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# VOLUNTEERS IN SOCIAL SERVICE

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## Preface

Private social work through the years has been inseparably linked with the spirit of voluntary service. One of the most reassuring memories in these troubled times is the singleness of purpose with which men and women voluntarily offered their services to community enterprises during the war years. The National Travelers Aid Association was privileged to have an extensive and intensive experience with volunteer programs throughout the country. This gave us a unique opportunity to see the rewards, as well as the pitfalls of volunteer participation in an agency that is primarily engaged in case work services.

We were aware that the lessons we were learning were not of the moment only, but were essentially true for all times. We, therefore, decided to examine both the credit and debit sides of our volunteer program and report our findings, so that not only we, in Travelers Aid, but others in the social work field might benefit by our experience.

Mrs. Dorothy H. Sills, who, as Director of USO-NTAA Volunteer Services, had broad experience in all phases of the volunteer program, was selected to make the study. In addition to the wealth of data already on hand, 18 units of operation where the volunteer programs presented a variety of patterns, were selected for intensive study. Eleven Executives, 13 Supervisors, 18 Case Workers and 68 Volunteers, including Board and Committee members, were interviewed individually and in small groups. The same subjects were discussed with all of these people in order to register all points of view. What contributions volunteers make in service to people, what elements are necessary to make a program effective and satisfying to volunteers, what benefits volunteers and communities derive

from participation, were the questions raised. The uniformity of response was remarkable and made it possible to record here a very real concensus.

In addition to the help given us by these individuals, we gratefully acknowledge the assistance given through consultation with staff members from the following organizations: Child Welfare League of America, Family Service Association of America, Community Chests and Councils, Association of the Junior Leagues of America, New York Community Service Society, Philadelphia Council of Social Agencies.

As this report goes out, we trust it will be a useful guide to the many voluntary agencies that will be concerned with deepening and broadening their service.

BERTHA MCCALL  
GENERAL DIRECTOR

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## Foreword

It is now a cliché that "the first social workers were volunteers." Not so very long ago, a person who was unable to resolve his own economic, social or personal problems had no recourse but to turn to his friends, neighbors or philanthropic individuals for assistance. This *voluntary* help stemmed, at least in part, from the concept accepted in our culture, that one of our duties as human beings was to aid the distressed. Whatever other elements may have been involved, this help from one person to another offered an opportunity for direct expression of *natural human sympathy and interest*, and was a satisfying experience.

Two aspects of the growth of the field of social work into a recognized profession had special influence in changing the role of volunteers. Communities gradually accepted responsibility, through organized public and private agencies, for providing basic human requirements for its members who were unable to do so for themselves, partly through the realization that many human problems were rooted in the social and economic structure. In recognition that specialized knowledge, understanding and skill were essential for effective service, a body of professional literature, specialized school curricula, agency training programs for students and staff, and standards for personnel and practice, were developed.

Consistent with these changes in responsibility for social service and in approved professional standards, the sympathetic, philanthropic members of society *relinquished* both their freedom to give direct expression to a wish to help, and the resulting personal satisfactions. These were instead delegated to organized agencies. The role of the volunteer in the years prior to the war, in social work, was therefore almost entirely limited to that of supporting and promoting agency programs and standards.

We must not lose sight of the fact that this delegated responsibility was threefold: the proper administration of funds; adequate provision of appropriate services; and the expression of kindness toward people in trouble. This last is stressed, for, although the integrity and efficiency of

the social worker are usually taken for granted, there still seems to be some question of the warmth and kindness with which she gives service to people. We should note that this criticism is voiced not only by disgruntled clients and uninformed citizens, but sometimes by board and committee members and service volunteers closely associated with staff.

There may be various reasons for this complaint. Social workers tend to express themselves to lay people, as well as among themselves, in the technical language of the field. Lay people may erroneously assume that these same words are used in contacts with clients. It is also true that lay people misinterpret the social worker's objectivity in analyzing situations and human behavior as a lack of sympathy. Perhaps through anxiety to avoid the pitfalls of undisciplined and emotional approach to people in need, social workers have sometimes gone too far in their conscious effort to eliminate *feelings* as an influence in the relationship, not only between staff and client, but also between clients and lay members of the community. This anxiety was certainly one factor in the common practice, before World War II, of limiting the activities of volunteers to assignments that did not involve any direct contact with the agency's clients. This questioning by lay people may also be due in part to the fact that their own feelings of sympathy and helpfulness are not wholly satisfied when expressed only in support of agency programs.

These considerations may understandably arouse the defenses of professional workers. Nevertheless, they are important not only in understanding some of the motives that prompt people to enlist as volunteers in the social services, but also in evaluating their potential contributions in agency programs, and in examining the readiness of professional people to find places for them.

## The Basis for Volunteer Service

From all over the country come reports that social agencies, communities and volunteers themselves are interested in volunteer participation in the social services on a broader and more varied basis than the pre-war pattern of board and committee membership, occasional professional consultation on legal or business matters, and assistance in research or clerical work.

*Agencies* have learned anew that volunteers can make a real and useful contribution, directly, through actual service to people and interpretation to the community, and indirectly, through the understanding and knowledge they may acquire of general and specific social work philosophy, standards, structure and method.

*Volunteers* speak with enthusiasm of all they have learned through their experience, of the satisfactions they have found in their work, and of their interest and desire to share directly in providing adequate services to people.

*Communities* have realized that participation by volunteers has increased the general interest, knowledge, understanding and active support of community services, and has strengthened community cooperation and general organization.

This interest is clearly related to satisfactory, challenging experience during the war period. America's entry into World War II as an active combatant accelerated the urge of its citizenry, already stimulated during "defense days," to play an active part in the total war effort. In addition to the millions directly engaged in military and war production activities, it has been estimated that more than ten million shared as volunteers in community projects of various kinds, including the social services. The experience that organized social agencies, both those particularly responsible for war services and those carrying on their regular activities in a war-torn world, have had with volunteer participation is the focus here.

It is not necessary or appropriate to analyze all of the pressures, mo-

tives and expediencies involved. The enormity of the task and the scarcity of professionally trained personnel were certainly factors in agency decisions to plan volunteer programs; the emotional need not only to share in the war effort, but also to sacrifice in doing so, was a motivating force that prompted many civilians to offer their services; all of us were affected to some extent by the urge to pool our resources in working out of a common danger toward a common goal.

Whatever the reasons, many thousands of our community people participated in social services as volunteers, thousands of staff members worked directly and cooperatively with volunteers, and hundreds of social agencies found places in their programs for volunteers. Often this was, for all concerned, a new experience. There is no question but that millions more people were assisted, millions more services were rendered, than could have been possible through employed staff alone.

#### WARTIME VOLUNTEERS IN ONE CASE WORK AGENCY

Travelers Aid, as a case work agency exclusively concerned with service to people traveling through or coming into communities, and with special understanding and skills developed to provide this service, was faced, during the war period, with planning a tremendous expansion of its services in order to provide assistance at strategic points to the millions of people who were moving about the country.

From the beginning, it was planned to use the services of qualified and trained volunteers, under staff supervision, to supplement the skills of professionally trained staff. There were two important factors in this decision: the limited number of case workers available precluded employing large enough trained staffs to provide all of the services within the agency's function that would be needed; it was expected that a large volume of the needs of this wartime constituency would be for those services that did not require case work training and skills, providing that they were professionally planned and supervised. Because of the special needs of its constituency, Travelers Aid has included in its function, information and direction services appropriate in a social agency and geared to the needs of strangers. These services, while very helpful to clients, have not *in themselves* required case work training and skills, and could therefore be

given effectively, under appropriate conditions, by people not professionally trained in social case work. When the need for such services was complicated by underlying personal or social problems, applicants could be referred to professional staff.

Five years of experience have proved that these initial plans were sound in principle. As had been expected, there were some differences in practice, and varying degrees of professional satisfaction with results, but the people who were served in vast numbers seemed satisfied with the help they had received. The quantity and quality of service to people are, of course, the most important results of this experience. Nevertheless, the benefits that accrued to board, staff and volunteers were many.

Much has been learned about what must go into a program of volunteer services if it is to be effective. What agencies can validly expect of volunteers, what volunteers can validly expect of the agency, and some of the ways in which board, staff and volunteers can work together smoothly and effectively, have become much more crystalized.

