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# A Study of Attitudes and Perceptions of Volunteers in Nonprofit Organizations

Lucy A. Newton, PhD

Volunteers provide a diverse and valuable source of non-salaried labor in the United States. Although in the past a large proportion of volunteers were homemakers, recent surveys indicate that many full-time paid workers in American business are anxious to volunteer in their spare time (Geber, 1991). If the Federal government's ability and willingness to fund American social programs continues to decline, this pool of willing volunteers and the nonprofit organizations which utilize them will become even more critical to the success of American social action in the coming years.

To meet the challenges of obtaining and effectively involving volunteers and to optimize the use of their scarce resources, nonprofits have become increasingly business-like in the management of their operations and labor (Drucker, 1989). Despite reported gains in business orientation, however, there has been limited research in the field of Business Administration, into the effectiveness of managing volunteers or the attitudes and perceptions of these volunteers in nonprofits. There has been even less investigation of how volunteers' attitudes and perceptions compare with those of paid staff. Do volunteers see themselves as adequately supervised and their efforts fully utilized? Are they more or less committed to the organization than are paid staff? Do volunteers and paid staff differ in their perceptions about the relative importance of the problems faced by nonprofits in utilizing volunteers?

The purpose of this study is to address these questions by examining three types of volunteers' attitudes: organizational commitment, satisfaction with supervi-

sion they receive, and concern about the problems nonprofits face in effectively managing volunteers. This examination is particularly useful because it compares two of these attitudes of volunteers (commitment and problems in managing volunteers) with paid staff who work in nonprofits. The third attitude, satisfaction with supervision, serves as an indication of how well nonprofits may be doing in effectively involving volunteers once they have been recruited, trained, and placed.

Organizational commitment represents an identification with organizational goals and a desire to remain a member of the organization (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982). In for-profit firms, it has been found to be linked with both decreased turnover (Cotton and Tuttle, 1987) and job performance (Lee and Mowday, 1987).

In nonprofit, organizations commitment may not predict volunteer turnover as well as it predicts turnover of paid employees in for-profits. There is high potential mobility for volunteers across nonprofits, since pay is not a factor and volunteer positions are abundant (Jenner, 1984). Thus, it is not surprising that some research has found that for volunteers convenience of the work schedule is related to volunteer turnover, but organizational commitment is related only to *intention* to leave, not actual turnover (Miller, Powell, and Seltzer, 1990). Similarly, Jenner (1984) found that although organizational commitment was related to volunteer hours worked at the time of measurement, it did not predict turnover two years later.

Although organizational commitment may not be directly related to volunteer turnover, it has great potential value for

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nonprofits. Jenner's research indicates that it is an important intervening variable in volunteer turnover and may also be related to effort, performance, and time worked. Given the cost and difficulty of initial recruiting and training volunteers, retaining them and maximizing their performance is a high priority for nonprofits.

Organizational commitment may have several bases. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) suggested that commitment may be based on one of three factors: (a) compliance to secure rewards or avoid punishment, (b) identification with other persons or the group, and (c) internalization of the organization's values or ideology. It is likely that both volunteers and paid staff are committed to the organizations they serve based on their shared ideology with the organization. The initial motivation to volunteer often has been found to be altruistic (Gora and Nemerowicz, 1991; Howarth, 1976). Others at first may begin volunteering for compliance (e.g., gaining experience through volunteering to help them obtain a paying job later) or identification reasons (e.g., forming friendships). However, these often give way to ideological concerns over time (Gora and Nemerowicz, 1991). Thus, the commitment of volunteers would be expected to be based upon ideological attachment to the nonprofit's purposes.

The organizational commitment of paid staff in these agencies is less clear. Paid staff may be expected to have greater organizational commitment than volunteers, since they receive monetary rewards. Some authors argue, however, that pay levels in nonprofits may often be lower than those for comparable jobs in for-profit agencies, and that paid workers in these agencies rely upon satisfaction from their work to compensate for lower wages and benefits (Mirvis and Hackett, 1983). Thus, many paid workers in nonprofits may have initially been attracted to their positions as a way of combining work and altruism (compliance and internalization).

Others, however, see little difference between pay levels in for-profit and non-

profit agencies and argue that paid staff in nonprofits are not a breed apart from their counterparts in for-profits (Johnston and Rudney, 1987). In fact, there are some indications that volunteers and paid staff in nonprofits may have greater differences in commitment than paid staff in for-profit agencies. Research results indicate that volunteers may have higher intrinsic motivation than the paid staff in nonprofit agencies (Adams, Schlueter, and Barge, 1988). This further suggests that paid workers in both types of organizations may not differ, but that they may differ greatly from volunteers on ideological attachments in nonprofits. In sum, the question as to whether and by how much the organizational commitment of paid staff differs from that of volunteers remains largely unanswered.

A second question to be addressed in this study is the level of satisfaction with supervision that volunteers receive. Staff who coordinate or supervise volunteer activities have a challenging job. Rewards and punishments available to volunteers are limited. The working hours for the supervisor may be long and irregular, and the span of control may be excessively wide. The pool of volunteers is often diverse in terms of talents, schedules, and backgrounds (Ellis, 1986). In some nonprofits, volunteers may be supervised by a fellow volunteer. This added responsibility on the unpaid supervisor may further complicate supervisory effectiveness, since there is little additional reward for taking on these added duties. In addition, the supervisor may not be trained adequately in supervisory and management techniques.

Adams et al (1988) found that volunteers were generally satisfied with their supervisors' decision-making styles, although they desired a participative approach from their supervisors. No research was found, however, which looked at correlates of supervisory satisfaction. It is not known whether supervisory satisfaction is related to whether the supervisor is paid staff or a fellow volunteer, to

tenure as a volunteer, or to the recruitment practices used to obtain volunteers. This study examines these possible relationships.

The final issue to be addressed is a comparison of perceptions of volunteers and paid staff about the problems of managing volunteers. This comparison allows insight into managing nonprofits by obtaining two different perspectives. Staff may have to deal on a long-term basis with a pool of volunteers which turn over often. They must also answer to a triple constituency: volunteers, the organization, and clients (Ellis, 1986). Thus, their views reflect a long term "big picture" of the volunteer process and the organization. In contrast, volunteers may have a more limited scope. They may be expected to evaluate the relative importance of problems of managing volunteers against their own experience and exposure to the organization or its clients. Their perceptions, based on first-hand experiences, should provide a valuable point of comparison to those of paid staff.

## METHOD

A list of all known organizations interested in involving volunteers in a county in the Southeastern United States was obtained from the local Community Information Line. This voluntary agency serves as a resource center for people seeking help as well as for those wishing to volunteer. The county has a population of about 80,000 people, about half of whom reside in urban areas. Of the 81 organizations on

this list, 22 had never involved volunteers (although they would be willing if any came forward), and 28 did not have volunteers working at present, were not currently operating, declined to participate in the study, could not be contacted, or had merged with other agencies. The remaining 31 organizations participated in the study.

The organizations consisted of church and religious groups, hospitals and nursing homes, government agencies, schools and day care centers, and youth and civic clubs. The researcher visited each organization and asked each paid staff member to complete a survey and to ask each volunteer currently working to complete a separate survey form whenever that volunteer reported for work over the next month. Both surveys were to be completed anonymously and respondents (both paid and volunteer) were assured that responses would be kept confidential.

A total of 69 paid staff and 189 volunteers completed surveys. A description of participants in the study by organization is shown in Table I. A summary of recruiting sources is shown in Table II.

For both survey forms, organizational commitment was measured by use of five items adapted from Buchanan's (1974) organizational commitment scale. The internal consistency reliability (alpha) of this measure was .92. Satisfaction with supervision was assessed with four items adapted from Smith (1976) (alpha = .78). Responses for both organizational commitment and supervisory satisfaction

**Table I**  
**Description of Participants in the Study by Organization**

Type of Organization	Number Paid Staff	Number Volunteers
Mental health	1	3
Civic	14	6
Religious	3	39
Health care/hospital	20	45
School/day care	9	16
Government agencies	<u>22</u>	<u>80</u>
Total	69	189

**Table II**  
**Sources of Recruitment of Volunteers Participating in Study**

Source of recruitment	Number of volunteers	Percent
Word of mouth; friend's referral	64	38.6%
Media; publicity by organization	13	7.8%
Referred by relative	6	3.6%
Through other volunteer activities	23	13.9%
Recruited at church	44	26.5%
Asked by staff member	15	9.0%
Order by court as part of sentencing	1	.6%

ranged from "1" (strongly disagree) to "5" (strongly agree).

