City of
GLEN EIRA

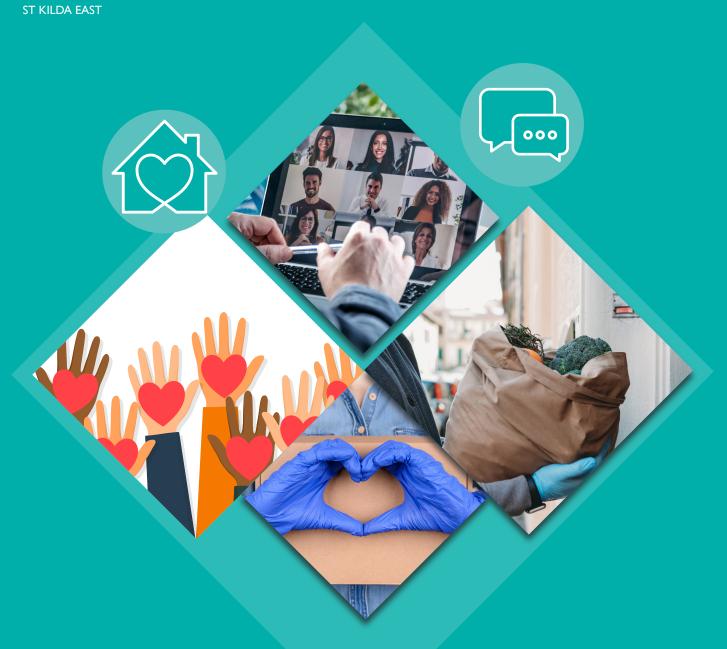**GLEN EIRA
CITY COUNCIL**

BENTLEIGH
BENTLEIGH EAST
BRIGHTON EAST
CARNEGIE
CAULFIELD
ELSTERNWICK
GARDENVALE
GLEN HUNTLY
MCKINNON
MURRUMBEENA
ORMOND
ST KILDA EAST

COVID SAFE VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES FOR **VOLUNTEERS**

Overview

Volunteers play an important role in our community — by volunteering formally at a local organisation or informally by helping family, friends and neighbours. The COVID-19 pandemic has left many volunteers questioning if it is safe for them to volunteer, or if their volunteer program has been placed on hold, when is it safe to start again.

The *COVID Safe Volunteer Guidelines* bring together information to help answer questions for volunteers about participation, keeping connected to your organisation or helping in the community and keeping yourselves and others safe. Volunteer involving organisations can also use the *Guidelines* to support their volunteers by giving a copy to their volunteers.

Information in the *Guidelines* was gathered from Volunteering Victoria, Volunteer.vic, Department of Health and Human Services and Safe Work Australia.

Stay up-to-date

It is important to stay up-to-date with the latest advice from the Chief Health Officer to help you decide if it is safe for you to volunteer or regulations about the industry you volunteer in. To find out more, visit https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19

Can I volunteer?

Volunteering is considered work so you can continue to volunteer. If you can do your volunteer work from home, you must continue to do so.

You can continue to volunteer onsite if the organisation you are volunteering for is operating in accordance with relevant restrictions on businesses and organisations and has a COVID safe plan.

For informal volunteers, those that help family, friends and neighbours or form a group to help vulnerable members of their community, it is important to look after themselves and others by following government guidelines. More information can be found in the section: *Informal volunteering — safely supporting others around me.*

What if my volunteer role has been put on hold?

If your volunteer role has been put on hold it is important to support your wellbeing by maintaining social connections with your organisation and other volunteers. This could include:

- Regular phone calls or messages with your volunteer manager and fellow volunteers.
- Keeping up-to-date with newsletters and emails from your organisation.
- Joining an online network with other volunteers.
- Considering online or phone volunteering options.

Looking for a volunteer role?

People like to help in a crisis and during the COVID-19 pandemic some people have found extra time with a change to their work arrangements. Here are some points to think about before you start looking for a volunteer role:

- Decide how much time you have for volunteering.
- Think about your interests and skills.
- The type of not-for-profit organisation you would like to volunteer with/for.

To find a volunteer role you can:

- contact the organisation directly;
- register with Community Information and Support Glen Eira at https://www.cisvic.org.au/VolunteersofGlenEira and
- register your interest to become an emergency volunteer at https://www.wevolunteer.org.au

Informal volunteering — safely supporting others around me

You can consider helping family, friends and neighbours or form a group to help vulnerable members of the community, older people or people with disabilities.

