



Finnish Red Cross



Amity within Red Cross

Prevention and processing of inappropriate treatment and harassment in volunteer activities

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**Aiming at amicable
volunteer activities**

A WELL-FUNCTIONING VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY is safe, healthy and effective. It highlights equality, fairness, good interactions and giving and receiving support. The objectives of the work are clear and operations are coordinated and well-organised. The roles, responsibilities and mandates of each volunteer are well-balanced for their duties, and each volunteer can feel like a welcome and valued member of the volunteer community.

Volunteers are always responsible for their own actions and everyone has their part in creating a good atmosphere and volunteer activities that are open to all. A safe environment allows people to bring up even difficult issues that are important to smooth operations and high-quality volunteer activities. Good interaction also helps to resolve possible conflicts faster.

The purpose of this guide is to support responsible volunteer activities, promote a good atmosphere within volunteer activities, prevent and recognise inappropriate behaviour and harassment and help to act quickly and effectively if any problems do arise, in line with the agreed shared operating models. The guide will also review what should be taken into account after the situation has been resolved and the volunteer activities return to normal.

As an organisation, the Finnish Red Cross requires a professional, respectful and fair attitude from its volunteers towards other volunteers, recipients of aid, employees and partners alike. The basic principles of social interactions are valuing the opinions and views of others and treating everyone fairly. The Red Cross is committed to being a safe environment for its volunteers, recipients of aid, employees and third parties. When volunteers first start their volunteer activities, they commit to following the seven basic principles of the Red Cross and the volunteer code of ethics of the Finnish Red Cross.

The operations of the Finnish Red Cross are guided by several different sets of rules, guidelines and policies:

- Act (237/2000) and decree (827/2018, organisational rules)
- Rules and Regulations, Rules of Procedure and Finance Rules of districts and branches
- data protection policy, policy on preventing sexual harassment and abuse, policy on political or comparable activities, volunteer operations policy and other policies supplementing the rules
- **Code of Ethics and principles of the organisation**

There are **links** throughout this guide.

Clicking them will take you to the websites referred to in the text.

In addition, several Acts – such as the Non-discrimination Act, Act on Equality between Women and Men and the Constitution of Finland – obligate us to ensure the safety of volunteer activities and promote a good atmosphere within, as well as equity and equality, and to prevent and intervene in any harm and grievances.

Every actor within the Red Cross is committed to promoting an ethically sustainable and responsible operational culture that cares, intervenes in issues, brings them up and takes action. The organisation does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour or harassment in any form. If there are any deviations from the agreed procedures, the matter will be brought up and intervened in according to the operating guidelines.

This guide applies to all Finnish Red Cross volunteer activities within the districts and branches, online or in the various institutions of the Finnish Red Cross. In this guide, the term 'institution' refers to youth shelters, reception centres and Kontti Secondhand Stores.

This guide is based on the *Sopuisasti Punaisessa Ristissä* (Amity within Red Cross) manual for the Finnish Red Cross employees, as well as the organisation's existing guidelines and policies. Additionally, the Amity guide for volunteers of the Norwegian Red Cross, the existing guidelines and practices of the districts and the materials of the Centre for Occupational Safety, as applicable to volunteer activities, have been used for compiling this guide.





**Respectful interactions
at the centre of all**

IN A WELL-FUNCTIONING VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY, people are treated impartially and equitably. The key part is to have a positive attitude with the other volunteers in the community, even if their origin, age, educational background, state of health, sexual orientation, gender identity, character or maybe their way of being a volunteer differs from your own. Getting to know different people helps us to see that we can get along with anyone – we all have many similarities.

A well-functioning volunteer community requires not only effective interactions but also respecting others, having and following common ground rules and trusting others. Small actions, such as asking how others are doing or whether they'd like help, can have a large impact. Every one of us can foster a good atmosphere and promote a great operational culture through our own actions. The volunteers in charge play an especially important role in creating a good atmosphere and can steer the general attitudes through their own example.



As a volunteer:

- Treat all volunteers, recipients of aid, employees and partners in a professional manner.
- Treat others in a respectful and encouraging manner and greet them.
- Thank others and let them know if you have something positive to say.
- Help and support others and give advice when needed, work together with others.
- Listen to others and be open to different views.
- Share and communicate information that is needed in the operations.
- Trust others to do well what they have promised; do not intervene with the work of others when not needed, for example.
- If you notice any issues, bring these problems up.
- Approach things calmly. If you feel insulted, bring the matter up and ask the other person what they meant.
- Give constructive feedback – and recognise how you react to feedback given.
- Ensure the safety and coping of yourself and others.
- Follow the instructions given to you.
- Treat the recipients of aid with respect and remember to maintain confidentiality.
- Take care of the duties you have accepted responsibly.
- Value and support the volunteers in roles of responsibility.



