

# OHTA Volunteer Guidelines

This section contains information for committee chairs on recruiting and managing our volunteers, motivating, and retaining them, and recognizing and recording their contributions. Information for volunteers includes roles and responsibilities of various volunteer positions and the basics of volunteering with OHTA.

## 1. How to Recruit, Onboard, Train, Inspire, and Retain Our Volunteers

If OHTA Leadership and Committee Chairs are the backbone of the organization, then our volunteers are its muscle. Since these volunteers are donating their time, energy, talents, and resources to OHTA, careful attention must be paid to ensure a positive experience for them. This section will provide Committee Chairs with guidance on their roles and responsibilities, and on the appropriate recruitment, induction, management and supervision, motivation, recognition, retention, and documentation of volunteers.

Additional Committee Chair responsibilities include ensuring the following:

- That volunteers have the required education, experience, and skills to successfully accomplish the tasks that are assigned to them.
- That appropriate guidance, training, and resources are provided to volunteers so that they understand and can contribute to the OHTA mission overall and the responsibilities assigned to a specific committee.
- That OHTA resources are used for the maximum benefit of the Association and OH students worldwide.
- That all stakeholders –OHTA members, students, training providers, scholarship donors, etc. – are treated with courtesy by other OHTA stakeholders and are not discriminated against on the basis of age, race, religion, nationality, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, professional status, cultural identify, political affiliation, or any other factor.

A recent study conducted by the ASAE Foundation found that volunteers prefer – and may perform better – when they are managed like employees:

[https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an\\_magazine/2016/november-december/get-the-best-from-volunteers](https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an_magazine/2016/november-december/get-the-best-from-volunteers)).

Peggy Hoffman, CAE, of Mariner Management, suggested that organizations use the same type of human resources tools with their volunteers as with their staff. Specifically, they should “establish volunteer job roles and assess performance”.

## 2. Recruiting OHTA Volunteers

To recruit the most qualified professionals for OHTA, it's important to understand why people volunteer. Author and consultant Susan J. Ellis [*The Volunteer Recruitment (and Membership Development) Book*] cites both professional and personal reasons why people volunteer. Among those listed, the most relevant to occupational hygiene professionals include gaining leadership skills, networking, donating skills, giving back to the profession, and/or becoming involved in a larger cause. Also, for many individuals, it's difficult to turn down a request from a colleague.

(See [https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an\\_plus/2016/november/use-motivators-to-recruit-and-retain-volunteers](https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an_plus/2016/november/use-motivators-to-recruit-and-retain-volunteers)).

### 2.1 Induction (Onboarding) of New Volunteers

Volunteers for OHTA tend to be mid-career or senior, and most will have had extensive volunteer experience. But just as senior employees reporting for a new job will benefit from an onboarding process to orient them to the organization, its culture, and the job itself, volunteers new to OHTA should be personally apprised by knowledgeable committee members and/or the OHTA Volunteer Working Group of the structure of OHTA, the expectations for volunteers, and their roles, rights, and responsibilities. Training providers who will be leading OHTA courses in unfamiliar locations should receive specific guidance from individuals who have lived and/or worked in those areas.

### 2.2 Managing/Supervising Volunteers

As mentioned above, volunteers are more likely to have a positive experience if they are treated more like employees with respect to performance expectations and assessment. Using the *OHTA Volunteer Catalog* (in preparation) as a guide, the Committee Chair in collaboration with the OHTA Volunteer Working Group can set realistic expectations for the initial phase of volunteering (keeping in mind that volunteers are just that—generous individuals who receive no monetary reward for their efforts!). Periodic reviews can help the volunteer understand what he/she is doing well, and which areas could benefit from improvement.

## 3. Motivating, Recognizing, and Retaining Volunteers

The key to motivating, recognizing, and retaining volunteers may be found in the reasons that our professionals volunteer in the first place (e.g., gaining leadership skills, networking, donating skills, giving back to the profession, becoming involved in a larger cause, and perhaps other reasons that are specific to an individual). Knowing our volunteers will help determine motivations and rewards that will help keep them committed to the OHTA mission. Experienced volunteers probably don't need (or want) another

plaque or certificate, and they aren't in this for the money. Some suggested ideas for rewarding volunteers for their time and effort:

- Recognition at a public meeting or on social media,
- Listing on the OHTA web site (currently under revision),
- A letter to their employer stating specific skills and/or contributions that were valuable,
- Personal, handwritten notes to individual committee members, thanking them for their participation at a meeting. (A former executive director of a large occupational health association was well known for this gesture.)

Making an effort to seek out volunteers at national or international meetings, and providing networking – and where appropriate, training – opportunities at these meetings, may encourage other volunteers. Online training or e-documents may also provide important learning.

To repeat, acting on your understanding of why an individual volunteers, along with a personal touch, may inspire them to stay engaged.