There are many indications of interest in the analysis and use of the recent experience with volunteer services as a basis for future planning. The results of Travelers Aid experience are not only useful to that agency but are adaptable to other fields of social service. An effort has therefore been made to identify those principles and methods that are generic and to present and discuss them in general terms.

The following discussion will be focused on those volunteers who offer their services, without remuneration, to organized private social agencies employing qualified staff to carry the major responsibility for fulfilling the agencies' functions, and who meet the requirements established by the agency for volunteer assignments. Special consideration will be given to volunteer services in case work agencies in general, and in the Travelers Aid field in particular.

## Basic Principles of Volunteer Participation

As successful volunteer programs are analyzed, the interdependence of all of those who share in them becomes apparent. Board, staff and volunteers each have distinctive roles to play. The achievement of each group depends not only on their own competence, but on that of the others, as well as on skillful cooperation and coordination of their several activities.

*The principles\* outlined here are those basic in organization, administration and purposeful human relationships, adapted to volunteer participation.* It would be interesting to cogitate about why people experienced in social work so frequently have to develop these principles empirically and individually when working with volunteers, although in other situations their application has been so familiar a part of professional practice.

Some of these principles apply particularly to the agency, board and staff, others to the volunteers. They are equally pertinent to the small or large agency, for one or two volunteers or hundreds. The initial steps must be taken within the agency itself so it is logical to review first those principles which relate to the roles of board and staff.

### PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION

*Board and staff work together in planning for volunteers.* This is part of their joint responsibility for the agency's program. While it is generally accepted as essential that board and staff work closely together in arranging for all agency projects, in a volunteer program, board members have an unusually important role to play. They themselves are community people as well as active volunteers, and are in a strategic position to offer

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\* See "Summary of Full Statement of Principles of Volunteer Service," mimeographed, four pages, adopted by the Advisory Committee on Volunteer Service of Community Chests and Councils, Inc., December 1945.

See also "Citizen Participation in Community Services"—Report of Volunteer Survey Committee, New York National War Fund. (A study of volunteers in New York during the war period.)

continuing leadership to the program and to give assurance to the public that the agency is not, through its volunteer program, compromising with professional standards or qualitative service to clients.

*All of the services in the agency must be analyzed.* Such study will indicate which of these require professional training and skill, and which, if any, do not. It is possible, then, to select from the latter group those that can be given by volunteers in a way that is consistent with the quality of the agency's practice. Sound practice would also preclude assigning to unpaid people, duties for which staff would, under normal circumstances, be employed. Inherent in this analysis is a clear understanding and acceptance that there is a difference in the assignments and responsibilities of staff and volunteers, related to the differences *intrinsic in their status*, as well as in their *preparation and training*.

*Consideration must be given to the circumstances under which volunteers can be expected to render these services, and whether or not the agency is in a position to provide them.* The kinds of volunteers needed for the assignments, and the training and supervision necessary for effective performance, are important factors. Appropriate limits and controls of volunteer activities must be established by board and staff, in line with the authority vested in them by the community, and the responsibility for service to clients.

## PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTRATION

*The care and skill with which the agency carries out its share of a volunteer program are as important as the capacities of the volunteers.* The unfortunate result of inadequate planning for the agency's responsibilities has been amply demonstrated during the war period. In some places it has taken many months and a great deal of work to overcome the effects of too hasty initial planning. In others, there has been a tendency to place the blame for a breakdown in volunteer services entirely on volunteers, without evaluation of the way in which the agency had carried out its responsibilities.

*Specific duties that can be assigned to volunteers must be selected.* It is possible then to estimate the hours of volunteer time, and probable number of volunteers required, and the amount of staff time necessary for adequate supervision.

*The personal qualities and abilities necessary for effective performance must be determined.* These will establish the criteria to be used in selecting volunteers and in assigning work to them.

*Recruiting volunteers involves the agency's public relations.* It is important to avoid, as far as possible, rejecting applications and having to dismiss volunteers after a period of service, though both rejection and dismissal may sometimes prove necessary as part of the agency's responsibility to clients. Both in recruiting volunteers and in interviewing applicants, clear interpretation must be given of the services for which volunteers are needed, the qualifications required for them, and the responsibilities, including training and supervision, that are involved. This will not only help to avoid the unpleasant tasks of rejection or dismissal, but will also tend to enlist those people who are potentially suited to serve in the agency's program. The use of an interim placement service such as a central volunteer bureau is helpful in this screening process and also in steering applicants who do not meet one agency's particular requirements to other opportunities.

*Training and supervision of volunteers must be thoughtfully planned.* The assignments volunteers will carry, and the equipment they bring to the service, indicate the kind and amount of training and supervision they will need to perform their tasks. Opportunity for development and growth should be provided.

*Adequate physical working conditions are important for good performance by volunteers.* In addition, the physical arrangements are evidence to the volunteers of their status in the agency. Volunteers have shown that they are willing to put up with many discomforts if these are really unavoidable and not due to inattention or thoughtlessness.

*Volunteers need recognition of their services.* Tangible evidence of achievement, such as testimonials, certificates and pins is important to volunteers. It is rather strange that many staff people are critical because volunteers value such concrete symbols of their service, when it is accepted as valid that staff members and the agencies employing them should be concerned with promotion and salary increases in recognition of accomplishment and growth in ability.

*Opportunity should be given volunteers to develop and use their*

*capacities to the fullest possible extent.* Volunteer services are necessarily limited, however, by the kinds of responsibilities within an agency's program and services which can be assigned to volunteers and which they are willing to accept. Nevertheless, plans can be worked out for whatever advancement or promotion may be possible within these limits, and for transfer to other agencies or services when appropriate.

### PRINCIPLES OF STAFF RELATIONSHIP TO VOLUNTEERS

The attitude of board and staff toward volunteers will materially affect their performance. It is important for volunteers, as for all other people, to feel that their work is worth doing, that they are capable of doing it, and that their colleagues have confidence in them.

Conviction on the part of board and staff that there is a real place for volunteers in the agency will in itself foster a sound approach. But where a volunteer program is an innovation, there can be no real conviction that it is appropriate within the agency. The plan, therefore, is of necessity experimental, and under such circumstances, the basic principles involved are essential as guides. These principles apply particularly to staff because of their close association with volunteers.

It may seem that proper staff attitudes toward volunteers could be taken for granted as implicit in social work philosophy and approach to people. The comments of staff themselves, as well as of volunteers, emphasize that most staff members must learn to adapt their understanding and skills to this relationship, and often need help in doing so.

Executives and supervisors who have had experience with volunteer programs agree that the development of sound and helpful staff and volunteer relationships is important as an administrative and supervisory function. Staff attitudes should be based on the following principles:

*Realization* that volunteers do bring to the program a store of knowledge and competence, although these may be different from the equipment and experience of the staff.

*Understanding* of some of the motivating forces, and an *appreciation* of the sincerity and generosity that are factors in the volunteer's wish to serve.

*Respect* for the volunteer's ability, both to carry assignments and to develop further understanding and skill.

*Acceptance* that the services given by volunteers are an important part of the agency's service to clients, even though they do not require the technical skills of trained staff.

*Recognition* that an offer of service to an organized agency implies an acceptance of professional standards.

*Ability* to apply sound principles and skills in relationships with volunteers, as well as with clients.

*Willingness* to share knowledge and experience with volunteers, both to teach them and to learn from them.

*Awareness* that working with volunteers offers staff members an opportunity to increase their ability to work with people.

*Recognition* that volunteers need and deserve expressed approval when they have done well, as well as supervisory help from the staff when there have been errors or inadequacies in their performance. This is an essential part of the learning process and establishes status, as well as giving a sense of confidence and recognition.

*Skill* in giving volunteers enough security about their place in the agency to discuss freely any questions they may have in relation to the agency, or to their own assignments.

### PRINCIPLES THAT APPLY TO VOLUNTEERS

However essential the board and staff may be in enabling volunteers to work effectively, it is the volunteers themselves who are the keystone of the program. Like board and staff, they must present qualifications that are appropriate for the duties they will carry, and consistent with the agency's standards. Specific qualifications for volunteers differ so widely in accordance with the variety of assignments available for them, that it is not feasible to review them here. Suffice it to say that they will be determined by the tasks to be performed. Nevertheless, there are some principles that apply to volunteers, whatever their duties may be, and these merit attention.

