



# Manipulation

Volunteer Training

Indiana Department of Correction





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# Manipulate

ma·nip·u·late

mə'nipyə,lāt/

*verb*

to control or influence (a person or situation)  
cleverly, unfairly, or unscrupulously.



# Manipulation

- Most of the individuals incarcerated are extremely grateful for the service that volunteers provide and treat them with the utmost respect. In a 2018 IDOC Volunteer Survey, over 98% of the volunteers rated their overall interaction with the population as good or excellent.
- However, there exists a segment of the population that is manipulative and sees the caring nature of volunteers as a target. The following training module addresses this group of individuals by equipping volunteers with information to recognize manipulation and avoid becoming a victim.
- Manipulation affects everyone. Staff, volunteers, and visitors can all fall victim to manipulation. Manipulation in any form can jeopardize the safety and security of the facility. It often starts small and seemingly innocent but can quickly lead to serious consequences.



# Manipulation

- Most of the people incarcerated just want their basic needs met and want to move through incarceration as hassle-free as possible, while avoiding any type of confrontation.
- There are still some in the criminal mindset that use manipulation against volunteers. The reasons behind this behavior can be as simple as playing a game, a method of control, or more nefarious goals like trafficking.
- Volunteers must be aware that there are individuals that may be profiling them for purposes of manipulation.



# Profiling Victims

- Demographic
  - Age or gender can be a point of relation to manipulate a volunteer. This includes finding someone in the same generation and using shared experiences. A younger volunteer may be naïve and an older volunteer may be overly sympathetic.
- Physical Appearance
  - Not adhering to the dress code or grooming standards calls undue attention. A volunteer that is overly boisterous or timidly subdued can also attract manipulation.
- Financial Status
  - Never talk about personal financial matters. Discussing financial matters can lead to manipulation and escalate into trafficking.



# Profiling Victims

- Work Ethic
  - If a volunteer is unreliable, fails to show up, is late to assignments, or has a poor attitude, they can become a potential victim.
- Demeanor
  - Staff are often categorized based on their demeanor. Staff are either very strict, very lenient, or somewhere in-between. Staff that are strict are avoided, those in-between may be groomed, and those that are lenient will be targeted. Volunteers are typically more lenient and therefore must be extra vigilant.



# Victim Tests

Once a victim has been identified, the process of manipulation begins. The goal can be short-term with very little planning, or long-term, developed over an extended period of time.

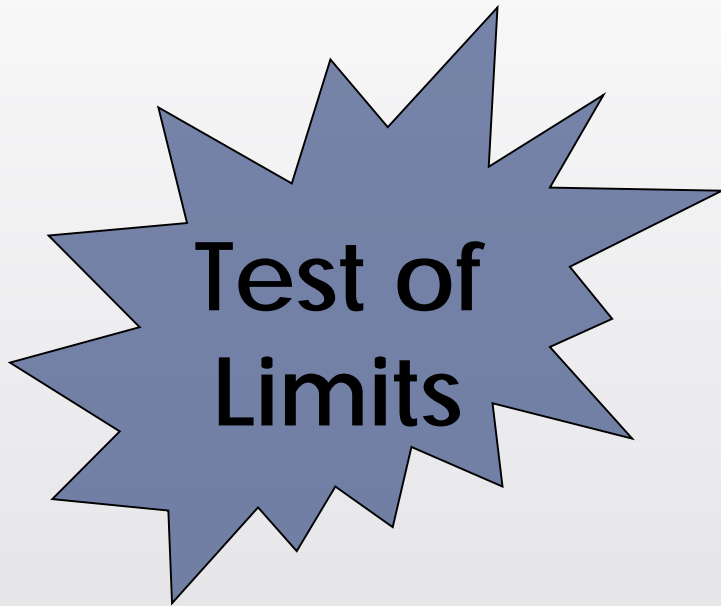
Typically the volunteer is tested to determine if they are a suitable victim.

2 examples of victims tests when attempting to manipulate volunteers are the Test of Limits and the Fishing Test.





## Victim Tests



**Test of  
Limits**

Breaking minor rules to test a volunteers response.



**Fishing  
Test**

Working in teams to request minor items from volunteers.





## Tools of a Set-Up

There are 11 tools used in a set-up. The tools utilized are the volunteer's own feelings and concerns. These tools are applied according to the way they read the volunteers' sensitivities. They know just when to apply the different steps and when to back off.



# Tools of a Set-Up

## The Support System

- Attempts to create a friendship, which makes requests for favors difficult to refuse.

## Sympathy

- Using sympathy as a tool to lower the guard of the volunteer. Once a volunteer is emotionally connected, they become an easier target for manipulation.



# Tools of a Set-Up

## The Plea for Help

- A sincere plea for help should be addressed but to avoid manipulation, volunteers must verify the situation. The easiest way to do this is to discuss it with staff and make sure the person making the plea knows that staff will be made aware of the request.



# Tools of a Set-Up

## Offer of Protection

- Offers of protection may include offers to do a favor, yet willing to “take the heat” if caught. The purpose here is to create a bond of friendship and trust that can be used for manipulation.

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# Tools of a Set-Up

## Allusions to Sexual/Romantic Relationships

- Using a romantic relationship as a tool for manipulation.

## The Touch System

- Creating a contact situation to test boundaries and form a physical connection.





# Tools of a Set-Up

- The Rumor Clinic
  - Planting rumors and spreading gossip which can lead to a breakdown of professionalism among the staff and the population.
- Emotion
  - Using emotion as a powerful tool to aid in manipulating and deceiving volunteers.





