

YOU AND YOUR VOLUNTEERS:



**A
PARTNERSHIP
THAT WORKS**



A guide for supervisors of volunteer programs
State of New York
Department of Social Welfare • 1966

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INTRODUCTION

Citizen participation in social welfare is indispensable if the community is to have representation in the public and voluntary programs set up to meet the community's needs.

The citizen cannot play a more important role in social welfare than that of the informed, dedicated volunteer.

Public welfare needs such volunteers, great numbers of them, as indicated by the provision of the State Social Welfare Law that authorizes local public welfare departments to recruit, train, and utilize the services of interested citizens.

This was reemphasized when the Governor's Committee on the Education and Employment of Women, in its December 1964 report stated: "We welcome the recent appointment of a Consultant on Volunteers in the State Social Welfare Department. . . . The Committee also recognizes and appreciates that the State Department of Social Welfare is pressing forward with the development of plans for the training and use of volunteers in public welfare."

How to do this, how to establish and operate effective volunteer services in public welfare, is outlined in this manual by an outstanding authority, Mrs. Ruth R. Sherwood.

This guide is recommended for use by all persons in public welfare who are connected with volunteer programs or expect to be. It contains valuable information on the functions and validity of volunteer services, and should do much to promote these services in our State.

Albany, N. Y.
April 15, 1966

GEORGE K. WYMAN,
Commissioner

VOLUNTEERS: They Came First

"Before social work was, I AM," saith the volunteer. Or so the volunteer would have a right to say.

The work which we now perform as professionals had its origins in the solicitude and compassion of anonymous volunteers, who felt a responsibility toward their fellow man. This sense of responsibility, which we have inherited, has brought with it increasing complexities and an ever-growing need for highly specialized skills and training.

Yet the work done in the past by volunteers still exists to be done — and the need for it, too, is growing. The charitable deeds of those dedicated individuals were not always well directed (and sometimes, as we all know, turned out to be more harmful than helpful). Yet they had a directness and simplicity that were of the greatest importance in person-to-person dealings.

Today's volunteers can work far more effectively than yesterday's. Their enthusiasm and concern can be channeled productively through the training and guidance they receive from professionals like you. On the all-important person-to-person level, it would be impossible to underestimate the value of trained and dedicated volunteers, both men and women.

Ours is of course not the only area in which volunteers can serve with distinction. The current national anti-poverty program, for example, enlists the services of many volunteers. (May I emphasize that our programs in Social Welfare are in no sense competitive, but rather cooperate fully with anti-poverty efforts. Both programs provide dramatic illustration of the belief that "I am my brother's keeper.")

This booklet is intended as a guide, to spur your own thinking on how you can best use volunteers, both to develop new programs and to expand programs already in existence.

Hundreds, and even thousands, of variables make the work of each department office — and each individual — different from that of any other. So there is no attempt here to set down inflexible rules.

This guide is designed to serve the largest number of qualified people in the best possible way. If you have already had experience working with volunteers, some of the material may seem repetitious. Please bear in mind that to another reader these will be new and helpful ideas.

For further assistance and information, this office is always at your service.

(MRS.) RUTH R. SHERWOOD
*Senior Welfare Consultant on
Volunteer Services*

New York State Department of
Social Welfare



No ALL RIGHT, JUST HOW CAN VOLUNTEERS HELP YOU AND YOUR STAFF?

Volunteers can help in almost any assignment. They can help *you* to exactly the extent that you help *them* to do it.

Citizens' Committee Recommendation

Here's what the New York State Citizens' Committee on Welfare Costs* had to say about volunteers:

"The Committee recommends the use of voluntary workers in public welfare in the same way that volunteer services are provided to hospitals or to the Red Cross. . . .

"A Volunteer Bureau set up in each local welfare agency would be of help as many welfare recipients need services not requiring a professional welfare worker. Many of these needs are now expected to be filled by the caseworker, but the caseworker's time limitations often prevent the giving of the services. Another need in the motivation and rehabilitation of a welfare recipient is a sense of belonging to a community and a feeling that someone in the community, or the community itself, takes an interest in him.

"The utilization of volunteers in local social welfare programs is also an excellent means of improving public understanding of social welfare problems."*

Some of the jobs

Here is a partial listing of some of the ways your volunteers can serve both in the casework field and in institutions, including all public welfare programs. Volunteers are currently serving in many of these capacities. Some of the jobs listed may suggest others to you, not included in this roster:

Friendly visiting: calling on homebound or institutionalized lonely, elderly, or handicapped persons, to chat, read aloud, play games, run errands, listen.