The principles of a safer space

The principles of safer spaces are the cornerstone of day-to-day volunteer activities. The principles of safer spaces have been created to give every volunteer the chance to participate in the operations as they are. The principles of a safer space of the Finnish Red Cross apply to all encounters with others and steer the actions in all training sessions and events of the Finnish Red Cross.

The principles of a safer space remind you to meet new people without prejudice and without any expectations or interpretations made based on external characteristics. These principles also act as reminders to respect others and take them into consideration, highlighting how everyone plays a role in creating a good atmosphere. Principles of safer spaces will also remind us of the importance in intervening in situations if we notice any harassment or other inappropriate treatment.

Principles of safer spaces 2025



Principles for safer spaces

We are responsible together for ensuring that everyone feels good and safe in all Red Cross activities. We follow these principles for safer spaces.

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Be open</p> <p>Meet new people and things without prejudice. Approach every encounter as an opportunity to learn something new and develop.</p> | <p>Respect</p> <p>Pay attention to your choice of words and value the opinion of others. Do not mock, embarrass or judge anyone with your words or behaviour.</p> | <p>Create a positive atmosphere</p> <p>Also take responsibility for the experience of others. Listen, compliment and encourage.</p> |
| <p>Avoid assumptions</p> <p>Do not make assumptions based on external characteristics, skin colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, age or speech. Do not make assumptions about gender, background or functional ability.</p> | <p>Give space</p> <p>Respect the personal space, privacy and personal autonomy of others. Make sure that everyone is heard and give everyone the opportunity to participate.</p> | <p>Intervene</p> <p>Do not stand idly by if you witness harassment or other inappropriate treatment.</p> |
| | <p>Enjoy</p> <p>Have fun! Ask questions and search for information if you find anything confusing.</p> |  <p>Finnish Red Cross</p> |

Good manners also apply online

Good manners and respecting others also apply online and in social media. While tapping on your keyboard, keep in mind that thousands of people may see your message – and the recipient of it is another person. So remember to treat others with respect also online and when posting on social media. Do not write anything that you would not say to the other person face-to-face. Remember that as a Red Cross volunteer, you and your actions also represent the Red Cross as an organisation, impacting its image.

Remember good manners also when using instant messaging services, such as WhatsApp, or when communicating via email or Oma. [**The Finnish Red Cross communication guidelines for branches and volunteers have good tips for communication.**](#)

The Centre for Occupational Safety has a list of social media guidelines from the perspective of employees. These same guidelines can also be applied to volunteer operations. However, in most Red Cross online volunteer duties, the volunteers only use their first names or are completely anonymous due to safety reasons, although usually in online communications messages are posted under one's own name. The instructions below also apply to online volunteer activities:

- Write under your own name. You are responsible for what you publish.
- Be sensible and kind. Show respect to your reader. You are also building your own image when you write. Avoid writing insulting things as far as possible.
- Think before you publish. Remember that once you click publish, you will never be able to take the post back. Be careful; sometimes it can be difficult to tell the difference between private and public or personal and professional.
- Argue calmly from your perspective and avoid placing the blame on others. Remember that you do not need to comment on every piece of criticism or every discussion. Take a break from the conversation if needed, take some distance and reconsider matters. If you make a mistake, admit to it and apologise.
- Do not share any personal data or inappropriate posts or images.
- Do not talk about confidential matters. Figure out which is public and which is confidential information.
- Treat any matters related to the operations with care.
- Be loyal to your community, also during your leisure time.
- Criticising other volunteers, recipients of aid, employees or cooperation partners in social media is not good manners.



**Recognise
inappropriate behaviour
and harassment**

THE RED CROSS PRINCIPLES steer people towards responsible actions. Ethical and responsible, the Red Cross emphasises humanity, accountability and reliability. The Finnish Red Cross does not tolerate any kind of inappropriate behaviour or harassment. However, we must first recognise the inappropriate behaviour and treatment to be able to intervene in it. The concept of inappropriate behaviour and harassment is extensive and comprises things ranging from social exclusion to sexual harassment. Still, not all conflicts included in social situations are counted as inappropriate behaviour or harassment, which should also be acknowledged.

All behaviour that cannot be considered to be generally acceptable and that insults or demeans the other party can be considered inappropriate behaviour and harassment. Inappropriate behaviour and harassment can also occur in social media and instant messaging applications.

These actions affect the whole community and could have serious consequences both for the victim of such inappropriate behaviour and for the entire community.

There is no one clear definition for inappropriate behaviour and harassment, and it can occur in many different forms and at different degrees. Some examples of inappropriate treatment and harassment include:

Discrimination

In a comparable situation, one person is treated worse than others due to one or more personal characteristics. Based on the Non-discrimination Act, these grounds for discrimination include, e.g. age, origin, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, opinions, political activities, trade union activities, family relations, state of health, disability, sexual orientation and other reasons related to one's person.

