ABSTRACT

Some undergraduate programs in social work require students to volunteer with a local human service agency as part of their introductory course. In one of our two studies reported here, we found that approximately half of the programs in the U.S. include a required volunteer component. In most instances, this volunteer service helps identify the most appropriate candidates for the social work program. Little, however, is known about the impact of the volunteer service itself on the students. In our second study, we used a matched-pairs pre-test–post-test group design to test the impact of this volunteer service on personal responsibility, social responsibility, and liking people. We found no significant changes due to the volunteer service . In addition, we analyzed students' written evaluations of their volunteer service. This analysis revealed significant individual gains. Based on the frequent use of required volunteer service in undergraduate social work programs and on our findings, we propose that the Council on Social Work Education further study and standardize the use of volunteering in introductory to social work courses in BSW programs.

Student Volunteer Service: Should It Be Required in Introductory Undergraduate Social Work Courses?

Ram A. Cnaan, PhD and Diane Metzendorf, DSW

INTRODUCTION

In the United States approximately 400 baccalaureate programs offer degrees in social work. Typically, students who choose social work as their majors have taken a variety of liberal arts courses. The gatekeeper course to the social work program is generally a course entitled "Introduction to Social Work." The purpose of this course is to familiarize undergraduates with the roles and nature of the social work profession (CSWE, 1988). In some programs students who enroll in this course are required to volunteer once a week with a human service agency for at least one semester. Reflecting on our own personal experience in working with students, we realized that there is no theory or empirical data to support this volunteer requirement. We also found that this volunteer service is not regulated by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE). Consequently, there are few data available on how often this educational approach is used, how it is implemented, and what impact, if any, the volunteer service has on the students. The purpose of this study was to examine these issues.

It is important to distinguish between field practice and required volunteer service. Field practice, which is required in all social work programs as a component of practice courses, may best be described as an apprenticeship within the context of a core course. In field practice, students serve from one to three days a week in a human service agency under field supervision. Field practice and mandatory volunteer service require that students provide time and unpaid labor to human

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service agencies as a means of advancing their social work skills. One major difference between the two is that no qualified field instructor supervises the work of the student volunteers. They are on their own and expected to learn by themselves. The other difference is that student field practice is highly regulated by CSWE as to time and content, whereas student volunteer service is totally unregulated.

In this article, we review the literature on volunteering and social work in general and on student volunteering in particular. We then describe two separate empirical studies that we carried out to test our hypotheses. One was a random survey of one-tenth of all accredited baccalaureate programs in social work (BSW). The other was a field study to assess the impact of volunteering on students in one baccalaureate program. The latter included an analysis of the students' evaluations of their volunteer component. Finally, we report our findings and discuss their implications.

SOCIAL WORK AND VOLUNTEERISM

Social work as a profession had its origins in the work of middle-class women volunteers (Lubove, 1965). As social work grew into a powerful and cohesive profession, the use of volunteers decreased (Becker, 1964). Although tensions often exist between professional social workers and volunteers in human service organizations (Cnaan, 1990; Schwartz, 1984), social workers and social work educators often serve as volunteers (Parker, 1991; Parker and Newman, 1990) and continue to do so upon retirement (Friedman, 1988). Thus, the spirit of volunteerism is very strong among social workers.

As Brudney (1990) and Schilling, Schinke, and Weatherly (1988) have noted, budget cuts have forced many human service organizations to rely more heavily on direct service volunteers. In 1977, Trost found that professional social workers were neither positive nor negative in their overall view of volunteers. Trost also found that social workers who had both direct professional contact with volunteers and previous personal experience as volunteers rated volunteers as helpful in general and assessed their use of volunteers as very positive. Thus, lack of personal and/or professional exposure to volunteerism increased the likelihood of professional hostility towards volunteers in human service organizations. Furthermore, as Haeuser and Schwartz (1980) have pointed out, there are no courses to teach social workers how to manage or work with volunteers, which may explain the tension between professional social workers and volunteers. One way in which future social workers can gain first-hand knowledge on volunteering is through a baccalaureate program that requires one semester of volunteer service.

In a recent essay advocating the use of volunteers as direct service givers, Ambrosino (1992) wrote: "Most social work students have had at least one volunteer service prior to entering a social work program. The more varied the experiences, the more likely the student is to have a realistic viewpoint of the social work profession" (p. 180). However, as we have pointed out, little if anything is known as to what the scope, specific goals, and structure of this required service should be.

