Creative Approaches to Volunteer Programming: How to Meet Today's Special Needs

endless possibilities

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1. How do we get people to value Volunteers? Answer: We show up with value.
   ***Value people can see and feel. Not just value that we have to explain - although both are critical.

   Can you answer this question without taking time to think about your response?
    "What is the value of Volunteers to your organization?"

2. Medicare Response to COVID
   > This is what Medicare did in the early days of COVID:
   > Waive Requirement for Hospices to Use Volunteers. CMS is waiving the requirement at 42 CFR
   > §418.78(e) that hospices are required to use volunteers (including at least 5% of patient care hours). It is anticipated that hospice volunteer availability and use will be reduced related to COVID-19 surge and potential quarantine.

   > WHAT?? Does this make any sense to you?
   > When people are struggling the most and when volunteers are needed most - e say "Well, since it will be difficult we will just waive the requirement."

3. And what was the response nationally?
   > Many programs (not all) either laid off the volunteer program staff or just significantly reduced the use of volunteers.
   > Imagine for a moment if Medicare had said:
   > "Because of increased social isolation for patients and families, we are increasing the volunteer requirement from 5% to 20%."

   > What are your thoughts?

4. GOALS: are you clear about your organization's goals and the possibilities that exist for volunteer utilization within each of the goals?
   - Possible goals:
   - Census growth
   - High quality care
   - Patient/family satisfaction
   - Good financial stewards
   - Community reputation
   - Serve as a community resource for issues related to death/dying, grief/loss, caring for the seriously ill, care for caregivers, pain/symptom management, spiritual care for people who are ill, etc.
   - Significantly contribute to addressing social isolation during these times

5. First consider potential limitations:
   - Are you limited by your own thinking or skill sets?
     - "Our volunteers don't want to do this."
     - "I can't find volunteers."
     - "Medicare says we can't do that."

- Are you limited by your own policies and procedures? If so…why? Can they be changed?
- Regulations and accreditations
- Organizational directives
- Resources (Can you begin the groundwork anyway?)
  - Time
  - Money
  - Human resources

6. Example:
- A problem that is common in most programs is the transitioning of families from hospice care to bereavement care following the patient's death. Families often talk about how it feels like abandonment.

- Potential limitation: you might have a policy (or even – just a practice) that states that patient care volunteers cannot continue after the death of the patient (or you might limit the number of follow-up visits.)

- Solution: analyze why you place this kind of limitation on volunteers and look at resolving these issues. By providing this type of crossover service we can address a built in gap in the care we provide that is easily resolved with volunteers.

7. NHPCO Facts and Figures
What is the role of volunteers in each of these?
- Growth in the number hospice patients with non-cancer diagnoses, including Alzheimer's, dementia, or Parkinson's
- Ten percent received hospice care for two days or less. Twenty-five percent of beneficiaries received care for five days or less, and 50 percent received care for 18 days or less.
- Location of care: 27 days at a private residence, 22 days in nursing facilities and 56 days in assisted living facilities.

8. About E-Volunteering
- E-volunteering is volunteer work that happens virtually via the internet, smart-phone, telephone, FaceTime, etc.
- It has gained prominence due to the COVID pandemic but in reality – we should have been doing it all along.
- Not all volunteers want to volunteer in this way and not all have the equipment or the ability, but if you are looking to expand your volunteer workforce and increase services to patients and families, take a look at this format.

At some point in our near future, most volunteer work will happen virtually.

