

TRAINING COORDINATORS OF VOLUNTEER SERVICES AT NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

by
MARVIN S. ARFFA

Volunteer participation in the care, treatment and rehabilitation of persons affected by a variety of afflictions ranging from cancer, to mental illness, to poverty, is an increasingly important facet in the organization of services in medical, psychiatric, educational and community settings throughout the nation. Particularly important is the expanding idea of using volunteers in more professional or semi-professional tasks, relieving the health and welfare manpower shortage and the burdens of understaffing. The role of the volunteer is constantly changing and expanding. Volunteers have extended their experience to new concepts of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in the community as well as within the hospitals.

This expansion of volunteer services has placed the coordinator of volunteer services in all settings in the position of having to establish more sophisticated recruitment, selection, orientation, training and assignment procedures which were not as necessary in dealing with the limited functions of volunteers in the past. As a result of this pressure and their feeling of being undertrained for their role, more and more coordinators voice their need for additional and continuing education. As more agencies create additional positions for coordinators, the demand for entry training will increase rapidly.

The need to provide better knowledge, understanding and improvement of technical and professional skills in accordance with the responsibilities of a coordinator of volunteer services is documented in the report of a planning conference, co-sponsored by NIMH, on "The Development of Standards and Training Curriculum for Volunteer Services Coordinators" held in Washington, D. C., 1963. The opening statement of this report states: "During the past years there has been tremendous growth in the area of volunteer services, not only in state hospitals for the mentally ill and mentally retarded, but in community psychiatric facilities and programs as well. This has meant that increasing numbers of people are being employed as volunteer services coordinators, bringing to their job a variety of backgrounds and experience— but very little specialized training to equip them to handle the numerous responsibilities involved in this particular position. These individuals recognize their lack of preparation and are requesting assistance. The American Association of Volunteer Services Coordinators (AAVSC) feels that the development of a training curriculum to more adequately prepare volunteer services coordinators for their job will, in turn, affect the quality of programs and services."

On May 11-12, 1967 Northeastern University in cooperation with AAVSC and the Division of Mental Retardation of Public Health Serv-

ice held a workshop in Boston, Massachusetts to explore further the implications of specific educational programs for coordinators. In the Foreword of the Proceedings, Dr. Robert Jaslow stated:

"The field of volunteers has assumed increasing importance during the past ten years for a number of reasons . . . The utilization of the volunteers according to their particular skills has been enhanced and brought about primarily through the development of the Volunteer Coordinators. Their ability to place volunteers appropriately, conduct proper orientations, handle problems with staff, and prepare staff for working with volunteers has been vital in the increased use of volunteers.

Another extremely important value of Volunteer Coordinators is the use of the volunteer group as a recruiting mechanism, both for the young high school student as well as for the housewife who may or may not have had previous training. The numbers who go on into the service field from the volunteer groups are not inconsiderable and is a frequently overlooked advantage of a volunteer program.

Throughout this entire discussion it should be understood that much of this has been accomplished by the Volunteer Coordinators. The training of people to do this will improve both the quality and quantity of the volunteer movement in a particular institution both in regard to public relations, counseling of the individual, utilization and stimulation of the volunteers. Since the volunteers are not a paid group their rise and fall depends considerably on the Volunteer Coordinator. The difficulties of keeping and stimulating a volunteer group are considerable and in many situations a volunteer program is only saved by the large population group it can draw upon. Therefore, the need for an astute, well-trained coordinator of this group becomes apparent. As in every other case, it is much easier to destroy than to build and maintain and by now we should have developed enough experience to be able to learn what type of training is required and what are the qualities that are worthwhile for the role of Volunteer Coordinator to enable us to develop effective training programs."

In a memorandum to all State agencies administering Social and Rehabilitation Service programs, former Administrator Mary E. Switzer noted that the major objectives of the volunteer program are: "(1) to assist the consumers of services and volunteers to participate on advisory committees so that the Agency's program and policies may be responsive to the needs of the persons it serves, (2) to open channels so that the young and old, the poor and well-to-do, men and women, the housewife and the professional may supplement and complement the agency's work in the planning, administration and delivery of health, social and rehabilitation services as volunteers, (3) to open opportunity to the middle-class for involvement in the problems of poverty, and the agency's effort to cope with them, and (4) to assist staff members, particularly "new careers" personnel, in career planning and work adjustment.

These observations, combined with the establishment of the Office of Citizen Participation under the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the Citizen Participation division of the Model Cities program, the Citizen Participation Branch of NIMH, and the passage of Public Law 90-248, a Social Security Amendment of 1967, Section 210, charging states to include volunteer programs in state plans, document the trend and importance of establishing leadership patterns for volunteer programs. In summary, the rationale for a major training program in the Coordination of Volunteer programs is based on the following facts:

1. Authorities in the field have indicated that the need is great and there is no such major training program in any university in the country.
2. Busy coordinators, because of the heavy burdens of their administrative responsibilities, do not have the opportunity to keep up with the changes in the areas of mental health or administrative practice.
3. Because of the impact of the community mental health programs and other developments in the field, there is an expanding need for specially trained administrators in the many rehabilitation facilities developing new volunteer programs.

