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Recruitment of the retired volunteer: a needs assessment for the Dekalb county CASA program

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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORK

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B.S. GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY, 2000

RECRUITMENT OF THE RETIRED VOLUNTEER: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR
THE DEKALB COUNTY CASA PROGRAM

Advisor: Professor Sarita Davis

Thesis dated May 2005

The purpose of this evaluation was to conduct a needs assessment for the DeKalb
County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program, which utilizes volunteers
to advocate for the best interest of abused and neglected children who are in foster care.
This assessment assisted the staff in developing a recruitment strategy targeting retired
adults. This assessment evaluated the dependability, health and income of retired adults.
For the purpose of this study dependability was measured by: (a) the number of hours
volunteers spent on assigned cases per month, (b) the number of hearings attended and
(c) the number of monthly advocacy reports that were completed and sent to volunteer’s
advocacy supervisors between September 2004 and November 2004. Six, current, retired
adult volunteers participated in the study. A convenience sample of six non-retired
volunteers was used to compare dependability findings with those of retired adult
volunteers. Income and health were qualitatively analyzed. Descriptive analysis was used
describe dependability and volunteer demographics. This evaluation was relevant to
DeKalb CASA because, as a program that is dependent upon volunteers to for its success,
it is vital that the most advantageous volunteer be recruited and retained. Thus, this
evaluation allowed staff to identify the benefit of recruiting this target population in
regards to their level of dependability compared to non-retired volunteers, as well as, the
potential challenges experienced by retired adults in regards to health related illnesses and limited income. Findings from this study concluded that retired adult volunteers are more dependable than non-retired volunteers. In addition, volunteering did contribute to increased feelings of better mental and physical health. Moreover, their limited income did not restrict their ability to volunteer.
RECRUITMENT OF THE RETIRED VOLUNTEER: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF
THE DEKALB COUNTY CASA PROGRAM

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

KELLI GREENE WOOD

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
MAY 2005
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provided the background of the DeKalb County CASA program, the statement of the problem, significance of the evaluation and the summary all in detail.

Background of the Problem

Due to an increasing number of children entering the court system, many case managers became overloaded with cases and were unable to provide the court with the vital, detailed information that it desperately needed in order to make informed decisions. Thus, in 1990, due to the efforts of a child advocate attorney, DeKalb County CASA became a part time program. Staffed by MSW interns the purpose of the program was to provide that much needed information that the court was missing. On July 1, 1997, after receiving funding, DeKalb CASA became a full time program whose mission was to advocate for the best interest of abused and neglected children in the custody of the DeKalb county Juvenile Court (Gordon, 2002).

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) volunteers are sworn in as Guardian ad Litems and operate as officers of the court (Gordon, 2002). They are required to remain assigned to a case for 12 months or until the child has achieved permanency. They work on only one or two cases at a time, thus they are able to focus and spend more time with their assigned child(ren) and are, therefore, able to provide the court with more information (National CASA, 2003). Howbeit, their success and the amount of information that they provide is reliant upon the vast amount of work that they do.
The amount of work that volunteers do and the role that they play in the lives of the children whom they serve is vital. Prior to being sworn in volunteers must complete 40 hours of extensive training which covers topics such as child abuse, family dynamics, child-rearing styles, juvenile justice legal procedures and foster care placement. Additionally, they must complete a screening process that includes consenting to a background investigation, providing three references, taking fingerprints, and participating in an interview. This process allows staff to determine if the interested adult will be a good volunteer. After completing training, the screening process and being sworn in, volunteers spend approximately 15 to 20 hours a month working on their case (Callender, 2003). Throughout the month, volunteers are expected to complete certain tasks such as investigate the case by conducting personal interviews with all relevant persons involved in the case, which would include the child(ren), foster parents, and siblings. This is done to ensure that all relevant facts concerning the case are obtained. Additionally, volunteers are to ensure that services available to the child(ren) are being administered in a timely manner. Volunteers, additionally, are to monitor court orders to ensure that all parties involved in the case are in compliance, and if they are not, the volunteer has the right and the responsibility to bring it to the Court’s attention. Furthermore, volunteers are required to see their child(ren) face to face at least once a month and speak to them at least twice a month. This means that if a CASA is assigned to a case that has two or more children and each of the children are in a different placement then the volunteer must travel to each of those separate placements in order to satisfy this requirement. Moreover, volunteers help to ensure that their assigned children visit with their siblings, as well as biological family. Thus, many volunteers spend a large majority of their time traveling to various locations within and outside of the Metro Atlanta Area to either visit all of their assigned children or functioning as an aid to allow sibling groups and family to visit one another. This is a very important aspect of CASA volunteers.
When CASA children are allowed to visit with siblings and other family members, it helps to strengthen familial bonds. CASA’s are also expected to attend court hearings if and when their assigned case is to be heard in court. In addition, he/she is required to provide the Court a legal written report that details all of the facts of the case as well as his/her recommendations (Calkins & Miller, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

