

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks

60-Minute Module Series

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS Training Guide

**National Park Service
Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



HOW TO SUCCEED WITH VOLUNTEERS-IN-PARKS

60-Minute Module Series

Program Preparation
Program Planning
Motivation
Needs Assessment
Designing Jobs
Recruitment
Interviewing
Orientation
Training
Safety Management
Supervision
Delegation
Performance Reviews
Recognition

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of conducting performance reviews of volunteers is sometimes met with strong resistance. You may hear, “We’re getting too formal,” “Volunteers will be scared off,” “We don’t have the time or skills to do them,” or “How could we ever initiate this with our current volunteers?”

Countering these reflections are a growing number of VIP Program Managers who see performance review as a reflection of the importance of our volunteers. It is a mutual way to express appreciation, identify problems and needs, determine the volunteer’s future involvement in the organization, and hold the volunteer and the National Park Service accountable for their commitment to one another. Increasing numbers of volunteers are seeking to develop and enhance their skills through volunteer work and thus are welcoming opportunities to receive constructive feedback and evaluation of their work.

A formal performance review process should already be in place for paid staff prior to establishing a similar process for volunteers. Initiating a volunteer performance review system should be gradual and sensitive to concerns and issues of existing staff and volunteers. Often, the development of a self- assessment tool is the first step toward having volunteers begin to take a critical look at their accomplishments. Stressing the mutual benefits of the experience may be most poignantly noted by remembering that volunteers can and do “fire” organizations when they are not satisfied. Both parties, the park and the volunteer, have concrete information to use as they evaluate the success of this partnership, if they have initially agreed to (1) clear success measures for the volunteer job, and (2) the support and training that will be given to the volunteer by the park.

PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The **Purpose** of this module is to introduce or enhance a park's performance review of volunteers.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Define a volunteer performance review process that fits into the total supervision and support process of the NPS.
2. Develop an understanding of the purposes, benefits and barriers of instituting or enhancing a performance review process.
3. Examine a suggested process and tools for performing the review.
4. Explore the potential outcomes of performance reviews.

GENERAL NOTES TO TRAINER

1. This workshop is in a suggested format. Feel free, however, to personalize it with your own stories. Also, phrase questions and activities in a manner most attuned to your participants.
2. Be prepared to experience resistance on this topic. It is still controversial, but more volunteer managers are discovering the positive impact that performance reviews can have on the volunteers and the park when they are performed effectively.
3. This workshop deals with both attitudes towards performance review and a process to apply it to the volunteer program. You will need to judge whether the entire workshop can be delivered effectively in the allotted time frame. Suggestions for breaking it into several sessions are given in the “Suggestions for Expanded Activities” section found after the Trainer’s Notes for this module.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Transparency Handout	Section	Method of Presentation	Time
T-1 T-2 T-3	H-1 Introduction Activity Introduction Learning Objectives Key Concepts	Presentation Group Interaction	10 minutes
T-3 T-4	H-1 H-2 Concept 1 Definition of volunteer performance review	Presentation Individual Response	8 minutes
T-3 T-5 T-6	H-1 Concept 2 Benefits/Barriers	Interactive Presentation	12 minutes
T-3 T-7 T-8 T-9	H-1 H-3 H-4 H-5 Concept 3 Process of performance review	Presentation	8 minutes
T-3 T-10 T-11 T-12 T-13	H-1 H-6 H-7 H-8 H-9 Concept 4 Outcomes of performance reviews	Presentation	10 minutes
T-3 T-4	H-1 Summary/Wrap-Up/ Evaluation	Summary Remarks	3 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 60 minutes

TRAINER'S NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Time: 10 minutes

T-1: Evaluation

Introduce the topic with the following activity:

For 2 minutes have participants share any words that come to mind when they hear/see the word: **Evaluation**. (You may wish to write words on T-1.)

Anticipated reaction:

Generally, there will be an overwhelmingly negative reaction to the word (e.g., powerless, adversarial, boss, school, uncomfortable). Occasionally, more positive words will suggest growth, challenge, affirmation.