The attitudes of volunteers toward their role in the agency, and toward

the clients the agency is serving, will materially affect their use of knowledge and skill. Since social service programs are based on the needs of human beings, positive attitudes toward people are of major importance, particularly when volunteers will be in direct contact with people, including clients, in the course of duty. The principles underlying good performance of volunteers therefore pertain to their relationship to the agency and their relationship to the agency's clients.

#### PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIP TO THE AGENCY

*Understanding of the agency's general aims and functions.* Volunteers should know the nature of the enterprise in which they are enlisting, and with which they will be identified.

*Acceptance of the validity of the agency's aim and functions.* Volunteer interest and loyalty develop only when there is belief in the validity of the program. This does not imply that volunteers must accept blindly all aspects of the agency's practice, for informed and experienced volunteers may often help board and staff to raise standards and quality of service, through their thorough grasp of needs, and their ability to promote community support.

*Readiness to adapt to the standards of practice, conduct and appearance established by the agency.* All workers in an agency represent that agency to the public, and therefore must conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with its position as a professional and responsible community group.

*Dependability in following through on assignments.* As with an employed person, real emergencies connected with other responsibilities may excuse absence or tardiness, provided that the agency is notified as soon as possible. Under any other circumstances, volunteers are responsible to perform tasks assigned to them *in the manner* and *at the time* they have agreed to do so.

*Willingness and ability to conform to established methods and procedures.* Patterns of the agency's work may seem, or actually be, unsuited to the activities of volunteers. In this case, regular channels should be used to suggest or to plan suitable adjustments. It is particularly important that volunteers who have never before had the

experience of working in an organization understand and accept this requirement as essential for smooth operation of the agency's program.

*Willingness and ability to use the direction and help of others.* Staff members and experienced volunteers carry the agency's responsibility to assist new volunteers, both in their current performance and in developing additional skills.

*Subjugation of personal pleasure and interest to the needs of the service.* Willingness to do what is needed as well as what is enjoyed, is part of the discipline required in any work.

*Understanding and acceptance of both the scope and the limits of assignments.* Volunteer activity must be kept within the boundaries set by the agency's responsibility and the volunteer's accepted function. Related to this is the realization that an individual cannot acquire the equipment necessary to qualify as a professional person through volunteer work alone.

#### PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIP TO CLIENTS

*Helpfulness is founded on positive attitudes toward people:*

- "Feeling" for people as fellow human beings.
- Respect for people as individuals.
- Concern for people in difficulty.
- A sincere wish to help.

*Self-discipline is a prerequisite for the helping process:*

- Convincing friendliness and willingness to help.
- Poise and lack of self-consciousness.
- Recognition and control of personal prejudices.
- Protection of confidential information.

*Methods of helping people are based on constructive use of positive feeling, knowledge and understanding:*

- Natural warmth and interest.
- Appreciation of the fact that people are different, react individually to situations and have every right and reason to do so.
- Ability to leave people free to make their own decisions even when they have requested and received information and suggestions.

Recognition of situations that require different or additional help.  
Skill in referring people in need of other kinds of assistance to appropriate resources.

### *BARRIERS TO SOUND STAFF AND VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIPS*

Appreciation of the way in which personal attitudes, needs, and degrees of security affect human relationships is a fundamental in the professional practice of social work. One of the first disciplines a social worker must learn is to control his own attitudes so that they do not interfere in his relationships with clients. Some social workers, however, are less adept in applying this kind of discipline to other professional relationships. For example, they are less objective in contacts with workers in different agencies or fields, with board members, or with volunteers.

There are several possible reasons for this discrepancy. Emphasis on a disciplined approach as basic in a therapeutic relationship with clients may lead social workers to think it inappropriate in other contacts. Sometimes social workers cannot exert this kind of discipline in other relationships until they have thoroughly integrated it in their contacts with clients. Some workers can accept discipline "on the job" but resist it in activities that do not seem to them to be primary professional responsibilities.

These factors may affect staff and volunteer relationships and must therefore be considered in planning a volunteer program. As one executive expressed it, "Staff is apt to react more personally and emotionally in relationships with volunteers, perhaps because it is a new kind of experience." Volunteers, too, need to develop skill in professional relationships, for they usually have been more accustomed to the personal. In other words, both staff and volunteers may need help in working together comfortably and smoothly.

It is not possible or appropriate to discuss all of the personal factors that might be involved. Some, however, have proved more likely than others to enter into relationships between staff and volunteers, and need to be considered by executives and supervisors.

Both staff and volunteers may lack full confidence in their ability to carry their particular assignments, and this insecurity may affect their working relationships, however satisfactorily they carry out their duties. The staff member who is insecure about his professional competence may

become uneasy if even a small part of the agency's service can be given capably by a volunteer, and therefore unable to accept the volunteer as a co-worker. The volunteer who is uncertain of her own ability may be frightened by the special knowledge and skill of the staff and therefore unable to have a comfortable, easy relationship with staff members. Lack of a sure and clear grasp of the difference in assignment and responsibility is usually a complicating element.

Social and economic position are so important to some people that they find it difficult to relate themselves easily to anyone whose position is different from theirs. We see this operating in the financially secure lay person whose initial attitude toward employed staff is a reflection of established, patronizing attitudes toward "hired help," as well as in the staff member who is condescending toward a volunteer whose background and experience do not command a salary range or social position equal to that of professional workers.

Disappointment in personal achievement may also be a factor here. Some lay people may be envious of the financial independence and personal prestige they associate with a professional career, while workers may be dissatisfied with their own personal lives and therefore uncomfortable with volunteers whose social, marital and family adjustments seem to provide an enviable degree of security and satisfaction.

Lack of perspective about the value of different kinds of knowledge, experience and skills, in relation to different kinds of work may also be a handicap in staff and volunteer relationships. Some social workers may tend to be impatient or intolerant toward people who do not have the same philosophy, attitudes, knowledge or abilities as their own, while volunteers who have always considered themselves adequate to handle any problems or situations encountered in their own normal living may find it difficult to understand or accept the fact that this experience does not fully equip them for every kind of work in a social agency.

It would certainly not be appropriate for executives and supervisors to assume responsibility for a therapeutic relationship with staff and volunteers, directed toward a resolution of these personality factors. Nevertheless, they should be borne in mind in planning for volunteer assignments and supervision, and in assisting both staff and volunteers in the development of skill in working together.

## What Volunteers Can Contribute

The contributions of laymen associated with social agencies as board and committee members, or as professional consultants and research or clerical assistants, have been so well recognized and fully experienced as to need no discussion here. We might note, however, that there has been a growing realization that the contribution they make and their satisfaction in working, may be greatly enhanced if plans for them include the application of the principles just discussed and some preparation for and orientation to their duties in the agency's program.

Wartime experience demonstrated anew that *carefully selected* volunteers may contribute to an agency's program through other assignments more directly related to services to clients. What they bring to the program, and what may result from their experience, constitute their potential, total contribution. Some of this may be similar to or the same as staff contribution, some may be vastly different; at any rate, it is *in addition* to what the staff contributes in the total program.

### WHAT THEY BRING TO THE PROGRAM

As individuals, and as community people, volunteers come to the agency equipped with personal attributes and with various kinds and degrees of knowledge, understanding and ability, resulting from life experience. This is stressed, for the competence of employed staff is mainly the result of professional education and experience, however much their performance may be enhanced by personal attributes, whereas the contribution of volunteers is more often determined by their personal qualities, life experience and community status.

The following personal qualities have been frequently mentioned as important elements volunteers can bring to an agency program. While they are valued in staff members, too, they seem to be more frequently and obviously manifest in volunteers. Several of them are the very qualities that may be considered "dangerous," in volunteer workers, until it is realized that they are so only when misdirected or uncontrolled.

Freshness and spontaneity.

Enthusiasm and eagerness to help.

Outgoing warmth and friendliness.

Freedom to be simple and natural in relationships with people.

An inquiring mind.

Resourcefulness and initiative.

*Life experience* for most volunteers has been different from that of professional social workers. The volunteers available for work in an agency have usually devoted most of their time and energy to areas other than social service; many of them have been absorbed in activities mainly related to their families, personal interests and obligations. Because of these various kinds of experiences, volunteers may bring much of value to the agency, though all volunteers will not have gained all of these benefits. Needless to say, staff members, too, may bring to their work similar fruits of personal life experience.

