DOs & DON'Ts FOR VOLUNTEERS

How to support refugees in a responsible and ethical manner

Be prepared and stay informed

- Maintain up-to-date information on the services and support available to refugees. (see https://help.unhcr.org/ and https://bluedothub.org/ for information).
- Attend any trainings which can improve your knowledge and ability to support.
- Know your role and the limits of your role.

- Provide information you are unsure of or have no knowledge about.
- Be unsure of what is expected from you (if in doubt refer to your organisations or UNHCR).
- Wrongly present yourself as an employee with UNHCR or the government.

Maintain confidentiality

- Respect privacy.
- Keep people's stories confidential.
- Refer persons in safety and dignity, based on existing referral pathways.
- Alert the responsible authorities if other volunteers reveal confidential information.

- Disclose or discuss information that could be harmful to refugees or their community.
- Take pictures of persons - unless they invite you to do so.
- Share people's stories publicly e.g. Facebook, web, media or with other persons - including your family and other volunteers.

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe
www.unhcr.org/europe

Treat people with dignity and respect

Introduce yourself stating your role as a volunteer.

Treat people equally and with respect (even if they may not share your traditions and social norms).

Listen actively and emphatically.

Be open and non-judgmental.

Behave appropriately considering a person's culture, age and gender.

Respect a person's right to make his/her own decisions.

Respect the decisions of caregivers in their role as e.g. parents, guardians, etc.

Refer to the professional concerned if you are concerned about a certain risk to life and safety of a person or a caregiver.

Report any concerns you may have about sexual exploitation and abuse.

Start doing things or talking to persons without them knowing who you are.

Judge the person for their actions or feelings (e.g. Don't say: "You shouldn't have done that. If I were you, I would have done so and so."

Pressure persons to tell their stories.

Ask them to tell you stories about other persons.

Talk about someone else's story (gossip).

Become angry.

Touch, kiss, stare at, sext, ask for a date, or initiate a romantic or sexual relationship with any of the refugees that you are helping.

Offer help or services in exchange for sexual favors, money or other personal benefits.

Have any sexual activity with anyone under 18.

Don't be alone with a child or approach a child without the permission from the parent or caregiver.

Assume that other people have the same beliefs or political views as you have.

Impose yourself on others or be pushy.

Make decisions to speak on behalf of persons.

Start political discussions with refugees or other volunteers.

Give accurate information

Provide accurate and updated information.

Be aware of the limits of your skills and knowledge.

Inform individuals you will ask for more information and get back to them if you do not have the information they request.

Give false information.

Make up things you don't know.

Give promises.

Show-off your skills.

Support people in helping themselves

Believe in people's capacities regardless of age, gender, mobility, health, education, culture, etc.

Support others and encourage them to take action. Ask the people what they would have done to make the situation better.

Assume that you know what people want.

Do everything yourself.

Take care of yourself

Rest and take care of yourself.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Spend quality time with family and friends.

Share problems with someone you trust.

Be active in the community.

Enjoy what you do.

Ensure that you and people in your community distinguish between your role as volunteer and your private life.

Underestimate the pressure of your role .

Spend a lot of time supporting others which leads you to become tired, irritated, ineffective and uncompassionate.

Isolate yourself from friends and family. Neglect your health.

Neglect your health.

Resort to smoking, drugs and alcohol to cope with stress.

Forget to be responsible and that your actions in your private life may affect how you are perceived as a volunteer.