* Report of New York State Citizens' Committee on Welfare Costs. 1965. Baldwin Maull, Chairman.

Home management: aiding caseworkers or homemakers to help families help themselves in budgeting, buying, housekeeping, cooking, good grooming, raising children, coping with home-work problems.

Tutoring: assisting with basic literacy projects for adults; teaching and counseling potential school dropouts; tutoring retarded, normal, or gifted children.

Rehabilitation: assisting with diversional and occupational therapy programs.

Recreation: playing games, coaching athletics, developing hobbies with children from preschool age through high school; teaching crafts, sewing, painting, music to senior citizens or mental patients.

Driving: taking children, families, or the elderly on outings, to clinic appointments and the like, either on call or on a regular basis.

Group programs: getting together mothers of families on welfare, for discussion on subjects of mutual interest, or for classes in such subjects as sewing or cooking.

Interpretation: using language skills.

Home finding: locating potential foster homes and homes for displaced families.

Waiting room assistance: acting as receptionist, supervising children while mothers are being interviewed.

Public relations: helping to interpret public welfare, conducting guided tours, arranging public information sessions, speaking to clubs and groups, with emphasis on recruitment of volunteers.

Telephoning: contacting the homebound elderly or handicapped in between caseworker's visits, contacting clients, helping to collect and update information.

Home maintenance: instructing families in the care of their homes, plumbing, painting, carpentry, gardening, and other such projects.

Clerical work: acting as receptionist, typist, initial interviewer, coordinating material for reports, and other jobs in the welfare agency office.

Seasonal projects: securing seasonal gifts, tray favors, entertaining for patients in nursing homes and institutions, making layettes, knitting or sewing articles of clothing for welfare clients,

collecting and mending clothing, making or repairing toys, raising money for special needs, obtaining comparative retail price information, assisting with camping programs and special outings, distributing surplus food.

This is no more than a partial listing of functions volunteers can be asked to perform. The limits are set by your needs, your circumstances, your imagination, and your volunteers' capacities and abilities.

New program? Old program?

Again, depending on who your volunteers are and how many you have, you may decide to activate a totally new program — perhaps one you've long wished you could carry out — or you may choose instead to add strength to an effective program already in operation. Remember that the right kind of volunteer help can release *your* time and that of other staff members, and that programs can be built and expanded in this manner.

However you think you can best employ volunteer help, decide in advance precisely what their duties will be, and make sure the staff is as well informed on this point as you are.

If you're using volunteers for the first time, it's well to begin on a modest scale, with a single project. Don't try to blossom out in a full-scale volunteer program all at once. There's plenty of time and opportunity to grow later.



2.

**BUT WHERE
DO YOU FIND
VOLUNTEERS?**

Volunteers and potential volunteers are everywhere. They are young and old, rich and poor, male and female. The trouble is, they don't wear labels. Sometimes they don't *know* they're volunteers, until they get your message. So you have to find a way to make them come to you and identify themselves.

There are a number of efficient ways to do this, all of them being used in various locations in the State, though not all available to every office in search of volunteer help.

A community committee

It's often advisable—and indeed recommended—that a group of citizens be asked to form an advisory committee charged with the recruitment effort. Many people are happy to give their time and lend their names to such a worthwhile project; and a volunteer chairman can be of inestimable value.

If you have a paid director of volunteers (as a number of counties already do), he or she will be the logical person to serve on and act as liaison with such a committee.

The public media

Reaching the public at large isn't too difficult when you have the cooperation of newspaper editors and radio and television program directors. And you do have this cooperation, in almost every instance. Make use of the facilities they offer you—and ask their advice. A good newspaper feature story, a television interview, a series of radio spot announcements: these are extremely valuable tools in your volunteer recruitment drive.

Remember, then, to go right on using them to tell the story of volunteer *achievements* in your continuing program. This is one way to keep these important activities alive in the minds of the community, and to generate enthusiasm for them among prospective new volunteers.

Community groups

In every community there are usually numerous groups dedicated to humanitarian service of some kind. Often, these groups are in search of worthwhile projects, and are happy to hear about new volunteer opportunities. They may be church groups, high school and college groups, fraternal organizations, men's and women's service clubs, retiree organizations, labor unions. There are many ways to reach their memberships with your message.

A simple letter, outlining your volunteer projects, can be sent to each president, with the request that its contents be made known to the members. Many groups have their own newsletters or other regular publications, and are usually glad to include such notices. Groups that use speakers will probably welcome someone from your office or a volunteer from your committee, to discuss both what is

being done in their community and how they can help it to get done even better.