Bullying

Repeated, regular and long-term negative, insulting, demeaning or aggressive behaviour towards one or several people. Prolonged, inappropriate behaviour turns into bullying.

Social exclusion and ignoring others

Excluding a person from the community. For example, they are not spoken to or listened to, their opinions are not considered, they are not greeted or given necessary information, or they are not invited to joint meetings.

Ruining one's reputation

Spreading untrue negative information or rumours about a person or speaking ill of them behind their back.

Gender-based harassment

Undesirable behaviour based on gender, gender-identity or expression of gender that is not sexual in nature, but that purposefully and explicitly violates the mental or physical integrity of the other person. Examples include belittling a certain gender or demeaning talk of different genders.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is verbal, unspoken or physical undesirable behaviour that is sexual in nature and that purposefully or explicitly violates the mental or physical integrity of the other person. Sexual harassment also comprises lewd or suggestive remarks; materials, messages or phone calls of a sexual nature; physical touches, propositions or demands related to sexual intercourse or other sexual congress.

The Finnish Red Cross does not tolerate any form of sexual harassment or abuse. The organisation is committed to being a safe operating environment for volunteers, employees, the recipients of help and third parties alike. The Finnish Red Cross has a policy on preventing sexual harassment and abuse. You can read the full policy in the branch support materials on the website volunteerinfo.redcross.fi

Prevention of sexual harassment and abuse – Red Cross**Negative operating culture**

Negative operating culture includes all unethical behaviour, gossiping and inappropriate humour, unfounded use of one's authority based on one's position or to strengthen it, hiding things, purposefully neglecting to share essential information or covering observed violations due to a friendship.

Inappropriate use of social media

The same ground rules apply to social media use and online encounters and volunteer duties as to face-to-face encounters. It should also be kept in mind that Red Cross volunteers must never publish or comment on anything in social media that contradicts the values and principles of the organisation.

Actions such as humiliating others, name-calling, belittling, mocking, mean or suggestive messages, threats, intimidation, questioning one's reputation or position and both mental and physical violence can be counted as inappropriate behaviour.

Not all conflicts constitute inappropriate behaviour and harassment

All branches or teams have occasional conflicts or issues with cooperation. Sometimes, it can be difficult to identify inappropriate treatment and harassment, as people experience different things and situations in different ways. As an example, mild individual actions, occasional inappropriate remarks or differences of opinion related to operations do not count as actual harassment. However, it is still important to handle these situations and find a common solution for them.

For example, the following do not count as inappropriate treatment and harassment:

- Differences of opinion related to operations
- Issues related to operations will be processed even if someone finds this unpleasant.
- Some actions, decisions and interpretations lead to a conflict, causing the affected parties to feel uncertain and anxious.
- The volunteer is given a well-founded disciplinary notice or warning.
- Well-founded changes are made to practices, and the matter has been discussed with the volunteers.

Irresponsible behaviour

Irresponsible behaviour is disruptive, makes other volunteer activities more difficult and causes resentment, irritation and depleted motivation in other volunteers without being truly inappropriate behaviour. In addition to actions, things such as attitudes, gestures, expressions and words have an impact.

Irresponsible behaviour includes, e.g.:

- Refusal to follow the agreed practices and methods
- Neglecting to follow the shared agreements, regulations and ground rules of volunteer activities
- Absence from agreed duties and neglecting duties without the appropriate notification

- Exceeding authority, wilful behaviour
- Neglect of duties, carelessness or other irresponsible action
- Assuming or demanding privileges
- Blaming others without a just cause or questioning their competence
- Repeated dramatic emotional outbursts
- Inappropriate social media posts
- Misuse of the organisation's property or facilities
- Use of intoxicants in volunteer duties and excessive use of intoxicants in any Red Cross events
- Carrying weapons within Red Cross facilities

Disruptive behaviour can also include:

- Mixing political activities and volunteer duties
- Mixing volunteer duties and a romantic relationship in a way that intervenes with the operations
- Dressing inappropriately for the situation or poor hygiene

These matters also need to be intervened in if they are continuous or cause a significant detriment to the volunteer community or the organisation's reputation. Sometimes, these can stem from actual misunderstandings or thoughtlessness. The person does not happen to think about how their actions affect others and the volunteer community and its operations.



Assessing the situation

EACH ACTOR, VOLUNTEER AND EMPLOYEE within the organisation has the duty to report or intervene in inappropriate actions that violate the rules and principles. The suspicion or concern must be brought up as quickly as possible and assessing it will be started without delay. These situations will be primarily resolved close to the volunteer operations. A large part of inappropriate behaviour can be reviewed either by volunteers or, if necessary, with the support of the district/institution. So if you feel that someone is behaving inappropriately in the volunteer activities of the Finnish Red Cross, first bring the matter up with the volunteer or employee in charge of the activities in question. Within the branch, the matter should primarily be brought up with the president, another board member or the possible volunteer in charge of the activity form in question. In online volunteer activities, always contact the party in charge of the said activities. At youth shelters, contact the shelter director or employee.

