

Court-Referred Community Work Volunteers: A Library Case Study

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Durham County Library consists of a main library, seven branches, and two mobile units serving a population of 153,000 residents of the city of Durham, North Carolina and surrounding Durham County. The library has a collection of some 280,000 volumes plus audiovisual materials. Annual circulation exceeds 730,000 items.

The library employs 72 full-time people, two part-time permanent staff, 19 part-time pages, and one part-time intern. Very little has been automated in the library. Acquisitions and cataloging are handled on-line, but the physical processing of materials and maintaining the card catalog are still done manually. The administrative office and the reference department have a micro-computer each. None of the circulation functions have been computerized.

Volunteers have been utilized in the library system for many years. Prior to the 1980's they were used primarily for special projects such as taking a user survey and assisting with large children's programs. The library was unable to use much volunteer help because of severe space limitations. There was hardly any room for staff, much less volunteers. There was only one regular weekly volunteer at the main library.

Late in 1979, anticipating moving into a new, much larger main facility, the library recruited two additional volunteers to help begin taking inventory. About the same time, Offender Aid and Restoration of Durham County contacted the library to

see if first offenders could perform required community service at the library. The Assistant Director completed a questionnaire describing the types of work that needed to be done and an agreement was reached. Initially the court volunteers cleaned books which were stored in the very filthy basement of another county agency. When the new building was ready for occupancy, volunteers were immediately recruited to assist with taking inventory and many were persuaded to continue helping with daily tasks.

The library underwent a major organizational change in the summer of 1982. At that time, management of the volunteer program was moved from administration to the newly formed Community Services Department. The new library director indicated a strong commitment to utilizing volunteers; hence, the volunteer program was formalized at that time.

As time went on, the volunteer program began to rely more and more heavily on its court-referred volunteers. In 1984 a study was undertaken to evaluate how well these volunteers were fulfilling their community service obligations and to make some comparison with the regular volunteer program. All court-referred volunteers were studied. Selected volunteers from other sources were used for the comparison. Statistics were gathered over an eleven month period from January to November.

SOURCES OF VOLUNTEERS

The library uses people referred

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through many sources. Briefly, those discussed in this study were referred from the following sources:

Non-court:

RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program, age 60 and up)

Volunteer Services Bureau (youth and adults)

N.C. School of Science and Mathematics (high school students, required to perform community service)

Self referred (youth and adults)

Court:

DSRP (Durham Service and Restitution Program, a first offender program for persons cited or arrested for a misdemeanor. This program was reinstated when the Offender Aid and Restoration program mentioned earlier ceased to exist)

DWI (Driving While Impaired, punishment of 24, 48, or 72 hours community work in lieu of jail sentence for driving under influence of drugs or alcohol)

ReEntry, Incorporated (a felony diversion program)

Adult Probation (adults on probation)

Juvenile Probation (youth under 16 on probation) Direct Placement (persons referred directly by a judge or district attorney and who were ineligible for participation through DSRP)

STATISTICAL STUDY

Analysis of statistics for the various groups of volunteers proved to be quite interesting. A comparison of hours scheduled versus number of hours worked was made. The findings are summarized in the accompanying chart.

Of 2327 hours scheduled for DWI clients, 2136% or 92% were completed. There were 80 persons involved, 69 completed, 10 were terminated for poor attendance, and 1 was transferred to another agency to complete his work. Of the 69 completions, 48% were ranked as per-

forming excellent work, 25% good work, 20% adequate work, and only 6% poor work.

The figures for DSRP were almost impressive. Of 2341% hours scheduled, 1973 or 84% were worked. There were 46 people involved, 38 completed, 7 were terminated for poor attendance, and 1 was terminated for falsifying his time sheet. Of the 38 completions, work was ranked as excellent for 71%, good for 18%, adequate for 5%, and poor for 5%.

ReEntry had the next best statistical record: 176% hours completed of 216 hours scheduled, or 82%. Unfortunately, both of the people placed through this program proved to be supervisory problems.

Direct Placement also did well. The two people referred were scheduled for a total of 80 hours. One completed all of his hours; the other working one-quarter of her hours, for a combined total of 65 hours or 81%.

