

# fact sheet #31

## for Friends and Foundations

### WHEN A FRIEND STEPS OUT OF BOUNDS

Most active members of any given Friends group are happy, helpful team players. They have joined your group because they want to be engaged and they want to contribute to the betterment of the library. Once in a while, however, a Friend can become, shall we say, a little unfriendly. They may be a bully wanting to do things their own way, regardless of what the group as a whole intends. They may want to tell the library exactly how to spend the money the Friends raise, or they may want to withhold giving money to the library altogether. Or, they may just go their own way making singular decisions and wreaking havoc with customary procedures of the group.

Of course, the very best way to handle an unfriendly Friend is to avoid the situation in the first place. This can best be done with a set of job descriptions outlining specific roles and duties (see Fact Sheet 30: Orienting New Active Members in Your Friends Group), along with a statement on how the group works as a team (for rules and guidelines, see the sample below) and how the group will handle those not adhering to the job description or the team rules (asking the member to get in line or else asking that member to step down). Have all volunteers and board members sign this.

It is never easy to reprimand or “fire” a volunteer, but if your group is a 501(c)(3) organization, it has fiduciary responsibilities. These responsibilities not only include safeguarding the money raised, it also means safeguarding the good name of the group and insuring that the group stays stable and healthy. If your board is allowing a single individual to take command then your board is failing in its fiduciary responsibility. Knowing that should help make the decision to reprimand or fire a volunteer easier – you’re just doing your job!

Here are some tips for working with a “rogue” volunteer:

1. Have clearly defined job descriptions and rules for working as a team (see sample rules below).
2. Step in when unwanted behavior first appears – remind the volunteer that they have agreed to stick with their job description and have signed off on rules of working as a team.
3. If unwanted behavior continues, the board must vote to require the volunteer to step down.

Sample Rules for the Team:

1. All board members are equal. No one person has more authority than any other and this includes the president.
2. All board meetings will be collegial and all members will have a chance to express his or her opinion – no one will dominate the conversation.
3. All spending decisions will be made by a majority vote of the board and be based on the request of the library director or his or her designee.
4. All board and committee members will adhere to their job description unless modified by a majority vote of the board.
5. All board members will safeguard the revenues raised and the good name of the group, and ensure that the board works in a high functioning manner.

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