Interestingly, the boundaries between social workers and volunteers in the United Kingdom are less marked. In the 1968 report of the Seebohm Committee, which changed the nature of social service provision in the United Kingdom, it was recommended that volunteers be enlisted to assist professional workers. In *Social Work and Volunteers*, Holme and Maizels (1978) noted for the U.K. that: "Social work today relies on a work force of paid and unpaid labour—the 'professionals' and the 'volunteers.'" Still, they found that the number of volunteers used by social workers in the United Kingdom was not high. One explanation is that, while the British social service system favors the use of volunteers, the system's professional workers have been slow to use them. According to Holmes and Maizels,

social workers who do use volunteers do so mainly to befriend a client, to carry out practical tasks, or when special skills are required. Only 26.13 percent of the social workers reported direct use of volunteers, primarily in working with the elderly and people with physical disabilities. The remainder used volunteers only indirectly (through other agencies or through the client's social network).

VOLUNTEERISM AS A REQUIREMENT

The history of social work relationships with volunteer work is based on a free choice of individuals to volunteer their time and services. However volunteering can also be mandatory and a civic responsibility. According to Kelen (1992):

> Examples of obligations to personal service are obligations for military service [in Rome and many other countries], to serve in courts and on juries, to maintain roads and bridges, work on a dike or in a mine [especially in Communist countries], and all sorts of compulsory service for corporate purposes which are found in various types of organizations. (p. 19)

Kelen cites many examples from ancient Greece and Rome where donations (such as financing a public feast) or service was mandatory for certain elite groups. His own ideas on volunteering as mandatory work came from his years in Hungary. For Kelen, the most conspicuous phenomenon in East European voluntarism is the obligatory or *apoditic* nature of voluntary work. In the former Soviet countries, compulsory volunteerism was referred to as "Subbotnik work," namely Saturday work. This suggests that "volunteering in the world can also take the shape of forced labor" (p. 39).

A less pessimistic view of mandatory volunteering is offered by Adams (1987 and 1992) who had observed that our society is characterized by the "American imperative to volunteer." One such example is court-ordered community service. In this legal and social phenomenon, judges sentence certain defendants to community service rather than to a prison term. Thus the convicted individuals are forced to volunteer or else go to jail. Other examples of this pressure to volunteer include pro bono service as a criterion for corporate promotion (Wuthnow, 1991), the growing call for mandatory community service by students still in high school and after graduation through the National Community Service Act as championed by President Clinton. It is our contention that mandatory volunteer service in undergraduate programs as a means for entry into social work is only one facet of this growing call for civic responsibility and the "imperative to volunteer."

UNDERGRADUATE VOLUNTEERS

Serow, Ciechalski and Daye (1990), who reported on a large sample of undergraduates, found that personal aims, rather than concern for society and the needy, motivated most students to volunteer. Students viewed community volunteer service as a means of acquiring and demonstrating competence. Fitch (1987) found that student volunteers did not differ from nonvolunteers in socio-demographic characteristics and that their motivations were a mix of both egoism and altruism. This finding was supported by Fagan (1992). He also found that "Volunteers tended to be good students who were more interested in making a positive social and moral contribution to society" (p. 5).

In light of the call for national community service (Eberly, 1988) it is interesting to note that approximately half of all students reported that they perform some type of volunteer work, but most gave, on average, little time to their volunteer work (Fagan, 1992). Social work undergraduate programs that require volunteer service may contribute to that high percentage of student volunteers and is clearly in line with the trend for national community service. Student volunteers may volunteer on their own, as a response to a call from agencies or groups, or as a substitute for an academic credit (Bojar, 1989; Cooley, Singer, and Irvin,

1989; Redfering and Biasco, 1982). In social work programs, the required volunteer service, be it volunteer service or field practice, is a required assignment necessary for passing a key course.

Volunteering in college has a long-term impact on people's lives. For example, Schram (1985), in a survey of Michigan State University graduates who had been student volunteers, found that an overwhelming majority (95.4%) reported that they had gained new skills by volunteering. Of these, 85% reported using these skills in their paid employment. Peterson (1975) found that volunteer service contributes to ego development, moral development, and self-actualization. Hobfoll (1980) found that student volunteers became more empathic towards needy people and more favorable towards black ghetto children and welfare recipients. Students who volunteered in psychiatric settings (Price and Larson, 1982) or in services to developmentally disabled individuals (Fox and Rotatori, 1986) became more sympathetic towards them.