The Center for Continuing Education at Northeastern University has pioneered a basic workshop program on the administration of volunteer programs; established the first national periodical publication devoted to the topic; has developed educational programs in cooperation with the Massachusetts and New England Association of Directors of Volunteer Services; and has actively participated on the Continuing Education Committee of AAVSC.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The proposed training program at Northeastern University consists of trainees selected according to the following eligibility requirements:

1. Each applicant must have earned a baccalaureate degree, preferably with a major in one of the behavioral or social sciences.
2. A trainee must be a citizen of the United States currently employed or intending to be employed as a Coordinator or Director of Volunteer Services in mental health setting.
3. Each employed trainee must be recommended by his employing agency and be released by his employer from regular duties so that the trainee can devote full time to study during the period of the course.

For the purposes of this program, the term "coordinator of volunteer services" is defined as any paid person who performs highly responsible administrative work in planning, developing, integrating, and coordinating volunteers from all socio-economic segments of the community.

The purpose of the training program is to provide a graduate entry

level curriculum for coordinators of volunteer services in all mental health settings that use volunteers, providing them with consistent, systematic training designed to improve their knowledge, creativity and effectiveness and thereby improving the volunteer services which they supervise.

Since administration involves getting work done through others, a major portion of the coordinator's time and effort is devoted to dealing with people. Knowledge and skill in dealing with others then becomes a prime requisite of effective managerial performance. The ability of the coordinator to develop and maintain a healthy, dynamic and productive organization will depend largely on the extent to which he understands human behavior and learns to apply sound principles and practices in his dealings with others in the organization.

This knowledge and skill is something that some people come by naturally—but, in many cases, they are unprepared by either training or experiences to handle effectively this extremely important and demanding aspect of their responsibilities. This kind of knowledge and skill needs to be taught, learned and practiced if the agency is to be assured of the effective utilization of its human resources and of achieving its objectives through the combined efforts, imagination, initiative, cooperation and creative contribution of its people.

The program is generally designed to help participants to:

1. Gain a better understanding of the concepts and principles governing the functioning of the organization and the behavior of both managers and those whose work is being managed.
2. Develop an understanding of the essential processes and skills required for applying these principles and communicating effectively with those to whom they report, those who report to them, and others in the organization with whom they must maintain working relationships.
3. Learn how these principles and skills can be applied in dealing effectively with the human situations encountered in every organization, so as to insure the full utilization of all its resources toward the purposeful, efficient and profitable achievement of its objectives.
4. Gain experience in applying these skills in specific situations encountered in their working relationships so as to:
 - a. Develop common understanding and support of agency objectives, policies and plans.
 - b. Stimulate individual and group effort, acceptance of responsibility, creativity, contribution and teamwork.
 - c. Constructively resolve conflicts and difficulties.
 - d. Develop and maintain a cooperative, dynamic and productive working climate based on mutual understanding and confidence.

Specific objectives of the program are to provide:

1. understanding of the nature of volunteer services and its value to patients and clients, hospitals and other agencies, and the community;
2. knowledge of the principles of organization, supervision, and administration and learning to apply these in structuring an effective volunteer service program;
3. knowledge of the structure and function of community organizations and social institutions and their existing or potential resources, including the legal implications of volunteer versus paid employment;
4. skill to coordinate community resources and volunteer services with treatment or rehabilitation programs;
5. skills for effective leadership and to establish and maintain effective working relationships with staff, community leaders, and volunteers;
6. skill to interpret the concept and potentials underlying the use of volunteers as members of the treatment, rehabilitation, and educational programs;
7. knowledge of the principles and practices of personnel management and the learning process as they relate to the recruitment, selection, referring for assignment, training, motivation, counseling, retention and evaluation of volunteers;
8. knowledge of the media, methods, and techniques, to relate volunteer resources and service needs of any health, education, or welfare agency to resources of the community;
9. skill in presenting ideas accurately, effectively, and concisely.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

An underlying approach to the program is that the sequences of topics to be covered be both generic and practical. The concept of voluntarism, including its organization and administration, is imbedded in a sociological framework which defines the place of the volunteer in our existing social system, how he got there, and in what ways he may be expected to develop. The concepts basic to administering any group of individuals working in the formal social structure of an organization are equally valid for the administration of volunteer services in a variety of settings. At the same time, these concepts must be applied to the unique elements of a comprehensive volunteer program and relate to the immediate needs of the director.

The content of the curriculum closely follows the recommendations of the Continuing Education Committee of AAVSC and the results of a job-activity study conducted by Mr. Fred Will. The latter concluded that such a curriculum should emphasize, in part: individual and group behavior, communications, and principles of leadership.

Generic and particular professional topics are integrated throughout the entire educational experience which includes lectures, small group discussion, and experiences in the field.