Finally, both volunteers and paid staff were asked to rank from one to seven the importance of the following possible problems in using volunteers: recruiting, motivating and rewarding, retaining, giving performance feedback, training, placement, and coordinating the work of paid staff and volunteers. These seven problems were compiled from interviews with both volunteers and paid staff before construction of the instruments.

Volunteers were also asked to provide other information. This included their tenure in the organization, the source of their recruitment into the organization, and whether they were supervised by paid staff, another volunteer, or some combination.

## RESULTS

The means and standard deviations of variables for each group of participants is shown in Table III. The organizational

commitment of both paid staff (4.61/5) and volunteers (4.54/5) was very high. A two-tailed t-test was performed to investigate whether volunteers and paid staff differed significantly in their organizational commitment. The t-value of .08 was not significant. Thus, there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of organizational commitment.

To further investigate the possible predictors of organizational commitment of volunteers, this variable was regressed on satisfaction with supervision, type of organization (civic, religious, etc.), tenure in the organization, type of supervision (volunteer or paid staff), and recruitment source. These results are shown in Table IV. Both satisfaction with supervision and tenure were significant predictors, both in a positive direction.

The mean for volunteers' satisfaction with supervision was also quite high (4.17/5). To further investigate possible predictors of satisfaction with supervision,

**Table III**  
**Means and Standard Deviations for Volunteers and Paid Staff**

	Mean	S.D.
<b>Paid Staff</b>		
Organizational commitment	4.61	.56
<b>Volunteers</b>		
Organizational commitment	4.54	.68
Satisfaction with supervision	4.17	.82
Tenure (months)	42.42	47.2

**Table IV**  
**Results of Regression of Organizational Commitment of**  
**Volunteers on Possible Predictors**

Independent variable:	beta	t
Satisfaction with supervision	.50	7.13**
Tenure	.14	2.02*
Type of supervision	.07	.94
Type of organization	-.02	-.20
Recruitment source	-.09	-1.17
R-square		.287
F-ratio		11.79**

\* p < .05      \*\* p < .01

this variable was regressed on a set of possible correlates: tenure in the organization, type of supervisor (volunteer or paid staff), organizational commitment, type of organization, and source of recruitment. These results are shown in Table V. Only organizational commitment was a significant predictor of satisfaction with supervision.

Finally, the rankings of both volunteers and paid staff in regard to the seven problems in utilizing volunteers were examined. For each group, Kendall's coefficient of concordance ("W") was computed to determine whether there was significant agreement within each group on the seven rankings. The "W" for paid staff was .295 (chi-square=90.13; df=6; p < .01) and for volunteers was .266 (chi-square=187.9; df=6; p < .01), indicating that members of each group agreed on the rankings to a statistically significant extent. The two sets of rankings generated by the two groups

were then compared to investigate the extent to which volunteers and paid staff gave similar rankings. These results are shown in Table VI. Computation of Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient (rho=.86; p < .05) indicated that the two ranks were significantly correlated. Both groups ranked recruitment of volunteers as the most important problem faced by organizations in using volunteers and ranked coordinating volunteers with paid staff as the least important. Paid staff saw motivating and rewarding volunteers (rank of 4) as more important than did volunteers (rank of 6). Retaining volunteers and training volunteers were both ranked high by both groups.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine several attitudes and perceptions of volunteers of nonprofit organizations and

**Table V**  
**Results of Regression of Volunteers' Satisfaction with**  
**Supervision on Possible Predictors**

Independent variable:	beta	t
Organizational commitment	.515	7.13**
Source of recruitment	.070	.93
Type of supervisor	-.068	-.95
Tenure in organization	-.034	-.47
Type of organization	.078	1.04
R-square		.268
F-ratio		10.70**

\*\* p < .01

**Table VI**  
**Comparison of Rankings by Paid Staff and Volunteers of**  
**Problems Utilizing Volunteers**

Problem	Paid Staff Ranking	Volunteer Ranking
Recruiting volunteers	1	1
Retaining volunteers	2	3
Training volunteers	3	2
Motivation/rewards	4	6
Giving performance feedback	5	4
Placement of volunteers	6	5
Coordination with paid staff	7	7

to compare two of these with paid staff in the same sample of organizations. The first attitude of interest was organizational commitment. Both paid staff and volunteers expressed very high levels of commitment. In addition, there was no significant statistical difference between the two groups on this score.

This finding suggests several important conclusions. Within the scale, both groups reported very high scores on the items dealing with identification with the organization's goals and purposes and with loyalty to the organization. This suggests that both groups find their association with the nonprofit a way to address their altruistic needs. The role of pay as it affects paid staff, however, is less clear. The present data do not allow for conclusions about whether (and by how much) pay may increase levels of organizational commitment for paid staff. Although the commitment levels of staff were quite high, part of their commitment may have resulted from pay they receive. Thus, Mirvis and Hackett's (1983) contention that satisfaction of altruistic needs may compensate for lower wages of employees in nonprofits may have some validity. The end result, in any case, is that the overall commitment levels of both paid and nonpaid workers is remarkably similar, regardless of the causes of commitment for paid staff.

For volunteers, there was no significant association between organizational commitment and recruitment source, type of supervision (volunteer or paid staff), or

type of organization. Rather, supervisory satisfaction and tenure were the only significant predictors of commitment. It seems that the longer the volunteer is a part of the organization, the greater the commitment. This may be the result of greater understanding and appreciation of the goals and purposes of the organization, or it may be an effect of contact with the clients served by the organization. It could also reflect the identification form of commitment of volunteers (need to form social contacts) which is built over time. An alternative explanation is that tenure is a function of commitment and that volunteers who are more committed remain with the organization longer. This is consistent with research findings in the for-profit sector where commitment and decreased turnover have been found to be related. However, the present results contradict the findings of Miller et al (1990) and suggest that commitment may be more strongly related to lack of turnover of volunteers than had been previously thought.

A related goal of this study was to investigate the satisfaction of supervision of volunteers. Again, the overall score on this variable was quite high. This was consistent with the findings of Adams et al (1988). Volunteers generally seem to think that they are well supervised, regardless of whether the supervisor is a fellow volunteer or paid staff. These results may be a confirmation that nonprofits are indeed managing their volunteer resources pro-



professionally, as Drucker (1989) asserted. Besides the type of supervision received (volunteer or paid staff), neither the initial source of recruitment, type of organization, nor tenure seemed to affect supervisory satisfaction. Only organizational commitment was significantly related to this variable. It is somewhat surprising that tenure was not related to supervisory satisfaction, since it might be expected that those who were pleased with their supervision might be more inclined to remain in the organization. However, this was not the case in the present study. An alternative explanation is that those who were not satisfied with their supervision have already left the organization and thus were not adequately represented in the study.

The strong association between supervisory satisfaction and organizational commitment seen in the results of both regression analyses deserves comment. This association may be the result of greater insight into the operations and practices of the agencies, and perhaps a greater appreciation of the purposes of the organization. Without a longitudinal study it is not possible to suggest which causes the other, or if both are simply part of an overall consistent attitude toward the organization. This association may also be the result of common method variance or the "yea-saying" tendency of respondents to give generally positive views on more than one issue on a survey instrument.

The final issue to be investigated was a comparison of rankings of problems faced by nonprofits in managing volunteers. There was significant agreement both within the two groups of interest and between the two groups. This agreement between groups may indicate that volunteers have perspectives very similar to paid staff as far as the role of volunteers in the organizations. Both groups cited recruitment of volunteers as the most important problem and coordination with paid staff as the least important. The relative lack of importance of coordination with staff may be further evidence that the

organizations in the present study are effectively managing their volunteers. However, both groups also placed a high ranking on training volunteers, which may suggest an area for improvement in the future. Future research should more fully investigate the methods involved in training and attempt to identify problem areas in this category. Special attention should be paid to whether or not there are formal training courses, who does the training (staff or fellow volunteers), and whether training effectiveness is measured.