If your matter concerns inappropriate behaviour by a district or branch employee, branch director or the board of branch or district, please report the matter to the district's executive director. Also report the matter to the district's executive director if the inappropriate behaviour has been targeted at someone outside the organisation or a minor. The investigation in the matter will be started without delay after the contact, led by the district.

If the matter is especially serious, a written report will be submitted through the [**Finnish Red Cross's First Whistleblowing channel**](#).

| Role | Responsibility |
|--|---|
| Volunteer | Recognise the situation and report it |
| Volunteer in charge | Accept the report and start the necessary measures to resolve the matter. Report the case forward. |
| District office / institute / Support for online activities | Supports and coordinates the process according to the situation |
| Headquarters | Is in charge of processing serious cases |

The situation must always be assessed in a neutral, confidential, reliable and independent manner. The assessment must be based on facts. In an acute situation, the volunteer's activities can be put on hold while the incident is being investigated, with the decision of the volunteer or employee in charge of the activity. During the initial review it is important not to share information with any outsiders on the work of the investigation team, and no conclusions cannot yet be made about the final conclusion of the matter.

The purpose of the review is to hear the affected parties and assess the necessary further measures on a case-by-case basis. The people participating in the review work cannot be biased: the reported person, the person who submitted the report or other person involved in the incident can only be heard in the matter and cannot take part as investigating parties. Depending on the situation, the review can be carried out either as a mediation – a discussion where the goal is to establish a mutual understanding – or as a hearing where all parties will not be present at the same time. The situation can only be assessed and a solution proposed based on a review carried out properly. The observations made during the review will be written down and a report will be made on the investigation, containing the observations and recommendations for further action. When the situation has been resolved, the related materials are destroyed, except for the decisions. The documents containing the decisions will be delivered to the district/institute for storage. The decision documents will be stored for as long as until the matter has been processed in full or until the operations are restarted or the ban is lifted. Special caution will be exercised in sensitive matters.

When reviewing a report targeted at operations, an opportunity for being heard must always be reserved for the volunteer who is the subject of the report. The following principles must be upheld in hearings:

- The person who is the subject of the report must be given the chance of being heard within a reasonable amount of time.
- Ensure that the volunteer has received a written invitation to the hearing (with exact information, i.e. time and place).
- The volunteer must be aware of why they are being heard.
- If they so wish, the volunteer will have a chance to bring in another person to the meeting in the role of a support person. The support person cannot be involved in the matter being processed in any way.

All involved parties must be kept up-to-date on how the case is progressing.

In the event of a suspected crime, the police must be contacted or the victim is supported in filing a police report.

Reviewing inappropriate behaviour or harassment

Problematic situations are always primarily resolved close to the volunteer activities



You observe or experience inappropriate behaviour or harassment.

1

Explain the issue first to the volunteer in charge of the activity in question or to the president of the branch.

- Contact the employee in charge of the volunteer activities in question if...
 - bringing the matter up in your operational environment feels difficult
 - the case is related to the elected officials of your branch
 - an FRC employee is in charge of the activity (e.g. online activities)
- Contact the district's executive director/head of the department if...
 - the case is related to employees or elected officials of the district board

2

The person receiving your notification will take the matter forward; it will be processed and a report will be compiled of the situation.

3

The district/institution will always help and support with resolving the situation when needed.

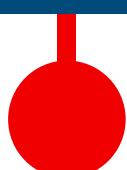
4

When the situation has been resolved, a follow-up meeting will be agreed on and support and help will be made available as needed to everyone involved in the matter.

5

If a crime is suspected in the matter or if the case is otherwise very serious, i.e. sexual harassment is suspected, this will be reported through the whistleblowing channel of the Finnish Red Cross.

- A police report will always be filed in the event of a crime.





Consequences for behaviour violating rules and principles

THE ORGANISATION MUST USE the means available to it to ensure that proven harassment or other inappropriate treatment comes to an end. The measures to be taken to resolve the situation will be decided based on a sufficiently extensive and neutral review.

The aim is to always find a solution for the situation in mutual understanding, i.e. reconciliation between the parties involved, changing behaviour, transition to other duties, additional training, etc. Looking for the solution starts by bringing the matter up. If the situation cannot be solved through discussion alone, a review must be started. The volunteer's activities can immediately be put on hold while the incident is being investigated, with the decision of the volunteer or employee in charge of the activity. Further actions will be decided based on the review. The district board can place the volunteer's participation on hold for up to 12 months. The district board's decision can be appealed to the organisation's board. If a crime is suspected, a police report is filed.