Think about what you could do to help them out. For example, delivering food and necessities (while maintaining physical distancing).

If you have not previously met your neighbours, think about the best way to approach them while maintaining physical distancing. For example, instead of going to the front door, you could leave a note in your neighbour's letterbox with your name, phone number and offer of assistance.

To find out more information about informal volunteering and how to stay safe visit:

https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/informal-volunteering-guide.pdf

https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/VV-Resource-4-stop-the-spread-1.pdf

Assess your risk

Volunteers are under no obligation to continue to volunteer if they do not feel comfortable doing so. If you do continue in your volunteering role then your Volunteer Involving Organisation has an obligation under work health and safety laws to provide protections around health and safety.

Some groups of people are more likely to become very sick with COVID-19. These are:

- People who are older or elderly (because of their lower immune systems, people over the age of 70 are more likely to get very sick with COVID-19).
- People who have pre-existing medical conditions (underlying illness makes people more likely to become very sick with COVID-19, including those with diabetes, chronic lung disease, kidney failure and people with low or suppressed immune systems).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to become very sick with COVID-19 because of higher rates of pre-existing medical conditions).

If you are one of these groups of people, it is important for you to consider if you are safe to continue in your volunteering role. Can your volunteer role continue virtually? Speak to your volunteer organisation and discuss options.

For this information and more on other medical conditions visit https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#who-is-most-at-risk-of-getting-coronavirus-covid-19

When you should not volunteer

You should not volunteer if you:

- Have travelled or have been in contact with someone who has travelled overseas recently.

- Have been in close contact with someone infected with COVID-19.

- Are feeling unwell or have any of the following symptoms:

    - Loss or change in sense of smell or taste

    - Fever

    - Chills or sweats

    - Cough

    - Sore throat

    - Shortness of breath

    - Runny nose

In certain circumstances headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea may also be considered.

If you have any of the symptoms, however mild, you should seek advice and get tested. To get further advice, call the 24-hour coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398 or contact your general practitioner.

The COVID Safe Plan

It is mandatory for every Victorian business to have a COVID safe plan. The COVID safe plan must demonstrate:

- Actions to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus (COVID-19) to the workplace.

- The type of face mask or personal protective equipment (PPE) required for the workforce.

- How your organisation will prepare for, and respond to, a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace.

- How your organisation will meet all the requirements set out by the Victorian Government — some higher-risk industries or workplaces have additional requirements of employers and employees.

Businesses must review and update their COVID safe plans regularly, especially when restrictions or public health advice changes. Organisations with multiple worksites must complete a COVID safe plan for each worksite.

Volunteers are considered as 'workers' under Work Health and Safety (WHS) Laws and are therefore given the same considerations as a paid employee.

Speak to your Volunteer Involving Organisation (VIO) about their COVID safe plan to understand your role to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus to the workplace.

What can my organisation do to help me?

Assess your volunteer role
You may wish to have a conversation with your organisation about different ways of volunteering to consider other ways to deliver services. For example, continuing to volunteer remotely, contacting community members by phone rather than in person, using video and social media forums and the use of regular email newsletters to keep people up-to-date.

Keep in touch
Keep in touch with your organisation for updates about changes to the organisation and the volunteer program. It is important to also keep your organisation updated on how you feel about volunteering and any concerns you have about safety. Tell the organisation if you are a person who is more likely to become very sick with COVID-19. Tell them how you want to keep connected with the organisation and if you can connect with other volunteers.

Staying safe
The most important way we can support each other and the most vulnerable people in our community is by:

- Staying up to date and complying with restrictions.

- Maintaining good hygiene — wash your hands.

- Practice physical distancing of 1.5 meters.

- Always carry a face mask and wear indoors or outdoors if you cannot physically distance.

- Staying home and getting tested if you have any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), no matter how mild.

Further resources

Health information
Coronavirus hotline: 1800 675 389
About coronavirus: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19
Directions: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19

Work places
Safe Work Australia: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces
COVID safe plan: www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-plan

Volunteering
Volunteering Victoria: www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au
Volunteer Victoria: www.volunteer.vic.gov.au