Debrief

Many people have had negative experiences with evaluation in their life. Ask participants to open their minds to a new view of performance evaluation — a **review** of performance which is intended to be an affirming event, not one to be feared, ignored or avoided.

T-2: Learning Objectives

Share a few introductory comments on performance review and share T-2, the Learning Objectives of this session.

T-3: Key Concepts

This workshop is built on **four Key Concepts**.

H-1: Key Concepts

Share T-3 and H-1 and indicate that each concept will be covered in the seminar.

CONCEPT 1

Time: 8 minutes

Successful performance reviews provide an opportunity for constructive feedback between the person who assigns work and the volunteer who performs it.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-4: Essential Elements of Volunteer Performance Reviews

H-2: Volunteer Performance Reviews

Presentation:

Performance reviews should be non-threatening, constructive, supportive, flexible and empowering. They should aim to encourage the volunteer to stretch for high standards and determine where the organization can help the volunteer achieve his/her goals.

Essential elements for success:

1. As they enter the organization, volunteers should be apprised of the feedback system, including the system of performance review.
2. The performance review is a time for both the volunteer and the supervisor to share their experience, with one another, in the organization.
3. Performance reviews should be based on previously agreed upon standards, job description, tasks, deadlines, available resources, intervening circumstances, etc.
4. The performance review should have no surprises if ongoing supervision and conflict resolution have taken place.
5. Depending on the size and culture of the park, the process can be formal or informal.
6. It is best to gradually include current volunteers who have not previously been reviewed. Self-assessment may work best as the system is initiated.
7. Performance reviews should be scheduled for a specific time.

CONCEPT 2

Time: 12 minutes

Volunteer performance reviews offer numerous benefits to volunteers and to the parks they serve.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-5: Benefits of Performance Reviews

Ask participants to share what they see as benefits for the agency and for the volunteer to be involved in performance reviews. (Add from T-5 any that they fail to mention.)

Benefits of Performance Reviews:

1. They are a way to tell volunteers they are important and that both volunteers and organizations are held accountable to their agreements.
2. Volunteers want to be successful and usually respond well to feedback.
3. It is a good time to express appreciation for volunteer efforts and acknowledge accomplishments.
4. Enables the volunteer and park supervisor to renegotiate their working agreement with one another.
5. It provides an opportunity for plans to be made to improve volunteer performance in the future (e.g., training, new placement).
6. Allows volunteers to express concerns and “escape” an unfavorable situation.
7. Allows staff to share concerns and “dismiss” a volunteer if the situation requires that action.

T-6: Barriers to Performance Reviews

Optional Activity:

If participants are expressing resistance to utilizing volunteer performance reviews, problem-solve to assist them in breaking through their barriers.

Ask participants:

“What are some potential barriers your park will need to overcome to do performance reviews successfully?”

Barriers

Strategies to Overcome

Our paid staff isn't reviewed

Suggest this be initiated first

No policies on reviews for volunteers

Institute policies on performance reviews and dismissal

Current volunteers are resisting the idea

Involve them in developing the form and process

CONCEPT 3

Time: 8 minutes

At the heart of a good volunteer review is a shared understanding of job expectations and outcomes.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

H-3: The Volunteer Performance Review Process

T-7: Volunteer Performance Review (Before the Session)

T-8: Volunteer Performance Review (During the Session)

T-9: Volunteer Performance Review (After the Session)

H-4: Volunteer Self-Assessment Forms

H-5: Ideas for Evaluation Questions

Review the following process for performance review.

Before the Session

1. Have the volunteer fill out self- assessment
2. Review volunteer's job description/goals and evaluate performance versus job expectation
3. Do an evaluation on the job expectation versus performance

During the Session

1. Together, review the agreed-upon job expectations
2. Share positive feedback and give appreciation for service
3. Volunteer shares self- assessment and assessment of agency support
4. Give assessment of volunteer's performance
5. Discuss any barriers that volunteer experienced in carrying out the position
6. Discuss future plans for the volunteer in the park (position, goals, etc.)