Although the work that volunteers do is very important and rewarding, it is also very demanding and time consuming. As stated previously volunteers spend a significant amount of time working on their cases. According to Applied Research Services (ARS) (2002), Callender (2003), and National CASA (2002) the greatest challenge for most volunteers is a lack of time. ARS found that active, as well as, former volunteers stated that they felt overwhelmed by their attempt to balance work, family, and CASA responsibilities. The most commonly cited reasons for volunteers leaving the CASA program, according to National CASA, (2002) were family needs and employment situation.

One of the recommendations ARS provided for CASA programs attempting to combat retention obstacles was to identify “their [volunteers] main sources of frustration and anguish which may contribute to their decision to leave the CASA network” (p. 6). As previously stated above the most prevalent challenge facing CASA volunteers is time commitment. Thus, ARS suggested that CASA programs look for volunteers within the community who do not have as many employment and family responsibilities; a possible group could be retired citizens. Thus, this evaluation will provide staff of DeKalb CASA the challenges and benefits associated with recruiting retirees as volunteers.
Significance of the Evaluation

Just as many non-profit organizations, volunteerism is the foundation of the DeKalb County CASA program. Thus recruitment and retention is a priority for DeKalb CASA staff, because the more volunteers that are recruited and retained equates to an increase in the number of children served. As of September 2004, there were 165 total certified CASA volunteers. Of those only nine volunteers were retirees. Thus, retirees make up a small percentage, 5.4%, of the volunteers at De Kalb County CASA. Currently, staff is interested in developing a recruitment strategy that will target retired adults volunteers. This evaluation will describe the challenges and benefits associated with recruiting this target population.

Summary

DeKalb County CASA’s mission is to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children who are in the custody of the DeKalb County Juvenile Court. To effectively accomplish this mission the program utilizes volunteers who diligently work to ensure that the child’s voice is heard in court. Currently, the staff of DeKalb County CASA is interested in developing a recruitment strategy that will target retirees as volunteers. Presently, retirees make up only 5.4% of the 165 certified volunteers. The challenges and benefits that this target population possesses are evaluated in this assessment.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviewed the literature on volunteerism trends of older adults, reasons for the increase in their volunteerism, the benefits both older adults and service organizations receive from their volunteerism. Motivations for volunteering among older adults were presented, as well as the conceptual framework of this evaluation.

According to ARS (2002), Callender (2003), and National CASA (2002), the most prevalent reason that volunteers give for leaving the CASA program is “lack of time.” National CASA (2002) reported that CASA’s felt overwhelmed by their work and family obligations. Moreover, they felt that they were unable to commit the amount of time they believed necessary to their CASA cases. One recommendation provided by ARS (2002) to CASA programs attempting to overcome this retention challenge was to reach persons within the community with fewer work and family obligations, such as retirees.

Volunteerism among older adults, according to Chambre (1993), has been on the rise. Despite previous obstacles against elders volunteering such as a perceived lack of interest, fragile health, and an unwillingness by organizations to recruit them, recent research has shown that Americans are retiring earlier, living longer and healthier lives and are looking for opportunities to serve (Anonymous, 1996; Chambre, 1993; Freedman, 1997; Greising, 1998).
Benefits Organizations Accrue from Volunteer Work by Retirees

For more than 25 years, there has been a considerable increase in the percentage of older adults who participate in organizational volunteering (Okun, Barr & Herzog, 1998). Between 1965 and 1990 there was a 30% increase in volunteer participation of adults over the age of 65 (Okun, Barr & Herzog, 1998). These authors cite Chambre (1993) for suggested reasons for this increased rate as, “(a) improvements across cohorts in educational attainment and health; (b) favorable shifts in the public attitude toward aging and elders; (c) an increased valuing of volunteer work; and (d) expanded opportunities for older volunteers in the public and private sectors” (p. 608).

