GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
SOCIAL REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION

GUIDE

FOR STAFF

WHO WORK WITH

VOLUNTEERS

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FOREWORD

Permission to reprint a *Guide for Staff Who Work with Volunteers* was sought to supplement and reinforce the ESEA Board and Volunteer Development Committee outline. Based on studies which showed that a good volunteer program depends on the degree to which staff is prepared to work with its volunteers, it sets forth in a concise manner ways in which needed skills can be developed.

The authors state that this *Guide* is not a panacea, but rather a problem-solving technique designed to forestall many of the obstacles hampering the progress of volunteer development everywhere. While a few phrases require translating into Easter Seal terms, ninety-nine and one hundredths percent of them are applicable and relevant and certainly worthy of consideration.

GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this <u>Guide For Staff Who Work With Volunteers</u> is
to describe staff procedure on which to build successful volunteer
programs. Much has been written about the recruitment, orientation,
and training of volunteers, but the essential areas of staff prepara-
tion and staff responsibility are too often overlooked or taken for
granted. This guide has been developed fron a distillation of experi-
ence gained in operating a multitude of programs. Analysis and evaluation
of many varied experiences showed the need to follow a sequence of steps
in the development of a project, whether the activity was large or small,
complicated or simple. When one of the steps was omitted, poorly planned
or overlooked, serious problems usually developed.

Although the procedures recommended may appear highly specialized,
they have been found to be flexible enough to be applied to programs
in all types of organizations using volunteer services. As staff and
volunteers grow accustomed to using this system of planning, preparing,
and implementing programs, these steps can be acomplished in a short
period of time. The guide is intended for use and reference by all
staff who will have the oppportunity of working with volunteers, to
enhance services and to improve the quality of life of their clients.

DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Step I - Recognition of Need

The first stage in developing a volunteer program is the recognition of an unmet need. This need may be identified by the administrator of the agency, any member of the staff, a client, a consumer of the service, or any citizen who is interested in the work of the agency.

The Administrator should apply certain criteria to determine whether the service suggested is an appropriate service for volunteers. The following questions must be answered in the affirmative:

1. Does the task have genuine significance?

2. Will it promote better service?

3. Will it relieve staff of non-professional duties?

4. Will it supplememt the staff job but not replace it?

5. Will it demand work that is appropriate for volunteers to perform?

6. Will it yield staisfaction to the volunteer workers?

The next vital component of the volunteer program is the securing of a firm commitment from the administration at all levels. This means a great deal more than either verbal or written consent.

1. It means that the administrator approves the selection of the project.

2. It means that the administrator provides leadership to insure the integration of the new service into the total program of the agency.

3. It means that a staff person is assigned the responsibility for coordinating the project. This employee may be a full-time or part-time coordinator. It is essential that this person have the qualifications for the job. These qualifications include ability and experience in working with volunteers. The coordinator must be relieved of other staff responsibilities so that he can do justice to this important assignment.

4. It means that the staff accept volunteers as legitimate members of the team.

5. It means the provision of the office space or work area, appropriate materials, and clerical assistance as indicated. It means too, the commitment of incidental costs, or petty cash.

SUMMARY

To summarize, the administrative commitment must provide the status that the project will need to assume its legitimate place among the other functions of the agency. Commitments of this kind must be developed and preserved through skillful coordination and open communication. The value placed upon the program will be judged by the working conditions provided.

Step III - Design for Project

It is advisable to operate a small pilot project to demonstrate the usefulness of volunteers to meet a particular need and to serve as a model for later expansion. Before the project is begun, a carefully thought out project design needs to be planned. This design is the joint responsibility of the Coordinator of Volunteers and the Supervisor of the area of work involved.

1. Together they must clearly define the goals of the project.

2. Job descriptions should be written and qualifications for volunteer workers described. This is a tool to establish a beginning, recognized as subject to change as the project progresses.

3. Work areas should be selected and prepared.

4. Plans for on the job training of volunteers and for the staff who work with volunteers need to be drawn up. It is very helpful at this point to involve selected staff, prospective volunteers, and when possible, clients, in the planning for the project designed.

5. Criteria for evaluation of the project should be discussed at this point (See Step VI)

6. A uniform record system should be set up and carefully maintained. Certain minimum standard data should be recorded for all projects. The recent Civil Service Commission acceptance of volunteer experience makes careful record keeping vitally important. The records make possible review and evaluation of progress and provide the basis for valid references for volunteers.

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For the purpose of record-keeping, Volunteer Services may
be defined as follows:

A. <u>Direct Service Individual Volunteers</u> include all persons
   who have made application and have been assigned regularly
   scheduled specific tasks.

B. <u>Direct Service Group Volunteers</u> include volunteers who are
   members of a group, such as a church circle, sorority or social
   club which has been registered and scheduled by the Volunteer
   Office. The same individual may not attend each time but is
   registered with the group.

C. <u>Special Services</u> refer to events such as trips, outings, enter-
   tainments or special parties. These occasional volunteers
   providing the Special Services are not necessarily registered
   as individuals or in groups, and may or may not serve more than
   once.

D. <u>Donors</u> include persons who make contributions of cash, food,
   clothing or merchandise.

Before the planning stage of the project design is completed, plans
for the following elements should be included:

Recruitment

Orientation and training

Administrative Supervision

Technical and professional supervision

Evaluation of the project, both by staff and
volunteers.

Recognition

When all these elements have been planned and agreed upon, the
project is then ready to proceed to the operating stage.