After the Session

1. Write a report for volunteer's file
2. Follow up on any action plans or agreements made

If applicable, share H-4 and H-5 to explore possible forms/questions to use in, or adapt to, your volunteer program.

CONCEPT 4

Time: 10 minutes

Outcomes from volunteer performance reviews can range from applause to dismissal — by either the VIP supervisor or by the volunteer.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-10: Possible Reasons for Low Volunteer Productivity/ Morale

Presentation:

One way to keep volunteers continually involved in your park is to take the opportunity of performance reviews to discuss a volunteer's readiness for a new challenge, need for a change or break, etc. If there has been low productivity or morale on the part of the volunteer, it is important to discuss remedies.

Activity to uncover productivity or morale problems:

Ask group to share possible reasons for low volunteer productivity or morale. The following may be some of the possible responses:

1. Boredom: too much routine
2. Discontent; personality differences
3. Idleness: fluctuating workload, insufficient staff
4. Lack of interest in the work
5. Ill-defined assignments
6. Inadequate supervision/training
7. Misunderstanding of policies and their purposes
8. Resentment, overload, unrealistic deadlines
9. Poor communication within work team (staff/volunteers)
10. Emotional stress and personal difficulties
11. Erratic participation
12. Lack of appreciation
13. Staff and park changes
14. Staff resistance to utilizing volunteers

T-11: Dismissal of Volunteers

Activity:

Ask participants to divide into small groups to identify possible remedies to specific morale problems.

Comment on Dismissal:

(Remember: It may be initiated by the volunteer or the park.)

(1) The volunteer may choose to leave the park for any number of reasons.

(2) The park may dismiss volunteers due to non-adherence to rules and procedures or due to continued unsatisfactory performance after progressive warnings have taken place.

Share/review your park's policies and procedures regarding dismissal, whether initiated by the park or the volunteer (e.g., exit interviews, dismissal procedures, etc.)

T-12: Exit Interview Outcomes

H-6: A Suggested Exit Interview Form

Volunteer Initiated Departure

It is advisable, whenever possible, to have an exit interview with a volunteer leaving the organization. You can gain a great deal of information which can serve other purposes:

- Tracking
- Recognizing and thanking volunteers
- Locating problems within specific areas (e.g., many volunteers staying a short time/leaving early)
- Detecting any recruitment problems (e.g., accepting someone who is not appropriate for the job)
- Hopefully minimizing any bad feelings caused by the park/agency
- Providing closure to the relationship

T-13: Volunteer Dismissal

H-7: Dismissal of Volunteers

H-8: Volunteer Termination

H-9: How to Fire a Volunteer

Volunteer Dismissal by Park

It might be difficult to imagine yourself firing a volunteer, but there clearly are situations when it must be done, for the sake of fellow volunteers, of paid staff, of park visitors, and/or of the resource.

Remember, however, that volunteers must be clearly informed of their roles and responsibilities through clear job descriptions. They must also understand, from the very beginning, that certain standards and expectations must be met for the success and continuation of the relationship between the volunteer and the park.

Essentials of Firing Volunteers:

1. As part of their orientation, each volunteer should receive a copy of the park policies on termination, including a policy on suspension and grievance procedures. This provides volunteers with forewarning that volunteers can be terminated. It also assures salaried staff that volunteers can be dismissed from the organization.
2. With few exceptions (e.g., observed harm to visitors, theft, etc.), volunteers should not be fired until you have had an opportunity to conduct an in-depth investigation, making certain that you have proof of violation of park policies or performance standards. You may choose to suspend the volunteer while the investigation is taking place. Determine if there are any excusable or extenuating circumstances, and always document, in writing, your investigation and conclusions. It is advised that you confirm the termination in writing with the volunteer.
3. Firing volunteers should be handled fairly and with utmost diplomacy. Don't apologize for your decision.
4. Provide notification to appropriate paid staff and other volunteers that the volunteer will no longer be working at the park.

