LETTING GO: PLANNING FOR VOLUNTEER RELEASE
Summary Sheet

1. Facts

   a. All personnel (volunteer and paid) are free to come and go.
   b. They leave when the price of staying outweights the benefits.
   c. The departure of individuals does not necessarily mean there is, anything wrong with the people or the organization.
   d. Turnover is not necessarily bad.

2. Attitudes/Ideas That Box Us In

   a. Volunteers work for free out of the goodness of their hearts.
   b. Volunteers cannot be held accountable because they work for free.
   c. Volunteers need kid glove treatment so they'll keep coming back. Staff get a paycheck.
   d. If someone volunteers, you take him/her on.
   e. Retention means hanging on at all costs because, if the volunteers weren't happy enough, we did something wrong.
   f. If we get good enough at recruitment and placement, we will have good volunteers who stay forever.
   g. Volunteers should be instantly perfect at the work and instantly compatible with staff.
   h. Any generalization about ALL volunteers.

3. Building Release Into A Good Volunteer Program

   a. Define jobs to be done including term of commitment, trial period, any required orientation and training.
   b. Develop volunteer personnel policies which include provisions for periodic review, procedures for "giving notice," allowance for sickness and vacation, grievance procedures, and any absolute expectations (e.g., confidentiality, client safety).
   c. "Hire" only those volunteers who have something to contribute to the work of the organization. Be creative, but don't make work just for the sake of making work.
   d. When a problem arises, get the facts from all parties. BE FAIR! BE HONEST! BE DECISIVE! Consider the consequences of inaction on other personnel and on the credibility of your program.
   e. When a good volunteer leaves, be gracious. Express appreciation and regret (in moderation). Do nothing (including too much regret) which makes the person feel like a "defector."

4. Using Release as a Planning Tool

   a. Analyze tenure and turnover in your programs. Look for patterns. Are they structural problems? Interpersonal? Both? Redesign policies and procedures if necessary.
   b. Use your networks with other volunteer organizations and volunteer administrators
   For support
   For referral