Based on the review, the organisation board can set a temporary or permanent ban on volunteering to the volunteer who, through their actions, has caused significant damage to the organisation, has violated the basic principles or rules of the Red Cross or caused significant financial harm. After this ban on volunteering has been set, the volunteer in question cannot participate in the Red Cross volunteer activities during the determined period of time. The volunteer's profiles will be deleted from the volunteer systems.

Notification channels

The aim is to always review inappropriate behaviour that violates rules and principles close to the operations when possible. In case of a serious incident or a suspected crime, please report it through [the whistleblowing channel First Whistle.](#)

The First Whistle channel allows volunteers to report concrete abuse, such as financial abuse, or other serious incidents occurring in volunteer activities, such as sexual harassment and suspected crimes. A written notification submitted through the channel is a report on what has happened. A report can be submitted anonymously, but giving the contact information of the person submitting the report will speed up the process. As exact a report as possible, with a description of the incident included, will also help to review the matter quickly.

The reports will go to the internal auditor of the Finnish Red Cross, who is also the channel's contact person. You can also contact the internal auditor personally. A suspected misconduct violating the rules and principles will be reviewed in full confidence and in an unbiased manner. The internal auditor will assess and decide whether to move the case forward to a more careful review. If the report leads to any measures, the reporting party will be notified of this by email or via the system, and the appropriate review work will be started.

So if you do observe any inappropriate behaviour, please report it:

1.

Primarily directly to the volunteer/employee in charge of the activity or to the district's executive director/head of the institute. The person in charge of the activities is responsible for ensuring that the matter is reviewed and reported as appropriate.

2.

If the actions have damaged the organisation or have been especially serious (e.g. suspected crimes or sexual harassment), the matter must be reported directly to the internal auditor via the **First Whistleblowing channel**. The internal auditor will then decide, based on predetermined criteria, how to move forward with the processing and who is responsible for coordinating the review, the headquarters or the district/institute. A police report will also be submitted in criminal cases.

If a volunteer has experienced threats or danger by a party outside the activities during their volunteer duties, this can also be reported through the **Finnish Red Cross's reporting tool for threatening and dangerous situations**.



Role of the volunteer in charge in challenging situations

THE ROLE OF A VOLUNTEER IN CHARGE includes the duty to receive reports on inappropriate behaviour or harassment for processing as appropriate. The key part is that the matter will move forward to processing as quickly as possible. All parties should have the chance to share their own perspective on the situation in a constructive and safe environment and space without undue blame or prejudice.

Volunteer in charge, do this:

1.

Always take cases of inappropriate behaviour or treatment seriously. Make sure that the matter is reviewed speedily and transparently. Neutrality and impartiality are key in the review. Ask for help from other volunteers in charge, the district office or the employee in charge of the operations when needed.

2.

Find out who all are involved. Discuss the situation in person with each party involved as soon as possible. Write down their own views of the situation or incident. Also gather other information and material on the matter. Remember that the person who is the subject of the report also has the right to be heard in the early stages of the review. Communicate with all involved parties that reviewing the situation may take several months even if action is taken right away.

3.

If the situation demands, the volunteer or employee in charge of the activities may place a temporary ban on volunteering on the volunteer being reviewed for the duration of the review (for a maximum of one year).

4.

Invite the involved parties to a shared review meeting. Based on this meeting, an agreement will be compiled, detailing, e.g. the future measures, the follow-up of the situation and its schedule.

5.

Hold the follow-up meeting at a time that is agreed together.

6.

If the situation is not rectified, the branch, district and headquarters have the right to take disciplinary measures in order to ensure safety (e.g. written warning, temporary ban on volunteering, etc.). You can ask for help and support from the district or the party in charge of the operations.

7.

In certain situations, the organisation may also set a permanent ban on volunteering for the volunteer. More information on this ban is available later in this guide.

8.

After the situation has been resolved, dispose of all related review matters not pertaining to the potential decisions (or give them to the employee for disposal). Submit the document related to decisions to the district/institute. The documents will be stored for as long as until the matter has been processed in full or until the operations are restarted or the ban is lifted.

When reviewing these issues, always remember to consider the hierarchy and create a safe space for processing the matter. A person experiencing inappropriate treatment needs support and needs to feel that they are not left alone to cope. If a volunteer in charge of holding a position of trust is behaving in an inappropriate way, this should always be reviewed with the district's support.

A report or suspicion of sexual harassment, one of the most serious forms of harassment, requires special attention and quick reactions. The Finnish Red Cross has strict, comprehensive instructions in its policy for preventing sexual harassment, misconduct and abuse and procedures for intervening in such.

Tools of the volunteer in charge in problem situations

The volunteer in charge has access to a range of tools for processing misconduct. A dialogue – a discussion that aims to create a respectful and open connection where all parties feel heard – is one of the tools that should be included in the toolbox of the volunteer in charge.

