

Mecklenburg County Department of Public Health

Volunteer Program Journey

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Mecklenburg County Health Department Volunteer Program

Abstract

The purpose of this project is to redirect the strategy and philosophy on how the Volunteer Program within the Mecklenburg County Health Department (MCHD) is managed. Our previous Volunteer program does not provide the energy and activity needed for an effective Public Health Volunteer program.

Introduction / Background

The old volunteer program was quiescent. The practice was to wait for a department or individual to identify a volunteering need, then seek out his or her volunteer and direct that individual to our Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator completes an orientation then redirects the volunteer back to the department. That was the extent of the MCHD Volunteer Program involvement.

The residents of Mecklenburg County support Health Department initiatives when the Health Department solicits their assistance. We have many operational opportunities that can be addressed by our community's volunteering generosity if a defined process to receive their charitable spirit is available.

Project Description, Objectives and Methodology

As a part of a recent reorganization, the MCHD Volunteer program is now a component of our Administrative Support Services Division. Within this restructuring, the administration of this program became the sole responsibility for Janet Harris our staff assistant and me.

We have attempted to reengineer our current Volunteer program with a specific focus on recruitment and implementation practices with a mission to become a Volunteer program that is integrated within the Mecklenburg County Volunteer community as a means of enhancing Health Department functions with Volunteer resources.

Our first effort was to learn the components of our local Volunteer network then to work with these partners soliciting best practice and eliminate our need to recreate the wheel in the area of Volunteer program administration to include:

- Volunteer Law
- Volunteer Practices and Policies
- Volunteer Recruitment Techniques

Secondly, we began revising and developing:

- Policies and Procedures
- Training Manuals
- Orientation Process and Tools
- Volunteer Utilization Forms

As we continued to establish our planned database of contacts, our journey included developing appropriate ventures with partners such as:

- Nonprofit Managers currently operating effective Volunteer Programs
- Carolinas Healthcare System Volunteer Leadership
- State or National Volunteer Association
- Potential Volunteer Sources:
 - University and Colleges
 - Human Resource Management
 - Employers
 - Webmaster for both Mecklenburg County and Carolinas HealthCare System

Goals will be to develop and implement appropriate:

- Recruitment strategies
- Orientation and Training Manual
- Evaluation Process
- Recruitment of volunteers by year end:
 - 3 or more active Volunteers by year end will be viewed as successful

Results

Janet and I have taken a team oriented approach to ignite our Volunteer program. We have each conducted exhaustive internet research on Volunteer operations. We specifically joined the North Carolina Society of Directors of Volunteer Services, NCS DVS, www.ncdvs.com, as this association strives to work with professionals involved with volunteer management. They are dedicated to providing a network to support leaders within the volunteer area. Education is provided with the most current materials and information to support one another professionally on ongoing bases.

One effort to ensure continuing communications is through local level committees. We meet locally to address current issues throughout the year. We have joined the local division and have begun attending these meetings as well as attended the State annual meeting earlier this year in March.

Attending both the State and our Monthly local meetings has presented us with the opportunity to increase our knowledge of Volunteer operations and to observe and review Volunteer Programs orientations and tools. Regulatory information along with required reference tools were also the benefit of these interactions.

With our newly gained information, we developed or revised the following tools, Attachments 1 and 2:

- Volunteer Application
- Volunteer Health History Form
- Volunteer Information and Authorization Forms
- Volunteer Interest Letter
- Volunteer Interviewing Questions

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- Volunteer Job Descriptions
 - Greeter
 - Library Assistant
 - Childcare
 - Office Volunteer
 - Miscellaneous Volunteer
 - Volunteer Operations Guidelines
 - Volunteer Orientation
 - Volunteer Policy and Procedures
 - Volunteer Timesheets

Armed with our new tools including three volunteer job descriptions and successful recruitment of six Volunteers on May 12, 2008, we provided our first Volunteer orientation to our six charter volunteers, Power Point Attachment 3.

We shared the new MCHD Volunteer Program philosophy with our middle managers at our leadership meeting on April 23, 2008 charging our leaders to become Volunteer recruiters to enhance our pool.

We work closely with our Human Resources Staff to ensure the appropriate application process. Our recruitment efforts are transparent and inclusive. The interest package details all steps of our application process for potential volunteers allowing them to opt out should they choose not to allow our applicant process, Attachment 1.

We are gaining a number of our new volunteers through our networking initiatives with the University of North Carolina, Charlotte (UNCC). We have coordinated with their Nurse Learning program. Through this collaboration, we are now one of the three Volunteering site selections for their students to choose as one of their required twelve volunteer contact hours locations.

The University of North Carolina relationship enhances our recruitment strategy by providing this opportunity to expose nursing students to Public Health activities as a potential future workforce selection.