# Tools of a Set-Up

- Learned Helplessness
  - Expressing a need or want that they cannot accomplish on their own and hoping the volunteer will step in to assist.
- The Victim Stance
  - Using a history of victimization to manipulate volunteers to gain favors and special consideration and as an excuse for their criminal behavior.







# Tools of a Set-Up

## Us vs. Them

- As humans, we feel the need to belong and connect to other people. One of the most common methods of manipulation is the “Us vs. Them” mentality.
- If a volunteer is overly sympathetic, has a disdain for the Department, or is indifferent to policies and rules, these feelings can be exploited to further separate the volunteer from their source of support in staff or even from other volunteers.
- Volunteers can act as an empathetic outlet without being reduced to “Us vs. Them” which can lead down a dangerous path. Volunteers should channel complaints to positive coping mechanisms. Examples are the formal grievance process, talking to their case manager, journaling, working out, meditation, or other similar outlets.

# Warning Signs



The following is a list of early warning signs that you may be being groomed for manipulation.

If they...

1. engage in long conversations about volunteer likes, dislikes, or other personal matters;
2. suddenly offer favors, perform extra work, are excessively nice, and/or overly complimentary;
3. ask for materials in excess of what is allowed by policy;
4. will not take "No." for an answer;
5. want to talk in private or in a whisper;

# Warning Signs



If they...

5. defy orders;
6. consistently violate minor rules;
7. attempt to turn volunteers against other volunteers/staff;
8. instill staff/volunteers with fear; or
9. push staff/volunteers to the limits of their patience.

# Avoid Becoming a Victim



Below are 15 ways to avoid becoming the victim of manipulation.

1. Realize that some people will take advantage of you if you let them.
2. Do not do anything you would be ashamed to tell staff.
3. Keep everything out in the open.
4. Learn to be assertive and say "NO" and mean it.
5. Be aware of verbal and non-verbal messages you send out, particularly body language, grooming, and attire.

# Avoid Becoming a Victim



6. Always document any attempt at manipulation and inform staff of the situation.
7. Verify information with staff before you take action.
8. Confront manipulative behavior and take action immediately.
9. Know your personal and professional boundaries.
10. Know when you are stressed or "burned-out" and take breaks from volunteering to re-focus.

# Avoid Becoming a Victim



11. Understand your strengths and weaknesses to recognize if you are being taken advantage of.
12. Be aware that religion can be used as a tool for manipulation.
13. Communicate your boundaries and stick to them.
14. Constantly monitor seemingly casual remarks and your own responses.
15. Be knowledgeable of proper facility procedures relating to programs and legitimate avenues offenders can pursue to acquire assistance.



# Avoid Becoming a Victim



The time a volunteer spends in a correctional facility has an effect on their behavior. The environment can begin to change their actions. Keep in mind this simple equation:

$$\text{TIME} + \text{EXPOSURE} = \text{INFLUENCE}$$

The longer you volunteer plus the more you are exposed to the environment, results in you being influenced by it.

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# Complacency



Definition of Complacency:

A feeling of smug or uncritical satisfaction with oneself or one's achievements, advantages, and situation, often without awareness of potential danger, or self-satisfaction accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies.





# Complacency

- Complacency can lead to manipulation. The factors that contribute to complacency are repetition, repetitive behavior, repeatedly being exposed to potentially dangerous situations, the getting “used to it” response or habituation, your state of mind, and fatigue.
- Volunteers that most often fall victim to manipulation are seasoned volunteers and they have fallen into a state of complacency, comfort, and reduced awareness.
  - Volunteers, similar to staff, should take steps to avoid becoming complacent, especially being in a correctional environment.





# Avoid Complacent Behavior

Complacency can lead to negative consequences for staff, volunteers and the entire population.

It is important to know how to combat complacency.

Next are 10 ways to avoid complacent behavior.



# Avoid Complacent Behavior

- 1. Never forget you are in a correctional environment.**

Remind yourself daily to be vigilant and thorough in your volunteer service.

- 2. Establish a culture that does not tolerate or accept complacent behavior.**

Make avoiding complacency a priority.



# Avoid Complacent Behavior

## **3. Develop a pilot's mindset.**

Perform “pre-trip inspections” with attention to detail. Failure to properly inspect could result in serious consequences.

## **4. If you find yourself tired - stand up, walk around, get a drink of coffee or water.**

Re-energize yourself so you can focus on your tasks.





# Avoid Complacent Behavior

- 5. Constantly reinforce to others the importance of not becoming complacent.**

Remind them about the dangers associated with complacency.

- 6. Be proactive!**

Look for ways to improve things before they become a concern or issue.



# Avoid Complacent Behavior

- 7. Role model appropriate behaviors at all times.**

Do not shortcut procedures or break minor rules. Others will think it is ok to do the same.

- 8. Solicit ideas from staff and other volunteers on ways to avoid complacent behaviors.**

Share these ideas with others.





# Avoid Complacent Behavior

**9. View your area with a set of “fresh eyes.”**

View things from a different perspective and look for things unusual or out of the ordinary.

**10. Have others regularly inspect your area to discover concerns or issues.**

Develop the mindset to complete every task.





# Response

If you ever feel that you may be the victim of manipulation, follow these steps:

- Respond in a positive, professional manner by correcting the inappropriate behavior.
- Contact your group leader, Community Engagement Coordinator, Chaplain, or any staff member.

The more people that know about the situation, the better the chance it will be addressed appropriately.





# Congratulations!

You have completed the eLearning Training  
Module:

## Manipulation

If you have any questions,  
please contact your Community Engagement  
Coordinator.

