

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF VOLUNTEERS

by

ADOLPH R. NEAL, M.S.W.

Veterans Administration Center, Temple, Texas

The purpose of this study of volunteers in Veterans Administration facilities was to determine what impact, if any, supervision and/or training had in the performance of volunteers. The writer considers supervision and training to be the most effective way of modifying undesirable attitudes in volunteers and a means of making maximum effectiveness of the services volunteers provide. Training is accepted as necessary to utilizing volunteers in a hospital setting. This was corroborated by Vernallis and St. Pierre¹ who concluded individual hospitals have the responsibility of orienting and training volunteers. In view of the widespread use of volunteers by Veterans Administration hospitals, the writer considered it pertinent to examine what influence supervision and/or training had on the performance ratings of volunteers in their duty assignments.

The hypothesis of this study is as follows: Volunteers who receive supervision and/or training will perform more effectively in their duty assignments. The writer also attempted to determine if the education and age influenced the ratings of effectiveness which volunteers received.

Five hundred questionnaires were mailed to ten Veterans Administration Hospitals. The supervisor of each volunteer selected and the Directors of Voluntary Services were asked to complete the appropriate portions of the questionnaire. The names of regularly scheduled volunteers who were on the hospital's roster for the period of January 1, 1968, through June 30, 1968, and who still had current assignments were alphabetized. A random sample was obtained by selecting every third name until each hospital had selected 500 volunteers or as near that number as was possible. Three hundred and ninety-four questionnaires were returned.

Chi-square was used to measure the frequency discordance between observed performance ratings of volunteers and the expected or hypothesized frequencies.*

Ratings were categorized as low, medium, and high. Volunteers were assigned to four different categories: (1) volunteers who had received no supervision and no training; (2) volunteers who had received no supervision but had received training; (3) volunteers who had received

*Detailed analysis of statistical data may be obtained directly from the author.

supervision but had not received training; and (4) volunteers who had received both supervision and training. Supervision was defined as face to face conferences between volunteers and their supervisors with emphasis on teaching-learning relationships. Training was limited to workshops, orientation, seminars, institutes or other more formalized kinds of teaching-learning situations.

The following findings were observed: (1) Volunteers who received both supervision and training made fewer low ratings; (2) volunteers who received no supervision and no training made fewer higher ratings; and (3) volunteers who received both supervision and training made the highest percentage of high ratings. This indicated that volunteers who received both supervision and training were rated more favorably by their supervisors than volunteers in other categories.

Volunteers who received no supervision were compared with those who received supervision and the same was done with training. Comparisons indicated that volunteers who had received supervision made fewer low ratings and made more high ratings than volunteers who did not receive supervision. The same was true of volunteers who received training but no supervision. Volunteers who had no supervision made a higher percentage of medium scores than did volunteers with supervision; however, volunteers who received training made a higher percentage of medium ratings than volunteers who received no training.

Volunteers who had completed eight grades of school or less received the most low ratings while volunteers who had graduate study made fewer low ratings. Without exception volunteers who had completed the most grades of school made the highest number of high ratings. The mode of average ratings was within the 9-11 grades with corresponding decreases in average ratings with increasing education except for those volunteers who had completed less than eight grades of school. There were far more volunteers who completed high school than any other category.

SUMMARY

From the observed findings, this study indicated that volunteers who had been supervised and trained received more high and fewer low ratings than volunteers who had not been supervised or trained. Given the assumption that supervisors' ratings were objective, the above finding confirms the writer's hypothesis that volunteers who received supervision and training performed more effectively in their duty assignments.

Supervisory ratings in relation to age tended to favor younger volunteers. They received more high ratings and fewer lower ratings. The mode of the average ratings was within the 40-49 age group and also

corroborated that younger volunteers were viewed more favorably than older volunteers.

An examination of whether education influenced ratings, indicated that without exception volunteers received higher ratings with each increase in educational attainment. Volunteers who had completed eight grades of school or less were rated least favorably.

The study indicated that there is an association between training and age and training and education. The study does not predict which variable, age or education, is most important. Multi-linear regression or some other applicable procedure would be necessary in order to predict which dependent variable influenced ratings most.

The writer viewed this study as providing some guidelines for users of volunteers. From knowledge gained from the study, users of volunteers should be able to select volunteers who should perform more effectively in their job assignments. Users of volunteers also should accept their responsibility for providing supervision and training for all volunteers since this study indicated supervision and training increased the effectiveness of volunteers' performance.

Reference

- (1) Vernallis, Francis F. and Roderick G. St. Pierre, "Volunteer Workers' Opinions About Mental Illness," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. XX, No. 1, January 1964, p. 1.

Acknowledgments

The writer is grateful to Joseph C. Rickard, Ph.D., and Mr. Robert Kidd, who were consultants.