Verbal judo is a great tool when the subject is very emotional. The basic principle of verbal judo is to calm down an agitated person by validating their feelings while maintaining focus on the matter itself.

Below, we have presented some operating models on how to approach challenging situations. For more tips and additional information on these models, click on the links below. The LIVE foundation organises free-of-charge training events on interaction in challenging situations for volunteers.

Dialogue – listen, ask, understand

Preparation

- Think about what you wish to say and what is your goal.

Getting started

- Start calmly, e.g.
'Can I talk to you for a minute?'

Describe the situation

- Explain what happened and how it felt to you.
Use 'I' statements: 'I felt uncomfortable when...'

Listen

- Give the other party space to express their own perspective.

Common solution

- Together, look for solutions on how such situations could be avoided in the future.



Models by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health – *Ratkaisu* and *Stop* – are also worth learning more about. The *Ratkaisu* ('Resolver') model teaches the steps for how to proceed in challenging situations. The *Stop* model gives you tips on how to intervene quickly and put a stop to inappropriate behaviour in an acute situation.



More information on the different methods is available at, for example:

Verbal judo:

Yle, Nän rauhoitat kiihtyneen henkilön puhejudolla

Dialogical methods:

HAMK, Dialogiset menetelmät

Työturvallisuuskeskus, Dialogue

Timeout tools:

Timeout, Tools

The LIVE foundation organises free-of-charge training sessions for volunteers on interactions in challenging situations:

Livesäätiö, Koulutus: Haastavien tilanteiden ennaltaehkäisy



Always intervene in inappropriate behaviour

If you are experiencing inappropriate treatment, you can try to resolve the issue with the person who has been behaving inappropriately, depending on the situation. If necessary, bring the matter up while another person is present to support you. If there is no chance of a one-to-one discussion, bring the issue up first with the volunteer in charge of the activities. If you are the volunteer in charge of the activity, discuss the matter directly with the employee in charge of the activity. If the situation cannot be resolved by talking, or is, by its nature, a situation where a direct conversation is not possible, you can contact the district, the institute's employee or the employee in charge of the operations. Serious incidents can be reported through the [**First Whistle channel**](#).

1.

Bring the situation up with the harasser

Bring the matter up right away with the other party and state that you feel that their behaviour is insulting. Explain how you feel and tell them to stop their inappropriate behaviour. State that if the poor treatment continues, you will take the matter forward. It is possible that the harasser does not realise their behaviour is seen as disruptive or undesirable before they are told about this. This will give them the opportunity to correct their course. Sometimes, the whole thing can be a misunderstanding or based on misinterpretation, and the situation can be resolved by talking it through. You can ask another person to support you during the discussion if needed.

2.

Write things down

Writing down how and when the inappropriate treatment has occurred and your actions in the situations is important for the further processing of the matter. Any potential harassing or insulting messages should be kept.

3.

Notify the volunteer or employee in charge of the operations of the actions

If the inappropriate behaviour continues or you do not want to bring the matter up directly with the harasser, contact the volunteer in charge, for example, the president or the volunteer or employee in charge of the operations. Try to always have this discussion face-to-face, but you can also contact them via Teams, by email or by phone.

The main thing is that you speak up. State clearly that you experience the situation as harassment or inappropriate conduct. Even though the volunteer in charge is usually the primary contact, you can also use the other reporting channels mentioned above, depending on the situation. The volunteer in charge is responsible for taking the matter forward. You can also directly contact the district or the employee in charge of the operations and ask for support and help for dealing with the issue.



Everyone has the right – and the duty – to intervene also if they see or hear another volunteer experiencing inappropriate treatment or harassment. If you notice any inappropriate behaviour towards another volunteer:

- Intervene in inappropriate behaviour verbally. Be stern but calm and try to calm things down. Tell the person behaving inappropriately that their behaviour is disruptive. Tell them that you disapprove of their behaviour and ask them to stop.
- Intervene in discriminatory jokes or hurtful comments, even if no minorities are present. Assess and decide whether you should intervene immediately or comment afterwards.
- If the harassment continues, record what happened and when, who was present and what was said. This will make the matter easier to deal with later.
- If necessary, speak with the disturbed person and offer help. Take them to a quiet space. Do not put blame on the disturbed person. If you did not witness the situation yourself, ask what happened.
- If the situation continues, offer to be a support person to take the matter forward. Encourage or assist in reporting the incident to the volunteer in charge. If you are at a Finnish Red Cross event with a harassment contact person present, encourage them to notify the harassment contact person.
- If you are unable to intervene or provide assistance, contact the volunteer in charge or the possible person in charge of harassment issues in the event.
- Addressing harassment is not easy. Do not be afraid of failure. The important thing is that you try to influence the situation!
- **Submit a misconduct report in the event of serious incidents**

Who is the harassment contact person?