Even though your volunteer program may not be adopted as a formal group project by the organization, you will be reaching many potential individual volunteers.

The volunteer bureau

Several New York State communities have full-fledged volunteer bureaus, which act as a clearing-house for all volunteer services in the community. If yours is such a community, your recruitment task is considerably lightened for you. You register your specific needs with the volunteer bureau, and they will recruit, screen, orient, and refer qualified volunteers to you for interviews and placement. It works a lot like an employment agency, without the financial considerations. Do remember, though, that it often takes time to find the "right peg for the right hole."

Word of mouth

In the long run, word of mouth is the most effective advertising technique of all. You and your staff have a tremendous number of excellent contacts in the community, at all levels. Talk about your volunteer program. Enlist the interest of others. They too will help spread the word.

(Of course, the *first* place to spread the word is within your own organization! A staff that is fully informed can get very excited about informing others.)



3. SO NOW THAT YOU'VE FOUND THEM — WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

Succinctly—find out where your new volunteer belongs in your program, and provide the necessary training. These are the basic first steps. It all starts, of course, with the interview.

The interview

In your profession, you're almost certainly an expert interviewer. This will stand you in good stead in "hiring" volunteers. And "hire" is precisely what you do—as carefully as you would a new employee.

Insist on a personal interview. Only on rare occasions, for emergency or minor spot jobs, are telephone interviews acceptable. (See page 16 for suggested application blank.)

The volunteer may come to you with a definite idea of the job he or she can do best, or simply brimming with good will and genuine eagerness to work, without the vaguest notion where he or she might fit in. Either way, make sure you learn *all* about your new "employee." Maybe you'll discover a bit of valuable experience, an almost-forgotten something overlooked in the volunteer's background, that's exactly what you're looking for. In the long run, both you and the volunteers will be happiest if they're doing what they're best qualified to do.

Nobody needs to tell you that there probably will be some applicants who are totally unqualified for the kind of work they would like to do. Every effort should be made to channel their willingness into a job they can do; but if all else fails, a kind and sincerely meant "Thank you, but sorry" is the only thing left to say.

Training

1. *You.* Before even thinking about training your volunteers, you'll have to "orient" your staff. This, of course, is something to be done long before the first volunteer is "hired"—preferably, long before the first volunteer is even interviewed.

It stands to reason that volunteer help will mean a shifting of professional job responsibilities in some cases, and will involve professional workers in on-the-job training of volunteers. This must be carefully spelled out well ahead of time.

Two matters should be clear at the very beginning:

(a) Exactly what each volunteer job is to be (a complete job description, in other words). For unanimity and inclusion of all necessary information a form for staff use is recommended. (See page 15 for suggested request form.) This is also helpful in compiling reports on volunteer placements and in evaluating the program.

(b) Exactly what is required of each professional in working with volunteers. Only with full staff acceptance of the volunteer program can it hope to succeed. A volunteer program *does* cost money and *does* take staff time, but the rewards far outweigh dollars-and-cents considerations.

2. *The volunteers.* As for training of volunteers, much depends on the work they are to do. All volunteers should have at least a one-session course to acquaint them with the functions, operations, and facilities of the Department as well as basic Do's and Don't's for volunteers.

For regular, long-term jobs—such as family visiting, case aides, tutoring—additional sessions should be required. These should cover volunteer-caseworker relationships, reporting procedures, the importance of confidentiality, community resources and other subjects depending on the specific nature of the job. Sometimes for specialized jobs, step-by-step guidance is best. You can judge your own training needs, and you're always welcome to ask for help from the State Office of Consultant on Volunteer Services.

It is often helpful to make up a kit to give the volunteer to take home including background information on the agency, a brief manual on jobs available with qualifications needed, helpful hints, a code for volunteers (there are a number available for reprint) etc., but don't overload the kit and scare them away. The better informed the volunteers, the more their work will mean to them, and the more effective spokesmen they will be for your agency in the community.

From the very beginning, see to it that volunteers accept as a normal part of their duties the making of regular reports to the person in charge of their volunteer activities. This can be done in writing (following a form or outline which you provide), through personal conferences, or through periodic group meetings of volunteers. At the same time, be sure they know that this supervisory person is available for consultation—that volunteers need never wrestle alone with difficult or even minor problems. They also should know there is someone with whom to share the happy, exciting, rewarding experiences their work will bring.

At intervals—every one to three months, say—you may wish to re-interview your volunteers and evaluate their performance, also allowing them opportunity to comment on their work in the agency. Let them know that their suggestions are appreciated—that they are indeed your working partners.