In sum, the literature appears to indicate that whatever their motive in volunteering, be it helping others or advancing themselves, students gained skills and attitudes that were congruent with ethical and social work values.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Social work students are sometimes required to volunteer at least once a week in a local human service agency as a condition of entry into a specific social work program. It is unclear whether this required service benefits the student or whether it changes the students' attitudes towards social responsibility, personal responsibility, and the people they serve. The purpose of our study was to examine these issues as well as the frequency of this practice in social work programs.

As the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) does not regulate mandatory volunteer service in introductory social work courses, our first task was to determine the frequency of its use. Specifically we asked:

(1) What percent of schools have a volunteer component in the introductory course? (2) What is the mean number of volunteer hours per week that these schools require? (3) Who selects the agency where the volunteer service is to be performed: the student or the school? (4) What are the key goals of this volunteer component?

Given the assumption that one semester of required volunteer service is common in introductory social work courses, we would expect that students who performed such service would be more responsible and people-oriented at the end of the semester in comparison with non-volunteer students. We have chosen these two issues as many studies showed that volunteer service among young people is related to improved personal and social responsibilities (Brendtro, 1985; Conrad and Hedin, 1981; Hamilton and Fenzel, 1988; Saurman and Nash, 1980) and as interest in close proximity with other people is a desired characteristic for future social workers, a greater sense of compassion was found among student volunteers as compared with student non-volunteers (Knapp and Holzberg, 1964).

Our hypotheses were as follows: (1) Students who had a semester of volunteer work would score higher on social responsibility compared to their score prior to the experience and compared with students who did not volunteer. (2) Similarly, they would score higher on personal responsibility compared to their score prior to the experience and compared with students who did not volunteer. (3) They would score higher on liking people scale (LPS) compared to their score prior to the experience and compared with students who did not volunteer.

Finally, we would expect that students who were required to volunteer would assess the experience individually, some viewing it as an enriching experience, others, as a waste of time and energy.

METHODS

Procedure. Our study was based on two empirical investigations: (1) a telephone

survey of a random sample of social work baccalaureate programs, and (2) a matched-pairs pre-test–post-test group design that tested the impact of required volunteer work on personal responsibility, social responsibility, and liking people. In addition, we analyzed the students' written evaluations of their volunteer service.

In the first investigation, we selected every tenth school from the CSWE's list of accredited baccalaureate programs. Because the programs were listed alphabetically by state (which were also listed alphabetically), we were assured that our selection of programs would be random. During the 1991 Fall semester we conducted a phone interview with the director/chair of each program in our sample. Each interview lasted between five and ten minutes on average.

In the second investigation, students in an introductory social work course were asked to complete the research instrument within the first two weeks of the 1991 Fall semester. One of the course requirements was that the students would volunteer with a local human service agency. The students were also asked to give the instrument to a friend who had not previously taken this course, nor had volunteered with any organization during the study period.

Two weeks before the end of the semester, the same students and their friends were asked to complete the same set of instruments. In addition to this matched-pairs pre-test–post-test design, we also asked the student volunteers for a written evaluation of the impact the volunteer service had on them.

Respondents. For the first investigation, we contacted 38 programs in 31 states which represented all geographical regions of the United States. For the second investigation, we studied 35 undergraduates enrolled in an introductory social work course at a state university. This university is part of the state higher education system and is located in a suburban area about 30 miles south of a large major metropolitan area. The majority of the students were white women under the age of 22. Most had declared as their major social work or a related field such as criminal justice, psychology and public health nursing. The majority had neither volunteered before nor been assisted by a volunteer.

The students' friends, who served as a comparison group, were not enrolled in nor had they previously taken this course. They were matched on age, gender, education, and place of living (on- or off-campus). In addition, we found that the socio-demographic characteristics of the student population and the comparison group were similar.

Instruments. For the first investigation, we used a one-page questionnaire. The questions were factual and, if possible, closed-ended. They served to guarantee uniformity in the telephone interviews.

For the second investigation we used a three-part self-administered questionnaire. The first section consisted of basic socio-demographic information. The second section consisted of 21 questions regarding social and personal responsibility. Students were asked to rate each item on a 4-point scale that provided a potential full-scale score of 21 to 84. This scale, developed by Conrad and Hedin (1981), was also used by Hamilton and Fenzel (1988). The rated item assessed the extent to which the students regarded a particular facet of personal or social responsibility as characteristic of themselves.