Contacts and relationships with a diversity of people on many and different bases.

Knowledge and information on many subjects.

A variety of skills and talents.

Security and stability in personal life.

The perspective of an outsider.

The point of view of a lay person.

*As community people*, many volunteers have a knowledge and understanding of the community that is broader and different from that of staff. Volunteers usually are more closely integrated into the community, more generally representative of it, and sometimes have easier access to various kinds of information and opinions. Local customs and resources are broadly familiar, local attitudes comprehensible to them.

#### WHAT THEY CAN DO IN THE PROGRAM

It is not necessary to list all of the things volunteers can do in all areas of social service, since reports of studies and projects in many fields of social work, and other written materials, are available through local and

national agencies,\* and include details pertinent to particular fields. Experience has indicated, however, some of the kinds of duties that volunteers can carry satisfactorily, in appropriate circumstances, and these, with some examples, may offer helpful suggestions.

While, in principle, the work of volunteers supplements that of the staff, it is nevertheless true that duties may be assigned to volunteers that would be performed by staff if volunteers were not available. It seems valid to repeat that all of these assignments should be made in accordance with the qualifications of the volunteers, and with the amount of staff time and skill available for adequate supervision and direction. Duties for volunteers can be classified most easily as direct and indirect service to the agency's constituency.

#### *Direct Service to Constituency*

*Information and direction.*

*Reception and appointment service.*

*Referral service.*

To another agency as an information service

To staff member in own agency

*Aide to case worker.*

In many agencies, specially qualified volunteers take assignments from staff to carry a segment of the case work plan under the direction of the worker responsible for the case.

*Specialized consultation.*

Family agencies may have lawyers who volunteer to advise with the worker or with the client on legal problems; others have committees of business men, or individuals, who may be consulted on business plans.

*Transportation service.*

Family and children's agencies often have volunteers who take patients to clinics, the handicapped to school or work.

*Social relationships.*

Some hospital social service departments have volunteers who visit

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\* "Volunteer Case Aides in Medical Social Service"—Livingston Press, Livingston, New York, 1946.

chronically ill or friendless patients in the hospital or at home; in other agencies, volunteers may provide a continuing friendly relationship for children who have had only a limited opportunity for normal contacts with adults.

#### *Shopping service.*

Some refugee services arrange for volunteers to shop with or for newcomers unaccustomed to American stores; other agencies may make similar plans for clients confined to home or an institution or for others inexperienced in such activities.

#### *Formal or informal teaching.*

Children's agencies may arrange for remedial reading lessons, given by specially trained volunteers, and for tutoring children.

### *Indirect Service to Constituency*

#### *Finding and inspecting rooms and apartments.*

Agencies that take responsibility for a housing service have found volunteers of inestimable value; other agencies have used the services of volunteers in locating housing for clients with special needs, for shut-ins or handicapped people.

#### *Home planning.*

Some family agencies have had volunteers who planned and shopped for minimum basic equipment for new households.

#### *Surveys related to clients' needs.*

A family agency has had a committee of volunteers who secure current local prices of basic commodities and make recommendations to the agency staff committee on relief budgets.

Volunteers in a youth agency made a study of the in-service training opportunities available in industry and their relation to vocational courses in local schools.

#### *Locating special resources.*

Volunteers have proved to be remarkably ingenious in locating unusual resources and in arranging for them to be made available to clients.

*Library work.*

Hospitals and some agencies have developed circulating libraries for patients and clients as a volunteer project.

*Acknowledgement of donations to the agency.*

*Compiling resource files and keeping them up to date.*

#### WHAT MAY RESULT FROM EXPERIENCE AS A VOLUNTEER

The kind of knowledge and degree of understanding volunteers acquire only through actual participation in the agency's services enable them to give dynamic interpretation and leadership to the community in relation to its social services. Community people are known to be more accepting of interpretation from an informed lay person who is one of their own members. Volunteers are usually more free than staff to interpret, to praise, or to criticize community programs.

Unfortunately, some agencies have enlisted volunteers with interpretation as the main, if not the only purpose. The work assigned in such agencies, therefore, is a means to an end, and not fully accepted as worthwhile or valid in itself. It is not surprising that volunteer programs based on such an approach are seldom successful. Experience has proved over and over again that volunteers cannot work well when they are not sure that what they are doing is of real service.

It seems evident that the contributions volunteers may make as a result of their work will vary in direct proportion to the breadth of experience the agency has provided for them. If that experience has included an opportunity to learn about the community's services in relation to human needs, as well as to perform specific duties, volunteers will be in a much better position to make meaningful contributions in the community.

These contributions will be made through the volunteers' own development and growth as informed and socially minded citizens, through their ability to educate other people in the community, and through their purposive activities directed toward strengthening the community's social service program.

*Areas of volunteers' own development and growth\**

"Increased information about local needs and resources and knowledge of what goes on in the community."

"Information about other parts of the country."

"New understanding of social problems, a changed attitude toward them, and an incentive to learn more about them."

"Knowledge about other people and how they live."

"Contacts with different people and different problems; realization of the difference in problems."

"Recognition and understanding of different points of view and backgrounds that help in the volunteers' personal relationships."

"Deeper understanding of people—developed ability to see their 'human' side."

"Skill in recognizing underlying problems—experience in organizing work and in self-discipline."

"Increased self-confidence and poise."

"Patience, tolerance and humility."

"A different perspective of life."

*Areas of social education in the community*

Basic and common human needs

Philosophy underlying social services

Generally accepted standards for a qualitative service, selection of staff, personnel practices and salaries

Services available in the community

Services needed but not available in the community

Local conditions causing or contributing to the need for services

*Areas of purposive activities in the community*

*Promoting* support of the agency's program

*Developing* or strengthening other necessary services and resources

*Encouraging* community planning on an over-all basis to meet needs

*Stimulating* full and appropriate use of community resources

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\* These are extracted from interviews with volunteers.

## Recruiting, Training and Supervising Volunteers

Communities differ in the degree to which their resources are organized and in their patterns of citizen participation. Therefore, the spread and degree of interest in volunteer work, experience in working in organized services, and attitudes toward training and supervision as part of volunteer responsibility vary. These community patterns must be considered in planning volunteer programs.

### *Recruiting*

Recruiting plans will vary so greatly in different communities and for different programs that it is practical to present only general suggestions based on the trial and error experience of the war years. First of all, plans must be based not only on the number and kinds of volunteers required, but in relation to the various sources of volunteers each community offers. Use of newspaper and radio channels has not been successful for recruiting except when large numbers of people were desired for more or less routine tasks. Such channels do not usually afford an adequate opportunity for full interpretation of the qualifications necessary for work in the social services, so that if they are used, the number of sifting interviews may become burdensome and a relatively large percentage of the people who respond may be rejected. Recruiting volunteers through existing community groups, and through individuals, has proved the most practical method for securing those qualified to work in the social services.

### *RECRUITING THROUGH GROUPS*

In addition to centralized volunteer services,\* organized community groups, both of men and of women, are a fruitful source of volunteers. They offer a channel for interpreting not only the need for volunteers, but also the agency's services. Usually, groups include in their programs

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\*"To have and to hold"—Community Chests and Councils, Inc.

some form of contribution to general community life, whatever their main purpose may be. Their members, by the very fact of belonging to an organization, show some experience and interest in joining or working with others in a common enterprise. It is important, however, that social agencies recruiting through these groups interpret carefully the need and the reasons for selecting volunteers individually.

### *RECRUITING THROUGH INDIVIDUALS*

While there are many values in recruiting through community groups, some social agencies have found that the volunteers recruited through individuals familiar with the agency, have given the most satisfactory service, particularly in assignments which involved contact with people. Perhaps this is due to the facts that they usually have some knowledge of the agency's function and service when they apply, and they have been approached about serving as volunteers because they are known to have appropriate qualifications. The agency's own board, committees and staff, including active or former volunteers, have proved to be the best sources for this kind of recruitment. In addition, members of other social agencies and community leaders related to all kinds of services and activities can often suggest or refer volunteers.