Adult Probation volunteers did not do so well. The one federal probation case worked out very well and actually worked more hours than scheduled; however, the four cases from district court were for the most part unsatisfactory. Altogether, the adult probationers were scheduled 518 hours and completed 320 hours, 62%.

All totalled, court volunteers were scheduled for 5533% hours. They completed 476% for an 85% rate. The figures reported for court referrals do include people who were interviewed and assigned even if they never reported for any of their hours.

To calculate the number of hours scheduled for long-term volunteers, the number of hours each worked per week was multiplied by 46, the number of weeks in 11 months, minus 2 weeks for vacation. In addition, the days the library closed for holidays and staff training sessions were subtracted for each individual affected. The statistics show that 1168 hours were scheduled for RSVP members of

which 919½ or 79% were worked. For other long-term adult volunteers, 814 hours were scheduled and 598½ or 74% were actually worked.

A sampling of youth volunteers showed 117¼ hours worked of 153 hours scheduled, for 77%. However, this figure does not include youth who were placed and quit before the ending date of their volunteer agreement with the library.

All totalled, the non-court referred volunteers sampled were scheduled 2099¼ hours. They completed 1671 hours for an 80% rate.

Clearly, Durham County Library is experiencing a better fulfillment rate from court referrals as a whole than from general volunteers.

PROFILE OF COURT PARTICIPANTS

What are the court volunteers like? There has been a tremendous variety. Ages range from teens to 60's. They have been male, female, black, white, oriental, foreign, low income, and high income. Education and intelligence have ranged from semi-literate, mildly retarded to college-degreed, highly intelligent. Employment runs the gamut also: unemployed, student, clerical, sales, construction, medical, engineering, artistic, food services, and even college faculty. In short, there is no typical participant.

From January to November 1984, offenses included the following:

Driving offenses:

- driving while impaired
- driving without a license and damage to property
- hit and run and property damage

Substance offenses:

- possession of drugs
- aiding underage purchase of beer
- selling beer to minor
- transporting mixed beverage
- possession or consumption of alcoholic beverage
- underage contributing to the delinquency of a minor by giving beer to underaged

Theft:

- shoplifting (person is apprehended in store)
- concealment (person has concealed goods, such as in pocket, inside store)
- accessory to a felony
- possession of stolen goods

Property damage:

- broken window
- damage to personal property
- and assault on an officer
- breaking and entering an automobile

Assault (fighting)

Falsifying federal tax returns for other people

By far the most common offenses have been driving while impaired (90 cases) and shoplifting, concealment, or larceny (25 cases).

The offenders have been well mixed by race and sex. For example, in the DWI program, there were 36% white male, 25% white female, 28% black male, and 11% black female. In the DSRP program, there were 28% white male, 30% white female, 22% black male, and 20% black female.

TYPES OF WORK PERFORMED BY VOLUNTEERS

These court-referred volunteers have been active in every department of the library. Ideally, of course, each would be placed strictly according to his/her skills, abilities, and interests. In reality, placement is determined largely by the availability of the client (hours of day, days of week) and supervisors' requests for help. The library has utilized so many volunteers that it is impossible to list all jobs performed; however, sample jobs are listed below:

Typing - reports, overdue notices, book cards, delinquent borrowers' list*, large print catalog*, list of juvenile filmstrips*, etc. (The * items probably would not have been done if there had not been a volunteer to do it.)

Filing - putting daily circulation cards in order (often there are

more than 1000 cards in a day), sorting and shelving books, filing in card catalog, withdrawing cards from card catalog*. (* Item is done entirely by volunteers.)

Telephoning

Checking books in and out

Inspecting and cleaning returned audiovisual materials

Collating, stapling, mimeographing, making signs, preparing bulk mailings, rubber stamping, etc.

Assisting with programs by running projector, working with children's summer reading program, serving refreshments

Filling in book order cards, checking bibliographies, writing annotations

In short, the court-referred volunteers help with nearly all the daily operations of the library. Their help is indispensable in major projects such as moving vast numbers of books (shifting the collection, as it is known in library terminology).