In our analysis, we also used two sub-scales that we considered relevant to the students' volunteer services. One (Social Responsibility sub-scale) assessed respondents' attitudes toward society's obligations to meet the needs of others. The other (Personal Responsibility sub-scale) assessed respondents' perceptions of their personal responsibility, competence, efficacy, and performance ability toward others in need. In our sample the full scale demonstrated a good reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .84) as did two sub-scales of attitudes towards social responsibility (alpha = .80) and personal responsibility (alpha = .76).

The third section of the questionnaire consisted of the liking people scale (LPS). Developed by Filsinger (1981), this 15-item scale measures positive interpersonal orientation and detects tendencies for social isolation, shyness, and anti-social behavior. In our sample the reliability of LPS was high (alpha = .82).

Finally, we used a course evaluation form to determine how the 35 students who participated in the required volunteer service viewed the experience. The section of the form that we used was the students' answers to the open-ended question: "Describe the impact that the volunteer service had on your attitude."

FINDINGS

Of the 38 social work baccalaureate programs in our sample, 18 reported that their introductory course had a required volunteer component. Two others reported their introductory course as a social welfare course. The second course which was used as a gatekeeper was a social work course that required volunteer service. Two other programs reported that they had previously had a volunteer requirement, but had dropped it because the program had grown in size and it was no longer feasible. Thus, 52.6 percent of the programs in our sample currently require students to volunteer. Only one program director whom we contacted said that "required volunteering" is a contradictory term and thus they do not use it.

Programs in our sample that used a volunteer component reported different homegrown standards as to what was expected in the volunteer service and its role in the students' education. The expected number of hours per semester ranged from 20 to 48. In most schools (90%), students were permitted to choose the human service agency for their volunteer work. Half of the programs asked faculty either to provide suggestions or to approve the student's choice. Overall, we identified three common objectives for the volunteer service: (1) to test the students' capacity and suitability for the profession; (2) to familiarize students with the agency environment; and (3) to get to know the students informally and assess their professional interests. Only a few programs also used this service as a means to introduce students to the use of the professional self, provide students with working experience with people, and support conceptual learning with practice. None of the programs or schools published accounts as to how this service was performed or its outcomes.

To test each of our hypotheses regarding the impact of the volunteer service on one group of students, we employed both the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test with a Scheffe test and a t-test at the .05 level. The ANOVA used for each hypothesis included the following four levels: pre-experimental group, post-experimental group, pre-comparison group, post-comparison group. The t-test was used when the pre-score of each group (experimental and comparison) was subtracted from the post-score. The comparison was made on the difference only.

To test our hypothesis, that student volunteers would score higher on social responsibility as compared to their score prior to the service and as compared with non-volunteer students, we used both statistics. While the t-test revealed insignificant differences, the ANOVA revealed significant differences. When we used the Scheffe test, we found that, at the end of the volunteer service, student volunteers (mean = 3.26) scored higher than did student non-volunteers (mean = 3.06). This finding should be interpreted with caution as the measure of social responsibility among student volunteers increased only slightly (from mean = 3.24) during the study time, while that of the student non-volunteers decreased (from mean = 3.12). Contrary to our hypothesis, scores for the volunteer group were not significantly higher at the end of the semester as compared with their scores prior to their volunteer work, although a slight increase in social responsibility was detected.

To test our second hypothesis that volunteers would score higher on personal

responsibility as compared to their score prior to the service and as compared to student non-volunteers, we used both statistics. We found no significant differences in either case. To test our third hypothesis that volunteers would score higher on liking people as compared to their score prior to the service and as compared with student non-volunteers, we employed both ANOVA and t-test. Again we found no significant differences.

From the analysis of the student volunteers' evaluations, however, a much more positive picture emerged. Of the 35 students, 31 reported that the volunteer service was positive. Two students reported a negative experience, both noting their disappointment at having to work with a certain client population. Two other students reported themselves as neutral about the service.

Many students reported that they had learned something new and positive about the population with which they worked. For example, one student wrote: "My work at [Nursing Home] made me realize how open and receptive the elderly actually are to the youth." Another positive outcome was learning to be open-minded towards differences. As one student wrote: "Before I started my volunteer work I wasn't too thrilled with the idea of working with children.... I thought all they did was cry, scream, and make trouble. I was wrong. ..."A third positive outcome was increased appreciation of clients' struggles with certain social problems. One student reported: "These experiences showed me just how hard life is for an addicted person." A fourth positive outcome was a personal moral commitment. This was reported most often by students who had worked in jails or with substances abusers. They noted that they did not want to be like their clients. As one student wrote: "I know now that I will never drink and drive or commit any other misdemeanors." The final positive outcome was the student's reaffirmation of his or her commitment to social work. As one student noted: "The one thing that I know is that

this is the type of work that I want to be a part of."