SUMMARY/WRAP-UP/EVALUATION

Time: 3 minutes

T-3: Key Concepts

**T-4: Essential Elements
of Volunteer
Performance Reviews**

H-1: Key Concepts

Review key concepts and key elements of performance reviews.

END 60-MINUTE TRAINING

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPANDED ACTIVITIES

1. The length of time to cover this topic will vary greatly depending on participant's comfort level and experience. If you are simply wishing to suggest that performance reviews be adopted, you may wish to cover concepts 1 and 2 to get buy-in and input on the first session and concepts 3 and 4 in a second session which focuses on the "how-tos."
2. If there is resistance by current volunteers to the introduction of performance reviews, it would be advisable to have a session with them to expose them to the mutual benefits of the process and solicit their ideas for a process that would be effective and acceptable in your organization.
3. If you are devoting most of the session to "selling" the concept of performance reviews for volunteers, you may wish to break people into small groups and have them share any positive personal experiences they have had related to personal growth coming from the experience of having a performance review.

RESOURCES

1. Graff, Linda L. *Yes You Can!: Discipline and Dismissal of Volunteers, An Audio Workshop*, Graff and Associates, 1999. Available from www.lindagraff.ca
2. Lee, Jarene Frances, with Julia M. Catagnus. *What We Learned (The Hard Way) About Supervising Volunteers: An Action Guide for Making Your Job Easier*, Energize, 1998. Available from www.energizeinc.com
3. Maddux, Robert. *Effective Performance Appraisals*. Order from Crisp Publications, Inc., 95 First Street, Los Altos, California 94022.
4. McCurley, Steve and Rick Lynch. *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All the Resources in the Community*, 1996. Chapter 11, "Evaluation, Positive Correction and Termination." Available from www.energizeinc.com
5. McCurley, Steve and Sue Vineyard. *Handling Problem Volunteers: Real Solutions*, Heritage Arts, Publishing/VM Systems, 1998. Available from www.energizeinc.com

T RANSPARENCIES

Guide to Transparencies

- T-1:** Evaluation
- T-2:** Learning Objectives
- T-3:** Key Concepts
- T-4:** Essential Elements of Volunteer Performance Reviews
- T-5:** Benefits of Volunteer Performance Reviews
- T-6:** Barriers to Volunteer Performance Reviews
- T-7:** Volunteer Performance Reviews (Before the Session)
- T-8:** Volunteer Performance Reviews (During the Session)
- T-9:** Volunteer Performance Reviews (After the Session)
- T-10:** Possible Reasons for Low Volunteer Productivity/Morale
- T-11:** Dismissal of Volunteers
- T-12:** Exit Interview Outcomes
- T-13:** Volunteer Dismissal

Evaluation

Learning Objectives

- The process for the volunteer performance review
- Purposes, benefits and barriers to instituting volunteer performance reviews
- Suggested procedures and tools
- Potential outcomes of performance reviews

Key Concepts

Concept 1

Performance reviews provide an opportunity for constructive feedback between the person who assigns work and the person who performs it.

Concept 2

Volunteer performance reviews offer numerous benefits to volunteers and to the parks they serve.

Concept 3

At the heart of a good volunteer performance review is a shared understanding of job expectations and outcomes.

Concept 4

Outcomes from volunteer performance reviews can range from “applause” to dismissal — by either the VIP supervisor or by the volunteer.

Essential Elements of Volunteer Performance Reviews

- Volunteers learn about review system when they first start working
- Mutual feedback is key
- Performance reviews are based on previously agreed upon job description, goals, etc.
- No surprises

Essential Elements of Volunteer Performance Reviews (cont.)

- The process can be formal or informal depending on park's culture
- Gradually invite current volunteers to participate, starting with a self- assessment
- Schedule a specific time or it will continually be put off!

Benefits of Volunteer Performance Reviews

- A way to tell volunteers they are important and held accountable
- Volunteers want success and feedback
- A chance to express appreciation to volunteers
- Opportunity for re - negotiating working agreement

Benefits of Volunteer Performance Reviews

(cont.)