9. E-Volunteering - Adapted from Idealist – Online Volunteering
   http://www.idealist.org/info/Volunteer/Online#what
   - Develop, update, or manage website content, blogs, announcements, activities
   - Mentor and offer support to other volunteers
   - Translate materials – forms, marketing materials, resources
   - Create a blog, podcast, video, or social networking profile for your organization
   - Assist with research, analysis, writing, or editing
   - Write a grant, get the word out on fundraising, or send emails and make phone calls to current or potential donors
   - Facilitate an online support group (patients, caregivers, bereavement, volunteers)
   - Create/facilitate a bereavement support site adding regular references/resources

10. And let's discuss these:
    - Patient care assignments that occur virtually
    - Check-in Calls
    - Social isolation connection calls
    - Tuck-in services
    - Patients living alone or with limited caregiver support
    - Satisfaction survey initial contact prior to patient death
    - Spiritual support "prayer calls"
    - Bereavement services – support calls
    - Life skills training and resources for the bereaved
    - Professional volunteer calls
    - counseling, support, guidance, assessment (psychologist/psychiatrist, etc.)

11. And facilitating or co-facilitating groups
    - Groups either through the old fashioned telephone conference call or via FaceTime or a meeting platform.
    - Caregiver support group
    - Patient support group
    - Family meetings or family support groups
    - Volunteer support groups
    - Staff support groups with volunteer and/or professional volunteer involvement
    - Debriefing and/or counseling groups for IDT members followings difficult situations such as patient suicide
    - Inservices and trainings utilizing professional volunteers as speakers/trainers

12. Goal Setting Exercise
    - What first step/s will you take to increase volunteer utilization through expanding roles and functions?
    - What can you do right away to take a step toward increasing virtual volunteer roles?
    - What will you need for this to occur?
    - On a scale from 1–10, how committed are you to these goals?

13. "Dance above the surface of the world. Let your thoughts lift you into creativity that is not hampered by opinion." Red Haircrow

"Creativity doesn't come from trying to stay still."
Frances Ambler, Brief Lessons in Creativity

We owe it to patients, families and volunteers to never "stay still". We must always be looking to find better ways to utilize volunteers to care for people who are dying no matter what obstacles we encounter along the way.

Resources

Program Evaluation

Instructions: Rate your volunteer program against each of the following statements:
A = We are ready to go; B = We are OK but can use some work in this area ; C = Not at all ready. This needs our attention

COMPONENT OF IDEAL HOSPICE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM	RATING	IDEAS FOR WHERE TO BEGIN
Organization leadership supports expansion of volunteer programs and services.		
Staff/team members already work very well with volunteers.		
People in key positions in our organization support the use of virtual volunteers.		
Many of our current volunteers would like to work virtually.		
We are knowledgeable and prepared to recruit for virtual and in-person volunteers.		
We have several position descriptions specifically related to virtual volunteer roles.		
We are clear about how to increase supervision specifically for virtual volunteers.		
We know that virtual volunteers will have special needs and we are prepared to meet those needs.		
We have an online volunteer training program in place to meet the needs of all volunteers who prefer to train in this way.		
We have online application processes that are effective.		

Volunteers are able to submit their documentation confidentially and online.		
We have reviewed and edited our policies and procedures to accommodate virtual volunteering.		
We have a social media marketing plan in place.		

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Virtual Volunteer Suggested Policies and Procedures

Note: these are generic virtual volunteer policies and position descriptions. This may be a good place to start and I recommend putting together policies and position descriptions for each individual role as you expand. Also, I have intentionally left out policies related to issues such as vaccine requirements, TB tests, physicals, etc. You will need to research federal, state, local and organizational requirements and then explore your options. For example, do virtual volunteers who will never be present at the bedside or will never visit your facility need to have TB tests? As the world of virtual volunteering expands, we will need to figure out these issues locally and nationally.

Virtual volunteers provide their time and skills as do all volunteers except these volunteers work either in part or entirely utilizing virtual technologies. These technologies can include telephones, computers and/or other means to connect with people other than being present physically at the bedside or other locations. During these days of COVID fears and restrictions these volunteers can assist with minimizing social isolation for patients/families while at the same time provide meaningful interventions from the safety of their homes or other locations.

REQUIREMENTS

1. All virtual volunteers must complete and comply with all entry/onboarding requirements.

2. All virtual volunteers must complete the core volunteer curriculum followed by the virtual volunteer specialty education course. (You will want to have either online training options and/or you can mail a training course to these volunteers to complete at home.)

