Victim Advocate
Recruitment, Selection, and Training

Block 25
Sexual Assault Response Coordinator Training

01/17/2008
Why People Volunteer

- Do something useful to help others
- Give back for a service they or someone they know received
- Enjoy volunteer work
- Learning experience
- Meet others and be part of community

Brudney, 1994
Types of Recruitment

• Warm Body Recruitment
  – Disseminating information about the program and volunteer needs as widely as possible
  – Ex: Brochures, posters, flyers, base TV, base newspaper, brief at Commander’s Calls, e-mails, websites

• Targeted Recruitment

• Concentric Circles Recruitment

McCurley, 1994
Types of Recruitment

• Warm Body Recruitment
• Targeted Recruitment
  – Used when looking for people with particular skills or interest
  – Focus recruitment efforts where these people are likely to be found
  – Motivational appeal
• Concentric Circles Recruitment

McCurley, 1994
Types of Recruitment

• Warm Body Recruitment
• Targeted Recruitment
• Concentric Circles Recruitment
  - Word of mouth or snowball effect
  - People who are involved with the program recruit people they know
  - Personal appeal
  - Most common type of recruitment

McCurley, 1994
Your Pitch

What Volunteers Will Get Out of It

• New skills and information
• Knowledge that they are making a difference
• A community within the program
• Military receive Special Experience Identifier (SEI)
• Civilians receive an addendum to Position Description (PD)
Screening Process

- Application
- Interview
- References and Recommendations
- Background Check
Victim Advocate Eligibility

- Must possess the maturity and experience to assist in a very sensitive situation
- Only active duty military personnel and DoD civilian employees selected by the SARC may serve as VAs
  - Appropriate unit commander or agency head must concur before a volunteer can be selected as a VA
  - Appropriate military personnel may be detailed to serve as VAs, particularly in GSUs and deployed locations
Who Cannot Be A Victim Advocate

• Medical Personnel, FAP, Life Skills, and ADAPT
• Office of the Staff Judge Advocate
• Office of the Wing Chaplain
• Security Forces, OSI
• Command Chiefs, First Sergeants
• Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) Office
• Other positions that pose a potential conflict of interest
Application

- AF Application covers
  - Source of interest in role
  - What they bring to the role
  - Expectations
  - Commitment and over-commitment
  - Personal trauma
  - Criminal history and background check
Application

• Standard AF application available on Knowledge Now
• Can add questions
• Allows for screening major red flags
Conducting the Interview

- Interviews need to give you real data about how the applicant will do the job
- Prepare list of questions
  - use same questions for everyone
- Use scenario interviewing to learn what the applicant’s baseline skill level is
Conducting the Interview

• Explore applicant’s interests, abilities, and motivation for doing this job
• Discuss position requirements
• Sell the program
• Look for indications of good fit
• Explain what will happen next
Conducting the Interview

- Sample questions
  - There are many organizations looking for volunteers. What made you choose this one?
  - What skills and experiences do you bring to the table?
  - How would you respond if a victim said...
  - Tell me about a time when you made a mistake.
  - Describe your method of handling conflict.
Controversial Issues

• Discuss controversial issues with potential Victim Advocates:
  – Abortion
  – Emergency Contraception
  – Religious Issues
  – Lifestyle Issues (drinking, adultery, drug use)
  – Prior Victimization

• VAs must be able to respect victim’s wishes and not impose their own beliefs
Danger Signs to Watch For

• Recent or unprocessed trauma in the volunteer or volunteer’s family/significant other’s life
• Spontaneous, personal sharing that is unresponsive to questions posed, or inappropriate to the moment
• Marked deficits in listening skills
Danger Signs to Watch For

• Over-sexualized interpersonal style, language, or clothing
• Grossly unrealistic expectations about role or responsibilities
• Tendency to over-commit to too many things or to things that the volunteer can’t reasonably manage
Danger Signs to Watch For

• Victim blaming attitudes of any kind
• Inability to describe self with any depth of insight
• Inability to describe motivation to volunteer beyond “helping people”
References

• Check references (personal or professional)
  – Conduct telephone interview or ask for letters of recommendation
  – Ask about good and bad

• Obtain signed Supervisor’s Statement of Understanding

• Can also request Commander’s recommendation

• Any written recommendation should be sent directly to the SARC
Background Check

• Obtain consent to do background check
• Figure out what process works best at your installation:
  – Ask OSI to review applicants
  – Ask applicant’s commander about any potentially disqualifying information
    • Incidents of family violence or sexual assault
    • Other incidents of misconduct in recent past
    • Records of discipline or non-judicial punishment
Creating a Good Selection Process

• Include others in your selection process (assistant, experienced volunteers, SART members)

• Create clear criteria that are applied equally (rather than going on gut instinct)
  - Keep notes from interview
  - Include comments
  - Use checklist and/or ranking system
Selection

• Invite applicant to attend training
• Explain final selection based on satisfactorily completing training
• Discuss with applicants their expectations and the actual challenges and expectations of the job
  - Provide a job description
What to Include in a Job Description

