



# 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 incarcerated individuals that interact with volunteers are extremely grateful for their service and treat volunteers with the utmost respect.

However, there exists a segment of the incarcerated individual population that is manipulative and see the caring nature of volunteers as a target. The following training modules addresses this group of incarcerated 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 often starts small but can quickly escalate and jeopardize the safety and security of the facility.

Why do some incarcerated individuals manipulate staff/volunteers?

Most incarcerated individuals seek to have their basic needs met and want to move through incarceration as hassle-free as possible while avoiding confrontation or conflict with staff.

Some incarcerated individuals are still in the criminal mindset and use manipulation against staff and volunteers. The reasons behind this behavior can be simply as a method of control or more nefarious purposes like trafficking.

Volunteers must be aware that there are incarcerated individuals that are profiling staff and volunteers for purposes of manipulation.

Manipulation

# Profiling Victims

## Demographic

- A volunteer's age or gender can be a easy way for an incarcerated individual to relate to a volunteer and began manipulation. This includes incarcerated individuals in the same generation using shared experiences. A younger volunteer may be naïve and an older volunteer may be overly sympathetic.

## Physical Appearance

- A volunteer that does not adhere to the dress code or grooming standards calls undue attention to themselves. A volunteer that is overly boisterous or timidly subdued can also leave them open to manipulation.

## Financial Status

- Never talk about personal financial matters around incarcerated individuals. Discussing any financial troubles, you or an incarcerated individual have can lead to manipulation and escalate into trafficking.

# Profiling Victims

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## Work Ethic

- Incarcerated individuals can immediately recognize the work ethic of volunteers and staff alike. If a volunteer is unreliable, fails to show up or is late to assignments, or has a poor attitude, the manipulator sees a potential victim.

## Demeanor

- Incarcerated individuals often categorize staff into categories based on their demeanor. They are either very strict, very lenient, or somewhere in-between. Manipulators will avoid those that are very strict, may groom those in-between, and will target those that are more lenient. Volunteers are typically more lenient in their demeanor and therefore must be very vigilant of manipulation.

## Victim Tests

Once a manipulator has identified their victim, they begin the process of manipulation. The goal can be short-term with very little planning or long-term, developed over a period.

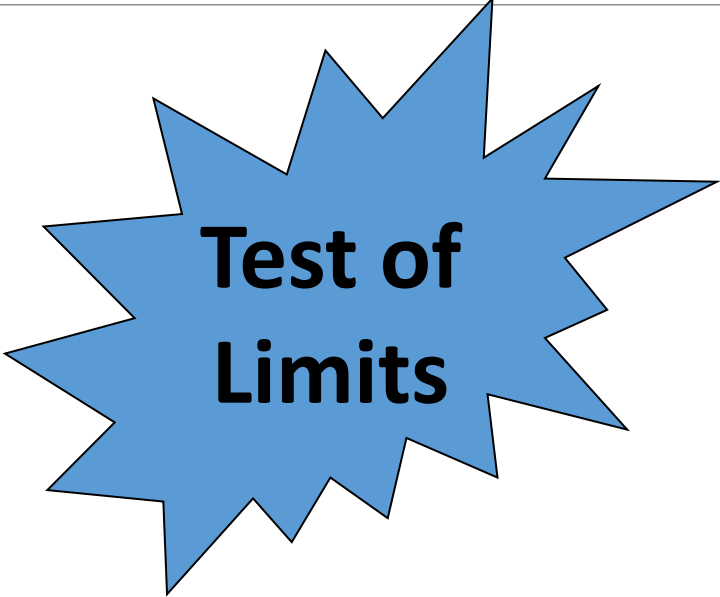
The manipulator will want to test the volunteer to determine if they are a suitable victim.

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



# Victim Tests

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## **Test of Limits**

The incarcerated individual breaks minor rules to test a volunteer's response.



## **Fish Testing**

Multiple incarcerated individuals may work in teams to request minor items from volunteers.

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## Tools of a Set-Up

There are 11 tools manipulators use in a set-up. The tools utilized are the volunteer's own feelings and concerns. Team members apply these tools according to the way they read the volunteers' sensitivities. Manipulators know just when to apply the different steps and when to back off.