Additionally, older volunteers bring reliability, dependability and discipline into the organizations that they volunteer for. These attributes, coupled with their experience and maturity, are the reasons many service and non-profit organizations seek retired volunteers. Moreover, Freedman (1997) stated that seniors provide essential community service, as well as substantial benefits to both individual clients and host agencies by fulfilling significant service gaps within their programs and agencies. Likewise, many utilize their expertise in providing complementary skills to staff and other volunteers alike, and are stable, and long-lasting participants.

Moreover, Chambre (1993) stated that recruitment of retirees is a cost-effective strategy because they live longer, have fewer children and longer periods of retirement. In addition, they are free from work and family obligations, thus they devote more time than other groups. Not only do programs and organizations benefit from retirees, but retired volunteers themselves benefit from serving.

Benefits Retirees Accrue from Volunteering

According to Omoto, Snyder & Martin (2000), participation in volunteer and community service is associated with better physical health, lower psychological distress, as well as, is an essential marker for life satisfaction among older adults. Further, it is
important for achieving a sense of purpose and meaning for those whose retirement denotes a loss of work, as well as, productive and functional purposes in their lives. Likewise, service provides opportunities for engagement, activity, acquaintanceship and growth, along with increased self-esteem, renewed feelings of health and vigor and new and satisfying social relationships with peers (Freedman, 1997). Despite these significant benefits to utilizing senior service, challenges and obstacles for this population do exist.

Aging and Health

As previously stated, health remains a challenge for many seniors. According to Independent Sector and Aging America (as cited in Chambre, 1993) a major reason why older Americans stop volunteering is due to poor health and the higher incidence of serious illnesses past the age of 75. Berger (2001) likewise asserts that older people are more susceptible to disease, take longer to recover from illness and are more likely to die from any given disease or infection. She further adds that for persons 65 and older the death rate from the eight leading causes of death (heart disease, cancer, stoke, accidents, pneumonia/flu, diabetes, arteriosclerosis, suicide) is significantly higher for them than for younger people. Moreover, Elwell & Maltbie-Crannel (1992) stated that retired people often have more negative feelings of their health than employed adults. However, they concluded that health declines are associated with age rather than with employment. More recent research, however, (Anonymous,1996) asserts that older Americans are living longer and healthier lives than past generations.

Opposition toward Retirees from Organizations

Freedman (1997) discovered that ambivalence about older adults still exist despite the substantial progress they have made. Questions concerning older adults as serious, capable, and productive citizens and service providers continue to persist. In addition, a problem exists for seniors at the organizational level: underutilization of seniors in
service assignments due to being ignored or being placed in assignments that do not make full use of their skills and abilities.

Seniors, likewise, experience difficulties when working with agency personnel, who are often overwhelmed with other duties and lack training in working with seniors in service roles, or are concerned that elders will impinge upon their territory or even displace regular staff. Thus, because there is such a low percentage of retirees volunteering at DeKalb County CASA, the researcher is interested in determining if they have experienced any ambivalence from DeKalb CASA staff.

Motivations for Older Adults to Volunteer

Omoto, Snyder & Martin (2000) found through past research (Moen, 1996; Peplau, Bikson, Rook & Goodchilds, 1982; Scultz & Moore, 1986) that whereas adults in an early life stage are more motivated toward volunteerism for interpersonal or relationship concerns, older adults are rather motivated by concerns with establishing a sense of purpose and a commitment to society. A study conducted by Marriott Senior Living Services (as cited in Omoto, Snyder & Martin, 2000) supports their findings. This report indicated that the three motives most frequently attributed by older volunteers for their service were: “to help others (83%),” “to feel useful or productive (65%),” and “to fulfill a moral responsibility (51%).” According to Ekerdt (1986), another motivation for retirees to volunteer are to alleviate feelings of role loss.

Role Loss

For many adults work has been identified with characteristics such as virtue, esteem, diligence, initiative, temperance, competitiveness and self-reliance (Ekerdt, 1986). Additionally, it is assumed that our friendships are attached to our work (Elwell, Maltbie-Crannell, 1992). Thus, retirement for many may attach feelings of uselessness as well as a sense of a loss of purpose (Omoto, Snyder, & Steven, 2000). Payne (1977)
stated that an individual’s sense of self-identity and social competence is dependent upon the kinds of social labeling he/she experiences. Moreover, she pointed out that elderly are usually susceptible to psychological breakdowns and loss of identity because of role loss. Thus, Payne (1997) ascertained that skills and values of work need to be restructured into age-appropriate activities such as volunteering which “...reinforces the value of time and appropriate (meaningful) use of time...it says the time of old age is different but valued time, it challenges (motivates) the individual and society to discover appropriate roles that restructure the time and work skills of older people” (p. 356). She goes on to suggest that as retirees engage in volunteer activities they begin to recycle role skills and develop a new status of prestige from peers and the community, thus they begin to reduce their dependence on others while they simultaneously develop an increase in their independence and self-identity.

