



**Austin Travis County Mental Health  
Mental Retardation Center**

**Volunteer Initiatives  
Development Plan**

**Governmental and Community Relations  
March 2005**

## **I. Volunteer Initiatives Development Plan**

The Volunteer Initiatives Development Plan is designed to provide a framework for expanding and enhancing volunteer recruitment and placement to meet the needs of the Center. The plan is based on the following:

- Observations of volunteer involvement at the Center;
- Staff input and requests;
- Center functions and services;
- Community interest and resources; and
- Texas Administrative Code Rules.

The development plan provides an overview an assessment of: 1) volunteer involvement; 2) volunteer recruitment and placement; and 3) community resources and collaborations.

## **II. Overview of Volunteer Involvement**

The activities and functions in which volunteers are involved include the following:

- Board of Trustees;
- Citizens' Planning Advisory Committee;
- Network Advisory Committee;
- Home and Community Services and Texas Home Living Advisory Committee;
- Consumer Council;
- Voice Committee;
- New Milestones Foundation;
- Central Texas African American Family Support Conference;
- Program volunteers; and
- Student (non clinical) program volunteers.

The majority of volunteers involved with the Center are serving in some kind of advisory capacity with standing committees or assisting with New Milestones activities and the Central Texas African American Family Support Conference.

In some cases, individual units or programs are using volunteers for short-term assistance or for more long-term support. The ACCESS program has a volunteer who has been assisting with their program for over 10 years. The Voice Committee and Citizens' Planning Advisory Committee have some long-term volunteers as well.

### **III. Volunteer Procedures and Staff Requests**

There is no existing policy governing the volunteer program, and there is one procedure. A revised procedure has been drafted for review by the executive management team. The revised procedure outlines the following:

- Definition of volunteer per Texas Administrative Code;
- Process for staff requests for volunteers;
- Volunteer application process;
- Requirement for background and registry checks;
- Volunteer orientation and training; and
- Volunteer placement.

The necessity for the development of additional policies and procedures should be evaluated as the volunteer program evolves and matures.

#### **Staff Requests**

The majority of staff requests have been for assistance with administrative or clerical duties. Volunteers have been placed with Behavioral Health Services for a total of 128 volunteer hours. New volunteers are in the process of being placed in Behavioral Health Services, Child and Family Services, and the Network Advisory Committee. To date, requests for volunteers have been submitted by: Behavioral Health Services, Child and Family Services, and Governmental and Community Relations.

In order to facilitate the submission of volunteer requests, an electronic Volunteer Request Form has been made available on the Intranet. In addition, the Coordinator of Volunteer and Consumer Initiatives is attending division staff meetings to explain the process for recruitment and placement of volunteers.

Staff requests will be reviewed at the end of the fiscal year to ensure volunteer recruitment and placement are meeting the needs of the Center.

### **IV. Volunteer Recruitment, Placement, and Training**

The process of volunteer recruitment typically involves a three-pronged approach. Volunteers can be recruited from: 1) agency supporters, family members and consumers of services; 2) community sources like universities, service clubs; and 3) targeted recruitment based on agency needs.

The Center has received unsolicited requests for volunteer opportunities via our web site or direct calls. However, in most cases the prospective volunteer fails to follow-up by completing the application. This lack of follow through is fairly typical in the process of finding and placing volunteers.

The best sources of volunteers are generally supporters like family members, and universities or other service oriented groups or organizations.

The Center web site is being updated with more complete information about volunteer opportunities as well as the application and placement process. This information should help to inform prospective volunteers of the opportunities and requirements of volunteering with the Center, and improve the follow-up.

### **Placement**

The process of successfully placing volunteers is contingent upon ensuring a successful match between volunteer interests and agency needs. Volunteers are interested in sharing their time and expertise for a number of reasons to include:

- Giving back to the community;
- Getting “work” experience;
- Supporting a cause of personal interest;
- Staying active and involved; and
- Helping others.

Measures have been put in place to ensure that volunteer interests are matched with the needs of the Center to include:

- A volunteer application;
- Written volunteer job descriptions;
- Orientation and training;
- An interview with supervisory staff;
- Follow-up by staff; and
- Exit interviews.

### **Training**

All volunteers are required to complete in-house training prior to placement. Volunteers serving on committees receive specialized training geared to the roles and responsibilities of the respective committees. Volunteers placed in programs or clinics receive training relevant for their “volunteer job”. Typically at a minimum, these volunteers receive training on: 1) orientation to the Center; 2) confidentiality; and 3) consumer rights.

Additional training may be recommended by staff as needs dictate. The majority of training is conducted by Human Resources and Governmental and Community Relations staff, and is completed in one day. In most cases the training provided is consistent with new employee orientation provided by Human Resources.

## **V. Volunteer Recognition and Benefits**

The primary event for volunteer recognition is the annual Volunteer Appreciation event held each December. Volunteers throughout the agency are recognized and provided dinner. In addition, volunteers are recognized at various times during the year with certificates and plaques of appreciation.

As part of the application process, volunteers are now being asked how they would like to be recognized. This information will serve as an informal assessment to guide future recognition activities. The feedback provided by our volunteers will be reviewed and reported at the end of the fiscal year.

## **VI. State Resources and Mandates**

The Department of State Health Services, Volunteer and Community Engagement Section is a resource to local community mental health centers for the implementation and management of volunteer programs. In addition, to an annual conference, they provide sample forms, policies and procedures that can be revised to meet agency needs.