3. To be eligible to work as a virtual volunteer a volunteer must successfully complete at least 2 months of "internship". This internship means that all "visits" will be accompanied by the volunteer manager or a volunteer mentor.

4. Volunteers will participate in quarterly conference call support/debriefing sessions based on availability and or one-to-one calls with Volunteer Manager and/or volunteer mentor for ongoing education and supervision.

PROCEDURES

1. Volunteers will receive all necessary information and resources prior to their first contact.

2. Volunteers will be provided with "no later than" timeframes for their interventions.

3. Follow-up communications requiring immediate responses and/or documentation will be communicated/submitted to (insert tile/position here) no later than (insert time frame here).

4. Calls not requiring immediate action may be submitted with all documentation, no later than (insert here.)

SUPERVISION

1. The general supervision of virtual volunteers will be the responsibility of the volunteer manager.
2. The volunteer manager on an ongoing basis will provide feedback and evaluation with the assistance and input of other team members (and others) with whom the volunteer has worked.
3. Volunteers will participate in competency assessment and evaluation following education course, prior to performing any new duty and annually thereafter.
4. Volunteers evaluate the virtual volunteer program by completing and returning the evaluation (time frames here).
5. Volunteers will be notified of continuing education opportunities specific to their duties.

CONFIDENTIALITY

1. All volunteers must maintain confidentiality concerning hospice patients and families. There should be no discussion of patient cases or mentioning of patients' names other than in direct contact with other members of the Hospice team. Since there will be patient/family information in the volunteer's home, volunteers are expected to take the necessary precautions to assure confidentiality of the information. All volunteers will understand and sign the Volunteer Code of Ethics/Confidentiality Statement.

2. Volunteers needing information from the patient/family chart can request the information from the volunteer manager.. It is important to remember that charts

are reviewed by team members on a need-to-know basis and not for curiosity sake. Charts can be reviewed for *specific* (rather than general) information.

Sample Virtual Volunteer Position Description

TITLE: Virtual Volunteer

RESPONSIBLE TO: Volunteer Manager and/or other team member (Depending upon position. For example, Spiritual Support Virtual Volunteers will likely report to Chaplains)

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY:

Virtual Volunteers are available to contact patients/families either by phone or through the use of other virtual technologies for the purpose of specific duties that are assigned. For example, virtual volunteers might work alongside chaplains, social workers, nurses or bereavement professionals. Virtual volunteers may take assignments directly from the volunteer manager and work closely to promote volunteer program goals and objectives.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

1. Review request and assignment with referring IDT member and/or volunteer manager.
2. Make virtual contact with patient/family, other volunteers, etc. depending upon assignment.
3. Conduct assessment of needs and/or provide assigned interventions.
4. Provide IDT member and/or Volunteer Manager with the information obtained according to polices.
5. Follow all policies and procedures for virtual volunteers.
6. Understand limitations of the role of the volunteer in this capacity and refer to appropriate team members as necessary.
7. Initiate communication to appropriate staff when concerns arise.
8. Document all interventions according to policy.
9. Honor time commitments.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance at all required sessions of the volunteer education course.
Attendance at virtual volunteer specialty education course.
Demonstration of competency requirements.
Acceptance of supervision and direction from appropriate team members as applicable.
Agreement with hospice philosophy.
Maintenance of appropriate boundaries and confidentiality.
Attend a minimum of two support, educational or team conferences annually.