The timing of our Volunteer collaboration with UNCC creates a win-win for both the university as well as our program. UNCC is in the process of expanding both their Bachelor of Science and Masters of Science of Public Health (PH) Programs. Offering MCHD as a volunteer site for their Nurse Learning Program, it simultaneously creates an established relationship for volunteer opportunities for students in their PH programs.

An additional outcome of our collaboration is that we are now included on one of our partners' website for Volunteer marketing exposure; see our advertisement on our CHS Volunteer website under Department of Public Health:

<http://www.carolinamedicalcenter.org/body.cfm?id=745>

Lastly, we are targeting our area Senior Center to work with them to be added to their list of Volunteer Referral Programs for their senior citizens seeking volunteering opportunities.

Conclusion

We now have an active MCHD Volunteer program!

Our all time high to date has been six volunteers, though we currently have three of our charter individuals on our roles with continued active recruitment. Even though our numbers are small to date, we have received 2,364.5 hours of volunteer time.

We are tracking our volunteer hours for various reasons; one of the outcomes will be to demonstrate the savings of these individuals that so graciously volunteer their time. Our research through the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates the 2,364.5 hours of donated time equates to approximately \$46,131.00 of unpaid labor costs through our volunteers.

Now that a formal entry into our Volunteer program has been established our struggle is not attracting applicants it is in receiving meaningful assignments that are engaging. We have added a new volunteer role of the School Health Library Assistant Volunteer. We are expecting a number of our UNC volunteers to rotate through this assignment.

Beyond the volunteers that come for a specific number of volunteer hours, we have had six volunteers with a turnover rate of 50%. This 50% represents two individuals leaving because their commitment ended. We find once a volunteer is on an assignment the relationship works great decreasing turnover, requested assignments have been episodic.

We plan to meet with our leadership team to provide a refresher of the Volunteer opportunities, remind them of the success we have had to date and work with them to develop departmental prospects through this value added service.

We have three charter volunteers remaining on our roster. Through our new partnerships, we have gained six new volunteers who are scheduled to attend our next orientation.

We have nine volunteers meeting our goal to have three active volunteers by year-end.

Leadership Development

SEPHLI in general has been a venture that strengthens my leadership abilities from various aspects. The self-awareness Advisor was excellent as the introduction point for this awesome journey through the utilization of their exceptional educating techniques. In addition, they were successful in navigating through the tools to help me understand “me” just a little better with the decision style profile and synthesizing the results of the 360 results.

The opportunity to understand personality types and appreciate how others perceive personalities was just the beginning of this value added endeavor. My goal from the inception of SEPHLI was to acquire a broader understanding of Public Health. Gaining the knowledge from the speakers, the Water Cooler discussions and Year 11 scholars in general was the source of many opportunities and conversations allowing me to gain from these Public Health experts.

The speakers along with required readings specifically the First 90 Day in Government were the source of Public Health understanding along with a strong strengthening of leadership functions in general. Leadership in Government has been added to my library and should be required reading for all new leaders to read within their first 90 days of employment within our environment.

This specific journey forced a reigniting of my collaboration skills. Working with leaders within the community has been rewarding and a powerful source of information. I am reminded of how much I miss working in the community on team projects.

Working as a team of two, both Janet and I have exhibited leadership development. Our initial development was with our oral and written communication skills to ensure clear and concise policies, orientations and marketing our vision.

Oral communication was enhanced through the need mentoring skills. We have both improved our counseling skills through mentoring. Working with Janet, growth has been noted through her hands on approach with the Volunteers. Janet's mentoring skills has expanded as the volunteers look to Janet for guidance and she is readily available.

Janet has been a rock throughout this project. Because of her efforts to ignite this program, I nominated her for our Key Employee Incentive Program, (KEIP). The KEIP award is an incentive for employees that make a significant contribution to at least one of our six primary CHS goals.

Janet's assistance with our Volunteer Program has had a major impact on our Customer Service goal therefore; her nomination resulted in the receipt of a \$1,500.00 reward.

The SEPHLI experience has the correct mix of exercises to challenge leaders while also allowing immediate integration of the gained learning. Incorporating the revitalization of our Volunteer Program while continuing current responsibilities and adjusting to new program requirements is a demonstration of critical thinking, time management and prioritization skills.

I have enjoyed my year long SEPHLI journey even though I did not begin this experience with the expectation that it would be as challenging as it was though as they say, "No Pain, No Gain".

Reviewers:

Polly Baker, MCHD Assistant Vice President

Janet Harris, MCHD Staff Assistant

Michael Kennedy, PH Education, Grants and Special Projects Coordinator

APPENDICIES

1. Online Application
 - a. Adult Volunteer Application
 - b. Volunteer Health History Form
 - c. Volunteer Information and Release Authorization form
 - d. Volunteer Code of Ethics
 - e. Confidentiality Statement
 - f. Workers Right to Know Statement

2. Program Introduction Guidelines

3. New Volunteers Orientation