Chambre’ (1984), likewise, stated that volunteering provides an effective method for retirees dealing with role loss. Volunteering for many retirees allows them to contribute, share one’s skills and life experiences, as well as have a destination for which one must get dressed and leave their home (Swartz, 1978 as cited in Chambre, 1984). Thus, volunteering is a motivation for many retirees to combat negative feelings associated with role loss.

Income and Role Loss

Financial resources have been directly related to age and role loss (Elwell & Maltbie-Crannel, 1992). As an individual continues to grow older the less money he/she receives from social security. Likewise, both objective and subjective income decrease following retirement (Elwell & Maltbie-Crannel, 1992). These authors looked at results from a Harris Poll and found that approximately one-third of the sample of retirees found that retirement was less satisfactory than nonretirees. Moreover, of the one-third, 40% attributed their dissatisfaction to their reduced income. In addition, Clark and Anderson
(1967), as cited in Elwell & Maltbie-Crannell, found that reduced income has a direct impact on self-image. Further, Elwell and Maltbie-Crannell (1992) stated that reduced income is a significant factor in explaining the low morale of the retired. It is likewise a crucial factor in mediating stress due to the loss of work after retirement.

Conceptual Framework

The Functional Perspective

The theoretical perspective that directs this evaluation is the functional perspective. In regards to volunteering the functional approach, according to Katz (as cited in Clary & Snyder, 1999) is a motivational perspective that directs inquiry into the personal and social processes that initiate, direct and sustain action by individuals. Clary, Snyder & Ridge (1992) elaborated by stating that the functional perspective identifies the social motives, needs, goals and functions that are fulfilled by a persons actions. According to the authors, “the logic of the functional approach to volunteerism is to identify the motives that are satisfied, the needs that are met and the goals that are reached when one gets involved in volunteerism” (p. 335). Moreover it asks the question, “What functions are served when a person volunteers?” Critical to the theory is the logic that different people engage in the same volunteering activities for different reasons (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Clary, Snyder & Ridge, 1992). Those reasons, according to Omoto, Snyder & Martin (2000), are due to the different life tasks that people of different ages are motivated by. They proposed that “...as people move through the life course, they attach different meanings to the volunteer role, and that these meanings are directly related to the agendas they pursue through volunteerism” (para. 8).

This theory can be applied to DeKalb County CASA volunteers. According to the literature giving back to the community is the most cited motive for older adults volunteering (Omoto, Snyder, and Martin, 2000). CASA volunteers are able to fulfill this motive by being a voice for an abused and/or neglected child in court. Volunteers, after
their extensive investigation of the child’s situation presents their findings and suggestions concerning where and with whom the child should live to a judge. This ascertains that the child’s best interest will be advocated for, whether it means that the child’s best interest is to return home or to remain in custody until a safer home can be found for the child. In addition, volunteers assure that a child is getting needed services such as medical and mental health. The need that is fulfilled through volunteerism is the need to be around young children. The children that CASA volunteers serve are between the ages of 1 day old to 18 years, and as a part of their requirement, they are expected to make contact with their child(ren) at least twice a month, with one of those contacts being face to face. Some volunteers participate in a myriad of activities with their CASA children such as going out to eat, going to the movies, going to plays, etc. Moreover, CASA volunteers receive free and/or reduced tickets to events such as the circus and plays through a foundation called VSA Arts. These tickets allow volunteers and their CASA children to spend quality time together. Lastly, one goal that a CASA volunteer can fulfill is remaining on a case until a child has obtained permanency. This means that a volunteer would remain on a child’s case throughout the length of time that the child remains in the custody of the Department of Family and Children’s Services until the child has finally been placed in a permanent home.

