

# Activity groups (Kompisgruppen & Sommarkompis)

## Information and guidelines for volunteers

In this document you will find information needed to prepare for your volunteer assignment. The document contains information on the organization and the activity programme as well as practical tools and general routines to take with you ahead of your assignment. At the end of some chapters, you will find questions to reflect on in connection to your volunteer assignment.

### **The Red Cross-Red Crescent movement**

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is a global movement with national organizations in 192 countries. It is the world's largest humanitarian aid organization, but also the world's largest voluntary organization. The goal is to be in place before, during and after a disaster, whether it is a natural disaster, war, poverty or otherwise.

The Red Cross also has a very unique position in the world that always enables us to assist with humanitarian aid, that is, to help people in various ways, even where other organizations do not have the mandate, during armed conflicts.

The Red Cross operates even where there are no acute disasters, and works in different ways for a more humane world, where humanity is one of our most important keywords. As a volunteer in the Red Cross Youth, you are part of this enormous humanitarian network and the extensive social safety net in which all national associations within the movement are united.

As mentioned, **Humanity** is one of the basic principles of the Red Cross movement. In addition, there are 6 principles that the whole movement is grounded in:

**Impartiality**

**Neutrality**

**Independence**

**Voluntary service**

**Unity**

**Universality**

### **The Swedish Red Cross Youth**

The Swedish Red Cross Youth (SRCY) is part of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, with the main goal of preventing and alleviating human suffering, regardless of who it affects and how it occurs. The RCY was founded in 1921 and was a "department" of the Swedish Red Cross for a long time. Over time, it became increasingly clear how important it was to work not only for children and young people,

but with children and young people. In the end of the 1990s, the Swedish Red Cross Youth became an independent organization, but still works closely with the Swedish Red Cross today.

Today we are an organization where children and young people have power over the decision-making - all our members and elected representatives are no older than 30 years and we conduct activities with and for children and young people around Sweden. All of the Swedish Red Cross Youth's activities are implemented in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It can be seen as a guideline, focused on the following four portal articles of the convention:

**Article 2:** All children are equally valuable and have the same rights. No one may be discriminated against.

**Article 3:** The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions concerning children.

**Article 6:** All children have the right to life, survival and development.

**Article 12:** Every child has the right to express their opinion and to be heard in all matters concerning the child. The child's opinion must be taken into account in relation to the child's age and maturity.

### **SRCY Activity groups**

The activity groups is one of the programmes that is implemented throughout Sweden. Through local boards (eg. SRCY Stockholm and SRCY Umeå), volunteers are recruited to plan and carry out activities for and with young people locally.

The cornerstone of the activity groups is children's right to a meaningful leisure time. Reports and studies have shown that young people with adequate leisure time are more likely to show mental wellbeing. This is strongly linked to the sense of context and meaning that comes with activities, which are important to social health. On the other hand, a lack of context and meaning leads to negative mental health - due to an increased feeling of isolation, among other things. It is also seen that different groups can have different conditions and opportunities to take part in active leisure time.

During the summer holidays, the feeling of isolation can feel extra difficult when for example school and other places that usually create context are on break. Because of this, several local boards also offer activity programmes during the summer break (Sommarkompis). All children and young people should have access to meaningful leisure time, regardless of background and ability, and by offering free activities, we give more people the chance to do so.

### **Aim of the activity groups...**

*...To contribute to an active and meaningful leisure time by creating social contexts for young people...*

*Reflection: Which articles from the Convention on the Rights of the Child do you see can be realized through the activity groups? Can you find or improve methods in the activity group you are assigned to that can meet some of the things mentioned in the articles?*



## Method

The structure and routines of the activities is something that the activity group jointly decide on. Usually, the volunteer group will have 1-2 teamleaders (verksamhetsledare) responsible for ensuring that volunteers know the routines that exist within the group, invites volunteers to planning sessions as well as introduces new volunteers to the programme.

Volunteers plan and carry out the activities as a group. In some groups, there may be volunteers that take on specific tasks, eg. promoting the activity by creating posters to send out, purchasing material or food for an activity, etc.

As support, volunteers can always reach out to their teamleader if needed. The local board is also there to support the groups. For general questions regarding the programme you can also reach out to staff members (contact details on [www.rkuf.se](http://www.rkuf.se))

## Reflection exercise: Safe spaces

*Take a minute and reflect on the following: What does a safe space mean to you? What is needed for you to feel safe in a new group of people?*

To create a safe space is to create opportunities for people to feel engaged and included. This can be done by taking time to greet everyone who walks through a room. It might sound simple but confirming a person's presence can do a lot. Acknowledge those involved and give equal space for everyone to be heard in their opinion.

Provide space for people to take a place on their own terms. This can as an example be done by being mindful of questions that can be asked during check-ins; "what has been your favorite travel destination?" - how can questions like these be perceived for someone who might come from an environment with financial difficulties?

Take into equal consideration who is present and participating and give equal space for participation. Be mindful of whether everyone can participate on equal terms - and how you can enable it. For example, a person with language difficulties may find it more difficult to participate in written exercises - how can we include them in other ways?

