



# Health and Safety

for congregations

*Volunteers*

## How this guide can help you

Volunteers are an integral part of the life of our churches. The church has a responsibility to protect our volunteers, the people they encounter and the church itself. Volunteers also have a responsibility for their own safety, and that of others.

Our volunteers should be treated with respect and kindness, and in turn behave in a way that upholds integrity. This guide gives you helpful information about how we provide a safe environment for our volunteers.

## Protecting the health and safety of our volunteers

Uniting Church has a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of our volunteers. It is important to remember that safety is about more than just physical hazards like a spill on the floor or lifting a heavy box. Psychological safety is just as important, but can be less clear cut. Everyone contributes to the creation of a positive and protective environment where people and our volunteers feel safe.

## Consulting volunteers

There is a duty to consult with volunteers in relation to health and safety matters. Consultation is an effective way to ensure volunteers contribute to the identification of hazards and the assessment and control of risks they face in carrying out their mission for our churches. Our consultation manual found [here](#) can provide you helpful information.

## Selecting and engaging with volunteers

Volunteers should be selected in accordance with the congregation volunteer policy and procedure found [here](#). Before any person can work with children or vulnerable adults, an appropriate screening process must also be undertaken. Selecting appropriate volunteers is a key step in protecting the safety of vulnerable people. The congregation volunteer policy and procedure will help guide you through this process.

From a health and safety perspective it is also important to ensure volunteers understand the physical and psychological components of their volunteer role and they are medically fit to perform the requirements or tasks. Make sure you clearly step them through what is required of them so they can make decisions about whether they are suitable for the role.

## Health and safety responsibilities for volunteers

All volunteers also have a responsibility to work safely, ensure the safety of others, follow reasonable instructions and to report any safety hazards, unsafe practices or safety incidents that they become aware of. We also ask our volunteers to be involved in assessing and controlling risks. This is particularly important where spaces are being used for activities by children or vulnerable people.

## Training and instruction

Part of our responsibility to volunteers is to provide training and supervision to perform tasks safely. Volunteers are also required to complete appropriate training before they commence to ensure they are upholding church values, policies and processes during their term of service. Additional requirements are found in the code of conduct found [here](#). Just as for paid employees, new volunteers should also be provided training and instruction in relation to:

- Emergency procedures - including the evacuation plan, the safest exit route, and what to do in the event of an emergency. See our emergency planning guide found [here](#)
- First aid procedure. See our first aid guide found [here](#)
- Procedures for reporting hazards and incidents. See our guide on incident and injury notification manuals for NSW found [here](#) and for ACT found [here](#)
- You should also provide any protective equipment that is needed for the role (if any) and provide any training and instruction on how it should be worn

Ongoing monitoring and supervision are also important to ensure volunteers are able to perform their tasks safely.