The library's regular volunteers perform many of the same tasks. They are, however, given much more choice about what tasks they would like to perform. Their interviews include discussion of their motivation, skills and interests as well as a description of available volunteer opportunities. As stated before, court referrals are generally placed based on immediate needs of the library and the volunteer's availability.

Most of the youth volunteers choose to run the film projector for programs or to work with circulation functions such as searching for reserve books or filing. The youth usually work on a short term basis, i.e., summer vacation or one school semester.

Half of the library's seventeen long-term adult volunteers work independently at a public service site, greeting the public and directing them to parts of the book collection,

meeting rooms, and the administrative offices. Of the other half, four work with children's services (primarily assisting with clerical duties), two with reference staff, and one each with audiovisuals, technical services (preparing books for discard), and overdues.

EVALUATION OF COURT-REFERRED PROGRAM

Overall, the use of court-referred volunteers at Durham County Library has been highly successful. It has not been without problems, however. Relations with the probation system, ReEntry, Incorporated, and court officials making direct placements has been far less than satisfactory. The distance between Durham and Raleigh may account for the problems with ReEntry, since limited budgets prohibited frequent long distance telephone contact. There were difficulties with both placements from this program. One did not attend regularly as scheduled. The other required constant supervision.

DSRP and DWI have established written standards (see Appendices A to D). The probationary programs and direct placements lack the firm guidelines provided by the DSRP and DWI programs. Follow-up generally has not been provided by these placement sources.

The one federal court placement was referred through the Volunteer Services Bureau. He did well because he turned out to be a very responsible individual. The federal probation officer made no contact with the library.

Experience has shown that a good relationship with frequent contact must be maintained for the success of the program. In Durham County Library's case, contact is made at least two to three times a week with the DSRP/DWI program to receive new placements and to make reports on current volunteers. There are usually six to twelve persons referred from these programs on the library's current volunteer list at any time.

COMPLETION RATES FOR VOLUNTEER HOURS SCHEDULED JANUARY - NOVEMBER 1984

Source of Volunteers	Hours Scheduled	Hours Worked	% of Scheduled Hours Worked
+ DSRP	2341½	1973	84%
+ DWI	2327	2136½	92%
+ Juvenile Probation	51	8	16%
+ Adult Probation	518	320	62%
+ Direct Placement	80	65	81%
+ ReEntry	216	176½	82%
TOTAL COURT	5533½	4678½	85%
+ RSVP	1168	919½	79%
++ Other Adults	814	598½	74%
* Youth	117½	153	77%
TOTAL NON-COURT	2099½	1671	80%

+ represents all persons in this category

++ represents current (as of December 1, 1984) volunteers, not including those who quit or were terminated during the year

* represents selected youth, excluding all those who did not work until the end of the agreed -upon time.

The most annoying problem with individual volunteers has been attendance. This problem is not limited to the court referrals. Staff members need to know when to expect their volunteers so that adequate supervision may be provided and effective use made of the volunteer's time. The problem with attendance of court referrals was addressed by the adoption of a strict attendance policy (see Appendix E). If a person violates the attendance policy, the volunteer coordinator questions the immediate supervisor as to whether the person should be given a second opportunity to meet his/her obligations. If so, a warning is given to the volunteer. If not, the volunteer is terminated at that point and paperwork returned to the appropriate referral source. One of the best features of the program is that volunteers who do not meet the library's regulations may be sent back to the referring agency at any time. This eliminates a great deal of nuisance.

Other minor problems have been improper dress, eating, drinking, or smoking on the job, or bringing a radio to work. Such situations have been virtually eliminated since a volunteer handbook has been written. The library's expectations of volunteers are reviewed point by point with each individual as a part of orientation. (See Appendix F for rules sheet taken from the handbook.)

Major problems have been suspected theft (three incidents in four years) and falsification of time sheets (two incidents and an offer of a bribe to falsify a time sheet or to accept a contribution to the library in lieu of working required hours). These were difficult to deal with but, again, the referral agency was helpful in resolving the problems.

Supervision problems sometimes occur. In these cases, the coordinator may counsel staff or the volunteer. Sometimes the volunteer is reassigned within the library. If the problem cannot be resolved in that

manner, the supervisor opts either to retain the volunteer despite a less than ideal situation, or to request the volunteer be terminated. The problems have generally occurred when the volunteer required close supervision and detailed instruction. Due to the volume of work to be done, the library must have volunteers who can work well with a minimum of instruction and supervision. Fortunately, a high percentage of those referred are able to do so.

