



# The Center for Creative Community



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## Fairy Tales as Factors in Volunteer Program Failure

### Volunteer Program Goal Clarification Process

## Suggested components In A Volunteer Program Policy

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### Fairy Tales As Factors in Volunteer Program Failure

Prepared by Ivan Scheier  
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The following alleged myths about agency volunteer programs were collected from discussions with people with daily hands-on management responsibilities for such programs. Their general feeling was that these myths were particularly damaging when held, consciously or unconsciously by upper levels of management and/or significant power figures in a community.

What do you think? Please mark each statement via this key:

XX This is fairly widespread myth we should be concerned about.

X Somewhat widely held, perhaps, but not terribly damaging.

   I think this isn't a myth at all. It's largely true. (leave blank)

   Because they work free, volunteers are free, a gift from the community rather than a careful agency investment.

   A good volunteer coordinator virtually assures program success.

   The volunteer coordinator's salary is (virtually) the only expense for the volunteer program.

   There is a definite volunteer type, tending to the naïve and saintly, female and flower-hatted.

   Mainly (or largely), people volunteer because they don't have much else to do.

   Volunteers, especially youth volunteers, can't reliably deal with confidentiality.

   The motivation of volunteers is by far the most important consideration in achieving a successful agency volunteer program.

   The volunteer program is a distinct and separate function of the agency rather than integrated as one form of community resource to be considered for contribution in achieving any agency purpose.

   The main (only) role of volunteers is to enhance services to the people we serve (clients, patients, consumers, audience, etc.)

   If we had enough money, we wouldn't need volunteers. They are mainly a way of buffering the impact of budget slashes.

   Because they are unpaid, volunteers cannot be held accountable to the agency.

- \_\_\_ Volunteer = unskilled (non-professional)
- \_\_\_ (Your favorite volunteer program myth here)
- \_\_\_ (Your next most favorite volunteer program myth here)
- \_\_\_ TOTAL Volunteer Program Mythology Score (28 is perfect)

## **Volunteer Program Goal Clarification Process**

(Relates also to your philosophy of volunteerism)

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The Center for Creative Community

Santa Fe, NM

Listed below are some of the purposes or goals a volunteer program might have. Though they overlap somewhat, these purposes are distinct from one another, and it is unlikely that any volunteer program would have the resources to effectively implement every one of these goals. The choice is important because the goals you concentrate on will determine how you operate your volunteer program-selection of volunteers, training, etc. This exercise is designed to help you identify, clarify, affirm or re-affirm the priority goals for your volunteer program

Step 1. Please review and familiarize yourself with the following list of possible primary purposes/goals for a volunteer program.

- Enhance the intensity and quality of services currently provided clients, patients, etc.
- Support paid staff so they can be more fulfilled and effective in their work.
- Improve the agency/organization's image and public relations in the community
- Provide a cushion against the damage done to the organization by budget cuts
- Educate the public about what we do and why we do it
- Help provide a variety of important services and capabilities we otherwise could not offer. (In that sense, help us achieve our dreams)
- A valuable "proving ground" to identify and pre-train potential new paid staff members
- Cultivate active friends and advocates – a support base in the community for the agency and for the people it serves
- Help us raise money or equivalent in-kind resources in support of our work
- Contribute ideas and input from the community – act as a sounding board to gauge community reaction to our programs, projects, etc.
- Comply with a mandate either from a funding source, government, or wherever...

Step 2. Are there other distinct goals you think the volunteer program does serve or might serve? If so, please list them below.

Step 3. Among the goals/purposes listed in both Steps 1 and 2, which do you think are or should be the top three, priorities of your volunteer program? Indicate these by placing a 1 (top) 2 (next) or 3 (third highest priority) next to these goals. (If this is felt to be too restrictive, you can do the same thing with the top five goals.) Comparing independently-rated goals priorities by stakeholders in the volunteer program (certainly including volunteers themselves) can lead to productive discussion of differences, and eventual working consensus.

## **Some Suggested Components In A Volunteer Program Policy**

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There is wide agreement in volunteerism that this kind of policy is highly desirable, in writing, carefully considered, and regularly reconsidered. Below are listed some subject areas which have been frequently suggested as needing

coverage in such a policy. The exact wording is, of course, up to each individual organization. Finally, please note that, as policy, the statement does not intend to cover details of volunteer program implementation. Now, please:

1. Circle the first word of each statement if you already cover this subject area in a written volunteer program policy.
2. Then, mark each statement with two checks (X X ) if you think it very important that this topic be covered in your volunteer program policy statement; one check (X ) for moderately important; blank, ( ) means not important at all.

With every prospective new staff member, we explore and expect at least an open-minded attitude to volunteers and related community resource development. Volunteer coordinator sits in on hiring interview.

In every staff job description, there is a strong statement to the effect that volunteers are one important way we get things done.

Ditto, in the overall mission statement of the organization.

Serious orientation to volunteers is part of every new staff member's orientation to the agency. Volunteer coordinator does this, if at all possible.

There are definite incentives/reward for staff who work well with volunteers.

"How are you doing involving the community?" is the kind of question we asked of every staff member at every performative evaluation.

Each top management person shall model the agency's commitment to volunteers by recruiting and supervising at least one volunteer.

Affirmative action policy (and values) applies equally to the volunteer program.

We consider volunteer involvement "real work" and will provide work references for paid employment to deserving volunteers on that basis.

Volunteer work in the agency does not in any way preclude a person's full consideration for paid employment in our agency. On the other hand, it does not guarantee such employment.

Clear and effective grievance procedures will be open to both volunteers and staff, on matters that may need to be resolved between them, or between either and the agency.

Wherever possible, volunteers shall be treated like staff.

Wherever possible, staff shall be treated with all the consideration given volunteers.

TOTAL



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