#### *Training and Supervision*

Training and supervision, inseparable in practice, are usually high on a staff list of the problems in volunteer participation.\* Some executives question whether the time required of staff would be justified by the contribution volunteers can make; many fear that volunteers would be so "resistant" to training and supervision that adequate assistance from staff would be impossible.

If these doubt were justified, professional people, and informed board members, would certainly agree that no attempt should be made to plan a volunteer program. It would be inconsistent with an agency's responsi-

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\* Training: Transmission of such pertinent knowledge and methods as have proved useful in carrying out specific kinds of responsibilities.

Supervision: A process by which a specially informed and skilled person works with another who is less well equipped, to promote the development of knowledge, understanding and skills and the person's integration and use of these in carrying out assignments, in order to insure a desirable quality in the service given.

bility to clients and community, and unfair to the volunteers concerned if they were assigned duties in the agency's service without enough preparation and professional guidance to facilitate effective performance. Study of volunteer programs of the war years disproves the validity of these doubts, under certain circumstances. For one thing, the initial step in planning for volunteers is to decide which, if any, of the agency's services do not require professional knowledge and skill. Recruiting and selecting volunteers is based on an analysis of the qualities and abilities required for the volunteer assignments *available and valuable* in the agency's total program. In other words, when the agency includes in its program and function a number of services that do not require professional skill, and can enlist qualified volunteers, it would seem that the amount of staff time required for training and supervision would not be greater in the long run than the time required for staff to provide these services themselves.

The study of Travelers Aid experience during the war years provides evidence on this point, for the executives and supervisors consulted on this question *without exception* agreed that the time required for training and supervision was justified by the amount and quality of service given by volunteers, in addition to the other benefits accruing from volunteer participation. All of the case workers interviewed preferred to work in an agency that had a volunteer program, since, with volunteers giving some of the services, staff was free to concentrate on duties which required their professional abilities.

The attitudes of volunteers toward training and supervision have also been studied, the findings in Travelers Aid corroborated by reports from agencies in other fields. All but one\* of the sixty-eight volunteers formally interviewed felt that training and supervision were essential for volunteers and hoped that more could be arranged when pressures had eased. Many of them commented that poorly prepared and executed training plans were a waste of time and were discouraging to volunteers as evidence that their work was not considered important enough to warrant thought and care on the part of staff. Good training, on the other hand, not only increased their effectiveness and self-confidence on the job, but also

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\* The exception had had many years of experience as a volunteer in administering relief for the Women's Auxiliary of a World War I veterans' group.

stimulated their interest in broad social problems and in further study and support of community services.

While a statistical study of these interviews was not attempted, it was noted that where training had been planned wisely, and supervision was readily available, the volunteers were thoroughly convinced of the value of this kind of help from staff and had definite ideas about desirable content.

*Training* must be planned in each agency in accordance with the assignments for volunteers, the qualifications of the volunteers available, and the agency's objectives in enlisting them. For example, the orientation for professional consultants will differ from the training for aides to case workers. An agency in need of wider community understanding and support of its policy and program may plan differently than one whose position and status are assured.

There has been ample demonstration that volunteers themselves can be very helpful to staff in training plans, after they have had some experience in the agency's program. For one thing, they often see more clearly than staff in what areas they need further training. As one volunteer said, "Many of the things volunteers need to learn and understand are so integrated in staff thinking that it is difficult for staff to remember that they are not generally familiar and understood." In addition, training is more acceptable to volunteers if some of their group have shared in planning it. This kind of participation stimulates thinking about the kind of help they need for their work, and increases their sense of responsibility to avail themselves of training opportunities, and to encourage other volunteers to do the same.

An outline of the general content and methods that have proved useful in training can form the basis for specific planning, though it is not intended that all of the following content and methods need be included in plans for all volunteers in all kinds of service. While the major part of training is usually carried by the agency staff, in many communities a part of a volunteer's initial training is given through inter-agency orientation courses. It is also quite customary for professional or lay people, not directly connected with the agency, to participate as lecturers or discussion leaders. These outside speakers add interest and stimulation, as well as special knowledge and skill.

## PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

### *Orientation to social services in the community*

*Philosophy and brief history of social service*

*Structure of local community services*

Planning group—e.g. Council of Social Agencies

Financial support—public, private, chest or other central group, individuals

Boards and committees

Staffs—regular and consulting

*Division of responsibility among local agencies*

Functions and services

Coordination and relationships

Inter-agency study and planning committees

Referral procedures

Cooperative care

### *Orientation to the agency*

*Program*

*Plan of operation*

Source of funds

Board and committee activities

Staff—qualifications, responsibilities

Hours of service

Intake policies

Relation to other agencies

*Role of the volunteers*

General plan for volunteer program

Available assignments

Significance of volunteer assignments in total program

Responsibilities of volunteers

To clients

- To the agency, staff and board
- To other volunteers
- To the community
- Methods and procedures for volunteers
- Keeping scheduled assignment
- Sharing in training and supervision

*Staff and volunteer relationships*

- Differences in assignments
- Mutual responsibilities
- Supervisory plan

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

*Trends and developments*

- Client needs
- Agency planning
- Community services
- Welfare laws and policies
- Local and national attitudes on social questions

*Areas of interpretation of social services*

- Basic human needs
- Meaning and purpose of behavior
- Social and economic factors affecting human beings
- Social work aims and methods
- Content and scope of professional social work training
- Basis for standards of personnel and practice
- Relationship of social services to other fields
  - Sociology
  - Psychology
  - Medicine
  - Politics
  - Industry
  - Social economics

*Details for volunteer assignments*

Change or increases in duties

Shifts in procedures

TRAINING METHODS

*Class instruction*

Lecture

Panel

Use of visual aids such as movies and skits

*Discussion groups*

Volunteers

Volunteers and staff

*Attendance at other meetings*

Agency board and committees

Councils of social agencies

Public meetings of various kinds

*Field visits*

Other agencies, courts, institutions

Slum areas

Public play grounds, recreation centers

*Individual instruction*

*Selected reading materials*

*Supervision* of volunteers serves a dual purpose in protecting the agency's responsibility to clients and community, and in enabling volunteers to develop and use abilities and skills valuable in the performance of their duties. Supervision may be carried on both formally and informally, by one or more of the staff, or sometimes also by experienced and competent volunteers. While it is always desirable for volunteers to have contacts with as many of the staff as possible, and to be free to turn to any one of them for immediate help or advice, it has proved necessary for each volunteer to have one specific staff member designated as her supervisor, to whom she is responsible. This supervisor must be accessible for planned discussion of any questions and problems the volunteer may have, and,

at the same time be responsible for the volunteer's development and growth. Necessarily, supervisors and other staff working with volunteers will need special qualities: full acceptance of volunteers as people and co-workers; confidence in the volunteer's ability; security in the supervisory role; ability to inspire self-reliance. Some social workers, unaccustomed to supervising volunteers, may need help in adapting their understanding and skills. In supervising volunteers, workers accept additional responsibilities and, at the same time, acquire new skills.

#### *Purpose of supervision*

- Adaptation of the volunteer's own equipment
  - Former knowledge and experience
  - Special skills and interests
  - Personal qualities
- Integration of experience in the agency
  - Pre-service training
  - In-service training
  - Work assignments

#### *Content of supervision*

- Consultation on specific situations encountered in the course of assignment
- Conferring on methods and techniques appropriate to assignment
- Evaluation of performance in relation to level of development
- Planning change or increase in responsibility

#### *Basis for supervision*

- Knowledge of performance secured through recording and observation
  - Situations presented to volunteer
  - Handling of situations by volunteer
  - Result of volunteer's work
- Knowledge of volunteer's equipment and capacity for growth

#### *Methods of supervision*

- Group conference
- Individual conference
- Cooperation "on the job"

## Volunteers in Travelers Aid

The conviction that volunteers have a place in the program has been voiced by the Travelers Aid field in many ways. The formal actions and recommendations adopted at the 1946 Executives' Council and Biennial Convention meetings,\* the replies to a questionnaire submitted to twenty-

### \* Executives' Council

"The casework services of Travelers Aid are in greater demand than ever and require more and better trained staff. As the program shifts from war to peacetime, there will be fewer tasks which can be appropriately handled by volunteers. This creates a problem of analyzing carefully the use which can be made of the thousands of fine volunteers who, during the war years, developed a loyalty to Travelers Aid and a sympathetic understanding of moving people. They form a reservoir of community support and interest which should be maintained by continued participation in some phase of the agency's program."

