

## Volunteer Center of Bergen County, Inc. Code of Ethics

This code of ethics is, by necessity, general in outlining broad ethical principles. It is not a detailed set of recommended practices on a specific issue.

### **I. Personal and Professional Integrity**

All staff, board members and volunteers of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County (“organization”) act with honesty, integrity and openness in all their dealings as representatives of the organization. The organization promotes a working environment that values respect, fairness and integrity.

### **II. Mission**

The organization has a clearly stated mission and purpose, approved by the board of directors, in pursuit of the public good. All of its programs support that mission and all who work for or on behalf of the organization understand and are loyal to that mission and purpose. The mission is responsive to the constituency and communities served by the organization and of value to the society at large.

### **III. Governance**

The organization has an active governing body that is responsible for setting the mission and strategic direction of the organization and oversight of the finances, operations, and policies of the organization. The governing body:

- Ensures that its board members have the requisite skills and experience to carry out their duties and that all members understand and fulfill their governance duties acting for the benefit of the organization and its public purpose;
- Has a conflict of interest policy that ensures that any conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof are avoided or appropriately managed through disclosure, recusal or other means; and
- Is responsible for the hiring, firing, and regular review of the performance of the chief executive officer, and ensures that the compensation of the chief executive officer is reasonable and appropriate;
- Ensures that the CEO and appropriate staff provide the governing body with timely and comprehensive information so that the governing body can effectively carry out its duties;
- Ensures that the organization conducts all transactions and dealings with integrity and honesty;
- Ensures that the organization promotes working relationships with board members, staff, volunteers, and program beneficiaries that are based on mutual respect, fairness and openness;
- Ensures that the organization is fair and inclusive in its hiring and promotion policies and practices for all board, staff and volunteer positions;
- Ensures that policies of the organization are in writing, clearly articulated and officially adopted;
- Ensures that the resources of the organization are responsibly and prudently managed; and,
- Ensures that the organization has the capacity to carry out its programs effectively.

### **IV. Legal Compliance**

The organization is knowledgeable of and complies with all laws, regulations and applicable international conventions.

#### **V. Responsible Stewardship**

The organization and its subsidiaries manage their funds responsibly and prudently. This includes the following considerations:

- It spends a reasonable percentage of its annual budget on programs in pursuance of its mission;
- It spends an adequate amount on administrative expenses to ensure effective accounting systems, internal controls, competent staff, and other expenditures critical to professional management;
- The organization compensates staff, and any others who may receive compensation, reasonably and appropriately;
- The organization has reasonable fundraising costs, and recognizes that a variety of factors affect fundraising costs;
- The organization does not accumulate operating funds excessively;
- The organization's draws from its endowment prudently, consistent with donor intent, and to support the public purpose of the organization;
- The organization ensures that all spending practices and policies are fair, reasonable and appropriate to fulfill the mission of the organization; and,
- All financial reports are factually accurate and complete in all material respects.

#### **VI. Openness and Disclosure**

The organization provides comprehensive and timely information to the public, the media, and all stakeholders and is responsive in a timely manner to reasonable requests for information. All information about the organization will fully and honestly reflect the policies and practices of the organization. Basic informational data about the organization, such as the Form 990, reviews and compilations, and audited financial statements will be posted on the organization's website or otherwise available to the public. All solicitation materials accurately represent the organization's policies and practices and will reflect the dignity of program beneficiaries. All financial, organizational, and program reports will be complete and accurate in all material respects.

#### **VII. Program Evaluation**

The organization regularly reviews program effectiveness and has mechanisms to incorporate lessons learned into future programs. The organization is committed to improving program and organizational effectiveness and develops mechanisms to promote learning from its activities and the field. The organization is responsive to changes in its field of activity and is responsive to the needs of its constituencies.

#### **VIII. Inclusiveness and Diversity**

The organization has a policy of promoting inclusiveness and its staff, board and volunteers reflect diversity in order to enrich its programmatic effectiveness. The organization takes meaningful steps to promote inclusiveness in its hiring, retention, promotion, board recruitment and constituencies served.

#### **IX. Fundraising**

The Volunteer Center of Bergen County is truthful in its fundraising solicitation materials. The organization respects the privacy concerns of individual donors and

expends funds consistent with donor intent. The organizations discloses important and relevant information to potential donors.

In raising funds from the public, the organization respects the rights of donors, as follows:

- To be informed of the mission of the organization, the way the resources will be used and their capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes;
- To be informed of the identity of those serving on the organization's governing board and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities;
- To have access to the organization's most recent financial reports;
- To be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given;
- To receive appropriate acknowledgement and recognition;
- To be assured that information about their donations is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by the law;
- To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donor will be professional in nature;
- To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organizations or hired solicitors;
- To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that an organization may intend to share; and,
- To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.\*

*Approved by Volunteer Center Board of Directors January 24, 2008  
(Adapted with permission from the general Code of Ethics developed by Independent sector in 2004.)*

\*These nine points are taken from A Donor Bill of Rights, developed by the American Association of Fund Raising Counsel, the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, and the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and endorsed by INDEPENDENT SECTOR.