

Voluntary Service Law

On January 4, 2001 Voluntary Service Law, proposed by Legislator Chiang Yi-wen, was passed by the Legislative Yuan, making Taiwan only the second country in the world to have such a law on its statute books.

Why is Voluntary Service Law needed?

Voluntary Service Law is needed to coordinate the resources of voluntary work, increase the efficiency of voluntary work, maintain the integrity of voluntary work, and raise the standards of society in general.

How is Voluntary Service Law implemented?

Voluntary Service Law is implemented by the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), which oversees overall administration of the law and coordinates the relevant government departments responsible for different aspects of the law. For example, the Department of Education is responsible for volunteer education, and young volunteers come under the auspices of the National Youth Commission.

The rights and duties of the volunteer under the Voluntary Service Law

Rights

The volunteer has the right to proper training.

The volunteer has the right to receive respect for his or her dignity, privacy and religious beliefs.

The volunteer has the right to a secure, healthy and safe working environment.

The volunteer has the right to complete information related to the voluntary work.

The volunteer has the right to participate in project design, development, execution and evaluation.

Duties

The volunteer must follow the principals of voluntary service ethics (outlined in a forthcoming MOI handbook).

The volunteer must obey the rules and regulations of the voluntary organization.

The volunteer must participate in training programs.

The volunteer must respect the rights of the person receiving care.

The volunteer must keep any secrets he or she might come across during voluntary work.

The volunteer must refuse any payment offered for his or her voluntary work.

The volunteer must not abuse the facilities of the voluntary organization.

How Voluntary Service Law encourages the volunteer

Voluntary Service Law encourages the volunteer through a national system of incentives and rewards, which are regulated by the MOI. These include the Volunteer Passport, which recognizes the holder as a registered volunteer, the Volunteer Service Record Card, which is used to keep a record of the volunteer's total service hours, and the Honorary Volunteer Card, which is awarded to outstanding volunteers with at least three years of service. The Honorary Volunteer Card gives the holder free admittance to certain

cultural events, and exemption from military service.

A future amendment to Voluntary Service Law will give the volunteer certain tax relief benefits.

Voluntary organizations and Voluntary Service Law

Every voluntary organization in Taiwan has agreed to the content of Voluntary Service Law. Under the law, voluntary organizations must register with the MOI to gain legal status, and show that they have a complete system of training, management and planning. Well-established organizations, such as Tzu-Chi Foundation, automatically qualify for registration. The voluntary organization is primarily responsible of any injury or damage that might be caused by a volunteer belonging to their organization, but the organization may subsequently seek compensation from the volunteer.

The impact of Voluntary Service Law

Voluntary Service Law coordinates volunteer work throughout Taiwan through a centrally organized system of regulations, principals, incentives, and penalties. The law helps alleviate unnecessary overlapping of voluntary work, waste of resources, and other inefficiencies caused by a lack of coordination.