

Planning a Volunteer Position

A Worksheet for Staff from VM Systems

This worksheet is intended to assist staff in deciding what type of volunteers could be of assistance to them.

Potential Job Areas

In thinking about how and where volunteers might be involved in your area of responsibility, there are factors that you might want to consider. You might, for example, want to think about creating volunteer jobs through consideration of the following categories of work:

- ☐ Are there areas of work that staff don't want to do? This may be because they are not skilled in that type of work, or are too skilled for the work, or else simply have a preference to concentrate their efforts in another area.
- ☐ Are there areas in which there is too much work for staff to do alone, and for which we might create volunteer assistants who can extend staff resources? These assistants might work directly with a staff person or could do tasks that benefit all staff.
- ☐ Are there areas in which we can extend services because volunteers would allow us to begin work that we cannot now even consider undertaking?

You might also want to consider the creation of volunteer jobs based on the recipients of the service. Consider the following:

- ☐ Jobs that are of direct assistance to an individual client. (counseling, visitation, etc.).
- ☐ Office administrative help (information services, filing, messengers, etc.).
- ☐ Direct assistance to staff (research, training, computer assistance, etc.).
- ☐ Outreach (fundraising, client marketing, speakers bureau, etc.).

Volunteer Job Design

Keep the following keys in mind as you think about the specific work you would like the volunteer to do:

- ☐ The work must be meaningful and significant, both to the agency and to our clientele. The work must be needed and should be interesting to someone. This means that your volunteer job must have a "Goal" or a "Purpose" that the volunteer can work to accomplish.
- ☐ The volunteer might be able to feel some "ownership" and

"responsibility" for the job. Volunteers are not robots, but must feel that they have some input into and control over the work they are asked to do. This will mean including the volunteer in the flow of information and decision-making within the office.

- ☐ The work must fit a part-time situation. Either the work must be small enough in scope to be productively approached in a few hours a week, or else it must be designed to be shared among a group of volunteers.
- ☐ Volunteers must be "worked with." They should be assigned to work with staff who are capable of supervising their activities in a productive fashion, and providing ongoing direction, evaluation and feedback. What arrangements will you need to make in order to ensure this supervision of the volunteer?

Scheduling the Volunteer Job

The more flexible the timeframe of the volunteer job, the greater the likelihood that we can find someone who will be willing to undertake it. Think about the following as different options for the job:

- ☐ Can the work be done to a totally flexible schedule at the discretion of the volunteer?
- ☐ Are there set hours during the week when we need the volunteer?
- ☐ Could the work be done on evenings or weekends?
- ☐ Must the work be done on-site at our office?

Assessing Managerial Readiness

The following considerations must also be addressed in thinking about a new volunteer position:

- ☐ Do we have adequate assigned workspace for the volunteer?
- ☐ Have we assigned a supervisor for the volunteer?
- ☐ Do we need to provide any orientation or training for our staff before they work with the volunteer?
- ☐ Do we have a clear idea of the qualifications we will be looking for in a prospective volunteer?
- ☐ Do we know what training the volunteer will need to do his or her job the way we want it done?
- ☐ Do we have a firm description of the goals and objectives of the work to be done?
- ☐ Do we have a plan for including the volunteer in our office activities and communications flow? ■

VM Systems is a volunteer management consulting firm. Sue Vineyard and Steve McCurley, internationally known trainers and writers on volunteer-related topics, are the principals.