Finally, in a follow-up with some of the students we found that they had continued to volunteer with the same agency even after the semester was over. In a few cases it was part of their contract with the agency (such as a school that requires a commitment for the year). In many other cases students continued their involvement with the agency because they enjoyed the experience. Prolonged non-credit student volunteer work in cases where the experience was a positive one is quite common among student volunteers (Cooley, Singer, and Irvin, 1989).

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Social work as a profession has a unique relationship to volunteerism. The profession which grew from the work of middle-class women volunteers has become more skill- and knowledge-oriented over time. Tasks once performed by volunteers are now performed by professional workers. The literature suggests a resentment between social workers and volunteers, yet many social workers willingly serve as volunteers. In this article we have addressed a neglected aspect of the relationship between social work and volunteering, namely, required volunteer service as part of the baccalaureate social work program. We also showed that the idea of compulsory volunteerism is neither new nor currently unique to social work education.

Our findings indicate that over half of the social work baccalaureate programs in a random sample had a volunteer requirement, generally in the introductory or "gatekeeper" course, while in a few programs it is attached to the second course. As common as this practice is, it is interesting to note that each program set its own standards and regulations. Overall, we found that students were expected to provide 20 – 48 hours per semester of direct service to individual(s) within a human service agency. The goals were varied, but most centered on the need to prepare students for the profession and to

screen out those not suited for social work. Despite the frequency of this practice, there are no systematic reports about its implementation or evaluation. It may be that those programs which use this practice are satisfied with it and assume its usefulness. Considering that more than half of the programs in our sample had a volunteer component and found it helpful, it is surprising that the Council on Social Work Education has yet to adopt any guidelines regarding this practice.

As there are no published reports on the impact of volunteer service on social work undergraduate students, the second part of our study was designed to assess the impact of volunteering. We focused on one undergraduate program and compared 35 pairs of students: volunteers and non-volunteers. We found no significant differences regarding personal responsibility and liking people. Regarding social responsibility, we found some different post-experience, but the data were very inconclusive. The fact that our hypotheses regarding the impact of volunteering were not supported may, in part, be attributed to the three scales we selected for this study. Our analysis of the student volunteers' assessment indicated that volunteering positively influenced their attitudes towards client populations such as the mentally ill, children, developmentally disabled, and substance abusers. It should be noted that such positive attitudinal changes have been reported in the literature for students working with these populations regardless of social work affiliation (Fox and Rotatori, 1986; Hobfoll, 1980; Price and Larson, 1982). We found in the students' evaluation a commitment to serving people in need and a willingness to be open to human differences.

From the students' written evaluation we can also assess what makes a required volunteer service in an introductory social work course a good experience. The characteristics are: (a) a supportive agency, (b) use of the volunteer service to examine and identify one's own attitudes and values, (c) use of the experience to review one's understanding of social problems and human needs, (d) use of the experience to apply and better understand conceptual knowledge generated in lectures and in reading, (e) opportunity to develop interpersonal contacts with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and (f) a clarification of one's personal commitment to help others and genuine interest in pursuing social work education. The experience can be very positive and educational even for students who decide that social work is not for them. The latter, if given a good experience, can develop appreciation for people in need and learn to be more accepting of differences.

Social workers are often accused of being hostile to volunteers and unwilling to use them in human service agencies (Schwartz, 1984). It has been recommended that one way to deal with this problem is to familiarize social workers with the role of volunteers and to demonstrate that volunteers can contribute to the welfare of others (Trost, 1977). The volunteer service within undergraduate school social work education is one means of helping future social workers understand the role of volunteers. It is not yet clear just how long that experience should last, but, as our findings indicate, the experience itself enables student volunteers to learn, gain, and contribute at the same time.

Volunteering in baccalaureate social work programs comes from the tradition of the friendly visitor (Becker, 1964). The volunteer component is demanding as students do not receive any credit for their work and faculty find themselves spending many hours advising and monitoring the students' volunteer service. Some schools find this cost to be negligible compared with the educational merits. Some schools have never considered this option while others have dropped it as too costly. This creates a paradox for baccalaureate social work education. If the volunteer component is helpful, then all students should benefit from it. If it is not helpful, then it should be banned. Whatever the case, CSWE should initiate a study commission to examine this practice

and assess its merit as a means to regulating this common practice. Such a commission should also pay attention to the ethical and moral issues involved in a mandatory volunteer component.

