



## How to Remove a Volunteer

What? "Fire" a volunteer? Can that be done? If so, how can it be done? Most key council and district leaders have asked these questions, and they deserve some answers. As a commissioner, you should be prepared to help guide volunteers with these questions.

**Note:** *This does not address removing a person on cause or grounds for legal action such as theft, misrepresentation, or committing an immoral act. (That information exists elsewhere.) This chapter will focus on the ineffective volunteer, the person who just isn't working out. You know that something must be done, but you don't know what or how.*

First, here are some types of poor performance:

1. **Bad chemistry.** This refers to the person who just can't get along with others and may even greatly offend some, driving good people out of Scouting.
2. **Bad politics.** This volunteer is a poor team player who is not in keeping with the organization's image. This person prevents others from being effective and may also drive them out of Scouting. This volunteer may hate his or her Scouting responsibility and lets others know it.
3. **Bad job.** This volunteer may be a nice person but simply doesn't perform assigned tasks and can't seem to meet the objectives of his or her Scouting responsibilities.

## What to Do

Guide volunteers with these ideas first. Sometimes easy solutions work.

- Some people simply don't know what to do, so train them. Sit down for a friendly and helpful coaching session.
- Find something else for them to do in Scouting. Most people have things they can do well. Discover their hidden talents. Gracefully change their assignment to build on their strengths.
- Some people try to do too much in Scouting. That's often our fault. We have asked them to do more than is reasonable, so reduce their workload.
- Get your facts straight; don't act on hearsay.
- Sit down in a relaxed setting to talk about what's going on. Often the person is the first to know things aren't working out but might be reluctant to ask for help.

## If All Else Fails

There will be times when a volunteer has gone beyond the point where coaching, training, or change of assignment will help. Quick action might need to be taken for the good of Scouting. Don't let a bad problem fester. Now what?

First, you don't really "fire" a volunteer, you replace one. "Hire" and "fire" are words for the workplace, not volunteer organizations. Replacing a volunteer sounds more positive.

2.

## Who Has the Authority?

Who has the authority to remove a volunteer? A good rule of thumb is this: *The person or group with the authority to appoint a volunteer has the authority to remove and replace that volunteer.* For example, a district commissioner appoints an assistant district commissioner (ADC); the district commissioner may clearly find a replacement for the ADC.

In the case of unit Scouters, commissioners must remember that it is the chartered organization that has made the appointment. The commissioner role is to help the head of the chartered organization or the unit committee make the change.

In the case of an elected officer, the local council may decide to go through the normal district nominating committee process to remove such a volunteer.

## Now Act

Write or make a visit. Here are some ideas you can suggest to key people in your chartered organization.

- **If writing**, use some variation of the following:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

On behalf of the Cub Scout Pack/Boy Scout Troop/Venture Crew \_\_\_\_\_ (or the chartered organization), I extend our thanks for your role in our unit. Your time, efforts and involvement are appreciated. Your replacement has been nominated and confirmed by our unit committee and our Chartered Organization. This is effective \_\_\_\_\_ (insert date).

Your support in this transition would be appreciated as the \_\_\_\_\_ (insert organization/unit/committee/etc.) endeavors to carry out the program, policies and procedures of the BSA.

- **If you visit (in most cases, this is best)**, don't go alone. Having a second person along might keep things under control and running smoothly. Here are a few additional tips:
  - Make an appointment. Say that you want to talk about his or her future as a \_\_\_\_\_ in Scouting, and mention the volunteer who is coming with you. Refuse to say more. He or she should get the message.
  - Be businesslike, brief, and pleasant. Tell the person that you have made a mistake. He or she apparently isn't able to carry out the assignment. You had assumed otherwise, and that was your mistake. Commend the person's other contributions in or out of Scouting, but indicate that you must now take action to replace the volunteer in this assignment. Be factual. Be prepared to listen. Don't argue.
  - Honor the person's dignity and avoid gossip. Don't verbally attack the volunteer. Protect his or her self-esteem. Share the responsibility and say, "We've both made some mistakes." Don't dump all of the blame on the other person. Don't say something you might be sorry for later. Just explain, wait, listen, repeat yourself if necessary, and leave.

