A Volunteer Development System

One out of every four Americans over the age of 13 does some form of volunteer work during the year. That means that nearly 40 million citizens—40 percent of whom are men—give their time, energy, and effort to some cause.

This vast resource is often untapped by human services delivery systems supported by HEW. Although administrators of human services programs universally express commitment to greater volunteer participation, and often volunteer themselves, few take full advantage of this valuable potential. Inadequate planning for volunteer participation is generally the reason for lack of meaningful volunteer involvement.

HEW encourages volunteering because:

- Volunteering as an option is a basic human right—everyone can help someone. We all need to be needed.

- Volunteers can represent a significant program resource, and they can provide a capacity to mobilize community support.

- Volunteers can extend and reinforce the work of paid staff—but they should never be used to supplant paid staff.

- Volunteers can improve program performance by acting as linkages within the community, interpreters of services, advocates for the inarticulate, as recruiters, trainers, or supervisors, and extend the outreach of the paid staff in delivering services.

- Volunteers come from all parts of communities, are all ages and do all sorts of things. Never underestimate the value of youth, older persons, the poor, or minorities to improve the quality of programs.

In order to use their abilities effectively and to grow, volunteers need help. This help should be in the form of a well-planned, volunteer development system based on the following principles:

- A freedom of choice is essential for volunteers, staff, and the persons being served. Volunters work with, not for other people. Expectations and goals should be defined in clear, contractual terms.

- Volunteers need appropriate placement to utilize their skills, knowledge, and interests; training to supplement their knowledge and skills; a place and tools to work with; and someone to turn to for support, encouragement, and appreciation.

- Volunteers need periodic review of their accomplishments and growth opportunities when ready for more or different responsibilities; records to prove their service and training; and recognition.

- Volunteers need access to the policy development process. Firsthand perspective helps policy makers focus on priority needs.

A volunteer development system produces enriched and more effective services and an informed dedicated citizenry ready to participate in collaborative efforts outside the agency in meeting human needs, and attacking problems. Solving some problems may create new ones, so there is an ever-expanding need for this kind of citizen network.

A volunteer system must be well conceived and create a climate in which people can risk giving their best. An ideal program is staffed with a full time administrator who decentralizes administration to line staff as readiness is indicated.

Provision of opportunities to participate in policy development, program innovation, and advocacy roles attracts and motivates the best volunteers. A volunteer system is a continuously intrinsic part of the overall program planning cycle and fits into the total system, rather than being a separate program.

All long-range planning in the human services delivery area should include explicit provisions for volunteer participation in providing services, in interpretation, setting program goals and in carrying out program goals.

The following chart illustrates the basic elements of a volunteer development system. Additional information can be obtained by writing Office of Volunteer Development, HEW, Washington, D.C. 20201.

A VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM
Division of Responsibilities in Overall Volunteer Development Cycle

Phase I Preparation	Phase II Operation	Phase III—Evaluation/Future Planning
Executive	**Executive**	**Executive**
emonstrate support for volunteer development: . Establish volunteer development system . Set long-range goals and objectives for volunteer development system involving leadership, paid staff, boards or committees, volunteers, and consumers . Appoint qualified Director to focus efforts . Designate staff time to define roles, prepare training, evaluate plans, meetings . Communicate support through: Staff meetings Memos of authorization Public statements	A. Support recruitment through public statements, community activities R. Offer explicit encouragement—welcome trainees C. Monitor progress D. Informal observation E. Encourage staff cooperation F. Allocate support as needed	A. Evaluate actual performance of the volunteer development system against targeted goals and objectives B. Assess overall effect of volunteer on agency's ability to respond to needs C. Assess overall cost/benefit of volunteer development system D. Assess long-range effects of volunteer development system on agency consumers, community E. Provide for volunteer perspective input in new program development cycle F. Make recommendations for future priorities for volunteer development system G. Recognize the status of Volunteer Director as member of top administrative team and volunteers as essential to agency services
Volunteer Director	**Volunteer Director**	**Volunteer Director**
efine goals and objectives for volunteer evelopment system: . Work with unit heads, line staff, representative volunteers and consumers defining needs for volunteers . Assess community for volunteer resources: 1. Volunteers Voluntary Action Center Service Groups Schools and colleges, etc. 2. Organizations interested in cooperation . Establishment referral, reporting and record systems . Plan and budget for: Office services Volunteer expenses Public relations Recognition process . Develop orientation and training procedures for staff, volunteers and self.	A. Activate continuous targeted recruiting B. Develop skill bank and record bank of opportunities for volunteer assignments C. Counsel new volunteers, refer to units D. Operate orientation, training events E. Record assignments, training F. Participate in program development G. Cooperate with other agencies, educators to develop learning opportunities and joint programming H. Operate feedback system through meetings, roundtables, evaluations I. Represent volunteerism—to executive, staff, consumers, volunteers, volunteer resource groups, public J. Arrange for mobility and progression of volunteers; recognition of volunteers, staff K. Work with community volunteer administrators, professional groups, volunteer centers, civic and consumer groups	A. Collate and record volunteer service and training B. Assess referrals, dropouts, special accomplishments, services; consumer, volunteer, and community reactions C. Assess the capacity of volunteers to provide services and accept responsibilities through staff, consumer, and community reactions; honors; offices held; etc. D. Assess effects of volunteer development system on community understanding E. Measure impact of volunteer effort on program operations/delivery of services F. Summarize and make recommendations from data gathered for future priorities for volunteer development system G. Adjust recruiting, referral and training plans in tune with new priorities H. Insure volunteer perspective in future program development efforts
Line Staff and Supervisors	**Line Staff and Supervisors**	**Line Staff and Supervisors**
. Define unit and specific program objectives for volunteer services, unmet needs, volunteer opportunities, requirements . Contribute ideas for volunteer assignments, group projects . Suggest ways target group members could volunteer . Schedule time for: 1. Own training 2. Counseling, placing, working with and through volunteers 3. Participation in orientation and training of volunteers 4. Unit staff meetings, volunteer meetings, joint staff/volunteer meetings 5. Recording and reporting quantity, quality, impact	A. Interview, place volunteers B. Refer target group members as volunteers C. Recruit volunteers from own professional groups, membership organizations D. Operate on-the-job training for volunteers, provide counseling or supervision in groups as well as to individuals E. Review impact and extent of volunteer participation in unit F. Provide regular reports of service, changes, new needs, training requests, program recommendations G. Participate in recognition process—selection, awards, promotion to greater responsibilities, etc. H. Provide feedback from experience for future planning, public education, citizen recruitment	A. Evaluate impact of volunteer effort on: Staff Target group (consumers) Volunteers B. Assess performance of executive and Volunteer Director in the volunteer development system C. Summarize and make recommendations of program effectiveness from staff reports, target group responses, volunteer assessment D. Submit plans for supervision patterns and on-the-job training E. Submit future requests for volunteers, suggest sources