Summary

Older adults have participated in volunteerism for over 25 years. Both organization and the individuals themselves benefit from their volunteer work. Retirees are able to commit more hours to organizations because they have fewer responsibilities than non-retirees. Additionally they are more dependable, long lasting volunteers. Health, according to the literature, appears to be one of the greatest challenges to older adult’s volunteer participation, as they gradually age the greater their susceptibility to disease and illness. This causes the researcher to question, “How does their dependability compare
with non-retirees?" How does their health-related illnesses affect their ability to serve the
organizations that they volunteer for? Additionally, how does reduced income affect
retirees? Thus, these three dependent variables dependability, health, and income are
evaluated in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER THREE:
METHODOLOGY

This chapter provided the procedures that were used for this study. The sample, measures, procedures, statistical analysis, and summary were discussed in detail.

Sample

A sample of six female adult retirees who are DeKalb County CASA volunteers participated in the study. Four of the applicants were active volunteers, meaning that they currently have at least one case in which they are working on. Two participants were “on-leave” volunteers, which means that they asked not to be assigned to a case at the current time due to personal reasons. Although the two “on-leave” volunteers do not currently have a case, they have previously been assigned to cases and thus their participation was considered to be equally as vital to the study as the active volunteers.

Setting

All of the volunteers with the exception of one were interviewed at the DeKalb County CASA office. This location was selected because it was very familiar to the volunteers and thus would provide a comfortable environment. No staff were present at the interviews to ensure volunteers’ confidentially, as well as to allow volunteers to honestly answer the researcher’s questions. The volunteer who was not interviewed at the CASA office was interviewed via the telephone.
Measures

Participants were given a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) to complete prior to the start of the interview. The Greene Retiree Questionnaire (GRQ) was the instrument that was used for this study; it consisted of ten open-ended interview questions (See Appendix C). The questions were designed to assess motivation(s) to volunteer, volunteering history, the importance of volunteering prior to and after their retirement, challenges with volunteering due to a decline in income, and benefits of volunteerism on volunteer’s mental and physical health. These questions were important to this study because the researcher wanted to determine: (1) if the retirees’ motivations to volunteer were consistent with those stated in the research (Omoto, Snyder, & Steven, 2000 and Ekerdt, 1986); Questions 3, 4, 5, and 8 on the questionnaire were designed to evaluate motivation. (2) if volunteering does indeed contribute to increased feelings of self-perceived mental and physical health (Omoto, Snyder & Martin, 2000 and Freedman, 1997); Questions 6 and 7 on the questionnaire were designed to evaluate health. (3) if they have experienced any challenges to volunteering due to their limited income (Elwell & Maltbie-Crannell, 1992); Question 9 was designed to evaluate income. In addition, one additional question, question 10, was designed to determine if retirees had any negative experience with DeKalb CASA staff (Freedman, 1997). This was important to the researcher because opposition from CASA staff toward retirees could result in them leaving the program. The instrument has not been used previously, nor was it tested for reliability, thus the instrument reliability is unknown.

All of the interviews with the exception of the one telephone interview were audio taped to ensure clarity and accuracy of the volunteer’s statements. This was important for the reliability of the study.
Design

For the purpose of this study the cross-sectional survey design was used because this study does not have an independent variable. Thus this design would be best because it allows for measurements of dependent variables, and provide information about what individuals may want, feel or believe at a given time. Therefore, the researcher believed this design to be the most advantageous for this study. It is diagrammed as:

01  02  03

Each O represents one measurement of the dependent variable. 01 presents health, 02 represents income and 03 represent dependability.

Procedure

The names and demographic information on all six retired, DeKalb County CASA volunteers was obtained from the Advocacy Manager. On October 2004 an evite was sent to all volunteers explaining the purpose of the study and asking them for their participation. The study would be held at 1:00 p.m. at the CASA office. Volunteers had the option of choosing one of two days provided by the researcher that would be most convenient for them. The date most selected would be the date that the in-service would be held. Saturday, October 30th was the date chosen by the majority of the volunteers. Volunteers were told that they would receive in-service credit for their participation. In-service credit is equivalent to continuing education credits for licensed professionals. Volunteers must complete 12 hours of in-service credit annually in order to maintain their active status and eligibility to advocate for the abused and neglected children. Out of the nine evites that were sent out only three responded. Thus, follow-up calls were made in an attempt to solicit the remaining volunteers who did not respond.

On Saturday October 23rd, telephone calls were made to the three volunteers to remind them of the upcoming in-service. Out of the three who said that they would participate in the study only two participants came to the in-service on October 30th.
In an effort to obtain the other volunteers a letter (see appendix D) was mailed out to volunteers explaining the significance of the study and the importance of their input and suggestions to the study. Participants were asked to call the researcher to schedule a time for a face-to-face interview that was to last no more than 30 minutes. Four additional volunteers called to say that they were interested in participating. On November 18th, a telephone interview was conducted because the volunteer was unable to come into the office. On November 22nd two volunteers opted to come in together for the interview, and the final interview was conducted on December 2nd.