### Biennial Convention

#### Board Members Council

"Resolved to resume or continue the use of qualified volunteers properly trained and adequately supervised."

#### Workshop Resolutions

Workshop I—What services within the function of Travelers Aid should be re-examined?

*Information and direction*—"It was affirmed that information and direction is an appropriate part of Travelers Aid function. However, in order to make effective use of professional staff, the volunteer staff can and should be trained to handle the major volume of information services."

*Housing*—" . . . It is a real source of under care cases and we must continue to recruit and train volunteers for this service. . . ."

Workshop II—In view of the present personnel situation, how can a Travelers Aid Society meet the needs for adequate staff?

"That the service of volunteers is essential and can be made more effective by:

Careful selection of volunteers

Outlining duties for volunteers' positions, clarifying areas of responsibility related to the total program

Adequate staff supervision

An over-all training program

Workshop III—What are the problems in budget and financing Travelers Aid in the reconversion period?

"It is the executive's responsibility to see that staff, both paid and volunteer, and boards, are kept informed of trends and needs, both national and local, so that each shares responsibility."

Workshop V—What are the purposes and values of cooperative relationship between National Travelers Aid Association and other national agencies?

"Legislative information should be continued from National Travelers Aid. The local Executive should take responsibility for getting such information to her board, staff and volunteers in order that they may be active in backing Federal or State legislation which affects our local program. Example—Uniform Residence Laws."

two Societies, and regular statistical and narrative reports, give ample testimony. Realization of the time and skill required of board and staff for effective volunteer service has been similarly evidenced. These are our "warrants" for compiling and analyzing past experience and current practice in the field for the use of Societies planning for and working with volunteers.

Travelers Aid was one of six national agencies participating in a study\* sponsored by the Volunteer Committee of the Social Casework Council of The National Social Welfare Assembly. While complete summaries of the study will be generally available to the field, two parts of it are pertinent for inclusion here:

1) All twenty-two of the Travelers Aid Societies used as sources for the study, believed that the services given by volunteers in Travelers Aid warranted the staff time invested. There were several comments on the importance of establishing a balanced ratio between the number of volunteers and the staff time available for work with them.

2) All twenty-two Societies planned to continue volunteer services as part of their regular program, in assignments other than board and committee membership.

Of these, *twenty* plan to assign volunteers to information services; of the other two, one plans to assign volunteers only as aides in travel service, one only to "special projects that supplement the work of the agency." In addition to information services, eight of the twenty will also assign volunteers as aides in travel service, eight will have volunteers as case aides, four will use their services in "social relationships," three will assign them to special projects.

It is generally agreed that in most Societies there are segments of Travelers Aid services that can be given by qualified volunteers under present conditions. It is equally apparent that Societies are planning to use accumulated experience, knowledge and skills in working with volunteers to insure that service to clients will be as effective and complete as possible.

The structure and function of Travelers Aid must be considered when

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\* 1946-1947—A Report of this study is being prepared and will be distributed through the National Agencies represented on the Social Case Work Council of the National Social Welfare Assembly.

applying the basic principles and methods of volunteer participation to that particular field. The hours when Travelers Aid services are needed, the "intake points" or places of operation in relation to load and staff, the special needs and problems of moving people, the scope of Travelers Aid services, general and local attitudes toward non-residents and provisions for their needs, all affect planning a volunteer program. Most Travelers Aid people think that because of these special factors, Travelers Aid has a unique opportunity to work with volunteers; a few think that these factors make it more than usually difficult, if not impossible, to maintain high standards of service, and full use of available services, if volunteers share in the program. *Each Society's board and staff must decide whether or not, under the conditions existing in their particular city, it would be sound practice to use the services of volunteers.* There are many indications that staff and board members who have never shared in a volunteer program, or whose experience has been in a hastily or unskillfully planned one, are apt to give greater weight to the risks and problems involved than to the gains that may be expected, while those who have had personal experience in a well planned and executed volunteer program are convinced of its value. The experience during the war years in applying basic principles and methods in the Travelers Aid field, therefore, forms not only a sound basis for future planning, but will also prove helpful to board and staff members who are deliberating about the role that volunteers may be able to play in their particular Societies. These basic principles and methods are equally applicable whatever the size of the volunteer group may be. The way in which they are adapted in any particular Society will, of course, vary.

### *Basic Principles of Volunteer Participation in Travelers Aid*

#### STAFF AND BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Initial planning in Travelers Aid must include consideration of what part of the service can be given by volunteers, and what points of operation and during what hours of coverage services requested include those that volunteers can give. In other words, it must be decided whether or not a given information desk is always, or at certain periods, *mainly* an intake point for cases, or whether it is always, or at certain periods, *mainly*

approached for information and direction, with referrals to the staff incidental to this part of Travelers Aid function.

As an example, of the diversity of loads at Travelers Aid desks, one Society has found that during the last six months or so, irrespective of the initial question or request, almost all applicants coming to the desk in the terminal presented problems requiring case work service. Other Societies find that the vast majority of requests at terminal desks, whether staff or volunteers are on duty, are for information and direction services. There have been reports of the same kind and degree of variation between different intake points and different time periods in the same city. Variations are due to such factors as whether a particular terminal is a transfer or destination point, the main "gate" to the city, or whether the city offers such attractions as large industries, a health center, or tourist resort. In order to evaluate the load at intake points, it is necessary to assign experienced staff at regular intervals.

The volume of services likely to be requested during different periods is also important here, for with some exceptions, volunteers feel that the time they give must be used, and are likely to become discouraged and bored if they are busy for only a small part of their period of duty. It is usually possible, however, to schedule at those periods volunteers who appreciate the importance of consistent coverage, and the value of service to people they benefit, even when these services are few in number.

The accessibility of staff to take referrals and to give supervision when volunteers need it is another determining factor in general planning for volunteer assignments.

#### *SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS IN TRAVELERS AID*

Just as staff members should have, or be able to develop, special skills in order to work effectively in Travelers Aid, so must volunteers have special qualifications in addition to those listed earlier. Most of the assignments in Travelers Aid require that volunteers be able to work regularly, frequently, and for, at the very least, a six-month period. For many reasons, age is also a factor, the range from twenty-five to fifty most desirable. It is important for staff and volunteers alike to be clear from the very be-

ginning about these special requirements and the reasons for them, so that failure and disappointment may be avoided.

*Personal qualities*

Maturity  
Stability  
Poise

*Knowledge of the community*

Transportation system  
Other resources

*Positive attitude to newcomers and strangers*

Acceptance of an individual's freedom to move about the country as a principle of democracy  
Sincere welcome to strangers in the community  
Desire to help those in trouble away from home  
Ability to understand the special needs, reactions and problems of people separated from their own normal resources

*Ability to adjust to conditions in the commercial setting of a terminal*

Physical aspects, such as limited privacy, confusion, noise, crowding  
Psychological aspects, such as time limitations, atmosphere of hurry and excitement

*Ability to develop skills specially important in Travelers Aid*

Convey readiness to help  
Show warmth and friendliness  
Relate quickly to strangers  
Work quickly but calmly under pressure  
Avoid taking over applicant's feeling of urgency  
Help applicant to evaluate and handle time pressures  
Sense "feeling tone" of clients  
Recognize problem underlying request  
Notice discrepancies  
Interpret and effect referral to staff  
Accept refusal of referral to staff without defensiveness

While the personal elements affecting staff and volunteer relationships are the same in Travelers Aid as in other fields, a few aspects characteristic of Travelers Aid need consideration. One of the main factors here is the wide knowledge of community resources volunteers usually have and which case workers, if they are new in the agency and community, have not yet acquired. In addition, after considerable experience at information and direction desks, volunteers become so familiar with practice and routines that they tend to become possessive and may resist staff supervision.

### *Services Volunteers Can Contribute in Travelers Aid*

The innumerable special projects and assignments that can be carried by volunteers in Travelers Aid seem to be limited only by the individual and general needs of constituents locally, and the imagination and ingenuity of staff and volunteers. In the three main areas of service, generally accepted as appropriate for regular volunteer participation, assigning duties to volunteers is based both on a reasonable confidence that the services required are within the volunteer's capacity and area of responsibility, and on the certainty that staff is available when complications arise. For example, while qualified volunteers can give information and direction services per se, staff must be at hand to give other services that may be needed by the same people at the same time.