• Job title and purpose
• Benefits to applicant
• Qualifications for the position
• Time requirements
• Job responsibilities and activities
• Reporting relationship and supervision

Brudney, 1994
Tips on Screening and Selection

- Make the selection a prized position that people want to have – it’s more than just earning a bullet for an appraisal!
- Try to recruit a diverse group
- Invite more applicants than needed. Some will drop out
- But, do not recruit too many so you can keep them busy and involved
Tips on Screening and Selection

• Give yourself and the applicant an out by saying that the work is not for everyone
• Be clear about the screening and selection process so they will know what to expect
• Keep in mind that you can have different types of volunteers
  - Victim Advocates
  - Prevention Volunteers, Speakers
  - Outreach Volunteers
Victim Advocate Training

• Training allows opportunity to observe potential volunteer to be certain s/he is a good match for the program.
• Also gives potential volunteers the opportunity to decide this isn’t a commitment they want to make.
• Victim Advocates must receive all 40 hours of the official Air Force training before being assigned to work with victims
• Each SARC has been provided a CD that contains the complete VA training course
  – Similar in appearance and organization to SARC training course
    • MS Power Point slides, divided into training blocks; use of practical exercises
    – Most sexual assault subject-matter slides have extensive instructor notes
• VA course can be longer than SARC training (currently crafted for 40 hours of training, easily expandable to 50 hours)
• Assumes that VA trainees will be taught in groups – course can be modified for individual instruction
• Includes recommendations for relevant films (these will need to be purchased) – films are a useful component, but not essential
VA Training Course
Instructing the Course

• SARCs may add material to meet specific installation and local requirements

• SARCs are expected to reach out to installation-level resources to enhance existing training material or otherwise enrich the training experience
  – Example: site visits can be used to enhance the AF procedure blocks (medical, investigative, legal)

• SARCs are expected to reach out to the appropriate base-level functional organizations for instruction support
  – Example: Reach out to OSI to provide an instructor for Investigative Procedures block (and arrange a site visit)
VA Training Course

Implementing the Training Course

• Ideal training group is no more than 20 advocates, prescreened for appropriateness
• Training space should be informal and comfortable
  – Each student should have a writing area/desk
  – Pay attention to AV needs, especially if you want to use films and Power Point
• There should be reasonable room (and proper acoustics) for breaking out into small groups for practical exercise work
• Instructors should be assisted by facilitators as required to support role-plays and practical exercises
VA Training Course
Scheduling

- Give people time to process material
- Accommodate the scheduling needs of the majority of the advocates
- Mix week nights and full weekend days so that you have some longer stretches of time to teach long blocks of instruction
  - E.g. Monday 6-9pm, Wednesday 6-9pm, Saturday 10-6, for 3 weeks
Teaching Adults

• Adults have relevant experiences and opinions that need to be drawn upon to the integrate material
• Experiential learning is an essential means of teaching adults
• Most people learn through visual images
  – Visual materials must be appealing and contain the proper measure of contrast
Disclosure

• Be mindful of survivors in the room
• Model an appropriate level of disclosure
• Cause for concern:
  – Not previously disclosed to SARC
  – Lack of relevance to training issue
  – Escalation of emotional content of training
  – Dominating discussion
Facilitator Strategies

• Vary methods of teaching to enhance learning
  – Avoid death by Power Point
  – Utilize videos, guest speakers, exercises

• Vary intensity of course material

• Encourage participation and discussion

• Set ground rules

• Do check-in and check-out every day
VA Training Course Assessment

• Do ongoing assessment on whether the training is:
  – Communicating the core concepts
  – Engaging students in the learning activities
• Be prepared to reconsider teaching strategies if something isn’t working with your group
• Share feedback and ideas with other SARCs to fine tune the training for future use
After the Training

• Offer acceptance
  - Review expectations, meeting and time requirements
  - Discuss program policy and procedures
  - sign Advocate Statement of Understanding
  - Do not accept anyone you have doubts about!

• submit AF Form 2096 for military SEI, Civilian supervisor submits for requested addendum to PD

• The SARC will determine when a new VA is ready to consult with victims on an independent basis (where possible, initial consults should be done as part of a team with the SARC or an experienced VA)
Quality Control

• Write a probationary period into your policies and procedures
• Include mentored direct service (OJT) in your orientation for new volunteers
• Make role plays part of on-going in-service training
• Talk to volunteers after every direct service contact to see how they think it went
Key Points

• Use a selection process that maximizes opportunities to assess the volunteer’s appropriateness for the role
• Adult learning needs to be experiential and contain visual elements
• Facilitation of the training includes artful use of questions and techniques to stimulate audience participation
• The proffered Victim Advocate curriculum contains materials that the SARC will need to learn on their own to teach them
• SARCs MUST reach out to installation-level resources to enhance this training and access expert instructors in certain topic areas
References

• “Why People Volunteer” from: www.nonprofits.org/npofaq/04/02html