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for OPTIONS  
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VOLUNTEERING IS DIFFERENT NOW

There are some advantages to being "old Hat", and one is having seen the marvelous growth of volunteering in the last twenty years, watching it first hand as a volunteer and as a professional person from several perspectives. My current perspective is a mite tentative at the moment at HEW, since our reorganization is not completed. I hope you don't think I'll be giving you definitive regulations or answers. Basic ground rules depend on the people being served, the ones giving service, and the purpose of their program, and must be varied accordingly. I've been concerned about the desire of some staff members for the Office of Volunteer Development to regulate volunteers. I have been saying to the 383 program directors and their staff (which includes no volunteers by law!) that they can't regulate volunteers, either! If you do, you'll knock all the spontaneity and compassion out of them!

What we're coming to believe in for human services programs is a wider sharing of planning and goal setting with active volunteers, with consumers, and with the voluntary sector. We have learned the hard way that without volunteers it's hard to get public support, and the fragile nature of volunteering to serve leads us to protect the right to be part of the rule making process.

Consumers have a stake in the future, too. We've witnessed a consumer revolution in the last few years, much more consciousness of program impact or lack of it, on consumers. In all the legislation of the New Federalism, the idea that a proportion of consumers should be in on the program planning and policy development process is explicit. But, when providers of services get together with consumers of services, they may turn out to be adversaries. The providers think they know what people need, and consumers know very well what they want. And those two things are not always the same! Confrontation means conflicting goals as well as disagreement about strategies.

My objective for volunteering in programs of HEW is the involvement of volunteers, neutral, experienced citizens, in the formulation of goals, policies and plans as well as in delivery of services. The Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation at ACTION has similar objectives. I hope people will come to understand that citizen

participation and volunteering do overlap, and they ought to be together in HEW, too, where they are widely separated. How else will we have sound decisions?

Volunteers were mentioned first in HEW legislation when they were mandated for service and advisory roles by the 1967 Harris Amendments. Pleased as we were at the time, we soon found that it didn't work. A mandate, like the low end of a salary range, becomes the ceiling under which people seek the lowest level possible as compliance. We had one state report one volunteer! You can't mandate volunteers: the minute it's coercion it ceases being volunteering. So I'm very relieved that several pieces of legislation recently have removed the mandate and left the option open. The Supplemental Security Act, Title XVI and Title XX Social Services suggest the use of private agencies and volunteers in the delivery of services. Actually, volunteers facilitate the receiving of services, and that gives them a unique perspective on what really happens or doesn't happen to bring to the planning process.

I regard HEW related programs as potential consumers of volunteers and ACTION as producer of volunteers whom we desperately need. That's oversimplified, but the interdependence between us, and the other people who are participating in the planning process leads us both toward work with the voluntary sector.

HEW policy statements now talk about voluntary sector partnership in the planning process. This is really progress for an organization which for so long has been in a stance like the elementary teacher, with all the answers, telling people the right answers, rather than listening with sensitivity and concern to what other people's opinions and perspectives are. Thus, the function of the Office of Volunteer Development is to provide two-way linkage between actively participating volunteers and the people who design changes in old, or new program legislation, and with the regulations and guidelines necessary to carry out their intended purposes.

We have done three HEW surveys which covered the country, but which were inadequate statistically because of unstandardized definitions and categories. No two states, even no two programs, keep track of volunteers the same way. I am reminded of a religious survey which was done by a group of volunteers in a small town: the Catholic head count included all family members, the Protestants only those who had joined, and the Jewish temple only the men. We need better data, with agreement on broad categories and definitions, in order to channel feedback from

volunteers and consumers on the effectiveness of services to the bureaus and boards where programs are monitored and analysed. I am convinced most estimates are far too low.

The Volunteer Development System (available from our office) is intended to help administrators to devise a circuitry of input, in computer language, of goals and intentions out to service deliverers, and of results, and impact and ideas, back again to administrators. People who don't have service at risk, who are not parents or potential or actual consumers are needed. For example, many parents of retarded children in state institutions fear "I can't say anything...they might take it out on my child." Now I don't think for one minute, knowing a lot of conscientious staff members, that that is likely. But of course, if you feel that it might happen, you wouldn't want to be responsible. So there is a risk involved in being candid in the planning process if you are actually a consumer. And if you are a provider there is a risk involved, because you might displease your boss or lose your job. The balance of power may well rest with volunteers who have neither risk. The volunteer with freedom to speak without much risk becomes the decisive factor in the decision-making process, within an agency, or out in the community advocating new services, and in mobilizing the support of powerful decision-makers who control purse strings.

The volunteer becomes an ambassador, as advocate for good services, for special skills of the paid staff, for adequate salaries, for budget support, able to say things that neither the consumers nor the providers are free to say. The volunteer is crucial to the future of human services.

HEW relates to the voluntary sector in three financial ways: one is by grants--block grants or special project support. Title XX is an example of planning and decision-making devolving to the state and local levels. Not all volunteers are aware that the knowledge that they have from first hand experience is probably the most important information to go into that planning process. Administrators need volunteers in the planning process, so that better services reach people, and designs to deliver services to people really help them receive services intended. Volunteers facilitate the receiving of services in ways that paid staff have neither time nor resources to do.

Another way HEW supports programs fiscally is through purchase of services, through the state plan for the use of private agencies in service delivery, through contracts. The third way is a fee basis. This is tax money, but it's usually local tax money that goes into paying fees

for special services to an individual or family, case by case. An example is marriage counselling, which has no socio-economic limits, as a universal need. Universal human needs can have a sliding scale of fees: those who can pay, will pay, those who cannot won't be asked to pay. These are the new financial relationships to states and local programs which seem to be evolving at this moment. Volunteers have a stake in these financial concepts, since in voluntary and private organizations they have corporate responsibilities, and in governmental services, they are frequently the mobilizers of in-kind matching resources, as for Head Start, or extra-budget benefits for welfare clients, as in welfare auxiliaries or service volunteer organizations which expand and enrich public services.

Crucial to Volunteer Development is the Volunteer Administrator. Volunteering is no longer simply dropping in to do what ever needs doing or sticking in one job forever, either. Many full time employees and professionals now serve as volunteers, but the great increase is in opportunities for youth and for older, retired persons to find new identities and satisfactions as volunteers. The paid Volunteer Administrator protects the rights of consumers and paid staff as well as volunteers, matching people to people with complementary needs, and maintaining a support system for all as they work together. Service volunteers have built in chances to give their thinking on agency and public policies and plans, and to serve on advisory committees and boards, adding their important perspectives to the program development process. With their help, services are being more quickly attuned to changing needs. The volunteer gift of time is worth far more than we could ever afford to pay, but volunteers are the first to say that they get more than they give, where they have become full partners, and have a voice in the future. Viva la difference!