It is interesting to note that retaining volunteers was given a high ranking by both groups, and yet the organizational commitment of the volunteers was quite high. One explanation for this finding may be that volunteers leave not because of actions or attitudes of the organization but because of personal limitations on their time and energies. This hypothesis should be further investigated in future research.

The present data also suggest some other interesting conclusions and topics for future study. Recruiting volunteers was cited as the most important problem by both groups and the volunteers in the present study were recruited through a variety of sources. However, it appears that word of mouth or being asked personally by an acquaintance is the predominant means of recruitment. Publicity or media attention accounted for few recruits compared to other sources. This suggests that the most effective means of addressing one of the most important problems in using volunteers could be by more actively involving present volunteers and paid staff in recruitment. Since recruitment source was found to be unrelated to either organizational commitment or satisfaction with supervision of volunteers, it would seem that simply obtaining volunteers by any effective means is the key issue, and that the source of recruitment is of little importance to subsequent volunteer attitudes.

This study has taken an exploratory approach to assessing attitudes in nonprofit

organizations. The overall results suggest that both volunteers and paid staff are highly committed to the organizations they serve. Volunteers also seem to be generally satisfied with the supervision they receive, regardless of whether they are supervised by volunteers or paid staff. Future research should focus on other possible influences on positive volunteer attitudes and tenure, including such variables as full-time employment status, family obligations, and motivation for volunteering. This research would enable nonprofits to enhance the recruitment and retention of the pool of volunteers which are so vital to their purposes.

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the history, legal status, organizational structure and role of the 26 volunteer state defense forces (SDFs) that continue America's historic tradition of an unpaid general military reserve. The article discusses current SDF developments in relation to expanding emergency services, constabulary, and military family support roles. SDFs are suggested as having a major potential for extended services in these areas and in carving out new ways to support active military components.*

# Old Soldiers Don't Die—They Volunteer: The State Militia Revival

Captain Wayne Nelson, PhD

Volunteer soldiers are a pervasive theme in American history. For centuries, hometown militias provided security and protection and served the political purposes of a developing country. Generation after generation of farmers, artisans, shopkeepers, politicians and professionals, aged sixteen to sixty, drilled to the thunder and peal of fife and drum in the parks and fields of towns great and small across the youthful nation. The militia changed over time, like all social institutions, but its grass-roots nature generally reflected a cross-section of American society. Despite their varied social composition, militia soldiers were bound together by a dedication to the common defense and an obligation to serve the public welfare without compensation. They were the forerunners of America's long-standing tradition of volunteer service. In fact, the militia's record of volunteerism far preceded the 19th century extension of volunteerism beyond its historically exclusive military roots. The centrality of militia service to American volunteerism is reflected in Long's (1992) identification of militia captains, wagonmasters and fire chiefs as the first true volunteer administrators. Actually, the role of militia captain is older than either the wagonmaster or fire chief and dates to the "heads" (from the Latin *caput*) of the

armed civilian levies of Middle Ages. Transplanted to the New World, these captains and their motley bands represent the oldest institutionalized aspect of formal, secular volunteerism in America. This connection is evident in the historic, original, and almost exclusive association of the term volunteer with military (militia) service, a tie that only began to broaden in the late nineteenth century.

It is true that myth has claimed much of the militia tradition, especially regarding its role in the War of Independence. In other respects, however, the militia mythos is superseded by truly remarkable feats, like the capture of Louisbourg, France's most formidable bastion in the New World. Conversely, the American invasion of Canada in the War of 1812, demonstrated the limited value of amateur volunteers in offensive warfare. Putting aside these strategic considerations, a picture of the militia emerges as an undeniable influence on everyday American life. What began as a matter of defensive necessity was transformed by receding frontiers and prolonged peace into primarily an institution of male socialization. By the mid-19th century, the militia had become an essential rite of male passage into American democratic life, promoting American ideals among all classes, broadly preserving so-

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cial control and order, while advancing social change as new members from different classes and ethnicity displaced earlier cohorts. In time militias became more like social clubs and athletic teams than military units. Dressed in splendid if sometimes fanciful uniforms, they prepared for war in the same old way, but were imbued with a new spirit of fraternal unity and community pride that often exploded into fierce inter-city rivalries. Militia pride inspired hugely popular drill contests that were the main spectator draws of their day. But this star-like heyday was brief. The blood of the Civil War stained the crowd-pleasing flash and flurry of exotic militia drill. The glory was gone. Too many families had lost a father, son, or brother to cheer the martial splendor of local sons passing in review. A military revolution was underway. The era of the volunteer soldier was over. The age of the professional soldier had begun. The demands of modern warfare left scant room for amateurs. Voluntarism replaced volunteerism. By 1900 most unpaid local militias withered away or melded with the fast growing National Guard, a paid, part time force with both federal and state status.

Still, some genuine remnants of the old volunteer militia continue. Historic and ceremonial units like the Governor's Foot Guard of Connecticut carry on the pomp and splendor of the old days. Other, more practical units also endure in the law and tradition of the various named state defense forces (SDFs), more widely known as state guards or state military reserves. These truly all-volunteer forces are all that remain of the old tradition of state general militia. They are seeing something of a revival.

State guards are part of what the U.S. Constitution refers to as the organized militia. They saw their first limited revival during the First World War, when they prepared to guard against foreign saboteurs. Another surge occurred as war clouds gathered over Europe in the 1930s. By 1940, all but four states had organized state militia. By Pearl Harbor, 89,000 vol-

unteer soldiers donned obsolete Army uniforms and trained with surplus equipment to prepare for an invasion that never came. In 1943, 170,000 State Guardsmen supported the home-front war effort. And although the war's end saw the deactivation of most of these units, the cold war of the 1950s and 1960s saw a resurgence that continues to this day.

Twenty-six states currently support volunteer state troops. But few outsiders know of their existence, let alone their role and purpose. Even among those who know, there is some confusion. This confusion runs in several directions.

The first is semantic. It relates to a general bafflement about voluntarism and volunteerism. Strictly speaking, the U.S. Army and the National Guard are voluntary not volunteer services. They are paid and are considered voluntary because membership is by choice. State militia soldiers also serve at will, but are unpaid volunteers.

More important is the puzzlement about what groups constitute volunteer military organizations. For, example, students of volunteerism are generally familiar with the Civil Air Patrol (the official U.S. Air Force Auxiliary), and the Coast Guard Auxiliary. These successful and important volunteer services are respectively the largest air and sea search and rescue organizations in the world—volunteer or not! Both are composed of uniformed members who hold titles of rank and adhere to conventional lines of military organization. But they are not military. Like uniformed police and fire services, they are strictly civilian. Being "military" is a matter of law.

A more ominous confusion exists between the statutory state militia and the so called militia movement that is now sweeping the country. The latter is perceived by some, like Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center and Danny Welch, director of Klanwatch, as political, paramilitary gun-clubs, increasingly tainted by white racism. The influence of these groups is growing in the western United

States, Florida, Texas, and in the state of Michigan, which alone claims to have 12,000 members. While (unauthorized) militia leaders deny racist influences, they embrace conspiracy theories that paint the federal government as a tool of secret elites who plot to rob Americans of their basic freedoms. The militia movement's strong antigovernment bent is reminiscent of the 1960s Minuteman organization, which also drew its inspiration from the mythic aspects of America's militia tradition. These groups sport names like the United States Militia Association, the Unorganized Militia of Idaho, the Michigan Militia and so forth, names that are similar and easily confused with those of authorized state military forces. Unauthorized militia justify their status on the Constitutional right to bear arms and on legal standards that define the country's unorganized militia as all able bodied male residents (*Portland/Oregonian*, November 14, 1994). Of course, they have no actual military status, and have nothing to do with the "well regulated militia" to which the Constitution of the United States is referred.

#### STATE MILITIA: LAW AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution grants Congress the power to raise armies and to organize, arm and discipline the Militia, and to govern

... such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States Respectively, the Appointment of Officers, and the Authority of training the militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress.