Ideas to Broaden Your Marketing/Recruiting Opportunities

- Contact your local volunteer center
- Join or create a DOVIA (Directors of Volunteers in Agencies)
  - ✓ See what they are doing in Austin: https://www.doviaaustin.org/
- Use your current volunteers and staff – they are passionate about the mission
- Write s a story for your local newspaper or TV station
  - ✓ Oldest and youngest volunteer
  - ✓ A veteran volunteer
  - ✓ A volunteer with a personal special interest story
- Create a Speakers Bureau (see this handout)
- Explore internet volunteer recruiting opportunities (Here are a few examples)
  - ✓ Volunteer Match: https://www.volunteermatch.org/
  - ✓ IDEALIST (free for volunteer position postings) https://www.idealist.org/en/?type=JOB
  - ✓ All for Good: https://www.allforgood.org/
- Sponsor booths and exhibits at special events
  - ✓ Volunteer for other organizations and/or provide services such as support groups to disease specific organizations:
  - ✓ American Cancer Society
  - ✓ Alzheimer's Association
- "If you want something, tell 100 people" Just Ask…every chance you get

Sample Recruitment Plan

Initial Assessment:

- ✓ Where is my program with the 5% requirement?
- ✓ What specific requests do we get from patients/families that go unmet?
- ✓ What would administration/staff like us to do more of?
- ✓ What are volunteers saying about how we can improve?
- ✓ How many position descriptions do we have and how can we expend the services we offer through volunteers?
- ✓ What programs could we develop this year? (See *Additional Roles and Opportunities* included in this handout)
- ✓ What are our retention rates?

Specific Objectives: (Examples)
- ✓ Increase volunteer patient care utilization from 5% to 7%
- ✓ Increase the number of active volunteers by 20%
- ✓ Get 50 more volunteer applications this year than last year
- ✓ Improve the quality of volunteer training
- ✓ Improve the quality of volunteer training materials
- ✓ Improve the volunteer onboarding experience
- ✓ Improve retention
- ✓ Add a virtual volunteer program

Specific Activities to Meet Objectives:

- ✓ Provide more programming opportunities for volunteers that will increase patient care utilization:
    - o Wide range of virtual volunteer duties (see notes above)
    - o Tuck-in callers
    - o Callers to check on patients with limited caregiver support
    - o Check-in callers (call 2 days after admission to see check on patient/family satisfaction)
    - o Chaplain assistants
    - o Promatoras , etc.
- ✓ Increase marketing by creating and implementing a Speakers Bureau and booking at least 10 events
- ✓ Hold a "volunteer challenge". A prize will go to the volunteer or staff member who refers the most new volunteers.
- ✓ Add 3 outside speakers (staff and/or community members) in order to improve the quality of volunteer training
- ✓ Add 3 high-quality YouTube videos or TED Talks to the volunteer training
- ✓ Assess the volunteer training manual and update/rewrite outdated materials
- ✓ Streamline the volunteer onboarding process by exploring ways to make requirements easier for volunteers and/or by providing volunteers with the opportunity to meet several requirements on one visit or at one time following the training.
- ✓ Create and utilize a "volunteer plan" for each volunteer in order to improve retention rates

Sample Marketing Plan

Areas of Focus:

- • "Personalize" marketing materials: highlight specific opportunities for the audience (e.g. what motivates seniors if often different from what motivates millennials)
- • Target specific audiences:
    - ✓ Seniors prefer providing services such as respite care and office work
    - ✓ Millennials (and younger) prefer short and varied experiences that specifically relate to life goals
- • Refine marketing messages
- • Assure website is informative (regarding volunteering) and user friendly
- • Post volunteer opportunities on the website and update training schedules
- • Make sure the website home page has a "volunteer call to action"
- • Highlight the work of specific volunteers in marketing materials (with their permission)

- Update marketing mailing lists (email, telephone contacts, mailing addresses, etc.)
- Update social media marketing opportunities
- Expand community bulletin board lists (ask volunteers and staff to let you know when they see community/church billboards where marketing materials can be posted)
- Create a Speakers Bureau and a mailing list to send brochures

References

Marketing/Recruitment

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Ten Time-Tested Volunteer Recruitment Tips that Still Work
https://www.energizeinc.com/hot-topics/2014/september

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https://www.pointsoflight.org/virtual-volunteering-opportunities/

Virtual Volunteering: What Is It and How Can I Volunteer?
https://www.matter.ngo/virtual-volunteering/

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