The impact of the volunteer requirement on the curriculum and social work programs needs further examination. For example, non-traditional students such as foreign students with minimal proficiency in English, or students with physical disabilities may have difficulty locating an agency that will accept them as volunteers. In situations such as these, the volunteer requirement, if not coordinated and guaranteed by the social work program, can put extra burden on students. Social work programs should also monitor the length of the student's commitment to the agency. In some cases, the agency requires a long-term commitment such as a full academic year. This puts students who do not know how to search for a suitable agency nor how to bargain for reasonable terms of service at a disadvantage. To cope with this problem, some social work programs draw up a contract between the faculty member, the agency representative, and the student. Such contracts specify the expectations and requirements, thereby protecting the student.

A key issue in required volunteer service is guaranteeing that the volunteer service will be compatible with the student's education objectives. Most instructors do not supervise the actual volunteer work but are expected to assess its applicability to the content of the course. For example, instructors could: (a) visit the agency where the student is volunteering, (b) meet with each student a few times a semester to discuss the volunteer service, (c) ask students to keep a weekly log as to their volunteer work, (d) ask students at the end of the semester to write a detailed evaluation of their experience, (e) incorporate students' experiences into class discussions (for example, discussing a conceptual issue as is applied to their volunteer work), and (f) incorporate issues from the volunteer service into final assignments (usually term papers).

The student volunteer service, though time-consuming, is a way to link social work programs with the field and with social service agencies that otherwise are not part of the social work network. Furthermore, the student volunteers provide a valuable service to the community through the social work program. These hours of required volunteer service can be tallied and included as part of the program's community service in its annual report. Finally, given the increasing commitment of many colleges and universities to local community service, social work can be a major player in spearheading institutional initiatives that bridge academe and community.

Several important implications for volunteer administrators can be drawn from this study. First, schools of social work should be viewed as a potential source for recruiting seasonal volunteers. Wherever there are undergraduate schools of social work, volunteer administrators may link up with them to guarantee a steady stream of reliable volunteers. As student volunteers must satisfy academic requirements while volunteering, their commitment of time and period of stay is above average. Administrators of volunteer programs should consider students (volunteering at the organization) as members of the total volunteer team. As students wish to learn and apply their volunteer experience to classroom requirements and discussions, they will be willing to invest in the agency even if for a limited duration. Thus, students should be encouraged to participate in any training, meetings and staff/volunteer gatherings offered by the organization. Students reported that their most positive experience occurred when they sensed a supportive agency. Thus, they will begin to possess a sense of commitment and dedication for themselves as part of the volunteer team.

However, one finding from this study indicates that students who volunteer as required for a social work introductory course may discontinue volunteering upon

completion of the course. Volunteer administrators can encourage students to return when time permits, acknowledging to the student the valuable contribution that s/he has made to the organization through his/her participation. In a situation where the student has found that the work is not appropriate for him/her, the volunteer administrator can support this decision but can also suggest there may be other opportunities for this student to provide service. Furthermore, in agencies where their schedules differ from that of the student's academic year, such as elementary schools, recreational programs, and residential care units, the volunteer administrator may contract with the student, ahead of time, a longer period of volunteer service to avoid disruption in the program. In these instances, the volunteer coordinator may wish to involve the relevant social work faculty so that all parties will agree with the practice and will support it.

The three-way contract between the student, volunteer coordinator, and faculty member is an advisable practice. Often, students find that they do not meet the expectations of either the agency or the college; having a written contract and a channel of communication may avoid future problems and misunderstanding. Volunteer administrators should insist that faculty will meet with agency personnel, see the premises, meet clients, and be familiar with what their students are experiencing.

Finally, volunteer administrators who have found student volunteering to be a valuable experience for the organization may want to contact the practice instructors at schools of social work to suggest a formal relationship, such as a student volunteer unit or assist in opening the door for field placements.

The impact of the volunteer service on undergraduate social work students and on the many agencies in which they volunteer needs further study. Research issues should include the effect of the volunteer service on the decision to become a social worker, skills gained through volunteering, improper use of volunteers by some agencies, how best to use seasonal volunteers who are motivated by academic requirements, the accessibility of a proper volunteer service for non-traditional students (such as those with disabilities or of non-English speaking origin), decisions to specialize in areas of first volunteer service, use of the volunteer service in classroom teaching, and the supervision and training of undergraduate social work students, to name but a few.

AUTHORS' NOTE

The article is based on a paper presented at the Council on Social Work Education, 39th Annual Program Meeting, New York, March 1, 1993.

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