In the broadest sense, this militia is comprised of all able-bodied males. In 1939 the decision in *U.S. vs. Miller*, the Supreme Court defined the militia as comprising "all males physically capable of acting in concert for the common defense." This is the unorganized militia, which may be called upon to augment the organized militia should its numbers prove insufficient. Above this potential soldiery is the "well

regulated" or organized militia maintained in all 50 states and U.S. Territories as the Army and Air National Guards which have dual federal and state status. These main ground and air commands may be supplemented at the discretion of the states, by a third component, the volunteer state guards or defense forces (SDFs), (in Michigan, the State Emergency Volunteers). These reserve forces are not federal troops, but state troops and may be called to active duty only by the Governor. State guards are specifically recognized under the provisions of the State Defense Forces Act of the United States which authorizes the States and U.S. Territories to maintain "other troops" (32 U. S. Code Sec. 109). Although they are unpaid, SDF volunteers are not civilians. When on active state duty they are subject to the various state codes of military justice and are relieved from civil or criminal liability. In other words, they are soldiers subject to military, not civil law.

SDF volunteers are not exempt from federal service, which has a prior claim to all eligible American manpower. Indeed, members of the U. S. armed forces, both active and reserve, are barred by law from serving in SDFs. However, the great majority of SDF soldiers are retired active duty soldiers, who are no longer eligible for general service under federal selective service laws. As such, the SDFs provide a means for former professional soldiers to contribute their efforts, military training and special skills to the maintenance of military preparedness and public welfare. It is significant that defense force troops cannot be federalized even in a national emergency, although governors may order SDF soldiers to support federal missions and submit to federal commanders.

SDFs closely follow the organization, customs and courtesies of the U.S. Army. State guard officers, like their paid National Guard counterparts, are commissioned (or warranted) and promoted by the Governors as approved by the States' Adjutant Generals. Noncommissioned officers (NCOs) are typically appointed at the

discretion of an appointing officer after a nomination by an NCO board or the officer under whose authority the NCO will serve. Since state guards are generally cadre strength forces, some state units have no enlisted ranks below sergeant (Washington, for example). However, in most SDFs, volunteers hold ranks from Private to Brigadier General. As a rule, former members of the armed forces enter at their highest previous rank. The rate of promotion is comparable to other elements of the organized militia (National Guard).

Beyond the traditional military rank structure, personnel policies vary from state to state. Some states accept only volunteers with prior military service while others actively recruit all citizens. Non-prior-service volunteers usually enter as Privates, unless exceptionally qualified, in which case they may begin at a higher enlisted rank or apply for a commission subject to approval by an examining board of officers. As mentioned, the great majority of SDF soldiers have seen active duty. In fact, a casual look at the ribbons on their chests reveals a wealth of combat and other military experience that often far exceeds that of many of today's active duty units.

Inter-state variations are also found in SDF age and physical fitness policies. Some SDFs adhere to age and physical fitness standards only slightly less stringent than those of the active military. Other states welcome almost any good citizen over the age of consent who can make a commitment and contribution, regardless of physical condition. Most states, however, bar the wearing of the uniform by those who exceed normal military weight standards or suffer obvious infirmities.

As a general rule, volunteers agree to attend a minimum of one drill each month, and one or two additional training weekends a year. In practice, however, many volunteers far exceed this minimum expectation.

U. S. Army regulation 670-1 authorizes SDF volunteers to wear Army Service and Utility Uniforms with all federal emblems and insignia replaced by distinctive state

buttons and other organizational devices. While SDF volunteers do not qualify for Federal military awards and decorations, they are eligible for the many military awards and medals issued by state and territorial governments, the National Guards and by the state military forces themselves (Ogletree, 1988). SDF volunteers may wear Federal decorations earned while on active duty.

SDFs are cadre strength units (ranging from just over a hundred in some states to more than two thousand in the largest organizations). While reliable nationwide statistics are unavailable, a phone survey of SDF personnel officers suggests that almost 20,000 volunteers actively serve in these units, far fewer than are serving in the unauthorized militia movement. SDF soldiers are eligible for membership in the State Guard Association of the United States (SGAUS, not to be confused with the anti-government United States Militia Association). The SGAUS has 18 State Chapters and a fast growing and increasingly active membership. One of the primary goals of the SGAUS is to change Federal laws and open some Army training opportunities to state troops (especially professional military extension courses) on a vacancy basis. It also seeks authorization for SDFs to acquire equipment and supplies that are excess to the needs of the Department of Defense (DOD) and which may be beneficial to state civil defense and disaster relief missions. Another, more important goal of the Association is to encourage and improve the interface of the SDFs with the Federal military structure and to find new ways for its volunteers to support the National Guard, U.S. Army, and the DOD.

The main statutory missions of the various SDFs is to augment the National Guard in providing security or disaster assistance within the state if ordered by the Governor and to take over the armories and other state military property should the National Guard be mobilized.

National Guard Regulation 10-4 establishes the National Guard Bureau's policy

regarding interaction of the National Guard and the state defense forces. While this regulation has no legal authority over the SDFs, it constitutes the Bureau's opinion about what role these state units should play. One recommendation is that state defense forces be organized as either light infantry or constabulary units. Some states do this, others, such as Washington and California do not. Rather they designate their defense forces as infantry or other combat or combat support (military police, intelligence) branches. Regardless of the official branch designation, all SDFs field traditional service support branches (adjutant general's corps chaplain, and judge advocate general's corps, et cetera), and almost exclusively train to develop combat support and emergency service capabilities. Some states fully acknowledge their support status by embracing non-traditional branch designations that realistically reflect their domestic responsibilities. The basic branch in Oregon, for example, is the Emergency Services and Security Branch, a hybrid corps designation that combines that unit's constabulary function with its civil defense and disaster relief mission.

Regardless of the official SDF branch designation, no SDF actively prepares for combat. Most stand as common militia, trained as military generalists, preparing to meet the emergency service and civil defense needs of state governors.

In addition to continuous preactivation training, SDFs are also involved in a wide variety of National Guard support, civil humanitarian, community service, and ceremonial endeavors. Routine duties range from performing as military police, as in Texas and Tennessee, arresting AWOLs and rounding up stolen equipment (McHenry, 1994) to running week-long summer camps for children of National Guard soldiers (growing numbers of SDFs have sponsored Boy Scout, Civil Air Patrol Cadet and other youth-oriented programs). Thousands of hours of community service are logged each year by SDF soldiers performing security and traf-

fic control for parades, air shows and other events, or in assisting organizations like the Salvation Army in its annual Christmas food drives. Increasingly, SDFs have been asked to form honor details for veteran funerals and to provide color guards for other community events. SDF Medical companies are especially active. They have provided free blood pressure checks to thousands of citizens and have been authorized to give medical support to active Army units and ROTC cadets (Cheek, 1994).

The most rapidly expanding SDF mission is in emergency services. SDF participation in disaster relief operations, search and rescue missions and joint trainings with state Emergency Management Associations and other emergency service groups are improving the SDF's capabilities to assist the emergency management community. The Oregon State Defense Force, for example, has developed an aviation company with several instrument-rated pilots and trained observers who actively train to perform civil defense aerial radiological monitoring, assess damage for civil and military authorities, and transport Oregon State Defense Force command personnel and other officials in member-owned aircraft.

Despite a huge lack of resources and only modest support from most state military departments, the future for most SDFs looks promising. These units are working hard not only to support the active military establishment but to carve out viable missions of their own. A growing body of evidence supports the considerable value these organizations have for military family support and general humanitarian involvement as well as ceremonial and basic military security duties. Evidence suggests that SDFs will play an expanding and effective role in the emergency services arena. Despite such challenges as a historic ambivalence among some full time professional soldiers, the various SDFs, state guards, state military reserves and state emergency volunteers present a picture of energy, innovation and ability that will

carry America's volunteer militia tradition into the twenty-first century.