Volunteers may sometimes participate in travel service through such specific duties as actually meeting some clients or placing them en route; in other words, some of the concrete activities that are part of travel service can sometimes be appropriately assigned to volunteers. However, the *interviewing, decision to accept or reject, and planning* that are essential to sound practice in this area of Travelers Aid service are *specifically the responsibility of professional staff.*

As aides to case workers, volunteers may carry out a segment of the plan worked out by the case worker and the client; for example, taking care of a child so that the mother can be free to have an uninterrupted interview with the worker, a period of rest, or time to carry out the plans agreed upon with the worker. In all of these, as well as in any other assignments given to volunteers, it must be remembered that the *final responsibility for the agencies' service to clients rests with the professional staff.*

## INFORMATION AND DIRECTION SERVICE

Most Travelers Aid staff members agree that volunteers can give information and direction service efficiently and with satisfaction. One of the reasons for this is the volunteers' knowledge of the community; another is their enjoyment of this particular assignment.

\* "Volunteer has an enthusiasm for the community which she can spontaneously transmit to the applicant . . . stranger may feel more welcome." (Case Worker)

"Volunteers can do many things because of their knowledge and concentration on a limited assignment." (Travelers Aid Executive)

"Volunteers feel challenge of requests that come to information and direction desks and enjoy the opportunity to use their ingenuity and initiative . . . having staff on hand for things volunteers cannot do." (Experienced Volunteer)

### *On Duty with Staff at the Same Location*

There is general agreement that the ideal plan is to have a staff member and a volunteer working together, where volume of service warrants it. In this arrangement, the volunteer can give information and direction services, while the staff member at a desk a few feet away can take care of case work services. This proximity gives the case worker an opportunity to supervise the volunteer closely, by giving help when needed and through observing and evaluating the volunteer's performance, and to pick up on any opportunities for service that the volunteer may have missed. Volunteers have found that this system offers them an opportunity to learn something of what the case worker does and how she goes about it, through observation and interpretation by staff on the spot, knowledge that not only helps them in the discharge of their own duties, especially referrals to staff, but increases their understanding of the total Travelers Aid program and of case work as a helping method. Both staff and volunteers who have worked in this manner have found it highly satisfactory in sharpening the division of responsibility between staff and volunteers, and in insuring that all of the agency's services are readily available to clients.

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\* Quoted from interviews.

### *Working Alone when Staff is on Duty Elsewhere*

In almost all Societies, at least at some periods, volunteers may be on duty alone, with staff *on duty* elsewhere. Various methods or controls, in addition to special selection and training of the volunteers who are to work alone, have been developed to insure adequate service under these circumstances.

*Criteria* for assigning volunteers to a shift on duty alone, on a planned basis rather than expediency only, would include first of all a reasonable certainty that the number of cases that could be expected during that period would be too small to warrant assigning a staff member to duty at that point, and that the number of requests for information and direction services would warrant coverage. The criteria for selecting volunteers to be assigned to duty alone would include experience and self-confidence in giving information and direction services, clear understanding and acceptance of the division of responsibility between staff and volunteers, and skill both in recognizing situations requiring case work handling and in referring them to the staff.

Various methods have proved successful in checking on the validity of the decision to assign volunteers alone at the information desk with staff on duty nearby. Occasional but regularly scheduled coverage of shifts by staff can confirm the volunteers' reports of the kinds of services usually needed at that time. A brief visit by a staff member for part of each shift to talk with the volunteers about the kinds of requests they are having has also proved valuable in determining the range of services usually requested at that time, and in giving volunteers supervisory help while they are on duty. Some Societies have experimented with narrative recording by the volunteers, of all or some of the applications, which has not only served as a record of the situations presented, but has sharpened the volunteers' observations and awareness of possible underlying problems.

Assurance that the case work staff is really accessible is important if volunteers are to have confidence in asking for help in their own area of responsibility or in referring clients to the staff. Certain physical arrangements are part of this: telephone contact that is easily established; clear and well planned procedures for referral; perhaps most important of all, attitudes on the part of staff that reflect their readiness to give volunteers

whatever help they may need, as well as to take over what is beyond the volunteer's responsibility. A telephone call from the staff worker on duty to the volunteer as she takes over a shift has proved a helpful practice, both in reminding the volunteer that the staff is at hand and in fostering a close working relationship.

There is considerable difference of opinion about whether volunteers should ever be on duty when staff is off duty and "on call" only, and therefore not readily available for supervision or to take referrals. The conflict here seems to be mainly between two points of view. Most staff members think that it is not sound to expect volunteers to perform their duties without readily available help from staff, nor to ask them to handle the pressures from clients whose needs require the attention of staff workers; others think it is better to offer some help to travelers, even if the full range of Travelers Aid services is not immediately available. Discussion of the validity of these two points of view is beyond the scope of this material. It is clear, however, that there is complete agreement in the field that only volunteers of proved *ability* and *stability* should ever be assigned to duty when the staff is only on call.

#### TRAVEL SERVICE

As pointed out earlier, only some of the Societies consider it good practice to assign any responsibility in travel service to volunteers. It is equally clear that careful selection of cases, as well as of volunteers, and well established controls, are considered essential factors. While emergencies and expediency may sometimes necessitate variation in practice, there is general agreement in principle that *volunteers can carry only a segment of travel service, and even then, only under certain conditions.* The actual meeting or placing en route, and the sending of wires as prepared by a case worker, are all that volunteers are expected to do, the case worker carrying the rest of the service. The personality, condition and problem of the client are also considered in determining whether or not a volunteer can carry even part of the service. Emotionally or mentally disturbed people, very ill clients and runaway children are usually cared for only by staff. It seems clear that such a *decision can be made only when the intake interview has produced adequate and pertinent information and a working diagnosis.* As an extra precaution, volunteers are asked to make

a full verbal report to a staff member, or to record directly their activities in travel service cases.

### *AIDES TO CASE WORKERS*

As aides to staff members, volunteers have given both direct and indirect service to Travelers Aid clients. In both kinds of service, the activity of the volunteer is part of the plan worked out by the staff member with the client, and is directed by the staff member responsible for the case. Purchasing tickets, arranging for baggage and shopping errands for clients unable to do these things themselves, are examples of the indirect services volunteers can give that supplement the worker's activity in the case. Accompanying clients while they make these or other arrangements, and staying with an anxious or worried client who has a long wait, are examples of direct service to clients. As in travel service, volunteers are expected to report verbally or to record their work as aides to the staff.

In any assignments that involve contact with clients, volunteers may meet situations that require referral to the staff. It is in this area that staff is most likely to question the competence of volunteers. Skill in referring those applicants who request services or mention problems that clearly fall within the responsibility of a staff worker is not questioned. However, the ability to recognize the presence of problems that are not expressed cannot be taken for granted.

It is interesting that several executives and supervisors have commented that recognizing underlying problems is a highly specialized skill not found to an equal degree in all staff members. The fact that Travelers Aid staff members are convinced that volunteers have a place in the program is evidence of their confidence that qualified volunteers can develop an adequate degree of this skill, though they need more help from staff in this area than in others. Training and supervision in relation to referrals are of primary importance. The difference between the responsibilities of volunteers and staff, and the reasons for that difference, must be constantly emphasized. Volunteers, as well as staff, have testified that they are more certain and more skillful in making referrals when they really understand what situations only staff members are expected to handle and why this is so.

"Reporting back" on referrals from volunteers has been recognized by all concerned as a major factor in developing effective referral practice. The report back is not only part of a staff worker's professional responsibility, but is a useful method of clarifying the role of the staff worker, of helping volunteers to evaluate and develop skill in recognizing and referring cases, and of pointing up their participation as co-workers. The reluctance of some staff workers to share some information about clients with volunteers has been recognized as stemming partly from an exaggerated anxiety about keeping confidential *all* information about clients, partly from lack of confidence in their own skill in interpreting the decisions that were made, and partly from a resistance to accept volunteers as co-workers. Actually, some information can be given about case situations without violating the client's confidence. Interviews with volunteers, and reports of the kinds of questions volunteers ask about cases when they feel free to do so, all indicate that the volunteers' main interest is in doing their part in providing help for people who need it. Volunteers are not interested in the client's identity, the details of his problem, or the techniques used in helping him. They usually want to know what was troubling the client, whether he was able to get help with his problem, from Travelers Aid or elsewhere, if not why it was impossible, and whether they were right in referring the client to the staff.