A 2020 survey completed by 33 OHTA volunteers revealed:

- Almost half joined because they were asked by an existing member
- About one-third had learned about OHTA from their work with another association (mostly WHWB, but also IOHA, BOHS Faculty, AIHA, NIOSH, and the Hong Kong IOEH).

Committee chairs could start by asking their members why they volunteered. These reasons may be specific to the occupational health community, as we tend to have exceptionally talented and altruistic members! Committee members could also be asked to share how they learned about volunteer opportunities with OHTA. Combining this information (why people volunteer for OHTA and how they learned about OHTA) with engaging descriptions of the volunteer opportunities available should help in recruiting effective committee members and volunteers who can bring their individual talents to address specific needs of a committee.

Current volunteers should also be asked what benefits and/or rewards would inspire them to continue their work with OHTA. The 2020 survey of OHTA volunteers showed that about half felt that recognition (in newsletter, on Web, manuals, or training materials) or a personal thank-you (e.g., letter from committee chair) was sufficient reward for their efforts. Several indicated that “volunteering is its own reward,” and several were seeking maintenance credit for professional certification. One volunteer said

that "Seeing the faces and smiles and hearing the great questions of the trainees and having them thank you and interacting with them for a week is "Recognition Enough"!

It is also important to keep the lines of communication open, so that volunteers feel free to express concerns, make suggestions, report problems, and even criticize leadership. Whenever possible, a volunteer's concerns should be addressed, not only to keep that volunteer engaged, but potentially to minimize future problems. Active volunteers who disengage from OHTA should be contacted to determine if the reasons are related to OHTA or are in fact personal or professional.

#### 4. Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest

The professionalism and impartiality of Volunteer Members is important. Consequently, the AIHA code of Conduct has been attached in APPENDIX 1 which also includes references to Conflict of Interest.

#### 5. OHTA Volunteer Working Group

The OHTA Volunteer Working Group provides oversight for recruitment, management and supervision, onboarding and training, retention, and recognition of OHTA volunteers. This group is also responsible for developing and updating the *OHTA Volunteer Catalog*. They will also develop and maintain a database / recordkeeping system which will document names and contact information of all OHTA volunteers, presentation of courses presented by OHTA Training Providers throughout the world, and any other documents related to work conducted by OHTA volunteers. The Volunteer Working Group will work under the direction provided by the OHTA Board and will provide periodic updates to the Board. This person will assist in volunteer relations and communications by providing a point of contact for concerns, questions, and suggestions.

# APPENDIX 1



## AIHA CODE OF CONDUCT

*(Approved October 2017, Amended October 2020)*

This policy outlines the Code of Conduct for all members and volunteers of the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) and summarizes the behavior expected of members and volunteers representing AIHA in any forum, mailing list, public meeting, or private correspondence.

### ANTI-TRUST STATEMENT

Members and volunteers will refrain from any discussion or communication that could provide the basis for an inference that they have agreed to take any action that might restrain trade. An “agreement” in anti-trust terms is a very broad concept: it may be oral or written, formal or informal, expressed, or implied. This includes the prohibition of any discussion or communication related to the setting or charging of prices for time or materials, dividing markets, allocating customers, or agreements not to do business with a person or firm.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

If a member or volunteer has a situation or an affiliation that might constitute or lead to a conflict of interest or might be perceived by a reasonable person in the community to be a conflict of interest, this information should be disclosed immediately to staff. If necessary, the individual should remove themselves from specific decisions or discussions in which they may have a conflict of interest. AIHA maintains a separate Conflict of Interest policy.

### FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL PRACTICES

AIHA is committed to maintaining legal, ethical, and responsible financial and operational practices. If a member or volunteer believes that they have observed inappropriate financial or operational conduct or management, they are encouraged to report the concern in good faith to a member of staff (individuals may report concerns by mail, anonymously if preferred). Any good faith report or complaint will be treated confidentially and investigated thoroughly. Anyone who has a reasonable belief or suspicion that fraud or misconduct has occurred will not be reprimanded if the report is made in good faith but is found to be unsubstantiated. If a member, volunteer, or staff is found to have retaliated against a member or volunteer for reporting a concern in good faith, that individual will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of membership or other relationship with AIHA.

### RESPECT

When working together, members or volunteers should always be mindful of how their actions (i.e., verbal or written) or contribution affects colleagues, peers, and the Association. We may not always agree, but disagreement is no excuse for poor behavior or poor manners. Avoid becoming involved in personal attacks or repetitive arguments. Abusive language or actions, including any form of harassment, peer

pressure, intimidation, or bullying will not be tolerated. Additionally, members or volunteers will not discriminate against another member, volunteer, or staff and will be respectful of ethnic, national, cultural, and other differences.