3.

- Be prepared for four possible reactions. The volunteer might:
  1. Be smooth and controlled
  2. Be shocked and emotional
  3. Become angry
  4. Be relieved and ready to discuss practical solutions for the future
- Before pulling the plug, make sure members of the next higher authority to you are behind you. Then you can tell the person that the decision is non-negotiable.

Some of this may seem a bit strong. There is no joy in this task for anyone. Removing a volunteer is one of a leader's most difficult tasks. It requires discipline, good judgment, and sensitivity. Always keep two things in mind: (1) Do what's best for youth, and (2) The BSA has a right to choose its leaders.

## **Learn for the Future**

Try to do the following:

- Get a clear understanding of the assignment before recruiting.
- Select the right person.
- Try new people out a bit at a time.
- Train and coach.
- Have an understanding of what constitutes a job well done.

*Excerpt from "Commissioner Fieldbook For Unit Service", #33621A*

w/JS/removing a volunteer handout



# ***How To Fire (Replace) A Volunteer (Yes, Really...!)***

**First, ask yourself  
WHY?**

**Make sure this decision is based  
on**

**PERFORMANCE**

2.

## **Some types of poor performance:**

### **Bad chemistry.**

This refers to the person who just can't get along with others and may even greatly offend some, driving good people out of Scouting.

### **Bad politics.**

This volunteer is a poor team player who is not in keeping with the organization's image. This person prevents others from being effective and may also drive them out of Scouting. This volunteer may hate his or her Scouting responsibility and lets others know it.

### **Bad job.**

This volunteer may be a nice person but simply doesn't perform assigned tasks and can't seem to meet the objectives of his or her Scouting responsibilities.

3.

## What Do You Do First?

- Some people simply don't know what to do, so *train them.*
- Find something else for them to do in Scouting. Most people have things they can do well. Discover their hidden talents. Gracefully *change their assignment* to build on their strengths.
- Some people try to do too much in Scouting. That's often our fault. We have asked them to do more than is reasonable, so *reduce their workload.*
- Get your facts straight; *don't act on hearsay.*

→ Sit down in a relaxed setting to **talk**  
**about what's going on.**

Often the person is the first to know things aren't working out but might be reluctant to ask for help.

**OK, None of that  
worked...now what?**

**The Letter or  
The Visit???**

# The Letter:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

On behalf of the Cub Scout Pack/Boy Scout Troop/Venture Crew \_\_\_\_\_ (or the chartered organization), I extend our thanks for your role in our unit. Your time, efforts and involvement are appreciated. Your replacement has been recruited and confirmed by our unit committee and our Chartered Organization. This is effective \_\_\_\_\_ (insert date).

Your support in this transition would be appreciated as the \_\_\_\_\_ (insert organization/unit/committee/etc.) endeavors to carry out the program, policies and procedures of the BSA.

# The Visit...

**→ Make an appointment. Say that you want to talk about his or her future as a \_\_\_\_\_ in Scouting, and mention the volunteer who is coming with you. Refuse to say more. He or she should get the message.**

**→ Be businesslike, brief, and pleasant. Tell the person that you've made a mistake. He or she apparently isn't able to carry out the assignment. You had assumed otherwise, and that was your mistake. Commend the person's other contributions but indicate that you must replace the volunteer in this assignment. Be factual. Be prepared to listen. Don't argue.**

**→ Honor the person's dignity and avoid gossip. Don't verbally attack. Protect his or her self-esteem. Share the responsibility and say, "We've both made some mistakes." Don't dump all of the blame on the other person. Don't say something you might be sorry for later. Just explain, wait, listen, repeat yourself if necessary, and leave.**



## ***Learn for the Future...***

**Get a clear understanding of the assignment before recruiting.**

**Select the right person.**

**Try new people out a bit at a time.**

**Train and coach.**

**Have an understanding of what constitutes a job well done.**