For the purpose of this study, dependability was measured by: (a) the average number of hours volunteers spent per month working on their assigned cases. As part of their responsibilities CASA volunteers are expected to make contact with their assigned child(ren) at least twice a month, with one of those contacts being face to face; (b) the number of completed monthly advocacy reports submitted between September 2004 and November 2004. CASA volunteers are required to submit an advocacy report every month. CASA’s are to provide any case updates as well as provide a log of all activities that the volunteer had done throughout the month. These can include making telephone calls to the child, doctors, the case manager, foster parents, etc; and (c) the number of hearings that volunteers attended. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend all court and panel hearings that are scheduled for their assigned case(s).

Data was collected using secondary analysis from COMET, which is an acronym for CASA Outcomes, Management, and Evaluation Tool. This is an interactive database that provides a myriad of information, including but not limited to, volunteer personal information, employment -information, demographics, case activity, case reports and notes. To evaluate the number of hours spent per month on assigned cases. The total number of hours worked were divided by the total number of months listed. To evaluate the number of completed monthly advocacy reports completed between September 2004
and November 2004, monthly reports were collected from the participant’s Advocacy Coordinators and tabulated. Advocacy Coordinators are staff who supervise volunteers. To evaluate the number of scheduled hearings volunteers attended between September 2004 and November 2004, COMET was again used to determine if volunteers did attend the hearings for their assigned cases. A convenience sample of non-retired volunteers were selected to compare their results with those of the retirees.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative was utilized for this study. Qualitative analysis was used to analyze health and income. Descriptive statistics in the form of tables and figures were used to describe dependability and volunteer demographics.

**Summary**

A sample of six retired adult volunteers of the DeKalb County CASA program participated in this study. Health, income and volunteer dependability were measured using The GRQ, as well as Secondary Data Analysis. All participants with the exception of one were interviewed face-to-face. One interview was conducted via the telephone. All interviews with the exception of the telephone interview were audio taped for accuracy. The following chapter presents the findings from the evaluation.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

The findings of the study were provided in this chapter. Additionally, motivations to volunteer, perceived opposition from CASA staff toward retired volunteers and volunteer demographics were detailed.

The analysis of demographic variables revealed that the racial composition of the sample was evenly distributed among the sample (see Table 1). The mean age of participants was 54 years old, with an age range between 57 and 72 years old. 67% (4) were married, 17% (1) was divorced and 17% (1) was a widow. The salary of the women ranged between $21,000-$30,000 to $60,000, two of the participants chose not to answer the question. The average length of time that participants have been volunteering with CASA was 2.4 years and the average length of time that each participant had been retired was 3.6 years.

Participants in this study were asked open-ended questions designed to explore their perceptions about their motivations to volunteer, the importance of volunteerism on mental and physical health and their ability to volunteer with their limited income. Several common themes emerged including motivation to give back to the community, ambivalence toward role loss as a motivation to volunteer, positive benefits of volunteering for one’s mental and physical health, and there were mixed feelings regarding the impact of their limited income on volunteering.
Table 1.

Participant Demographics (N=6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time as a CASA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time retired</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Feelings Regarding Giving Back to the Community. Nearly all participants stated that their motivation to volunteer was to give back to the community. Following are some typical responses:

People who have been blessed, which doesn’t mean financially, but anything that you’ve been blessed with you have to give back to the community.

I have always like children, and I heard about it in the newspaper and a friend had told me about it. It allows me to give back and allow a child who deserves a better life to have one.

CASA allows us to give back and it’s important work. It’s a feeling of being a worthwhile person.

Ambivalence toward Role Loss as a Motivation to Volunteer. All participants denied experiencing any negative feelings associated with role loss, but some stated that they could understand why some people would. One participant’s response to this question was quite interesting:

People may feel this when they don’t have a life outside of work or when they equate all of their positives to be inside of work. You know all of your friends are at work. I know friends who are delaying retirement because they fear this will happen.

Benefits of Volunteering for One’s Mental and Physical Health. All of the participants agreed that volunteering does contribute significantly to one’s mental and physical health. Following are some typical responses to this question.
Particularly for seniors because you can get depressed being at home with nothing particular to do and you start worrying about the things that are wrong with you. You need something.

