



Community Nonprofit Internship Program Pilot

## Respectful Communication Policy Development Guide

Welcome! This tool is designed to foster a warm and supportive environment for your interns and staff. We encourage your organization to review the Codes of Conduct or Conduct Policies and consider what policies may apply for the creation of an inclusive and comprehensive document that sets clear expectations for the interns and all parties involved. This document will serve as a valuable tool for fostering a safe and accountable workplace environment.

### Shifting Our Perspective on Professionalism

In the world of work, professionalism often carries with it certain standards and norms. However, it's essential to recognize that these standards can sometimes perpetuate harmful biases rooted in white supremacy culture. These biases can manifest in dress codes, speech expectations, work styles, and punctuality. At Volunteer Alberta, we emphasize "respectful communication" as our preferred approach, emphasizing inclusivity and building relationships. We encourage organizations to consider the potential impacts of a strict professionalism culture when developing an Intern Communication Policy.

### Review and Reflection

If your organization has an existing Workplace Conduct/Communication Policy, take a moment to consider what parts of this policy may apply. As this internship may be a first-time experience for some interns and students, ensure that this document is readily accessible to them and everyone involved. If you don't have such a policy in place, consider whether there are other policies that serve a similar purpose.

Reflect with your team about what current values and behaviors are crucial for maintaining a safe and supportive environment within your organization? If these aspirations are not currently included in your organization's policy, then consider ways in which they can be implemented for this internship in a way that is reciprocal for both parties.

Additionally, consider whether the policy offers guidance on how to address situations where standards are not met and whether accountability measures are clearly defined.



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## Recommendations for Your Policies

Your policy should clearly define what constitutes respectful and acceptable communication and what does not.

To establish appropriate workplace boundaries, initiate a discussion on the purpose and scope of work with interns at the beginning of their internship .

- Specify the forms of communication to be used, such as email, phone, and text messages, as needed.
- Outline the expected frequency of communication and check-ins with the intern, as well as the intern's responsibilities when communicating with their supervisor.
- Make it clear who the intern should communicate with. Communication between the organization and intern should exclusively come from the internship supervisor listed in the letter of agreement.
- Address the process for resolving conflicts that may arise between interns and their respective supervisors, ensuring alignment with your organization's conflict resolution procedures.

## In Conclusion

We encourage you to view your agreements with interns as living documents that can be updated as needed. Flexibility is key to accommodate changes within the intern agreement. For instance, if text messaging is found to be ineffective, update the agreement accordingly.

Respectful communication fosters trust and helps establish enduring working relationships between interns and supervisors. By prioritizing respectful communication, you open the door to creating a workplace where individuals can grow, learn, and thrive.



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