- Plan for ways to improve volunteer performance in the future (e.g., training)
- Volunteers can express concerns and “escape” an unfavorable situation
- Supervisor can share concerns and dismiss, if warranted.

Barriers to Volunteer Performance Reviews

1. “Our paid staff doesn’t receive performance reviews”
2. “We have no policies on volunteer performance reviews”
3. “Current volunteers are resisting the idea”

Volunteer Performance Reviews

Before the Session:

- Have the volunteer fill out self- assessment
- Review volunteer's job description, goals, etc.
- Do an evaluation on job expectations versus performance

Volunteer Performance Review

During the Session:

- Review job expectations together
- Share positive feedback and appreciation
- Have volunteer share self-assessment and assessment of agency support
- Assess volunteer's performance
- Discuss barriers to success for volunteer
- Discuss future plans for volunteer

Volunteer Performance Review

After the Session:

- Prepare a signed report for volunteer's file
- Follow up on action plans or agreements

Possible Reasons for Low Volunteer Productivity/Morale

- Boredom, too much routine
- Discontent, personality differences
- Idleness, fluctuating workload, insufficient staff
- Lack of interest in the work
- Ill-defined assignments
- Inadequate supervision/training
- Misunderstanding of park policies

Possible Reasons for Low Volunteer Productivity/Morale (con't.)

- Resentment, overload, unrealistic deadlines
- Poor communication
- Emotional stress and personal difficulties
- Erratic participation
- Lack of appreciation by staff
- Staff and park changes
- Staff resistance to utilizing volunteers

Dismissal of Volunteers

- Volunteer initiated
- Park initiated

Exit Interview Outcomes

- Tracking
- Recognizing and thanking volunteers
- Locating problems within district, division, etc., in the park
- Detecting recruitment problems (e.g., wrong person)
- Apologizing for any problem caused by agency (keep good PR in community)
- Providing closure to the relationship

Volunteer Dismissal

- Park policies on dismissal, grievance, etc., should be explained during orientation
- Most often, investigate violations before dismissal
- Handle with fairness and diplomacy. Don't apologize!
- Notify staff that volunteer will no longer be working at the park

HANDOUTS

Guide to Handouts

- H-1:** Key Concepts of Volunteer Performance Reviews
- H-2:** Volunteer Performance Reviews
- H-3:** The Volunteer Performance Review Process
- H-4:** Volunteer Self-Assessment Form
- H-5:** Ideas for Evaluation Questions for Supervisors of Volunteers
- H-6:** A Suggested Exit Interview Form
- H-7:** Dismissal of Volunteers
- H-8:** Volunteer Termination
- H-9:** How to Fire a Volunteer (and survive!)

Key Concepts of Volunteer Performance Reviews

The purpose of volunteer performance reviews is to provide constructive feedback that acknowledges and enhances the volunteer's contribution to the park.

Concept 1

Successful performance reviews provide an opportunity for constructive feedback between the person who assigns work and the volunteer who performs it.

Volunteers should be apprised of the feedback system immediately upon entering their job. It is best to include current volunteers who have not previously been reviewed. Self-assessment may work best as the system is initiated.

Concept 2

Volunteer performance reviews offer numerous benefits to volunteers and to the parks they serve.

Volunteers want to be successful and generally respond well to feedback. Taking the time to review their work sends the message that you value their time and effort and that you hold them accountable for their agreement. It provides an opportunity to express appreciation. The review also enables the volunteers and the volunteer supervisor to determine if the work is meeting the needs of both parties and, as appropriate, to continue, to renegotiate, or to terminate the individual agreement.

Concept 3

At the heart of a good volunteer performance review is a shared understanding of job expectations and outcomes.

Be organized! Have the volunteer complete a self-assessment (see sample form) for discussion at a formal meeting. Review materials related to job expectations versus performance for discussion at the meeting. Be positive! Find ways to acknowledge accomplishments, to encourage improvements and to resolve problems. Be honest! Discuss future plans for the volunteer in the park.

Concept 4

Outcomes from volunteer performance reviews can range from “applause” to dismissal – by either the VIP supervisor or the volunteer.