A tip when starting an activity can be to talk about common approaches from the beginning - e.g. "arrive on time", "be present" which everyone in the group can be involved in designing.

## **SRCY policies**

When starting your volunteer assignment, your teamleader or local board will present you with a “volunteer agreement” to be signed and handed to them. The volunteer agreement contains the volunteer policy. You can find all SRCY policies and guidelines on our website: <https://www.rkuf.se/om-oss/Styrdokument/>. For any questions on the volunteer agreement or routines within the programme, contact your teamleader or local board. Local board contact details can be found here: <https://www.rkuf.se/engagera-dig/lokalforeningar/>

## **Criminal record extract**

When starting an assignment, volunteers must submit an extract from the police registry to the teamleader or local board. We have a responsibility in our target group being young people, to ensure that volunteers in the programme are suitable in regards to carry out activities with children. The volunteer is responsible for requesting an extract from the record. When it arrives, it is presented to the team leader/local board who notes this. You can find the application form through the police website

<https://polisen.se/en/services-and-permits/police-record-extracts/extract-for-employment-working-with-children-in-activities-other-in-a-school-or-childcare/>

The excerpts requested present any crimes involving children.

## **Evaluating the programme**

Regularly checking in and checking out with the group is a good way to anchor the participants in the present, strengthen the feeling of belonging and presence, and as a volunteer get an insight into the participants' emotional state and thoughts on how the programme/activities can be developed. It is also an opportunity for the participants to express ideas and feelings connected to the activity, and a way to increase participation. A good idea is to set aside time at the beginning and end of each activity to check in and out with the participants. Here are some examples of exercises that you can use to check in as well as check out in the group.

### Check-in exercise:

#### Traffic lights

1. Have everyone seated in a circle
2. Take turns where everyone assigns a colour to their present feeling – without having to go into detail.

### Check-out / evaluation exercises:

#### Word circle

1. Have everyone seated in a circle
2. Take turns where everyone says a word connected to their present feeling or what they felt about the day/activity. If participants answer with a short word like “good,” encourage them to develop by asking questions. For example: “what did you think was good about this specific activity?”

#### Post-it-exercise

1. Everyone is handed post-its and a note and asked to write down a sentence (can be

done anonymously) about what they thought of the day/activity. The notes are put in a box and read out to the group by the activity leader/volunteer

### Safe referrals

Sometimes questions or issues might arise that may be hard to answer. A participant might perhaps have questions about their asylum process or deal with mental health issues. In those cases it's important that we can take the time to listen, and then refer on to a person or authority that can help the person. Here's a list with some of those places that you can refer to:

- **Elevhälsan = The student health centre** can be a good first instance if the activity is conducted in schools and you think or a participant tells you that they need someone to talk to. They can in turn often decide whether it is enough to come to the school counselor or if the person in question needs more specialist help
- **Vårdcentralen = The general health clinic** is open to anyone who falls ill, physically or mentally, to receive medical help.  
Here an assessment is made of what it is you may need help. They can refer to specific clinics depending on the ailment. The health center also has its own general nurses, doctors, counselors and psychologists you can get help from.
- **Ungdomsmottagningen = Youth centres** are available throughout Sweden for young people to seek help and counselling. They have their own counselors, but do not offer specialist help if one, for example, has severe anxiety problems, sleep problems, is clinically depressed or suffers from other psychiatric disorders. How old one can be to seek help at the youth clinic depends on which county you live in, but it is up to between 18-25 years.

There's also an online website of the clinic, that is offered in different languages:  
<https://www.youmo.se/en/?lang=en>

- **[Röda Korsets asylrådgivning](#) = Swedish Red Cross asylum guidance**, family reunification and research is available through a phone line for people with questions regarding their asylum process.  
The number is 020 – 415 000 and the line is open tuesdays, wednesdays and thursdays between 09:30 – 12:00.
- **[BRIS stömlinje](#) = Children's right in society's telephone support line** is operated by professional counsellors and open for young people up to 18 that feel they need to speak to someone. It's open every day around the clock.  
There's also an option to book an appointment with a counsellor through BRIS.

### Falck Healthcare – Psychosocial support for volunteers

Volunteers in need of psychosocial support in matters concerning the assignment can receive quick and professional support through Falck Healthcare, with which the Swedish Red Cross collaborates. Falck's personnel are competent and work with providing support and relief calls by telephone. You are entitled up to three support calls free of charge. Access it by phoning:

0200- 21 63 00

Reference: Röda Korset, code: Volontär

## Checklist

Best of luck and have fun with your assignment! Having gone through the information in the handbook, you can use the following check-list to make sure you are properly prepared

- ✓ Request your extract from the police record and present it to your teamleader/local board
- ✓ Sign the volunteer agreement given to you by your local board or teamleader
- ✓ Become introduced to the programme by your teamleader (if you do not yet have a date for your introduction, contact the teamleader/local board)
- ✓ Become an official member of the Swedish Red Cross youth:  
<https://www.rkuf.se/engagera-dig/bli-medlem/>

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For further questions about the Swedish Red Cross activity programme, contact:  
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