Whenever you can, include volunteers in general staff meetings, or invite them to report occasionally to the staff. This will help increase their comprehension of the significance of their own work, and will give them a more accurate picture of your agency's over-all program. It will also help sell the staff on how valuable a volunteer program can be to them.

As your volunteer program grows, some of the volunteer training tasks may possibly be taken over by the more experienced volunteers themselves, and will not claim as much professional staff time.



4.

**"VOLUNTEERS HAVE A
DISCONCERTING WAY
OF SLIPPING AWAY..."**

Yes, they do. And whose fault is that? Not always the volunteer's, by any means. Here are some of the essential steps that will help insure long tenure and continuing loyalty among your volunteers.

Take time

When you plan a volunteer program — whether it's your very first or merely a new branch sprouting from one of dozens of existing programs — take time to plan it down to the last detail. Odd moments out of your busy day just won't be enough. Ask the help of your staff — especially those most closely concerned — in drawing up the volunteer job descriptions and training requirements.

Tell 'em who's "boss"

Even a well-planned volunteer program can fall apart at the seams unless there is one — repeat, *one* — authoritative person at the professional level.

Volunteer supervisors within county welfare departments are on the increase. Under the guidance of such a full-time professional, a volunteer program runs more smoothly and efficiently.

However *you* do it, be certain your volunteers have a “boss” and know it — a very un-bossy and helpful boss, to be sure! And be certain that this helpful “boss” is as well acquainted with the volunteers and their activities as the Commissioner is with his employees and their jobs.

The “boss” is the person volunteers report to for work assignments, the person they call if they can’t come in, the person they consult when they’re unsure of how to handle a given situation or need consultation or information. In other words, very much like the boss in the office (if he’s a *good* boss, that is).

On the other hand, never forget that they *are* volunteers. Maintain a reasonable flexibility in scheduling. And be prepared for the moment when an eager volunteer discovers there’s no immediate placement assignment: let him or her know that it’s the willingness to help — not how furiously busy the volunteer is — that really counts. And of course, if you can foresee a hiatus in a volunteer’s assignment, you should notify him or her as far as possible in advance (think how *you’d* feel, hiring a baby-sitter, or giving up your bowling night, only to find there was no work for you to do when you arrived at the job).

“Pay” your volunteers

Just as you should think in terms of “hiring” a volunteer in that initial interview, so it’s well to remember that they’re earning some kind of reward through their conscientious efforts. “Thank you” or a pat on the back — in any number of variations — is the form a volunteer’s “salary” takes.

Let your volunteers know that their efforts are appreciated. If you don’t tell them, they may wonder if they’re really doing an adequate job. They need reassuring. Often.

You may choose to initiate a system of formal awards or other recognition. This could take the form of pins for volunteer hours, a recognition tea, a personal note, a certificate, or a billfold identification card showing completion of training, to name a few examples. Such award programs are often highly successful among volunteer workers. On the other hand, so is the simple but effective expression of genuine gratitude!

Naturally, it’s important for you to make every realistic effort to help your volunteers to help you. Sometimes this can take the form of financial consideration (such as paying carfare for getting to and from volunteer duty, as is being done in some instances). This often proves a worthwhile expenditure, for it can make all the difference to some volunteers (particularly retired people with severely limited incomes, who could not otherwise afford to do volunteer work at which they may be highly capable). Such reimbursement for necessary expenses is also a form of saying “thank you.”

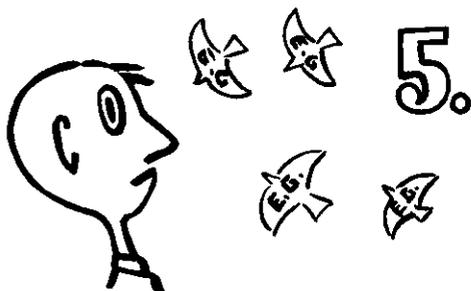
(Of course, all this presupposes a well-organized volunteer set-up. If it's anything less than that, volunteers are apt to feel discontented and uneasy — and your "thank you" will sound as hollow as a drain pipe.)

Confide in them

There are many high-level matters which you must naturally keep between you and the staff, and there is a great deal in your work that's confidential. But when something comes along that *can* be shared with volunteers (a new program, a success story, a budgetary increase) — share it. And ask for their advice from time to time. It gives them a sense of participation and belonging, and gives you genuine help.

If you think of your volunteers as staff members, they'll act that way. You may be surprised at the responsibilities which unpaid help will willingly assume when they believe they're needed.

When problems arise — particularly problems involving community relations — those who have enjoyed meaningful volunteer experiences may prove to be the strongest voice your department has.