### *Training Volunteers in Travelers Aid*

The content of pre-service and in-service training programs need not be very different. Basic information, routines and procedures may need to be repeated and more fully explained, while other pertinent material can be amplified and more completely interpreted as the volunteers grow more familiar with their duties and responsibilities. As one volunteer expressed it, "We need to be reminded." Sometimes it seems best to cover a great deal of material before volunteers are ever on duty; sometimes it is desirable to delay most of the formal training until they have had some experience. At any rate, it seems evident that volunteers cannot be *prepared* for their duties until they have acquired a certain amount of pertinent information and orientation, nor can they be expected to develop and improve their skills without the help that training and supervision

provide. In addition, their value in community education and interpretation, and in active support of agency and other community services, will depend on the opportunities they are given for accurate information and sound understanding.

### *PRE-SERVICE TRAINING*

#### *What it means to be a stranger*

- Special needs of travelers and newcomers
- Reactions and attitudes of people who are separated from their normal and familiar resources
- Community attitudes toward strangers

#### *History of Travelers Aid*

- Genesis and growth
- Relation of development to changes in the local, national and international scene, such as immigration, war periods, industrial growth

#### *Present function and services in Travelers Aid*

- Program of local Society
- Chain of service
- Program of National Travelers Aid Association

#### *Other services and resources for moving people*

- Available in community
- Lacking in community
- Available in other communities

#### *Coordination of Travelers Aid with other services to moving people*

- In own community
- In other communities
- On a national level

#### *Elements of the volunteer program in the local Society*

- Specific assignments
- Scope and limits of volunteer's responsibility
- Place of volunteer assignments in total agency program
- Established methods and procedures

Resources available for volunteers—reference materials, training, supervision

### *Referrals*

Criteria for referring clients to staff

Reasons for referring to staff

skills required

services *only* staff prepared to give

relation to agency standards, responsibility and cooperative agreements with other agencies

Methods of referring

procedures

interpretation to clients

Value of referral as real service

## IN-SERVICE TRAINING

### *Trends and developments affecting Travelers Aid*

Current causes of travel and migration

What people are traveling

What they need

Shifting attitudes toward movement of people

locally

nationally

Current services and resources for moving people

residence laws

public welfare policies and practices

voluntary agency resources

influence on Travelers Aid program, services and budget

### *Changes in volunteer program*

Shifts in procedures or routines

New assignments

Adjustments in supervisory plan

## TRAINING METHODS

While all of the methods previously outlined have been used success-

fully in Travelers Aid, "observation" seems particularly adaptable for volunteers assigned to work at information desks. It is customary for a new volunteer to work with a more experienced one, or a staff member, at least the first time on duty. Often this process continues through several periods before the volunteer carries responsibility for the information services by herself. Sometimes this training at the desk is the major part of a volunteer's preparation for duty, though this has not proved fully successful unless it was followed by more formal, planned training opportunities.

### *Special Aspects of Supervision in Travelers Aid*

Supervision of volunteers in Travelers Aid has the same purpose, content, basis, and many of the problems of current concern to all social agencies in relation to their responsibility for supervision of staff. In addition to the problems that complicate the supervisory process in the Travelers Aid field, there are difficulties connected with the kinds of assignments volunteers carry in Travelers Aid. The most skillful supervisor in the world, with unlimited time available, cannot *supervise* any worker without knowing *what the client needed, what was done about it and how it was done*, all in relation to the worker's equipment, level of development and capacity for growth. The main problem in Travelers Aid is the difficulty the supervisor encounters in acquiring enough information to form a basis for effective supervision.

One of the problems in supervising volunteer work at information desks is the fact that the only record kept routinely is a statistical count of services rendered. This statistical record may occasionally be supplemented by a brief description of situations that interested the worker on duty. Such supplementation has not ordinarily been required and, therefore, is available only when the worker had the inclination and the time to include it. This has been an acceptable method when staff workers were on duty, since it was taken for granted that staff would recognize and deal with situations requiring service in addition to information. It has not been adequate, however, as a record when volunteers were on duty, since it provided no means of knowing what additional services might have been needed, and requested or offered, under more propitious circumstances of time, pressure and the attitude and skill of the worker.

Several ways of securing more data about what transpired when volunteers were on duty have been tried successfully. Narrative recording by volunteers of all or part of what happened during a shift, the observations and evaluations of staff members working with volunteers at the desk, and of staff members visiting desks for part of each shift, have all added to the knowledge on which supervision of this part of Travelers Aid service can be based. Reports and recording of other kinds of volunteer assignments have been similarly used.

This knowledge of performance is also useful in evaluation, in planning changes or increases in responsibility, such as promotion from information and direction service to case aide, in transfer to another agency, or in dismissal of a volunteer.

There are many practical problems in planning supervision for Travelers Aid volunteers. The hours when Travelers Aid Service is available, and the number of points of operation, usually preclude having the total staff on duty at the same place at the same time. Group supervision, and other meetings of volunteers, therefore, must be arranged at a time in addition to their periods of duty.

Staff schedules usually rotate, while volunteers almost always work the same time and day each week, both facts which must be considered in planning for *individual conferences* in supervision of volunteers. Pressure and limited privacy at information and direction desks may restrict the amount and kind of supervision that can be given *while the volunteers are on duty*. The very fact that there are so many difficulties in supervising volunteers in Travelers Aid, makes it absolutely essential to plan supervisory schedules carefully, and to adhere to those schedules. Only in this way can volunteers carry their assignments effectively, and the agency discharge its responsibility for service to clients.

The assignment or division of responsibility for supervision is an essential first step, and includes the selection of one staff member responsible for supervision, though two or more may be needed for each group of volunteers, if there is a large number. This responsibility is mainly for *individual conferences*, on a planned basis and as needed; in other words, to provide every volunteer with one person to whom she is responsible and who she knows is there to help. Leadership in *group*

*supervisory conferences* and *other meetings* may be assigned to one, to several, or to all of the staff. Often it is desirable for some staff members to attend meetings along with volunteers. Assistance to volunteers *while they are on duty*, is a responsibility of the staff members who are on duty at the same time, whenever the volunteer's supervisor is not available.

While there may seem to be many disadvantages in spreading responsibility for volunteers among so many of the staff, it has a decided advantage in fostering good working relationships between staff and volunteers, and in developing cohesive group feelings and loyalties among employed workers and volunteers as a total staff.

#### IN CONCLUSION:

The time and thought required for a sound volunteer program in Travelers Aid may seem overwhelming. The willingness of volunteers to accept as much help from the staff as the service requires may be questioned. There may be scepticism of whether the investment of time by staff and volunteers will pay proportionate dividends. The following excerpt from a report of the development of one of our new Travelers Aid Societies provides an answer to these questions.

"We did not at any time have a large volunteer group. We used them mostly in our small office in the Ferry Terminal, and it was not convenient to use more than one at a time. We had, as a rule, an average of sixteen or twenty who were active each month. Before assigning them to their particular job, each volunteer had an interview with one of the workers, then she attended two two-hour training classes. At that point, she was assigned to work with one of the experienced volunteers or with a staff member for two days. Following that, she was given her own assignment and was responsible for the Ferry Terminal Office for a period of two or two and a half hours each week. Since April of 1944, we have held a volunteer staff meeting each month. The fact that the attendance was almost always one hundred percent is in itself a demonstration of the need which these meetings met in the lives of the volunteers. We discussed our services, ways of improving our services, problems that the volunteers had met, how they had met their problems, what help they felt they needed, techniques in deal-

ing with people, and services of other agencies. Throughout the entire training we tried to convey to them some of the basic philosophies of case work. Through our monthly meetings the volunteers became acquainted with each other and had an opportunity to exchange experiences. The entire professional staff participated in the meetings so that the volunteers also got to know what the professional staff did that the volunteers could not do. Therefore, there has never been any hesitancy in making referrals to the staff members, nor did the volunteers have a feeling of insecurity with us. Some of them are taking on responsibilities for community leadership and most of them have been active in the recent Chest campaign."