#### HONESTY

Sometimes the hardest thing to say is "no" or admit you have forgotten to do something. Members or volunteers should be honest and transparent with each other (and themselves) with regards to what can realistically be committed to.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

If members or volunteers are made privy to information that is considered confidential, the expectation is always to keep the details confidential. Information contained within private forums, private mailing lists, chats, or other mediums is also to be kept confidential. This includes any time after the professional relationship has ended.

#### RESPONSIBILITY

People on every project come and go, and AIHA is no different. If a member or volunteer leaves or disengages from any position within a committee or volunteer group, in whole or in part, we ask that the individual does so in a way that minimizes disruption. This means letting the staff know of the decision and taking the proper steps to ensure that any projects assigned to the individual do not fall by the wayside. Members and volunteers should check their e-mails regularly and answer them promptly. We realize that your time is valuable, and if a member or volunteer cannot commit to a project or has committed and no longer has the time to fulfill the responsibilities, please let staff know as soon as possible. Members and volunteers should check e-mails regularly and answer them promptly. We realize that your time is valuable, and if a member or volunteer cannot commit to a project or have committed and no longer has the time to fulfill the responsibilities, please let staff know as soon as possible.

#### PROFESSIONALISM

Acting in a professional manner is expected, including behaviors that are courteous and considerate, and communications that are honest, fact-based, and politically neutral. Members and volunteers shall maintain high standards and integrity, and shall be professional in dealings with other members, volunteers, and staff. AIHA members or volunteers should be mindful when making statements (i.e., verbal or written) or taking actions based on personal views that are NOT attributed to AIHA unless duly authorized by applicable AIHA procedures. Personal boundaries set by others must be observed. Sexual harassment including, but not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature will not be tolerated.

#### COMMUNITY (E.G. ON-LINE FORUMS SUCH AS CATALYST)

By using AIHA online forums, such as the Catalyst online community, you agree that you have read and will follow these rules and guidelines. You also agree to limit discussions and shared files to content applicable to AIHA's mission as a scientific society.

- Catalyst is a platform for AIHA members, Volunteer Groups, and related communities to share, inquire and work together on topics of healthier workplaces and a healthier world.

- Respect the purpose of the community. Use the community to share successes, challenges, constructive feedback, questions, and goals instead of products or services that you provide.
- When working together, members and volunteers must always be mindful of how their actions or contributions may affect colleagues, peers, and the Association overall. We may not always agree, but disagreement is no excuse for poor behavior. Avoid becoming involved in personal attacks or repetitive arguments. Abusive language or actions, including any form of harassment, will not be tolerated.
- Do not post any privileged, plagiarized, defamatory, abusive, profane, threatening, offensive, politically motivated opinions, illegal materials, or any suggestion or encouragement for illegal activity.
- Do not post any information or other material protected by copyright without the permission of the copyright owner. The copyright owner grants AIHA and users of this site the nonexclusive right and license to display, copy, publish, distribute, transmit, print, and use such information or other material.
- Avoid content or terms that could infringe on the rights of an individual's identities, including but not limited to race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, organization affiliation, political affiliation or infringe on any business, association, organization, or other entity's mission, business practices, or policies.
- Unsolicited advertising is prohibited—job announcements, product or service advertisements, or endorsements are not to be posted on any forum.
- Be aware of posting any confidential, secure, or sensitive information and respecting a third-party intellectual right.
- Messages should reflect content that is of interest to members of the AIHA.
- Post your message or documents only to the most appropriate communities.
- AIHA does monitor the site for inappropriate postings, though it does not on its own undertake editorial control of postings. In the event a posting is deemed to be in violation of any of the above parameters, the staff has the right and responsibility to take action, in the form of a written request to the individual to modify or remove the posting. Failure of the individual to take appropriate action may result in the staff's decision to unilaterally remove the posting. Matters may be escalated to the attention of the CEO, who reserves the right to discuss with the Board for further action.
- To preserve an environment that encourages both civil and fruitful dialogue, AIHA reserves the right to suspend or terminate membership in this community for anyone who violates these rules.

#### VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

AIHA staff will work with the AIHA Board of Directors and/or any relevant AIHA committee to resolve any issues or violations of the Code of Conduct in a professional and timely manner. If issues or violations of the Code of Conduct are persistent or egregious, the member or volunteer may be required to leave any volunteer position(s) and may be precluded from serving in volunteer roles in the future. Furthermore, and pursuant to AIHA's Bylaws, should an individual behave in such a manner "deemed by the Board of Directors as injurious to the reputation and standing of the industrial hygiene profession or occupational and environmental health and safety profession or the Association", the individual may be subject to due process and expelled by a "two-thirds vote of the Board present and voting at a duly constituted meeting." If any person is thought to have violated the law, the person may be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

I have read the AIHA Code of Conduct in its entirety and agree to abide by its provisions at all times while I am representing or volunteering for AIHA.

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Signature

Date