

# Supervising Difficult Volunteers



**“I don’t like to be difficult, but  
it’s the only thing I’m really good at!”**



# Supervising Difficult Volunteers

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800 volunteers statewide

# What is your situation now?

- How many are in a situation now with a difficult volunteer?

# Process

- How many are looking for a process to prevent difficult situations?

How many were hoping I could wave a  
**Wand of Wisdom**  
and take care of your situation?



# What is difficult about a difficult volunteer?

- Define a difficult volunteer with 1, 2, or 3 words

# What is difficult about a difficult volunteer?

- Could you be the difficult one?



## Start with you

- Believe your volunteers are valuable assets
- Acknowledge some need extra help
- Believe that you can help turn difficult behaviors into strengths



# Where to start

1. Define the Issue
2. Listen
3. Give clear feedback
4. Document
5. Follow up

# Define the Issue

- Figure out what the problem might be
  - Character issue
  - Competency issue
  - Behavior issue

# Listen



# Listen

- Listen to have the best possible understanding
- Listen for the employee's POV
- Listen for a problem that may not be the volunteer's fault

# Clear Feedback

- Give feedback about what needs to be done differently
- Give specific information in order to improve

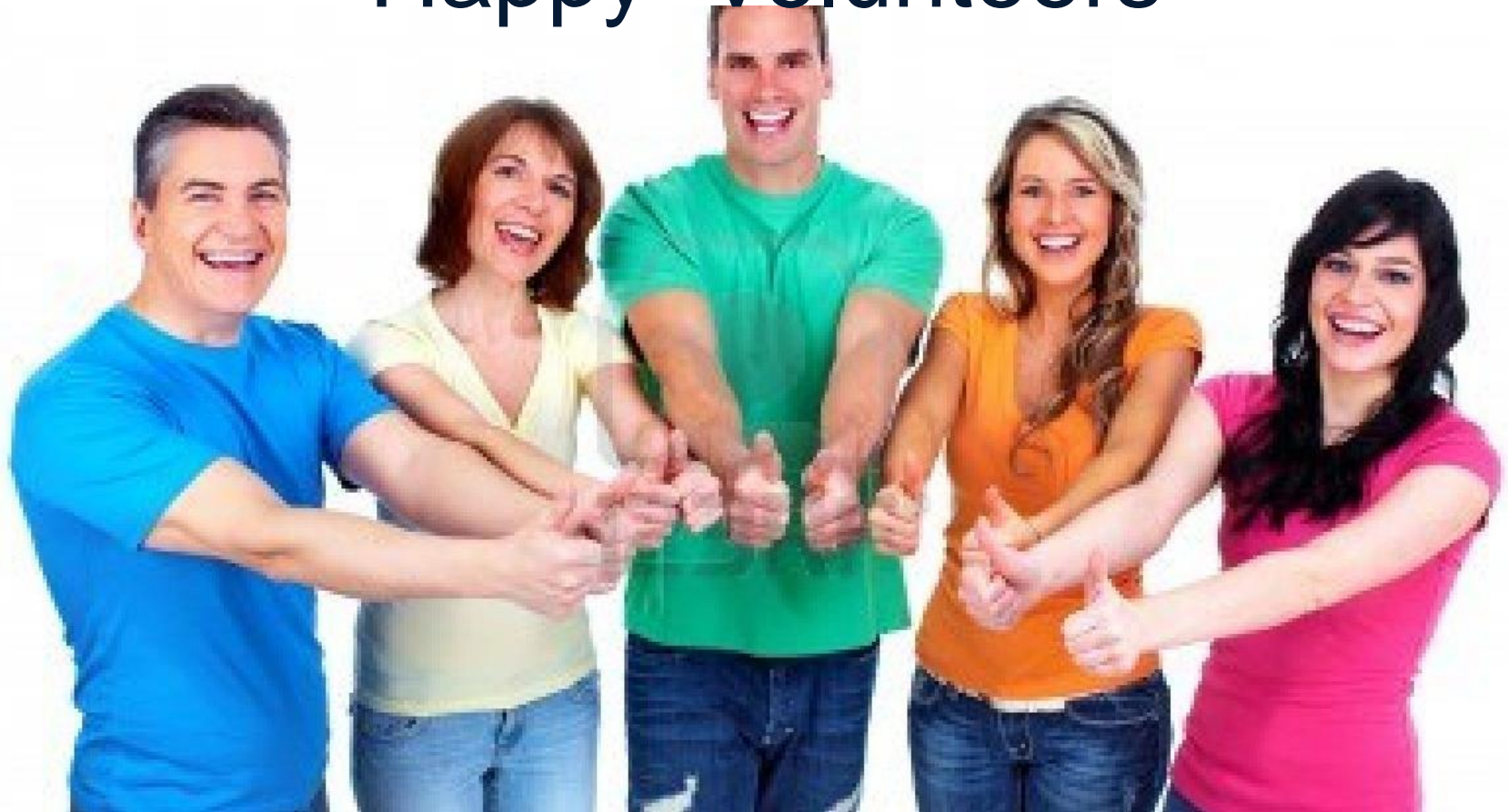
# Document

- Write it down
  - If it isn't written down, it didn't happen
  - Instances of unacceptable behavior
  - Key points of conversations
  - Date it

# Follow up

- Provide training, coaching, and counseling
- Hold volunteer to standards of behavior you set up
- Stick to deadlines
- Recognize achievement

# Happy Volunteers





# Prevent Difficult Situations

- Position Description
- Understand role
- Provide training, coaching
- Standards of Behavior
- Performance Improvement Plan

# Position Description

## Elements of a Position Description

- Position Title
- Location
- Objective
- Qualifications
- Responsibilities
- Time commitment
- Training/Support
- Benefits
- Supervisor

# Explain volunteer's role

# Provide training

- Explain expectations of role
- Train to understand organization
- Meet others in similar roles
- Understand minimum competency
- Train to develop volunteers skills

# Standards of Behavior

- Clearly spell out standards
- Ask volunteer to sign the agreement
- Use the Standards of Behavior document to counsel volunteer in a difficult situation

# Performance Improvement Plan

- Documents inappropriate behavior
- Clarifies areas to be improved
- Actions for improvement
- Spells out role of supervisor to help
- Date for feedback
- Date improvement is expected

# When is it time to part ways?

- Cannot fulfill terms of Standard of Behavior
- Safety of clients or other volunteers is in jeopardy
- Your organization may have clear guidelines

# Role Play

Sort out this difficult situation

1. Define the Issue
2. Listen
3. Give clear feedback
4. Document
5. Follow up

# Role Play

## Create a Position Description

- Position Title
- Location
- Objective
- Qualifications
- Responsibilities
- Time commitment
- Training/Support
- Benefits
- Supervisor





# University of Maine Cooperative Extension

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