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## ABSTRACT

*One out of every seven people in this country has a disability, 19.1% of our population. Of all people with disabilities 66% are unemployed; 79% of them want to be engaged in meaningful work. It is apparent that there is a huge untapped resource for those seeking volunteers. This article explores barriers to and strategies for incorporating people with physical disabilities into a volunteer pool. It is based on the experience Courage Centers (a rehabilitation facility) has had in working with people with physical disabilities as volunteers and on a presentation made at the Association for Volunteer Administration International Conference in October, 1992.*

# Disability as a Part of Diversity

Lisa Taylor

## INTRODUCTION

Courage Center is a nonprofit rehabilitation facility headquartered in Golden Valley, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis. Founded in 1928 by volunteers concerned about unmet needs of "crippled children," Courage Center today serves 22,000 children and adults annually through more than 70 different programs. Woven into the fabric of these programs is the dedication of 2,400 volunteers who gave over 82,000 hours of direct client and clerical program support in 1993. Our organization's mission is to empower people who have physical disabilities and sensory impairments to achieve their full potential. We carry out this mission through rehabilitation, enrichment, vocational, independent living and educational services, with the vision that one day all persons will work, learn and play together in a community based upon their abilities not their disabilities.

Approximately 20% of Courage Center's 2,400 program volunteers have a physical disability. Many are current or former clients who have received services. These volunteers work in a wide variety of roles, including tour guides, reception volunteers, activity directors and assistants, instructors for arts classes, ski in-

structors, swim buddies, couriers, maintenance workers, disability awareness speakers, Board members, tutors, officials for wheelchair athletic events and general office workers.

In order to include people with physical disabilities as a part of your volunteer resource it may be necessary to make a few adaptations or shifts in thinking, but the investment will reap a multitude of benefits to your clients, your staff and especially to those individuals with physical disabilities who become your volunteers.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities include self-care, tasks done with one's hands, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning, working and recreation. A disability may be congenital (something one is born with) or it may be acquired through disease or as the result of an accident or injury. In this article we are concerned only with people with physical impairments. In order to successfully incorporate people with physical disabilities into your organization, it is important to lay some ground work.

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*Lisa Taylor is Director of Volunteer Services for Courage Center, a rehabilitation facility, whose volunteer program was the recipient of the President's Voluntary Action Award in 1990. Ms. Taylor has served as co-chair of workshops for the ICVA conference in Minneapolis and has been involved in volunteerism over the past twenty-five years.*

### *Assess the Physical Barriers In Your Facility*

First, survey your building or office space to determine its accessibility. The survey should include: parking availability, the entrance, your office or interview space, volunteer work areas, bathroom facilities, break room, cafeteria, width of doorways, door handles, and drinking fountains. As you identify physical barriers, you need to look for adaptations or alternatives such as attaching blocks under a table or desk to elevate it to accommodate a person using a wheelchair, or a telephone device for the deaf (TDD) to accommodate people with hearing impairments. See the appendix for a quick checklist and suggested solutions to barriers you might identify. Resources that may be helpful to you include your State Council on Disabilities, occupational therapists at a local hospital or rehabilitation facility, or staff members of an organization that provides services to people with physical disabilities.

### *Assess and Address Attitudinal Barriers Within Your Organization*

Secondly, it is important to recognize not only the physical barriers in your organization, but to have an accurate sense about how people *feel* about persons with physical disabilities. Some of the conscious, or often unconscious, attitudes that may exist as barriers in your organization include:

*Fear:* We often fear the unknown. We are afraid of doing or saying the "wrong thing." When we encounter someone with a disability, such as someone who uses a wheelchair, we may not know where to look or what to say to this person. Getting to know individuals with disabilities, learning WHO they are, what their interests are, activities they are involved in, things which are important to them helps alleviate this fear. Disability awareness speakers who can educate staff about what it is like to live with a disability are often available through your state or local Council on Disabilities, or through an organization that serves people with disabilities.

*Oversensitivity:* When meeting a person with a disability we may be overly sensitive, seeing only the disability and not the person. We focus our attention on the wheelchair, the scarred face, the missing arm, or the service dog. While it is not possible to deny that the disability exists, it is the individual who needs to be "seen." Again, by getting to know a person as an individual: his/her likes and dislikes, their feelings, their goals and opinions it helps you to see the *person*, not just his/her disability.

*Condescension:* This is a patronizing attitude. An attitude of condescension causes people to treat the person with the disability as if he/she are "less than" an able bodied individual. It is a classic example of focusing on the disability rather than on the individual's abilities.

*Spread effect:* This means generalizing about a person's abilities, based on your observation of his/her particular disability. This might be demonstrated by making an assumption that because someone uses a wheelchair, he or she cannot hear or understand. In speaking to that person, you may try to over simplify or talk loudly, believing that you are making yourself more easily understood, when, in fact, understanding is not the issue at all.

*Assumption:* Too often we assume we understand what is wrong with someone without taking time to investigate. When we see a person with a staggering gait or slurred speech we may assume that he/she are abusing drugs or alcohol, when in fact he/she may be recovering from a stroke or head injury. We may see someone with communication and/or mobility problems due to cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's Disease, and assume that he/she have some intellectual impairment. Again, learning more about physical disabilities can reduce many of these misconceptions.

*Discomfort:* Disabilities are an uncomfortable reminder that we are all vulnerable to accidents, illness and aging. We do not like to think about how a disability might change our own lives. Additionally, we

tend to be uncomfortable with physical conditions which are unfamiliar and which we do not understand.

Education and experience are the best approaches in eradicating attitudinal barriers. (See Appendix II.)

Once you have identified and addressed the barriers, you are ready to recruit.

## RECRUITMENT

Many volunteer centers include information in their data bases indicating whether placement is appropriate for a person with a disability. Let your volunteer center know that you are interested in recruiting people with disabilities as volunteers. Local organizations that provide services to or advocacy for people with disabilities would be ideal recruitment resources. As you are developing recruitment materials, look at the written and visual messages you are giving about opportunities for people with disabilities to volunteer: are you actively conveying the message that they are welcome?

## APPLYING THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

### *The Interview*

When interviewing someone with a disability, people often become overly concerned about their language and with what they should or shouldn't do to be helpful to the person with the disability. Common sense and common courtesy are your best guides. If you think the person may want some help, it is all right to ask. People with disabilities are used to instructing others about ways to help them. If you are concerned about your language, tell the person that if you say something that makes he/she uncomfortable to please let you know, so that you can learn to be more sensitive about language. Saying "see" to a blind person, or "walk" to someone who uses a wheelchair is seldom offensive to them. This is an example of being overly sensitive about everyday language. By the same token, there are words like crippled, lame, or victim that have

negative connotations and should be avoided. Many of these appear on the handout noted in the appendix.

In discussing an individual's skills and interests, Courage Center uses the same application and interview process as with any volunteer. As we begin to focus on a specific volunteer assignment, we show the potential volunteer the job description and ask whether he or she has any concerns about being able to fulfill any of the responsibilities. At that point, the person being interviewed has the opportunity to share any reservations. It would also be appropriate to ask the individual if any adaptations would be needed in order for him/her to fulfill the responsibilities of the position. Use your creativity here. It is important to be direct, clear and respectful. Two way communication during the interview process gives you the opportunity to explore the probability of a fit. If one does not exist, you need to be honest and, if possible, help that individual find a more appropriate volunteer opportunity elsewhere.

### *Designing the Job/Making the Match*

When assessing the appropriateness of a specific placement, it will be helpful to determine the essential functions of the volunteer assignment, the associated tasks and the performance criteria.

*Functional analysis:* What functions need to be accomplished? For example, for a tour guide, the essential functions include speaking clearly, moving around the facility, knowing the organization, meeting a variety of people well. An activity assistant must be able to understand and convey information to the clients, and must be patient and nurturing. If executing the tasks involved is a problem, are there alternative ways to accomplish the tasks other than the way in which they have traditionally been done? Let me give an example of job-sharing as an alternative method. We had a volunteer who used a wheelchair. Although he was licensed to drive, he lacked the hand strength to operate the wheelchair tiedowns in our vans.

We had an able-bodied volunteer who was performing community service but, according to Courage Center policies regarding court referred volunteers, was not allowed to transport clients. We paired them together to drive clients to an activity off site; one drove, and the other operated the tiedowns.