The Finnish Red Cross trains harassment contact persons for the needs of larger FRC events. The harassment contact person can be either an employee or a volunteer. The duty of harassment contact persons is to offer first-stage advice and support in all kinds of discrimination and harassment incidents at Finnish Red Cross events. You can usually recognise the harassment contact person by their red vest with the text 'häirintäyhdyshenkilö'.

No form of harassment, badgering, bullying, discrimination or other unequal treatment is too minor or insignificant to be reported to the harassment contact person. The harassment contact persons are bound by professional secrecy and will not keep a record of those who contact them. Harassment contact persons are not present at all events and are not systematically trained. This means that all volunteers have both the right and the duty to intervene when common rules and principles are violated, also when there is no assigned harassment contact person.

What if I'm suspected of inappropriate behaviour?

If someone feels that you have been behaving in an inappropriate way, try to approach the situation calmly and constructively. Listen to what has occurred and consider your own behaviour from the perspective of the other party.

Share your own perspective on the situation with the other party and the volunteer in charge. Talk about how the matter could be resolved and what would be a good end result. Be prepared to ask for forgiveness, forgive others and change your own behaviour. If the matter feels difficult, you can seek support from someone you trust.

The organisation must also intervene if it is believed that the functional capacities of a volunteer have changed, for example, due to a memory disorder. In such cases, the situation will be discussed with you, and you will be supported to seek out help. Your duties as a volunteer may be restricted. This means that you are endangering the safety of operations without meaning to, but the concerns of others need to always be taken seriously. The Finnish Red Cross is committed to ensuring that the organisation is a safe operating environment for everyone and that help is available.



**Where do we go
from there?**

INAPPROPRIATE ACTIONS, harassment and irresponsible behaviour are always a crisis to the target of them and the operations. The more serious the matter, the longer it continues and the worse it gets, the more support will the targets of the inappropriate behaviour need. The branch/operating group will also need resources and tools for reorganising and enabling well-functioning volunteer operations. It would be best to intervene in any inappropriate activities at a low threshold as soon as any signs of it appear.

When the situation has been resolved, the volunteers can get support from the employees for their reorganisation. This reorganisation may include concrete measures, such as electing new elected officials, emotional support or reorganisation of operations. The reorganisation can also mean rediscovering and strengthening trust and the sense of community of the operations.

The volunteer whose inappropriate behaviour was reviewed also needs to be included gradually back in the operations after the matter has been resolved. In practice, this means holding discussions with them and keeping an eye on the situation.

The branch or operating group can take measures such as:

- Enabling a safe discussion session for the volunteers. The purpose of this discussion is not to rehash the incident or look for scapegoats, but to share what people are feeling and their hopes for the future and ask any questions they may have. An external facilitator, such as a district employee who was not involved in solving the case, may help to keep the discussion constructive.
- Strengthen trust and faith in the future. Communicate how you plan to move forward. Speak openly about possible rearrangements. Do nice things together, focusing on joy and togetherness. Build a sense of community.
- Update your common ground rules. Together, go through what 'safe space' means and how the principles of safer spaces are reflected in your operations. Commit the volunteers to the common rules.
- Recognise and reinforce the values of operations: Think about what kind of a feeling you want to convey to each other and to outsiders. What is important to you? How do you support each other in day-to-day life?

- Make individual support available to those especially affected by the situation. This support can be, for example, an open contact channel with a trusted person within the branch or guiding the person to seek out support and help.
- Monitor the atmosphere. Are there any tensions or distrust in your branch or operating group, is someone retreating from the operations. Any signs of volunteers suffering should be intervened in early.

The aim is to get back to normal day-to-day operations as soon after the incident as possible. Different people may have experienced the matter in different ways, and some may not even be aware of the issue. This should be taken into account when building something new. An open and confidential atmosphere where people can share their feelings without being judged will help move forward.

However, it should be kept in mind that getting stuck on things and processing them endlessly will not take the situation forward. The sooner you can get the operations to return to normal with day-to-day cornerstones firmly in place, the surer you are to build hope and create trust and faith in the future.