The use of court referrals at Durham County Library has proved to be a very positive experience for the library. In addition to receiving a great deal of service, the library has benefitted by working with many people who did not ordinarily use the library. Most have been amazed by what the library does have to offer. The result has been good public relations and increased public awareness of the library. One placement was hired as a page in the library. Two others continued to volunteer additional hours upon completion of their required hours.

There has been some negative impact on the regular volunteer program. Sentiment was expressed by one volunteer that the court referrals should have badges designating them as "aides," or some term other than "volunteer." Another volunteer reported that some of her fellow civic group members did not want to volunteer at the library because so many court placements worked there that they feared people would perceive them to be offenders also.

Staff has overcome any initial reluctance toward working with court placements. An explanation of what they should expect (and tolerate) from the volunteers and the volunteer coordinator has helped the program run smoothly. Supervisors recognize the valuable contribution the volunteers make and generally are diligent about making them feel welcome and appreciated.

From a volunteer administrator's point of view, the program is rela-

tively easy to administer. Persons may be turned down without an interview if the library cannot use them at that time or if their offenses are considered to be of such a nature that successful placement is unlikely. Persons may also be turned down after placement interview at the discretion of the volunteer coordinator. Placement interviews require much less time than regular interviews, generally about 30 minutes to arrange a placement, set up a schedule, review the handbook, show the volunteer where the staff room is, where time sheets are kept, and introduce him or her to the supervisor. Supervisors usually spend a minimum of time instructing these volunteers because they are short term and are only taught to do a few things.

Record keeping is simple, with just a registration card rather than a formal application, an agreement sheet, and a time sheet (see Appendix for samples). Follow-up paperwork to the courts can be completed in approximately five minutes per case. Formal recognition is not done, although a certificate may be awarded or a thank you note sent to persons whose performance is particularly outstanding.

All in all, Durham County Library's experience has been that the court program is certainly worthwhile.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Volunteer administrators faced with the decision of whether to use court referrals will want to keep these considerations in mind:

1. Can my program use short-term commitment people?
2. Does the referral source have firm written guidelines governing eligibility for participation and written regulations for the defendants? (See Appendix A for eligibility guidelines and participant regulations used by DSRP/DWI program.)
3. Does the referral source have a written agreement with recipient agencies, outlining responsibilities and rights of all parties? (See Appendix B for agency agreement form.)
4. Do the guidelines include having the participant abide by my agency's rules and standards?
5. Must the client perform at a certain standard in order to receive credit for hours served? (See Appendix D for participant evaluation form.)
6. Does the referral source pre-screen the volunteers, keeping agency needs in mind?
7. Does the referral source assist the recipient agency with problems?
8. Can the placement be terminated by my agency? On what grounds?

Having a written agreement and a clear understanding of the rights of the recipient agency are very highly recommended. A court program with enough staff to maintain sound volunteer management practices can certainly be effective in working with agencies for a successful community work program.

APPENDIX A

Eligibility Criteria for Community Service Defendants

Community Service Punishment is certainly not appropriate for all convicted defendants. The safety of the community and the protection of the on-going community service program should be considered. The agencies where the defendant must be assigned to work are not usually capable of supervising a hostile or emotionally disturbed defendant. Therefore, the following criteria of eligibility are recommended for consideration by the Trial Judge:

- (1) consider only non-violent offenses
- (2) exclude defendants:
 - (a) who have had a history of assaultive or violent behavior
 - (b) who have previously been unsuccessful in performing community service work
- (3) exclude:
 - (a) minor traffic violations
 - (b) drug offenses
 - (c) sex offenses

Permission should be granted to the community service coordinators to promptly report to the Court information gained by the coordinator in screening the defendant for community service work which was not made known to the Court and which indicates the defendant's unfitness for community service.

APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK PROGRAM
Recipient Agency Agreement

_____, hereinafter referred to as recipient agency, and the Community Service Work Program mutually agree to the following conditions:

THE RECIPIENT AGENCY AGREES TO:

1. Provide work for defendants and any necessary working materials.
2. Provide safe working conditions.
3. Refrain from assigning defendants to any activities that are not ordinarily performed by employees or volunteers.
4. Provide supervision of work participants.
5. Notify CS Coordinator immediately if defendant fails to show or is continually tardy.
6. Notify CS Coordinator immediately if defendant performs community service work below average or poor. The defendant will not receive credit for work performed at these levels.
7. Notify CS Coordinator immediately if defendant violates any Requirements and Regulations.**

THE COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK PROGRAM AGREES TO:

1. Provide agency with explanation of defendant's offense before placement.
2. Provide defendants, when available, to recipient agency.
3. Notify recipient agency of changes, relative to any defendants reporting to that agency.
4. Maintain scheduled contact with defendants.
5. Promptly and effectively handle any problems that may arise as a result of work placement.
6. Provide medical insurance for accidental injury.

The undersigned have affixed their signatures this ____ day of _____, 19____.

Authorized Rep. of Recipient Agency CS Coordinator

This contract will be null and void by mutual consent of the authorized representative of the recipient agency and the community service coord.

* One signed copy should be maintained by each party.

**A copy of the Rules & Regs. should be attached to the agency's copy.

APPENDIX C

DWI COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM
Requirements & Regulations

Defendants Name: _____ Docket No _____
Court Date: _____ No. of Hours _____

I. REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETION OF DWI COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

1. To successfully complete the Community Work Program a defendant must satisfactorily complete the required number of hours ordered by the court.
2. The defendant must participate in an interview with the DWI Coordinator to insure successful community work placement. It is the defendant's responsibility to schedule this interview within _____ Location of Community Work Program: _____
Phone Number: _____

This form is verification of your referral to the DWI Community Work Program and must be presented to the DWI Coordinator.

3. The defendant must complete all written forms by the court and the DWI Coordinator.
4. The defendant must pay the administrative fee of \$50 or \$100 whichever is appropriate. The defendant must present a copy of the receipt to the Coordinator.
5. The defendant must maintain contact with the DWI Coordinator as indicated below:

Monthly _____ Weekly _____ Other _____

II. DWI COMMUNITY WORK REGULATIONS

1. Every effort will be made by the DWI Coordinator to accomodate each defendant's personal schedule for both interview appointments and work placement hours.
2. The DWI Community Work Program will not permit a defendant to be tardy nor absent for a placement site or an interview. The only exceptions to this rule are:
 - a. Illness a letter from a licensed physician must be furnished.
 - b. Death of an immediate relative.
3. No defendant will be permitted to report for community work placement or an interview, who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This violation is grounds for defendant to be returned to court.
4. Conduct at the work placement:
 - a. All defendants must report to the on-site supervisor.
 - b. Defendants must follow all instructions given by the supervisor.
 - c. Defendants are required to wear clothing appropriate to the setting or agency in which they are placed. Shoes must be worn at all time, no open shoes are permitted for

- outside work, no sandals at any time. For outdoor work, clothes should be worn for protection from the sun; sunscreen, sunglasses, and gloves are also recommended. Supervisory personnel reserve the right to determine whether or not clothing or attire is appropriate to the setting.
- d. Depending on the work schedule at the placement site, lunch and beverage may be brought.
 - e. No visitors of any kind are permitted at the placement site.
 - f. Defendants are expected to demonstrate a good attitude and willingness to perform the duties assigned in a professional manner.
 - g. Defendants are expected to abide by all rules and regulations of the recipient agency.
5. If a defendant has been returned to court for non-compliance of community work requirements or violation of the court order, he/she will not be eligible for re-enrollment in the DWI Community Work Program .
 6. Any violation of these conditions is grounds for defendant to be returned to court.

No refund of Community Service Work fees will be made.

By my signature, I acknowledge that I have received, read, or have had read to me, and understand these requirements and regulations. I agree to comply with the conditions stated herein.

Defendant's Signature _____
DATE

DWI Coordinator _____

APPENDIX D

DWI COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM
 Evaluation Form

PREVIEW FORM WITH DEFENDANT BEFORE HE/SHE BEGINS COMMUNITY WORK

This section is to be completed by the recipient supervisor, after the DWI defendant completes the required number of hours. A signature on this form verifies the hours worked by the defendant as listed on the reverse side. Please give an honest evaluation, with any helpful comments.