*Task analysis:* In assessing a job, it helps to separate it into the specific tasks that are involved. See the task/skill analysis section (Appendix IV pg. 23).

*Performance criteria to consider:* *Timing:* does this need to be done within a specific time frame or at a specific time? Is *mobility* a consideration? Is *strength* a factor? What about *endurance*? Must the tasks be done in a specific *sequence*? How important is *attention to detail*? What kind of *communication skills* are required (verbal, written, telephone)? What level of *math or reading comprehension* is necessary? What kind of *social skills* are important? Is *hygiene/appearance* a consideration? What is the *stress level* of this job? How *independent* does this individual need to be?

The checklist in the appendix may be helpful in addressing these questions and assessing the appropriateness of an individual for a specific job.

*Adapting the job:* Once you have identified job tasks that do not match the person's abilities, you need to allow for some reasonable accommodations. These accommodations will fall into three categories:

1. task modification: changing, simplifying or reordering the steps used to complete the task. Examples: could something done manually be done by computer? Try using different materials to complete the task: calculator, checklist as a reminder of the task sequence, or a paper-holder to enable someone to staple single handedly.
2. task elimination: simply eliminating a task that the person is unable to do.
3. task reassignment: changing the amount of personal assistance to complete a task, or job sharing as in the example given for the transportation volunteer.

A local resource to help you in solving similar challenges might be an occupational therapist at a local hospital, school or rehabilitation facility. Again, the Job Accommodation list in the appendix may be helpful.

Don't be diverted by the existence of barriers. Enlist the potential volunteer to help you address them. Be up front with the volunteer that this is a new experience for your agency, and that you need his or her help in blazing the trail. This will establish the relationship you need as you begin together to address the barriers. Start small in order to set yourselves up for success. Assign the volunteer to a staff member who is willing to be a partner in your pilot efforts; enlist his or her support as you move ahead together.

### *Training*

As with any volunteer, the training you provide for a volunteer with a disability can make or break the situation. There are a number of job aids, such as checklists, flowcharts, troubleshooting guides, a mentor or experienced partner, a manual that can be employed to facilitate the process of learning the assigned job. (See "Job Aids for Volunteers: Tools to Help Them Successfully Complete Their Jobs" by Susan J. Barkman, *Journal of Volunteer Administration*, Summer 1990.) Remember that the best guide for this will probably be the volunteer: Ask him or her for suggestions; how does he/she best learn?

Keep in mind that the complexity of the person's disability may require an extended learning time for the job.

### *Supervision*

In initially placing a person with a disability as a volunteer in your organization, the creativity and flexibility of the staff supervisor is a key point. Someone who is flexible and open will be a far better person than one who appears to be under pressure or is rigid. It will be important for the supervisor to be explicit about his or her expectations of the volunteer. Communication is critical. In giving the volunteer an assignment, it is important to de-

fine the tasks in terms of what is to be accomplished, not just the activities themselves. It is also important for all volunteers to have a sense of the big picture into which their roles fit.

Communicate parameters for decision making and the availability of resources, both material and supervisory. Who is available for clarification and problem solving? What is the desired result of the volunteer's work? Frequent and ongoing feedback to the volunteer will be essential: when will it happen, from whom? All of this is part of good supervision, but as you begin to include people with disabilities as volunteers, you want both their experience and yours to be successful. Extra attention to good supervision is key because many individuals providing supervision to volunteers have had no supervisory experience or training.

#### *Recognition*

What kind of ongoing recognition are you providing for volunteers? Socialization may be a primary motivation for someone with a physical disability to volunteer. Is that need being met by interaction with other volunteers and/or with staff? Another motivator may be skill development: are you providing opportunities for growth?

If you typically hold a recognition event, remember to determine whether the site for the event is accessible. Will you need an interpreter for volunteers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing?

This article has addressed persons with disabilities as an untapped resource and

discussed an approach for ensuring their inclusion. However, each person is an individual, and as such, is your best source of information about how to develop a successful volunteer experience. Persons with disabilities now represent over 19% of our population. They are rich in skills and knowledge, a gold mine of abilities waiting to be asked to make their contribution to your programs!

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## Appendix I

### Quick Look Barriers Checklist

This checklist is designed to give businesses a quick appraisal of potential problem areas for accessibility.

ITEM TO BE PERFORMED	YES	NO
<b>Building Access</b>		
1. Are 96" wide parking spaces designated with a 60" access aisle?	_____	_____
2. Are parking spaces near main building entrance?	_____	_____
3. Is there a "drop off" zone at building entrance?	_____	_____
4. Is the gradient from parking to building entrance 1:12 or less?	_____	_____
5. Is the entrance doorway at least 32 inches wide?	_____	_____
6. Is door handle easy to grasp?	_____	_____
7. Is door easy to open (less than 8 lbs. pressure)?	_____	_____
8. Are other than revolving doors available?	_____	_____
<b>Building Corridors</b>		
1. Is path of travel free of obstruction and wide enough for a wheelchair?	_____	_____
2. Is floor surface hard and not slippery?	_____	_____
3. Do obstacles (phones, fountains) protrude no more than four inches?	_____	_____
4. Are elevator controls low enough (48") to be reached from a wheelchair?	_____	_____
5. Are elevator markings in Braille for the blind?	_____	_____
6. Does elevator provide audible signals for the blind?	_____	_____
7. Does elevator interior provide a turning area of at least 51" for wheelchairs?	_____	_____
<b>Restrooms</b>		
1. Are restrooms near building entrance/personnel office?	_____	_____
2. Do doors have lever handles?	_____	_____
3. Are doors at least 32" wide?	_____	_____
4. Is restroom large enough for wheelchair turnaround (51" minimum)?	_____	_____
5. Are stall doors at least 32" wide?	_____	_____
6. Are grab bars provided in toilet stalls?	_____	_____
7. Are sinks at least 30" high with room for a wheelchair to roll under?	_____	_____
8. Are sink handles easily reached and used?	_____	_____
9. Are soap dispensers, towels, no more than 48" from floor?	_____	_____
<b>Personnel Office</b>		
1. Are doors at least 32" wide?	_____	_____
2. Is the door easy to open?	_____	_____
3. Is the threshold no more than 1/2" high?	_____	_____
4. Is the path of travel between desks/tables wide enough for wheelchairs?	_____	_____

## Appendix II

### Job Accommodation Ideas

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Job accommodation problems with proposed low-cost solutions from the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

We present these "problems" and "solutions" to start the creative process. They can be used to give a person who is inexperienced in hiring people with disabilities an idea of some accommodations that have actually been achieved. They make it easier to begin the process of working together for change.

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**Problem:** A person had an eye disorder. Glare on the computer screen caused fatigue.

**Solution:** An antiglare screen was purchased. (\$39.00)

---

**Problem:** A person with a learning disability worked in the mail room and had difficulty remembering which streets belonged to which zip codes.

**Solution:** A rolodex card system was filed by street name alphabetically with the zip code. This helped him to increase his output. (\$150.00)

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**Problem:** An individual with dyslexia who worked as a police officer spent hours filling out forms at the end of each day.

**Solution:** He was provided with a tape recorder. A secretary typed out his reports from dictation, while she typed the others from handwritten copy. This accommodation allowed him to keep his job. (\$69.00)

---

**Problem:** A person who used a wheelchair could not use a desk because it was too low and his knees would not go under it.

**Solution:** The desk was raised with wood blocks, allowing a proper amount of space for the wheelchair to fit under it. (\$0)

---

**Problem:** An employee who used a wheelchair could not use the restroom.

**Solution:** The toilet facilities were enlarged and a handrail was installed. (\$70.00)

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**Problem:** A person who worked outdoors had a medical condition which caused his hands to be unable to tolerate cold.

**Solution:** The individual used gloves with pocket hand warmers such as those used by hunters. (\$50.00)

---

**Problem:** A person with an unusually soft voice was required to do extensive public speaking.

**Solution:** A hand-held voice amplifier did the trick. (\$150.00)

---

**Problem:** An employer wanted to make the elevator accessible to a new employee who was blind and read Braille.

**Solution:** Raised dot elevator symbols that were self-adhesive made the elevator accessible. (\$6.00 each)

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**Problem:** A person had a condition which required two-hour rest periods during the day.

