

Implementing & Managing An Effective Volunteer Program



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Volunteer:

“an unpaid person who is trained to assist in implementing ongoing program activities on a regular basis under the supervision of a staff person in areas such as health, education, transportation, nutrition, and management.”

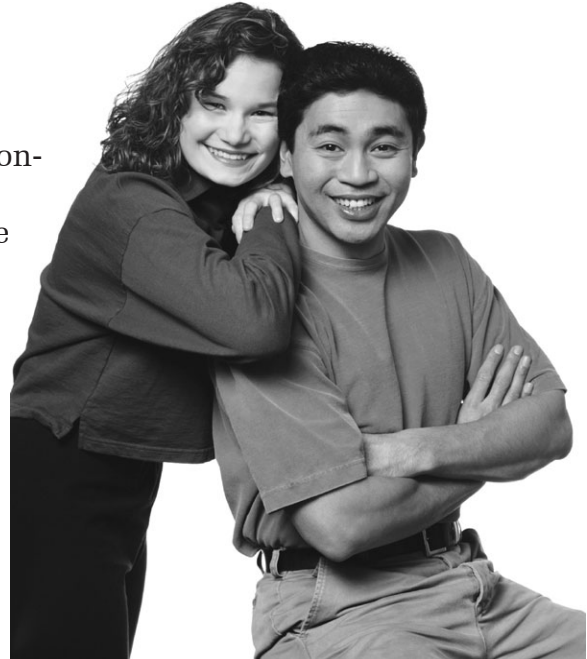
45 CFR 1304.3(20)

Introduction

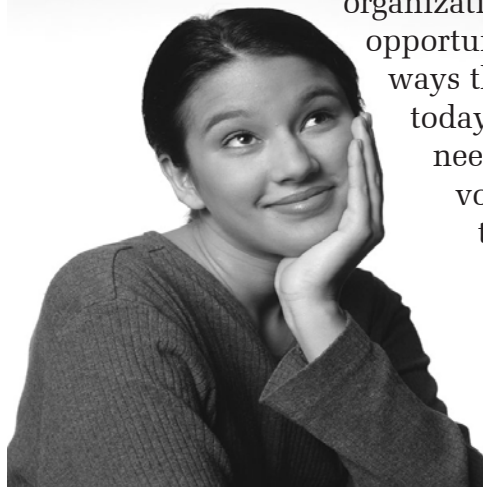
The Head Start Program Performance Standards require Head Start Programs to form partnerships with numerous community organizations. Programs are also required to “*perform outreach to encourage volunteers from the community to participate in Early Head Start and Head Start programs.*” (45 CFR 1304.41(3)). The aim of these requirements is to move Head Start away from being an island unto itself and recognize the program as an integral part of the community. Volunteers are a vital link from the larger community to Head Start.

Volunteers should be looked upon not merely as a source of non-federal share (also known as in-kind) but should be viewed as non-paid staff, with the same type of roles, management needs, and responsibilities as the paid staff.

Volunteers may come from all walks of life and represent a multitude of ethnic, social, educational and economic backgrounds. Head Start programs should look at almost everyone as a potential volunteer. Other sources of volunteers may be the community’s “mandatory” volunteers (including traffic violators or TANF participants).



When Head Start taps into the larger world of community volunteers, there has to be the recognition that many of the potential volunteers are individuals or organizations who prefer task-specific volunteer opportunities. This may necessitate an adjustment in the ways the program does planning. To effectively utilize today’s volunteers, greater attention must be paid to the needs of the volunteers, including recognizing that many volunteers will need to have smaller obligations of time and greater flexibility in setting their work patterns.



When designing the volunteer program, it is vital to remember not to make the mistake of assuming that the only people who will volunteer for the program are the same types of people who

volunteered in the past. Limiting the scope of the volunteer program in this way will create a self-fulfilling prophecy and the program may overlook individuals and organizations that could provide the resources that Head Start programs desperately need to provide quality services to children and families.

You may have to “sell” the idea of expanding the Head Start volunteer program to your colleagues within your agency. Some useful tips for accomplishing this may include:

- Integrating volunteer management topics into the general staff training calendar;
- Empowering other staff to recruit, train, evaluate and supervise volunteers,
- Knowing who staff listen to and involve that person (or a representative of that group) in promotion of the volunteer program, and,
- Above all, starting small and playing on the success of the volunteers and staff. In focusing the volunteer program try to work with staff who are already supportive of volunteers and are willing to use them in a meaningful fashion.