Didactic lecture-discussions are organized into the following categories of information:

1. Core Curriculum includes (a) the dynamics of human behavior, (b) interpersonal communications, (c) the dynamics and techniques of leadership, and (d) inter- and intra- group behavior.
2. General Administrative Theory sessions include (a) principles of personnel management, (b) supervision, (c) formal and informal structure of organizations, (d) community organization, (e) record keeping, (f) budget proposals and fiscal management, (g) job analysis and description, (h) public relations management, (i) program evaluation.
3. Administration of Volunteer Programs includes (a) history and sociology of the volunteer movement, (b) recruitment practices, (c) interviewing techniques in selection and assignment of volunteers, (d) working with allied staff, (e) using community resources, (f) evaluation of volunteer performance, (g) in-service training principles and practices.
4. Special Issues in Volunteer Administration is presented by guest speakers most expert in particular situations. Topics include:
(a) principles of adult education, (b) understanding the mentally ill and mentally retarded, (c) using high school and college students as volunteers, (d) the minority person as volunteer, (e) the community mental health movement and its implications for volunteerism.

Throughout the 4-month residential program, class sessions provide an opportunity for the active study, analysis and application of the information, ideas, principles, and practices presented. Each session will call for a reasonable amount of advance study and preparation to provide background and set the stage for a productive learning experience. Selected readings from the writings of recognized authorities are provided. The sessions provide unique opportunities for learning by doing, and applying what has been learned to real situations. Discussions are designed to encourage maximum participation of each member of the group, a free exchange of ideas and opinions, a healthy amount of constructive disagreement, and the freedom to take advantage of the diverse backgrounds of experience and the considered thinking of the entire group.

The inclusion of field experience as an integral part of the training program has been stressed by the Certification Committee of AAVCS. The field experience is regarded as a work-study program and trainees have no further commitment toward employment. Such experience enables students to become familiar with operational aspects of the job, i.e., planning and organizing, conducting orientation and training courses, interviewing prospective volunteers, working with facility departments

in maintaining volunteer programs now existing or developing new ones. They have experience in working directly with a community volunteer bureau and local mental health associations. They have experience in public relations, e.g., speaking to community groups and providing material for the hospital Public Relations department. They have an opportunity to deal with administrative tasks, e.g., setting up volunteer schedules, correspondence, liaison with community groups, work with volunteer planning committees, responsible for special activities. They have an opportunity to attend lectures, and sections of other training courses offered by a hospital or community facility which would contribute to the general knowledge needed by a Coordinator of Volunteer Services. Trainees also have an opportunity to learn about the expanding array of community mental health services as well as community rehabilitation services.

In our program, arrangements have been made with the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health to have the students use the facilities of the State for field experience. Most notably, Region IV of the comprehensive mental health and retardation service is ready to integrate students. Students will be placed in the region and will rotate on an individual basis among the facilities of the region. The local associations for mental health and associations for retarded children will cooperate in this venture. Trainees will spend a minimum of two full days per week in the field and will be supervised by professional coordinators of volunteer services.

An illustrative academic schedule is as follows:

SCHEDULE FOR SAMPLE WEEK

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
A.M.	8:30 - 9:30	small group meeting	field		task
	10:00 - 12:00	lecture period	work		
P.M.	2:00 - 4:00	discussion period	experience		group*
	Evening	Special Events as scheduled			

*Evaluative discussion of field experience; integration of theory and practice.

PROJECT EVALUATION

The general question of evaluation asks the extent to which the program achieved what it set out to achieve. Three complementary dimensions

of evaluation evolve from this basic question: (1) evaluating the training program; (2) evaluating the training objectives; and (3) evaluating the participants.

The latter may be further delineated in terms of two major dimensions: (1) what happens to the participants during the process of training, i.e., development of professional self image, and (2) what happens in terms of performance on the job following this training.

The contents and methods, including timing and sequence of training inputs, trainer behavior and its effects, participants' attitudes and behavior during the program and back on the job will be examined. Instruments will be developed in the form of assignments, questionnaires, interaction analysis, observation schedules, and debriefing sessions in order to accomplish these evaluations. Both trainers and participants will share in the evaluation. Questionnaires and interviews with participants will be conducted at regular intervals ranging from the time of immediate completion of the course to one year following the course. In general, the emphasis of the evaluation will be concerned with: (1) what changes, if any, occur in the occupational behavior of participants after completing the course, (2) the direction of these changes; and (3) the extent to which these changes can be attributed to the training experience.

It is hoped that the evaluation will serve as a guide to further action in developing, enhancing, and continuing training programs such as ours. As you read this, new positions numbering close to 1000 are being established as part of comprehensive state planning for mental health and retardation services. The position of Coordinator of Volunteer Services is a viable alternative and additional occupational option for young people to enter the administrative ranks of mental health services.

For further information about training programs at Northeastern University, contact Professor Robert B. McCreech at the Center for Continuing Education, 11 Leon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02115.