5. HOW ABOUT SOME EXAMPLES OF WHAT'S BEING DONE?

All over the State, volunteer programs in welfare departments are being planned, getting started, and growing. Here are just three instances of the types of programs being successfully undertaken.

(1) *A student-operated Community Development Corps.* Undergraduates of St. Lawrence University are working in this essentially rural area, under supervision of the Welfare Department, the University's Sociology Department, the Board of Education, and a number of private agencies. They act as home aides; as tutors to potential school dropouts and in adult literacy programs; as child care assistants; as Friendly Visitors in a nursing home; as maintenance workers helping Welfare families with home repairs; and in a variety of other projects. Both student and adult leadership are outstanding. The program was recognized in 1965 by the New York State Welfare Conference Group Award and a New York State Exposition Community Service Award.

(2) *An adult home aide program with the Volunteer Bureau.* Schenectady County's welfare department and volunteer bureau have initiated a joint project of family visiting. The number of volunteers participating is kept realistically small, to insure an effective training program. Some have done Friendly Visiting, and are now "moving up" to the increased responsibilities entailed in giving budget help, child care, and other home assistance to Welfare families. The Volunteer Bureau recruits and screens volunteer applicants, who perform their duties under supervision of a Welfare Department professional.

(3) *A Corps of Volunteers for Youth (COVY).* This is the designation for a high-school volunteer program in Westchester County. This area has the longest record in the State of the use of volunteers in welfare departments (over 30 years) and was the first to appoint a paid director of volunteers. As might be expected, volunteers here are employed in a greater variety of capacities than elsewhere, including service as case aides, escorts, interviewers, motor aides, etc. COVY, the teen-age program, involves high school students as "big brothers and sisters" to the children of welfare families, meeting with these youngsters at least once a week on an individual, person-to-person basis, and broadening their horizons through regular companionship and through such experiences as picnics, visits to parks and zoos, subway and train rides, etc.

6. HOW ABOUT KEEPING TRACK OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY?

You will want to have at least two basic forms for record-keeping purposes (probably on 5" x 8" cards) — one (the request card) for maintaining a complete job-description file of all volunteer assignments, both filled and waiting to be filled; the other (the placement form) for keeping a record of each individual's or group's service.

A third form being used successfully by some agencies is one on which volunteers themselves can report.

Each agency will have its special considerations to take into account. The sample placement and request cards shown are suggestions only.

Conclusion

It is the hope of those who have prepared this booklet that it answers some of your questions about the effective use of volunteers. Keep it handy for reference as your own volunteer program grows and flourishes — truly, a partnership that works.

REQUEST CARD

REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE

COUNTY

Department or Division

Date of Request

Address

Phone

Job Classification

No. Needed

Permanent

Temporary

Days and Hours of Work

Date to Start

Date to Finish

Job Description

Special Requirements

Comments

Person Volunteer Reports To

Phone

Person Making Request

Phone

Request Received By

Job Filled

Unable to Fill

Request Refused

Reverse Side of Card

Department or Division

Date Referred	Name of Volunteer or Group	Number Placed	Job Completed

SOME SUGGESTED READING

- "Strengthening Public Welfare Services Through The Use of Volunteers."
Summary of material presented at an institute sponsored by the American Public Welfare Association, Chicago, Illinois, 1960.
- "Use of Volunteers in Public Welfare."
Family Service Association of America, 44 East 23rd St., New York City, 1963. Price \$2.50 each.
- "New York Women."
Report of the Governor's Committee on the Education and Employment of Women, 1964. Executive Chamber, State Capitol, Albany, N. Y. No charge.
- "Citizen Participation in Public Welfare Programs."
Third Printing, 1962. U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Bureau of Family Services, Washington, D. C. No charge.
- "The Therapy of Friendliness."
A Thesis by Edith Lawton Hudson, 1962. The Duke Endowment, 1500 North Carolina National Bank Building, Charlotte, North Carolina. No charge.
- "Volunteer Service Manual."
Westchester County Department of Public Welfare, County Office Building, Martine Ave., White Plains, N. Y.
- "Maull Report."
Report of New York State Citizens' Committee on Welfare Costs, 1965, pages 24-26. N. Y. State Department of Social Welfare, Albany, N. Y. No charge.
- "The Citizen Volunteer."
By Nathan Cohen, Harper and Brothers, N. Y. 1960. Price \$4.75.
- "Handbook of Community Service Projects."
By Audrey R. and Harleigh B. Trecker, 1960. Association Press, 291 Broadway, New York City. Price \$6.50.

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