**Solution:** The company changed her schedule and allowed her longer breaks, although she worked the same number of hours. (\$0)

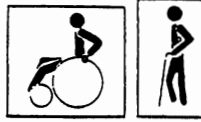
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For specific assistance, call the Job Accommodation Network 1-800-ADA-WORK

## It's the "Person First"—Then the Disability

### What do you see first?

- *The wheelchair?*
- *The physical problem?*
- *The person?*



If you saw a person in a wheelchair unable to get up the stairs into a building would you say "there is a handicapped person unable to find a ramp"? Or would you say "There is a person with a disability who is handicapped by an inaccessible building"?

What is the proper way to speak to or about someone who has a disability?

Consider how you would introduce someone—Jane Doe—who doesn't have a disability. You would give her name, where she lives, what she does or what she is interested in—she likes swimming, or eating Mexican food, or watching Robert Redford movies.

Why say it differently for a person with disabilities? Every person is made up of many characteristics—mental as well as physical—and few want to be identified only by their ability to play tennis or by their love for fried onions or by the mole that's on a face. Those are just parts of us.

In speaking or writing, remember that children or adults with disabilities are like everyone else—except they happen to have a disability. Therefore, here are a few tips for improving your language related to disabilities and handicaps.

1. Speak of the person first, then the disability.
2. Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
3. Do not label people as part of a disability group—don't say "the disabled"; say "people with disabilities."
4. Don't give excessive praise or attention to a person with a disability; don't patronize them.
5. Choice and independence are important: let the person do or speak for him/herself as much as possible: if addressing an adult, say "Bill" instead of "Billy."
6. A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability to walk, hear, talk learn. etc.; use handicap to describe a situation or barrier imposed by society, the environment or oneself.

### Say . . .

- person with a disability
- person with cerebral palsy
- person who is deaf or hard of hearing
- person with retardation
- person with epilepsy or person with seizure disorder
- person who has . . .
- without speech, nonverbal
- developmental delay
- emotional disorder, or mental illness
- uses a wheelchair
- with Down Syndrome
- has a learning disability
- nondisabled
- has a physical disability
- congenital disability
- condition
- seizures
- cleft lip
- mobility impaired
- medically involved, or has chronic illness
- paralyzed
- has hemoplegia (paralysis of one side of the body)
- has quadriplegia (paralysis of both arms and legs)
- has paraplegia (loss of function in lower body only)
- of short stature
- accessible parking

### Instead of . . .

- disabled or handicapped person
- palsied, or C.P., or spastic
- deaf and dumb
- retarded
- epileptic
- afflicted, suffers from, victim
- mute, or dumb
- slow
- crazy or insane
- confined to a wheelchair
- mongoloid
- is learning disabled
- normal, healthy
- crippled
- birth defect
- disease (unless it is a disease)
- fits
- hare lip
- lame
- sickly
- invalid or paralytic
- hemiplegic
- quadriplegic
- paraplegic
- dwarf or midget
- handicapped parking



## Appendix IV

### Courage Center Volunteer Department

#### Job Analysis

##### I. Physical Analysis

###### Strength/lifting

\_\_\_\_\_ lift less than 5 lbs. \_\_\_\_\_ less than 40  
\_\_\_\_\_ less than 20 \_\_\_\_\_ less than 50

###### Endurance

Work Speed Required \_\_\_\_\_  
High \_\_\_\_\_ Low

Frequency of breaks \_\_\_\_\_  
High \_\_\_\_\_ Low

Stress Level \_\_\_\_\_  
High \_\_\_\_\_ Low

Deadlines \_\_\_\_\_  
High \_\_\_\_\_ Low

###### Mobility

\_\_\_\_\_ Walking required Now continuously \_\_\_\_\_ Distance \_\_\_\_\_

###### Endurance

\_\_\_\_\_ Push \_\_\_\_\_ Climb \_\_\_\_\_ Crouch \_\_\_\_\_ See \_\_\_\_\_ Smell  
\_\_\_\_\_ Pull \_\_\_\_\_ Balance \_\_\_\_\_ Crawl \_\_\_\_\_ Color Vision \_\_\_\_\_ Taste  
\_\_\_\_\_ Reach \_\_\_\_\_ Stoop \_\_\_\_\_ Sit \_\_\_\_\_ Depth Perception \_\_\_\_\_ Touch  
\_\_\_\_\_ Run \_\_\_\_\_ Kneel \_\_\_\_\_ Turn \_\_\_\_\_ Hear \_\_\_\_\_ Finger Dexterity  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

##### II. Space/Equipment Needs (list)

##### III. Task/Skill Analysis

###### A. Problem Solving/Reasoning Tasks

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| _____ Determine own work activities                                      | _____ Devise new ideas, better work  |
| _____ Conduct work activities in appropriate sequence                    | _____ Recognize and use appropriate procedures   |
| _____ Recognize the effects of changing quantity or quality of materials | _____ Obtain resources needed to carry out work (e.g., equipment, materials, personnel, funds) |
| _____ Analyze and synthesize info  | _____ Collect and organize information   |
| _____ Review progress quickly  | _____ Identify alternative approaches/solutions  |
| _____ Correct deficiencies   |  |

**A. Problem Solving/Reasoning Tasks** (continued)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate for accuracy and completeness | <input type="checkbox"/> Summarize, draw conclusions |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____       |

**B. Computer Tasks**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enter data into computers | <input type="checkbox"/> Access data from computers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perform word processing   | <input type="checkbox"/> Write programs             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perform systems analysis  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____      |

**C. Mathematical Tasks**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Count  | <input type="checkbox"/> Estimate quantities needed to do job                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understand concepts of greater than and less than                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Use numerical values from charts, diagrams, tables               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calculate costs (e.g., interest, discounts, depreciation, prices, taxes) | <input type="checkbox"/> Construct diagrams, charts, records using numerical calculations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make and use measurements (standard, metric)                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Formulas (translating, substituting values)                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare budgets  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understand order (e.g., first, second, last)                             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handle basic calculations (+, -, ×, %)                                   |   |

**D. Communication Tasks**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Speak clearly                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Stay on topic of related conversations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use appropriate vocabulary, grammar       | <input type="checkbox"/> Report accurately what other has said  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give clear oral instructions              | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain activities and ideas clearly   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Presents information effectively to group | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Follow intent of oral directions          |   |

**E. Writing Tasks**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copy accurately   | <input type="checkbox"/> Write sentences in standard English (e.g., spelling, word choice)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete forms accurately (e.g., invoices, sales slips, requisitions) | <input type="checkbox"/> Organize, select and relate ideas in writing (e.g., correspondence) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Produce intelligible written documents (e.g., research reports)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and correct errors in writing                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write legibly   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____   |

**F. Reading Tasks**

- Identify work-related symbol/sign
- Read technical information

- Read simple directions
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. Personal Characteristics/Social Skills (check if important)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ General appearance (hygiene)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to interact with others
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Appropriateness of behavior
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Flexibility; able to accept change
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Attention span of \_\_\_\_\_ minutes needed
-

## ABSTRACT

*The Elder Abuse Resource Centre, a program of the Winnipeg, Manitoba-based Age & Opportunity Inc., provides counselling, information/referral, community education and research and data collection services related to family violence issues that affect older adults (60+). Volunteers have been involved in every aspect of the Centre's operations since its inception in 1990 and are key to the Centre's existence. This article will describe the Elder Abuse Resource Centre's Peer Support Volunteer Program, beginning with the rationale for establishing this vital volunteer position. The primary role that training has played in maintaining a quality volunteer program will also be addressed.*

# Elder Abuse Peer Support Partners: A Family Violence Prevention Strategy Utilizing Volunteers

Lynette Gillen

## INTRODUCTION

Elder abuse is a newly recognized type of family violence, having been effectively "discovered" in 1978 with a presentation to the U.S. Congress called "Battered Parents." Thus, the availability of documentation detailing co-ordinated volunteer efforts for the prevention of elder abuse is limited. The Winnipeg-based Elder Abuse Resource Centre (EARC) is itself in its infancy, having begun as a demonstration project in 1990. Since 1993, the EARC is an official program of its parent organization, Age & Opportunity Inc. Age & Opportunity Inc. is an umbrella nonprofit community service agency which has served Winnipeg seniors since 1957. In addition to providing counselling and support to elder abuse victims, the EARC also provides professional training programs, maintains an active Speakers Bureau to facilitate public awareness of the problem, and engages in research and data collection. The following paper will describe the results of the Elder Abuse Resource Centre's Peer Support Program which emphasizes one-on-one volunteer support of

EARC clients as an effective elder abuse prevention strategy.