Be helpful and supportive. Keep the volunteer involved by looking for new challenges in the job. If you note low productivity or morale, discuss other options for the volunteer. Be sure to keep a good written communication file on each volunteer. If necessary, take the appropriate steps to dismiss the volunteer.

Volunteer Performance Reviews

Definition:

Volunteer performance review provides an opportunity for the person who assigns the work, and the person who performs it, to discuss whether their expectations for themselves, and for each other, are being met.

Key Elements:

1. Volunteers, as they enter the organization, must be apprised of the feedback system, including the system for performance review. It should be described and delivered in positive, empowering terms.
2. Mutual feedback is the key. It is a time for both the volunteer and the supervisor to share their experience, with one another, in the organization.
3. Performance review should be based on previously agreed-upon goals, standards, job description, tasks, deadlines, available resources, intervening circumstances, etc.
4. The performance review should not include major surprises ,when ongoing supervision, conflict resolution, etc., have taken place.
5. Depending on the size and culture of your park, the process can be formal or informal.
6. It is best to gradually include current volunteers who have not previously been reviewed. You may start out with a self- assessment system as they begin to buy into the benefits.
7. It is best if the performance review is scheduled for a specific time. Otherwise it will most likely be put off.

Volunteer Performance Reviews

Before the Session:

1. Have the volunteer fill out (think about) his/her self- assessment based on a series of questions.
2. As the supervisor, be prepared for the performance review session. Reviewing the job description, goals, and standards agreed to, and evaluate performance, versus job expectation, for the time period being reviewed.

During the Session:

1. Review the previously agreed-upon job expectations together.
2. Share some positive feedback and give appreciation for service.
3. Ask the volunteer to share their self- assessment and respond appropriately.
4. Give your assessment of the volunteer's performance, based on some format such as Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory.
5. Discuss any barriers the volunteer experienced in carrying out his/her job and plan for how they might be overcome in the future.
6. Discuss future plans for the volunteer in the organization (positions, goals, etc.).

After the Session:

1. Prepare a report and follow up on any action plans or agreements made.

Volunteer Self-Assessment Form (Sample Questions)

1. Do you feel you are fulfilling the expectations of your job description, goals, etc.? If not, share your reasons for the gap.
2. How realistic was the estimated time to accomplish your volunteer work?
3. Did the organization provide adequate orientation, training, supervision and resources for you to accomplish your job? Suggestions for improvement?
4. What have been your greatest satisfactions on the job?
5. What have been your greatest disappointments on the job?
6. Were other volunteers and staff receptive and appreciative of your volunteer work? Comment.
7. What were your areas of growth in your volunteer job?
8. Overall, I would rank my performance as:
Superior, exceeding expectations
Excellent, met expectations
Needing improvement, did not meet expectations
Comments to explain above answer:
9. What type of work and time commitment do you desire for next year? (i.e., same position, new challenges, departure...)
10. Other comments, suggestions, etc.

Ideas for Evaluation Questions for Supervisors of Volunteers

Rate the volunteer on factors such as:

- Job performance
- People skills
- Responsibility and Motivation

People Skills: (example of rating systems)

(1)

- Adheres to confidentiality policy
- Relates well to clients, staff and volunteers
- Is courteous and tactful
- Cooperates with team of staff and co-workers
- Is well groomed and adheres to dress code

(2)

1. Superior - Exceeds requirements
2. Excellent - Accomplished tasks
3. Fair - Tasks not fully accomplished
4. Unsatisfactory - tasks not accomplished

You need to determine pertinent factors and a rating system that is appropriate for your organization and volunteers.

It is important that the volunteer and the volunteer's supervisor discuss any performance reviews and agree to the next steps, particularly if the job is not being accomplished. Numerous factors, both individual and park, may be effecting a volunteer's low productivity or morale.

A Suggested Exit Interview Form

(To be completed by the volunteer)

Date: _____

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address:

Reason for leaving the park:

Please indicate your most and least satisfying experiences in the park:

Most satisfying:

Least satisfying:

Was your work setting, office space, desk, phone, etc., satisfactory?