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# Tools of a Set-Up

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## The Support System

- The incarcerated individual attempts to create a friendship, which makes requests for favors difficult to refuse.

## Sympathy

- The incarcerated individual uses 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 incarcerated individual should be helped but to avoid manipulation, volunteers must verify the situation. This easiest way to do this is to discuss it with staff and make sure the incarcerated individual knows that a staff person is aware of the request.

### Offer of Protection

- Minor offers of protection may include offers by the incarcerated individual to do a favor, yet willing to “take the heat” if caught. The purpose here is to create a bond of friendship and trust to manipulate the volunteer.



# Tools of a Set-Up

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## Allusions to Sexual/Romantic Relationships

- When an incarcerated individual uses sex or a romantic relationship as a tool for manipulation.

## The Touch System

- Incarcerated individuals create a touching situation to test boundaries and form a physical connection.

# Tools of a Set-Up

## The Rumor Clinic

- Incarcerated individuals plant rumors and spread gossip that may lead to the breakdown of professionalism among the staff and Incarcerated Individuals.

## Emotion

- Incarcerated individuals, females especially, can use emotion as a powerful tool to aid them in manipulating and deceiving volunteers.

# Tools of a Set-Up

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## Learned Helplessness

- Incarcerated individuals, females especially, try to make an impression on male volunteers by asking or seeming to need the male volunteer to assist them.



## The Victim Stance

- Incarcerated individuals can use 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 that incarcerated individuals use is the “us vs. them” mentality.
- If a volunteer is overly sympathetic to incarcerated individuals, has a disdain for the Department, or is indifferent to policies and rules, manipulators will exploit that to further separate the volunteer from their source of support in staff or even other volunteers.
- Volunteers can act as a sympathetic outlet to incarcerated individuals without being reduced to “Us vs. Them” which can lead down a dangerous road. Volunteers should channel incarcerated individual complaints to positive coping mechanisms.



## Warning Signs

The following is a list of early warning signs to be aware of that an incarcerated individual may be trying to manipulate you.

If an incarcerated individual...

1. Engages in long conversations about volunteer likes, dislikes, or other personal matters.
2. Suddenly offers favors, does extra work, is excessively nice, and/or overly complimentary.
3. Asks for materials in excess of what is allowed by policy.
4. Will not take “no” for an answer.
5. Wants to talk in private or in a whisper.

# Warning Signs

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If an incarcerated individual...

6. Defies orders.
7. Consistently violates minor rules.
8. Attempts to turn staff/volunteers against other staff/volunteers.
9. Instills staff/volunteers with fear.
10. Pushes 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 incarcerated individuals will take advantage of you if you let them.
2. Do not do anything you would be ashamed to share with your peers or staff.
3. Keep everything out in the open. Manipulators want to keep things private.
4. Learn to be assertive and use the word “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

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- 1 Always document any attempt at manipulation and inform staff of the situation.
- 2 Verify information from incarcerated individuals before you take action and check with staff.
- 3 Confront manipulative behavior and act immediately.
- 4 Know your personal and professional boundaries.
- 5 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 an incarcerated individual is taking advantage of you.
12. Be aware that incarcerated individuals may use religion as a tool for manipulation.
13. Communicate your boundaries and stick to them.
14. Constantly monitor the seemingly casual remarks from an incarcerated individual and your own responses.
15. Be knowledgeable of proper facility procedures relating to programs and legitimate avenues incarcerated individuals can pursue to acquire assistance.

## Avoid Becoming a Victim

Incarcerated individuals and volunteers have an effect on each other. There are always possible negative effects of these interactions. Keep in mind this simple equation:

**TIME + EXPOSURE = INFLUENCE**

The more time you spend in a certain environment plus the more you are exposed to it, results in you being influenced by it.

## 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

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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 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 incarcerated individuals.

It is important to know how to combat complacency.

Next are 10 ways to avoid complacent behavior.

# Avoid Complacent Behavior

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- 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

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## 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're 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

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- 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 an incarcerated individual’s 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

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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, and/or any staff member.

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



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You have completed:

**Manipulation**

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