Appendices:

- APPENDIX 1** A support form for the review
- APPENDIX 2** A model invitation to a discussion
- APPENDIX 3** Support questions for the review
- APPENDIX 4** Preparing for a review meeting
- APPENDIX 5** An agreement on measures and follow-up

APPENDIX 1 Support form for the review / Inappropriate treatment or harassment

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Report on inappropriate treatment or harassment <i>To be filled in by the volunteer in charge or the employee</i> | |
| How, when and by whom did this inappropriate treatment or harassment occur? | |
| Date, location | |
| Name of reporting party | |
| Reception of the report I have received this report as a person in charge of volunteer operations. <i>Filled in by the volunteer in charge/employee</i> | |
| Date, location | |
| Signature | |
| Reviewing the matter by the person in charge of volunteer operations <i>Filled in by the volunteer in charge/employee</i> | |
| I have heard the 1st party and have written a separate record | Name, date |
| I have heard the 2nd party and have written a separate record | Name, date |
| I have heard the 3rd party and have written a separate record | Name, date |
| The review meeting has been held | Names of the participants, date |
| An agreement was signed during the review meeting | Yes/No, date |
| The follow-up meeting has been held | Names of the participants, date |

A model invitation to a discussion (private discussions with the parties)

(The invitation can be sent to the parties by email.)

Heading: Invitation to a discussion to review a situation

XX (branch, e.g. board of branch x) has been informed of suspected inappropriate behaviour/harassment within the branch/operating group X.

Experiencing or observing inappropriate behaviour or harassment is always a serious issue. The recipient of the notification has the duty to review the matter and then assess whether the situation constitutes harassment or other inappropriate behaviour. If it is stated that inappropriate behaviour or harassment has occurred, the party in charge of the volunteer operations (e.g. branch X of the Finnish Red Cross) must take action to stop it. The party in charge of the volunteer operations shall consider and decide what measures are needed to resolve the situation and will agree on potential further measures if necessary.

We will start to review the matter we have been informed of by first holding private discussions with the different parties. NN, NN and NN will take part in these discussions (e.g. the volunteer in charge of the operations, the president and a district/branch employee). After this, a review meeting will be held together with all parties involved at a date to be notified later.

The private discussion will be held (time, exact location).

Records will be written of the discussions.

Welcome!

Name and signature of the inviting party

Support questions for the review

(private discussions with the parties)

Discussion with the party who has experienced inappropriate treatment:

- What kind of behaviour has the person experienced as being inappropriate?
- How did the situation start and how has it proceeded?
Have the forms of inappropriate behaviour changed over time?
- How long has the situation continued? How often does the inappropriate behaviour occur or how often has it occurred? Is this behaviour connected to a certain situation?
- Who do they feel has been behaving inappropriately? Are there any others involved?
- Has the situation changed? What kinds of roles have the others played in what has occurred?
- Has the reporting party spoken with the person?
- What kind of a relationship does the reporting party have with other members of the volunteer group? How do they feel they get along with the other volunteers?
- Has the reporting party spoken with the other volunteers about what has happened?
If yes, how have they understood the situation?
- What is the reporting party's own view of the causes for the inappropriate treatment?
- Is this a new situation or has the person experienced something like this before?
How was the situation resolved? What kinds of coping methods did they apply?
- How does the reporting party think the situation should proceed?

Discussion with the party suspected of inappropriate treatment:

- Tell the person who is feeling like they have been behaving inappropriately.
- Explain why their behaviour has been experienced as inappropriate.
- Has the person experiencing inappropriate behaviour spoken with them?
- How does the party suspected of inappropriate behaviour feel about the situation?
- What kind of a relationship do they have with the other party?
Have they had any conflicts with them?
- How has the situation evolved? Has it changed and how?
- What kind of a relationship do they have with other members of the volunteer group?
- What is the person's own view of the situation and the reasons that led to it?
- How do they believe the situation should proceed?

Preparing for a review meeting

Prior to the review meeting

- The meeting invitation should be given both face-to-face and in writing.
- The parties need to know what kind of a meeting they are being invited to.
- Sufficient time needs to be reserved for the meeting.
- The participants must be given a few days to prepare for the meeting.
- It must be ensured in advance that all parties have the opportunity to bring a support person with them to the meeting.

The review meeting

- Focuses on concrete situations and incidents, but strives to move past them.
- Both party/parties share their own views of the situation.
- Forms an adequate mutual view of the situation.
- Features discussions on how the situation could be resolved.
- Agrees on the changes needed in the operations, training and behaviour.
- Compiles a shared agreement that states the measures needed to resolve the matter (appendix 5).
- Agrees on the follow-up measures and assessment of how the situation evolves. The follow-up agreement should be held within about three months.
- Agrees on what and how the other members of the volunteer community are told about the process.

APPENDIX 5 Agreement on measures and follow-up

| Review meeting | |
|--|----------|
| Date, location | |
| Participants | |
| The participants have read the 'Amicably at FRC' guide | Yes / No |
| The concerned parties' views of the situation | |
| Previous measures | |
| Agreed measures | |
| Party 1 | |
| Party 2 | |
| Party 3 | |
| Follow-up | |
| Date of the follow-up meeting | |
| Person in charge of the follow-up of the agreement | |
| What will be shared with the operating group/branch regarding this agreement | |
| We approve the agreement we have drafted | |
| Signature | |
| Signature | |
| Signature | |