Yes ___ No ___

Explain:

Do you feel that you had adequate support and supervision?

Yes ___ No ___

Explain:

Do you feel that you received sufficient training for your position?

Yes ___ No ___

Explain:

Do you feel that you made a significant contribution? Yes ____ No ____

Explain:

Do you feel that your work was appreciated? Yes ____ No ____

Explain:

Will you consider a volunteer position with the NPS in the future? Yes ____ No ____

Explain:

Additional Comments:

Volunteer's Signature

Interviewer's Signature

Dismissal of Volunteers

On rare occasions, we may be faced with the unpleasant task of dismissing a volunteer. It should be noted that unless you have a good management system in place (clear job descriptions, orientation and supervision, etc.) it is very difficult to fire a volunteer. Most often, firing is neglected, frequently with high costs to the individual and the park.

Reasons for dismissal:

- Misconduct
- Unsatisfactory performance
- Breach of confidentiality
- Inappropriate behavior
- Disregard of policies and procedures
- Suitable assignment not available

Alternatives to dismissal:

If the infraction is such that immediate dismissal is not called for, you may consider the following **alternatives to firing**:

1. Give a warning and develop a plan to improve behavior.
2. Provide additional training which may enable the volunteer to perform better.
3. Place in a more suitable job in the park.
4. Refer to a Volunteer Center or other agency for more suitable placement.
5. Retire the volunteer. (This is the delicate situation in which a person is unable to do a satisfactory job due to increasing mental, physical or aging problems.) You might plan a nice retirement party honoring the volunteer for his/her service.
6. Reassign to a different person in the park (if the problems stemmed from a poor personality match).

Volunteer Termination

Volunteers, like paid staff, terminate their relationship with the NPS through resignation or dismissal. In either case, it is recommended that accurate records and documentation be kept. Records are needed in case of grievance procedures or to document a volunteer's past work record with the park.

Reasons for resignation:

- Move out of area
- Volunteer job finished
- Personal or family health issues
- Changes in life situation (divorce, etc.)
- Family obligations
- Return to full-time work
- Loss of interest
- Dissatisfaction with the park
- Term is up
- Others

Exit Interview

It is advised, whenever possible, to have an exit interview with a volunteer who is leaving the organization. You can gain a great deal of information that can serve important purposes including:

- Tracking retention
- Recognizing and thanking volunteers
- Locating problems within a particular division of the park (i.e., many volunteers staying a short time/leaving early)
- Detecting any recruitment problems (i.e., accepting someone who is not appropriate for the job)
- Hopefully minimizing any bad feelings caused by the park/agency
- Providing closure to the relationship

How To Fire A Volunteer (AND SURVIVE!)

It might be difficult to imagine yourself firing a volunteer, and often it is nearly impossible to do, because the park does not have the appropriate systems in place to perform a termination. Remember that a volunteer must be clearly informed of his/her role and responsibilities through a job description and must understand from the very beginning that certain standards and expectations must be met for the success and continuation of the relationship between the volunteer and the park.

Four Essentials of Firing a Volunteer:

1. As a part of the orientation given to each volunteer, you should let them know that, on occasion, it has become necessary to terminate volunteers if their continued service is deemed to have a negative impact on fellow volunteers, paid staff, visitors, park resources, or the National Park Service. This provides the volunteer with forewarning and also informs salaried staff that volunteers can be dismissed from the park.
2. With few exceptions (i.e., observed harm to clients, theft, etc.), volunteers should not be fired until you have had an opportunity to conduct an in-depth investigation, making certain that you have proof of violation of NPS policies or performance standards. You may choose to suspend the volunteer while the investigation is taking place. Determine if there are any excusable or extenuating circumstances, and always document, in writing, your investigation and conclusions. It is advised that you confirm the termination in writing with the volunteer.
3. Firing volunteers should be handled fairly and with the utmost diplomacy. Don't apologize for your decision. Allow for an appeals process.
4. Provide notification to appropriate paid staff and other volunteers that the volunteer will no longer be working at the park.