteer, with or without a disability, brings to their work a different set of personal and professional qualities and skills, shaped by their own unique life experience. With some planning and possibly some minor workplace modifications these skills can be available to your organisation.

STEPS YOUR ORGANISATION CAN TAKE

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Assess your volunteer positions with a focus on the skills you need and what people have to offer – what they can do, rather than what they can't. This will enable you to decide on the people who are able to make positive contributions to your organisation and then set about recruiting. Involve as many people from your organisation as possible in the recruitment of volunteers to ensure all volunteers, including those with a disability are made to feel welcome and accepted.

RECRUITMENT

Once you have decided the skills you need and the people who can provide them:

- > Approach disability support organisations
- > Register your willingness to recruit with Volunteer Resource Centres
- > Advertise in publications that are targeted at people with disabilities
- > Display recruitment posters on notice boards.

THE APPLICATION FORM

The application form is an important and probably the best way to get information about potential volunteers. There are a few simple steps your organisation can take to make sure your application form is suitable:

- > Keep the layout simple and if possible, in several forms such as audiotape, Braille, Disc, e-mail and large print.
- > Have someone willing and able to help people fill out your application form.
- > Include a section where the applicant can ask for any additional support that they may need such as parking space, guide dog requirements, large screen for a computer and so on.
- > Include a section on the need for disclosure of any disability as some volunteers may wish to keep this information private.
- > Have a rigorous privacy policy.

THE INTERVIEW

An interview will simply let you get to know the person a bit better and decide if they will fit in to your organisation:

- > Check and confirm any special requirements people may have for the interview.
- > Make sure the interview is held in an accessible room.
- > Extend interview time for those with a speech problem or fatigue to maintain a level playing field.
- > Where the potential volunteer can't come to the interview in person, consider a telephone interview instead.



**Government
of South Australia**

Office for Volunteers

WORKPLACE REQUIREMENTS

Some modifications may need to be made to your workplace to accommodate a person or people with disabilities. These of course depend on the particular disabilities but may include ramps and other aspects of getting about such as door handles; vision impaired people may require large computer screens. The Disability Information and Resource Centre, South Australia and other organisations listed below are excellent sources of information. In many instances, however, little or no modifications are required.

FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Disability Information and Resource Centre, South Australia (DIRC)

195 Gilles Street, Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: (08) 8236 0555

Country callers: 1300 305 558

Email: dirc@dircsa.org.au

<http://www.dirc.asn.au/>

ACROD

National Industry Association for Disability Services SA Division

246 Glen Osmond Road, Fullarton SA 5063

Telephone: (08) 8338 0733

Commonwealth Carelink Centres

Provides free information about disability, aged and other support services.

Telephone: 1800 052 222

IDEAS Inc

An information service for people with disabilities, carers, and service providers.

Telephone: 1800 029 904

<http://www.ideas.org.au>

Brain Injury Network of SA (BINSAs Inc)

Torrens Building, 220 Victoria Square, Adelaide 5000

Telephone: (08) 8217 7600

Country callers: 1300 733 049

Email: info@binsa.org

Better Hearing Australia SA Division

Da Costa Building, 68 Grenfell St Adelaide SA 5000.

Telephone: (08) 8232 2996

Email: betterhearingsa@optusnet.com.au

Intellectual Disability Services Council

Provides advice on issues concerning people with intellectual disability and many other services.

<http://www.idsc.sa.gov.au/>

The Mental Health Resource Centre

1 Richmond Road, Keswick SA 5035

Telephone: (08) 8221 5166

<http://users.senet.com.au/~panangga/mhrc/>

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCI Australia)

Telephone: 1800 819 775

<http://www.spinalcordinjuries.com.au/>

Royal Society for the Blind of South Australia (RSB)

Knapman House, 230 Pirie Street, Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: (08) 8232 4777 (Low Vision and Adaptive Technology Centres)

Telephone: (08) 8232 2444 (Community Services)

E-mail: mail@rsb.org.au

<http://www.rsb.org.au/>

Volunteering SA

The Peak Body for Volunteering in South Australia

Torrens Building, 220 Victoria Square, Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: (08) 8221 7177

Email: volsa@volunteeringsa.org.au

<http://www.volunteeringsa.org.au>