Thus far, they have provided the Center with: 1) program development recommendations; 2) sample forms and procedures; and 3) volunteer management resources.

### **Texas Administrative Code**

Community Mental Health Centers are required to adhere to Texas Administrative Code Rule 414.504 in regards to pre-assignment clearances for volunteers. The rule requires that criminal background checks and certain employee registry checks be completed for all volunteers.

In order to be in compliance with the rule, it is necessary to complete volunteer applications and background checks for all existing volunteers. Procedures and policies are already in place to conduct the necessary checks for new volunteers. Additional staff have been trained to conduct the checks, to ensure they can be completed within a reasonable time frame.

## **VII. Community Resources and Collaborations**

A new collaboration has been initiated with Austin Business College in placing non-clinical students in volunteer internship positions at the program and clinic sites. Austin Business College requires students to complete a 120-hour internship as a requirement for graduation.

They offer Associate Degrees and Certificate Programs in Medical Office Management and Administrative Office Specialist/Technology. One Medical Office Management student has completed her volunteer internship (120 hrs.) with the East 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Clinic. This collaboration can continue to provide significant on-going administrative and clerical support for Center programs and activities.

A similar collaboration is in process with National Institute of Technology for placement of students from their Medical Administrative Assistant and Pharmacy Technician programs. These collaborations help to meet the Center needs, while providing students with a realistic educational experience with our programs and services. Further, these collaborations represent a unique public-private partnership with a community resource, which has been largely underutilized.

### **Community Volunteer Resources**

There are a number of local resources available to assist in the recruitment and placement volunteers. These resources include:

- United Way of the Capital Area;
- Travis County Retired Senior Volunteer Program; and
- University of Texas.

These resources serve the community in helping match students and the public with volunteer opportunities. The University of Texas provides three resources: 1) RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the LBJ School of Public Affairs; 2) Austin Volunteer Network at the School of Social Work; and 3) The Volunteer and Service Learning Center in the Office of the Dean of Students.

The resources of the University of Texas include information for program managers of volunteer programs, best practices, and research data covering all aspects of volunteerism.

Efforts are underway to link the volunteer needs of the Center with these community resources.

## **VIII. Action Plan for Expanding and Enhancing Volunteer Initiatives**

An action plan has been developed which includes goals, objectives, and strategies (**Attachment A**) for improving and enhancing volunteer initiatives through the end of the fiscal year. The action plan is based on the following:

- Information provided in Sections I-VII;
- Available resources;
- Staff and agency needs; and
- Center Strategic Plan.

This action plan provides a framework for moving forward in enhancing and expanding our current efforts. The plan should be viewed as a document that is flexible, and can be revised to meet Center needs.

## Attachment A Volunteer Initiatives Development Plan

Goals	Objectives	Strategies	*Relevant Supporting Documentation	Timeline	Measure
1. Increase the use of volunteers throughout the Center.	1. 80% of staff volunteer requests will be filled.	<p>1.1 Utilize local volunteer resources to publicize volunteer needs.</p> <p>1.2 Target volunteer recruitment to meet advisory committee needs.</p> <p>1.3 Educate staff on the process for requesting and placing volunteers.</p>	<p><b>Strategic Plan G4:</b> Demonstrate efforts and outcomes to increase membership of each under-represented group on the Citizens' Planning Advisory Committee, the Network Advisory Committee, and the Consumer Council within committee structure, guidelines and available openings.</p> <p>Use and recognize the efforts of volunteer activities.</p>	<p>Progress Report by 06/05</p> <p>Completion by 08/05</p>	1.1 Number of placements compared to written requests.
2. Develop community partnerships for the placement of volunteers.	2.1 Two (2) community partnerships will be developed.	<p>2.1 Continue development of partnership with technical colleges.</p> <p>2.2 Collaborate with UT, United Way of the Capital Area, and/or Travis County Retired Senior Volunteers in recruitment and placement.</p>	<p><b>Strategic Plan G4:</b> Demonstrate efforts and outcomes to increase membership of each under-represented group on the Citizens' Planning Advisory Committee, the Network Advisory Committee, and the Consumer Council within committee structure, guidelines and available openings.</p> <p>Use and recognize the efforts of volunteer activities.</p>	<p>Progress Report by 06/05</p> <p>Completion by 08/05</p>	2.1 Documentation of two partnerships.
3. Develop policies and procedures to support the volunteer program.	3.1 Develop policies and/or procedure(s) for the volunteer program. (see measurement)	<p>3.1 Assess the need for the types of policies/ procedures.</p> <p>3.2 Develop policies/ procedures to meet identified need.</p> <p>3.3 Consult with DSHS on policies/ procedures resources.</p>	<p><b>Strategic Plan G4:</b> Demonstrate efforts and outcomes to increase membership of each under-represented group on the Citizens' Planning Advisory Committee, the Network Advisory Committee, and the Consumer Council within committee structure, guidelines and available openings.</p> <p>Use and recognize the efforts of volunteer activities.</p>	<p>Progress Report by 06/05</p> <p>Completion by 08/05</p>	<p>3.1 Documentation of needs for policies/ procedures.</p> <p>3.2 Documentation of developed policies, procedures, and forms.</p> <p>3.3 Documentation of consultation with DSHS.</p>