Step IV - Recruitment, Selection and Placement of Volunteers

Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers will depend on the nature of the project. The method should be chosen with care, as recruitment of too many people or unqualified volunteers results in unpleasant public relations. The following possibilities may be considered:

1. Use of news media (citywide newspapers, television, radio, suburban newspaper)

2. Word of mouth

3. Reassignment of volunteers already functioning

4. Contact with schools, colleges, churches and other agencies.

If public media are to be used, recruitment plans should be coordinated with the volunteer coordinator and then through the administrator's office. Without this clearance and concurrence, confusion and embarassment may result.

Selection

Each volunteer should be given a personal interview with the coordinator of volunteers, during which time an application is completed and reference given. The interview is an opportunity for getting and giving information.

Placement

If placement is agreed upon, the volunteer should be given:

1. The assignment of hours, days, and duties.

2. Directions to the location of the work site.

3. Transportation information.

4. A schedule for orientation.

If the volunteer is not suited to this project, he should be referred to some other agency in need of volunteers.

Step V - Implementation

Orientation of Staff

The staff members who will be working with volunteers should be familiar with the volunteer job descriptions and the context of the training given the volunteer. When staff assignments change, the supervisor has the responsibility to see that this information is passed on.

Orientation of Volunteers

Once recruitment, selection, and placement have been completed, orientation is the next step. Jointly prepared by the coordinator, the supervisor of the area and a staff representative, the program should include:

1. A general review of the Department of Human Resources, the agency concerned, and its relationship to the total community.

2. An understanding of the responsibility and the function of the Division in which he will be working.

3. An interpretation of the jobs and roles of volunteers, and the specific rules and regulations that apply.

4. The use and purpose of the required forms and procedures.

5. Staff members should be included in the orientation program so that they will know what instructions the volunteers have been given.

Training and Supervision

1. Pre-placement training and on-the-job training are the joint responsibility of the Coordinator of Volunteers and the head of the unit in which the volunteer will be working. The nature of this training will depend upon the type of work involved and the education level of the volunteer.

2. The type and amount of supervision will be appropriate to the nature of the task. Adequate supervision must be provided, both to insure high standards of performance for the agency, as well as to provide the volunteer with guidance and stimulation to which he is entitled.

There are two types of supervision:

A. The technical and professional supervision provided by the staff worker to whom the volunteer is assigned.

B. The administrative supervision which will be provided by the Coordinator of Volunteers.

An opportunity for growth must be provided for the volunteer as part of the supervision and training process.

Step VI - Evaluation

An effective evaluation must include a review of the program of service, as well as the performance of volunteers. Before the actual evaluation session takes place, the following should be determined:

A. The over-all purpose and goals of the agency

B. The growth and satisfaction of the volunteer

C. A determination of whether the project has maintained the standards of the agency

D. Whether better service to the client has been provided

E. Value of the project to the staff

All evaluations should include input from:

1. The staff supervisor of the volunteers

2. The coordinator of volunteers

3. The volunteer themselves

4. Reactions of clients or consumers of the services whenever possible

Step VII - Recognition

Since volunteers work without pay and their motivation for continuing to work depends on their feeling of accomplishment, recognition is extremely important. There are two kinds of recognition - informal and formal - both of them important in communicating to the volunteer that his services are not being taken for granted.

Informal recognition -

As an informal way of recognition, the on-going, daily acceptance of the volunteer as a member of the team is most effective. This is especially productive if volunteers are included in the planning and evaluation of their activities.

Formal recognition -

Formal recognition may take the form of service pins, chevrons, certificates, special citations, letters of appreciation, or other awards. Formal awards may be presented at special events such as ceremonies of functions, which are conducted to express appreciation to volunteers. Often volunteers will protest that they need no recognition, that the satisfaction of contributing is all the compensation they desire. However, experience has shown that even the most sophisticated and experienced volunteer need to be reminded regularly that their efforts are both noticed and appreciated. (See Appendix for Award Certificate used in the Social Rehabilitation Administration).

Recognition of Staff Supervisors

Appreciation of the staff contribution to the success of the volunteer service is also effective in developing and maintaining support for volunteer involvement.

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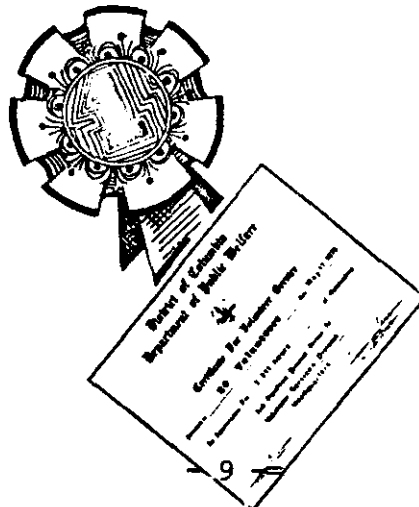
SUMMARY

The background for the preparation of the procedure used in this Guide came from many years of experience in seventeen divisions of the D.C. Human Resources Administration, involving 4,000 staff persons and an almost equal number of volunteers. When broken down into component parts, this procedure may appear to be complicated and time-consuming. In actual practice, these steps can often be completed in a very short space of time, especially during an emergency situation. When efforts were made to short-cut this procedure and eliminate some of the steps, the volunteer services failed to produce the desired results, even though the potential for better service was present. On the other hand, when the steps were conscientiously followed, the investment of time, effort and commitment was well worth the price. The yield of better service and better community understanding more than compensated for the amount invested.

Better Community