An overview of the growing problem of elder abuse will be given, followed by a discussion of the peer support method in general. The EARC Peer Support Program then will be described, including current program statistics and the important role that training has played in attracting and supporting volunteers.

## THE GROWING PROBLEM

As noted earlier, elder abuse is a relatively newly-recognized phenomenon, although it is believed to have a history predating modern Western culture (Pillemer and Wolf, 1986). Elder Abuse is defined by the EARC as any act or omission, by a person in a position of trust, that causes harm to an older adult. This definition encompasses physical, financial and emotional abuse as well as intentional neglect. A 1990 survey conducted by the Ryerson Polytechnical Institute found that,

About 4% of respondents had experienced one or more forms of maltreat-

---

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ment. This means that (in Canada), based on a total elderly population in private dwellings of nearly 2.5 million, about 98,000 elderly persons have experienced some form of abuse or neglect (Podnieks, 1990).

However, it is safe to assume that this is a low estimate, as many victims of family violence are reluctant to disclose information about their situations. The EARC handles an average of 100 new cases of elder abuse each year, and provides information to double that number of people on an informal basis. This does not include professional training and speakers bureau engagements aimed at public awareness.

The reason one may refer to elder abuse as a "growing problem" is due to the growth in the senior population in general. As our society ages, more attention will have to be given to elder abuse. Family violence involves issues of power and control that are independent of age; therefore, the age of a person does not lessen the risk that s/he will be a victim of family violence.

#### PEER SUPPORT AS A PREVENTION STRATEGY

It is common for most of us to rely on "peers," people with similar values and experiences, to discuss our concerns. We build a healthy network of our partner, family and close friends on which to rely in crisis. Helping occurs through mutual sharing of experiences as well as through activities such as empathizing and providing feedback. However, older adults who have experienced family violence are often isolated and afraid to reach out to others. They have been involved in relationships which reinforce their passivity and undermine their independence by allowing another person to usurp their power. Ending the isolation of abused older adults is an important step towards bringing them to the point where they can lead an empowered life, capable of making decisions in their own best interests. It is gratifying to note that the Ryerson Poly-

technical Study referred to earlier stated that,

Peer Counselling may be a particularly effective service for seniors at risk, helping abuse victims share their experiences and become less isolated and more confident in their ability to respond to abusive situations (Podnieks, 1990).

Advantages of volunteer peer support include lessening the perceived threat to an abused individual as part of a client-professional counsellor relationship; giving a positive and empowered role model to victims of abuse; and finally, providing a cost-effective service to EARC clients who no longer require professional counselling, but still need support (France, 1989).

#### THE EARC VOLUNTEER PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

The EARC Volunteer Peer Support Program began with the Centre's inception in 1990. It is one of four volunteer opportunities available with the EARC. To date, twenty-two volunteers have been matched with clients either in an in-person match or as a telephone support to clients who are unable or unwilling to meet with a volunteer in person. All Peer Support Volunteers are required to have excellent communication skills, be willing to complete our training course, and be screened through an interview and reference check. Peer Support Volunteers who will be matched in person in most cases are truly peers, that is, within five years of age of the client. Telephone Support Volunteers are required simply to be over 18 years old in addition to meeting the EARC Volunteer Program core requirements. The Centre employs a Training Co-ordinator and Program Assistant to manage the peer partnerships. Both positions are part-time and currently funded by the Canadian Federal Government New Horizons program for services to seniors on a project basis.

Bi-monthly volunteer meetings are also organized, providing a forum for Peer

Support Volunteers to express their concerns and personal triumphs of their work with EARC clients. Additionally, program staff members encourage volunteers to call them after each appointment with their partners, particularly if they have had a highly emotional or troubling meeting.

The matching process for Peer Support Partners has been kept as simple as possible. Peer Support Partners are initially matched based upon factors such as compatible personality, proximity to the client and similar background. The Training Co-ordinator and EARC Counsellor collaborate to ensure that the best possible match is made. Thereafter, a four month trial period ensues where either partner may choose to terminate the relationship. If all goes well, the volunteer contracts for an additional six months with evaluations of the relationship occurring every six months.

Peer Support Volunteers are an exceptionally diverse group of people. Many of our volunteers are retired from the traditional helping professions, such as nursing or social work, but the program also incorporates other retirees who have seen first hand evidence of elder abuse and its effects, including a former bank manager and an employee of the provincial courts.

#### THE PEER SUPPORT VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAM

Beginning with the development of the EARC volunteer program, volunteer training of the highest quality has been a priority. In 1992, the EARC obtained a grant to compose their *Peer Support Volunteer Trainer's Manual*. This resource is used by family violence agencies and volunteer bureaus across Canada. At this time, the manual is being revised to include training modules for volunteer support group co-facilitators and speakers bureau volunteers.

The Peer Support Volunteer Training Program is an intensive eight week series of lectures, role-playing and sharing which emphasizes the development of communication skills, and gaining knowledge of

elder abuse, community resources and the aging process. It is designed as a "mini-gerontology" course. Program modules include an overview of the subject of elder abuse, information on ageism in North American society, a description of the justice system as it relates to family violence, information on the importance of self-care, as well as a number of sessions stressing personal communication skills. Techniques employed in the communication seminars include games which encourage the use of open-ended questions, reflective responses, feedback, and a non-judgemental attitude which avoids the pitfalls of advice giving. Experts are used as lecturers whenever possible. They are an important part of the EARC's mandate to maintain links with a wide variety of community-based organizations. For example, a representative from the Winnipeg Police Department delivers a presentation on the justice system while the local Addictions Foundation covers the subject of aging and chemical abuse. EARC staff members and Speakers Bureau Volunteers reciprocate with public awareness presentations to these same groups.

Besides providing volunteers with training appropriate to their task, the training sessions also serve as an important part of the matching process in that the Training Co-ordinator becomes very familiar with the participants over the eight weeks of the course. Based upon work within the training sessions, the Co-ordinator makes recommendations to the EARC Counsellor as to suitable volunteers for a peer partnership. It is interesting to note that a situation was recently encountered where a volunteer had successfully completed the interview and reference-check portion of the EARC screening process but was subsequently found to be unsuitable as a Peer Partner during the course of the training program.

Another possible problem solved by the eight-week training program is the volunteers' conceivable reluctance to attend regular volunteer meetings which help staff members assess the program strengths

and weaknesses. Thus far, volunteers have formed such strong bonds to other group members throughout the training process that they have welcomed opportunities to meet again on a regular basis. This initial group experience allows volunteers to better share their thoughts about their matches at the meetings.

The Training Co-ordinator and Program Assistant also use bi-monthly volunteer meetings for additional training as the need arises. For example, a session was recently completed which focused on setting limits and knowing when and how to say "No." The Training Co-ordinator perceived a need for the session based on a report from a volunteer that included receiving five calls each day from the client with whom the volunteer was matched. Knowing that many volunteers feel that they should be able to "do it all," a volunteer meeting was organized to address this issue. Bi-monthly volunteer meetings consequently provide staff members with flexibility when meeting volunteers' training needs.

## CONCLUSION

The strength of the EARC Peer Support Volunteer Program lies in its volunteers, partnerships with other community-based organizations, and commitment to train-

ing to ensure a quality program. Program funding remains an important issue, as core funding exists only to employ the EARC Counsellor, whereas the Volunteer program must continually seek project funding to remain viable. Given that the reported incidences of elder abuse will inevitably rise as we age as a society, this service will remain a necessary and cost-effective element in the prevention of further occurrences of elder abuse.

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