

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Mental Health

Use of Volunteers

Policy # 98-7

Date of Issue: October 21, 1998

Effective Date: November 2, 1998

Approval by Commissioner

Signed by: Marylou Sudders

Date: October 21, 1998

I. PURPOSE OF POLICY:

To establish a standardized policy for governing and integrating the use of Volunteers in all DMH-operated facilities and programs.

This policy replaces DMH Policy #96-2.

II. SCOPE OF POLICY:

The provisions of this policy are applicable to all DMH-operated facilities and programs that use Volunteers. (No DMH-operated facility or program is required to use Volunteers.) This policy shall not apply to people who volunteer on an occasional basis or to non-DMH programs that use DMH facilities.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- Volunteer: Any person who works in an unpaid capacity for the Department of Mental Health at one of its facilities or programs, who is not there for training purposes, whether or not he/she may have unmonitored client contact.

People who provide unpaid services on an occasional basis (e.g. once a year at Christmas) are not Volunteers for the purposes of this policy.

For the purposes of this policy, a current client of a facility or program who provides unpaid services at that facility or program shall not be considered a Volunteer at that facility or program. This exclusion does not apply to a client who provides unpaid services at a different facility or program or to other clients in general.

A Volunteer is considered to be a "special state employee" under the conflict of interest law, MGL Chapter 268A.

- Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI): Information regulated by the Criminal History Systems Board and maintained by the Board of Probation regarding criminal convictions and pending criminal data. The Department of Mental Health has been authorized by the Criminal History Systems Board to receive such information.
- Volunteer Coordination: A function performed within each DMH Area.

IV. POLICY:

Each DMH-operated facility or program may recruit, screen and train Volunteers. The provision of Volunteer services shall be guided by this policy and the standards and guidelines established by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

Each DMH-operated facility or program shall develop and implement a written plan for Volunteer services, if such services are provided and shall designate a person(s) to be responsible for Volunteer Coordination. The plan shall clearly state the scope, availability and objectives of Volunteer services and the basis for the evaluation of the effectiveness. In addition to the plan,

- A. All Volunteer candidates shall complete the DMH Volunteer Application Form attached.
- B. A Criminal Offenders Record Information (CORI) check shall be conducted on all candidates being seriously considered for Volunteer services in accordance with DMH Policy #97-2 or its successor policy.
- C. Assignment to appropriate services or units shall be based on each Volunteer's experience, competence and preferences, and the need of each facility or program for Volunteer assistance.
- D. An orientation program to familiarize Volunteers with the goals of the facility or program, including its services and relevant emergency procedures shall be provided, including an overview of client

care and treatment and an explanation of the importance of maintaining client confidentiality and protecting client rights.

- E. Volunteers shall receive general direction and guidance from the DMH employee coordinating Volunteer activities in the facility or program and from the staff of the program or facility to which they are assigned.
- F. Each Area Director shall assign a person to be responsible for Volunteer Coordination within the Area who shall report to the DMH Area Director.
- G. The person coordinating Volunteer activities in the facility or program shall be responsible for the following:
 - 1. Maintaining records on Volunteer services. These records shall include a file on each Volunteer including her/his application, participation in orientation and training programs, assignment record and progress reports from supervisors. The coordinator shall also maintain a master assignment schedule for all Volunteers.
 - 2. Managing the recruiting, screening, and assigning of Volunteers.
 - 3. Instructing program staff in the proper, effective and innovative use of Volunteers.
 - 4. Participating in the planning of training programs as appropriate.
 - 5. Ensuring that name tags displaying the Volunteer's name and position title are worn by Volunteers in appropriate locations at appropriate times. (The determination of "when" and "where" name tags are to be worn is to be made by the DMH staff person coordinating Volunteer activities.)

V. IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY:

The Area Director is responsible for ensuring that all DMH-operated facilities or programs utilizing Volunteers develop and implement a Volunteer services program in accordance with this policy.

VI. REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed annually.

© 2004, Department of Mental Health, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, All Rights Reserved