1. Did the defendant abide by established schedule for completing community work?

Yes _____ No _____

If not, did the defendant call prior to his/her absence or tardiness with reasonable cause to miss, such as illness?

Yes _____ No _____ Comments _____

2. Was the defendant cooperative, and willing to do tasks which he/she was capable of doing?
 Yes _____ No _____ Comments _____

3. Did the defendant stay on task without constant prodding?
 Yes _____ No _____ Comments _____
4. What type of community work did he/she perform? _____

5. Did the defendant conduct himself/herself in an appropriate manner for your work setting? Yes _____
 No _____ Comments _____
6. Did he/she indicate a desire to become a volunteer in your agency?
 Yes _____ No _____
7. Other comments, if any _____

8. In summary, how would you rate his/her performance of the community service work, according to criteria discussed below?
 _____ Excellent _____ Below Average*
 _____ Above Average _____ Poor*
 _____ Average

*Defendants performing community work at below average or poor levels should be referred back to the DWI Coordinator immediately. Work performed at these levels will not be acceptable.

Signature of recipient agency representative _____
 Date _____

Mail this form to DWI Coordinator after defendant completes his/her assigned community work hours.

APPENDIX E

Durham County Library Attendance Regulations Required Community Service Volunteers

Placement

All volunteers must have a placement/scheduling interview with Kay Taylor, Head of Community Services. Interviews are held between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Occasionally, interviews may be scheduled on Saturdays. Interviews must be arranged in advance.

Schedules

Every effort will be made to accommodate each volunteer's personal needs; however the needs of the library will always be given precedence in establishing a work schedule. Once the specific schedule has been agreed upon, it must be kept. Changes in schedules are permitted only if:

- a. they allow you to finish ahead of schedule.
- b. they are agreeable to your supervisor(s)

If your schedule on your paid job changes, it is your responsibility to let your employer know you have this commitment which must be fulfilled.

Absences

The only absences which may be excused are:

- a. illness requiring you to be absent from your paid job (if more than one scheduled date is involved, doctor's certification is required)
- b. death in your immediate family
- c. DWI classes

Your supervisor must be notified in advance of these absences. Arrangements must be made with the supervisor to make up the missed hours at a mutually convenient time before your court date.

Any other absence will be considered unexcused and may be grounds for dismissal from the library's volunteer program.

APPENDIX F

WHAT THE LIBRARY EXPECTS FROM YOU AS A VOLUNTEER

- Transportation:** You are responsible for providing your own transportation to and from work.
- Attendance:** You must notify your on-site supervisor in advance if you cannot work at your scheduled time. If you cannot reach your supervisor, leave a message or ask for the volunteer coordinator. Failure to do so may result in suspension or termination from the volunteer program.
- Babysitting:** You must make your own child care arrangements.
- Time Sheets:** You are responsible for recording your hours worked on a volunteer time sheet. Your supervisor or the volunteer coordinator will show you where the time sheets are kept.
- Badges:** Badges are provided by the library. Please be sure to wear your volunteer badge while on duty in the library. The badge should be left at the work site at the end of each work session.
- Dress:** Volunteers are to dress neatly and be well groomed at all times. The following apparel is not appropriate: shorts, halter tops, hats, mesh shirts, shirts that do not overlap pants or skirts; tube tops, tank tops, flip flops. Combs and curlers in hair are not permitted. (When working in a branch library, talk to the supervisor about appropriate dress. It will not necessarily be the same as in the Main Library)
- Attitude:** You are expected to show a positive attitude and to conduct yourself in a business-like manner. You are representing the library when you work here.
- Service to public:** When approached by the public with questions, answer if you are positive of your facts; otherwise refer person to a staff member.
- Confidentiality of library records:** Library records are confidential. Users, what they check out or any fines they owe, are not to be discussed with others.
- Delinquent materials or fines:** If you owe fines or have long overdue materials, you must clear your record before you begin your volunteer work.
- Performance:** Work must be of a quality acceptable to the supervisor.