I have 2 close friends one retired from work, one whose job closed down and both went home and did nothing, both developed Alzheimer’s, not saying that doing nothing would cause you to have Alzheimer’s but it is important to keep your mind active, very important.

Because I have left so many of my connections at work, then you leave that, but then I found that I had a whole new group of friends, sort of like going to work. It is important to keep your mind and body active and with volunteering you are able to do all that. Good mentally, physically, lot of benefits.

**Impact of Limited Income on Volunteering.** There were mixed feelings between participants on this question. Some participants stated that they had no problems what so ever, however, one volunteer’s response was very informative.

I would have been ready to take on a case a little earlier but I was too short of money and did not have money to put gas in the car to go back and forth. When Kevin did Bowl A Roma I couldn’t participate, I wanted to but I could not afford it, it did not fit into my budget. I think that it makes a difference with seniors who are on a fixed income.

The findings from dependability were as follows: (1) the number of hours that volunteers spent per month advocating for their assigned case (see Figure 1); (2) the total number of completed monthly advocacy reports submitted to volunteer’s Advocacy Coordinators between September 2004 and November 2004 (see Figure 2); and (3) the
number of assigned hearings that the volunteer attended. When evaluating the number of
hearings that volunteers attended, the researcher identified that all volunteers with the
exception of one, who had two scheduled meetings, had one hearing that they were
scheduled to attend between September and November. Thus the study found that both
the retirees and non-retired volunteers attended all of their scheduled hearings for their
assigned cases. No figure was provided.

Figure 1. Comparison of average number of hours spent per month on assigned
case(s) between retired and employed volunteers.

Figure 1 shows that retired volunteers spent approximately 5.4 more hours per
month advocating for their assigned case(s).
Figure 2. Comparison of number of monthly advocacy reports between retired volunteers versus employed volunteers.

Figure 2 shows that out of 9 possible monthly reports that could have been completed by both groups between September, 2004 and November 2004, retirees completed one more monthly report than employed volunteers did.

The conceptual framework used for this study was Functional Perspective to volunteerisms, which identifies the motives that are satisfied, the needs that are met and the goals that are reached when one becomes involved in volunteerism. The only data that was collected to measure the conceptual framework was for motivations to volunteer. This study found that retirees’ motivation for volunteering was to give back. No data was collected on the remaining tenants of the Functional Perspective. This is a limitation to this study. To address needs one question should have been asked on the questionnaire was: “What need(s) do you possess that you find are met by being a DeKalb County CASA volunteer?” “What goal(s), if any, have you reached in any of your case(s) since you have been a DeKalb County CASA volunteer?” This question should have also been added on the question to assess what goals are reached when one becomes involved in
volunteerism. This is the last tenant of the Functional Perspective. These questions will be beneficial to future researchers.

Summary

Findings from this study concluded that retired adults are potentially more dependable volunteers than non-retirees. Retirees spent more hours per month advocating for their assigned cases and completed more monthly advocacy reports than employed volunteers. Both retirees and employed volunteers, however, attended the hearings that were scheduled for their assigned cases between the months of September 2004 and November 2004. The qualitative data suggests that retired adult volunteers are motivated by a desire to give back to the community. In addition, retirees strongly believed that volunteerism is important to keep one’s mind active as well as to increase feelings of better physical health. Volunteer’s limited income had an impact on the ability for one retiree, the remainder were not affected by it. Chapter Five will discuss the findings of this study, as well as, provide a list of suggestions for recruit of future retirees as well as how to restructure the program to accommodate for retirees’ limited income. Chapter Six will provide implications for social work practice.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS

This chapter examined the outcomes of the evaluation, as well as discussions significant to the findings. The findings from this study supported previous empirical data that suggested that retirees devote more time than non-retirees. In addition, volunteerism increased feelings of self-perceived mental and physical health. This study also found that the majority of retirees’ volunteerism was not impacted by their reduction of money.

Previous research found that older Americans are more motivated to volunteer by a sense of purpose and a commitment to society (Omoto, Snyder & Martin, 2000). Mariott Senior Living Services, 1991 indicated the motivation most frequently attributed by older volunteers to volunteer was “to help others”. Findings from this study support these empirical studies. Participants from this study overwhelming agreed that their primary motivation for volunteering at DeKalb CASA was to give back. Several volunteers additionally added that they believed it was their God given responsibility to work with children. They stated that it was what they are here on earth to do.

Interestingly, although previous research stated volunteerism is an effective method of combating negative feelings associated with role loss as well as a motivation to volunteer (Ekertdt, 1986; Elwell, Maltbie-Crannell, 1992; & Payne, 1997), all of the participants stated that they had not experienced feelings of role loss after retirement. One possibility, however, that could have contributed to the participant’s responses is that volunteers could have begun volunteering prior to their retirement or shortly after it, thus continuing to remain active.
According to Omoto, Snyder & Martin, 2000, retirees who participate in volunteer services experience better physical health, lower psychological distress, increased self-esteem and new and satisfying social relationships with peers. Findings from this study suggest that retirees do indeed have increased feelings of better mental and physical health, increased self-esteem and possess new and satisfying interpersonal relationships with their peers. When examining the demographic information from the study, four (67%) of the participants stated that their health was excellent. One (17%) stated that her health was good and only one (17%) stated that her health was fair. Thus, the majority of the sample possessed, at the minimum, good health. All participants agreed that it was very important for them to remain mentally and physically active and that volunteering allows them to do that. Additionally, all of the participants agreed that volunteering, particularly at DeKalb CASA, increased their self-esteem. The majority of the volunteers stated that they had never volunteered at an organization like DeKalb CASA before, and that although it does require a lot of work, it is also very rewarding. One volunteer told of a case that she previously had worked on and described the difficulty of the child being adopted and how both she and the child were told that the child would never function intellectually or physically as she should. However, she exclaimed of how happy she was when the child was finally adopted by a family member and told of how now the child is not only functioning normally but is the smartest child in the class. As the volunteer told the story she was overwhelmed with joy and began to cry.

Overall, the participants in the sample believed the work that they did at CASA, advocating for the best interest of abused and neglected children in foster care, was very important and this brought about increased feelings of self-esteem. Regarding friendships, one volunteer stated that she had left all of her connections at work when she retired but that she was amazed at the new friends that she had made through volunteering.
Elwell & Maltbie-Crannel (1992) stated that the loss of income for many retirees contributes to their dissatisfaction. In addition, reduced income was found to be a significant factor in explaining the low morale of the retired. In this study, the majority of volunteers (84%) were not affected by their reduced income. In addition, the loss of their income did not inhibit them from volunteering. One volunteer, however, did state that she was impacted by her loss of income and that it did prevent her from becoming a CASA volunteer sooner. She stated that she did not have enough money for gas to come to orientation, nor to the training classes, which were required. In addition, she was unable to participate in an event because it cost money. When examining her demographics the researcher identified that this volunteer also stated that her health was fair. This was interesting because this was the only volunteer who reported challenges to volunteering due to her lack of income as well as reporting her health to be fair.

Clark and Anderson (1967) stated that reduced income has a direct impact on self-image. Due to the small number of volunteers utilized in this study further research needs to be conducted with a larger sample to effectively evaluate the impact of retired adult’s limited income on their health and volunteering experience.

Regarding dependability which was measured by: (a) the average number of hours volunteers spent per month working on their assigned cases; (b) the number of completed monthly advocacy reports submitted between September 2004 and November 2004; and (c) the number of hearings that volunteers attended, this study found that retirees did commit more hours to working on their assigned cases than non-retirees. However, retirees only completed one additional monthly advocacy report than non-retirees and both retirees and non-retirees attended all of their scheduled hearings between September 2004 and November 2004. Thus, retirees have the potential to be more dependable volunteers than non-retirees. Future research needs to be done with a larger sample size that will help to determine if retirees are actually more dependable than non-retirees.
Although opposition from DeKalb CASA staff was not a dependent variable for this study, it was still perceived as an important factor to consider for the evaluation. The researcher wanted to identify any possible challenges that could potentially contribute to retirees leaving the program. Freedman, 1997, stated that some agency personnel possess ambivalence about older adults' ability to function in service role capacities. Thus, it was the intent of the researcher to identify if any participants had experienced any ambivalence from DeKalb CASA staff. All of the volunteers stated that they had not.

Suggestions

Volunteers provided suggestions both for how to better utilize public relations strategies to recruit retirees as well as how to improve the program to be more accommodating to retirees' economic challenges. Several volunteers stated that many of their retired friends have never heard of CASA, thus they suggested that brochures be posted in venues where retirees visit the most such as libraries and the YMCA/YWCA. In addition, it was suggested that some brochures and program information be sent to corporations to be handled out to employees who are soon to retire.

Two volunteers shared that DeKalb CASA could make several changes to accommodate retirees who are on a fixed income. Due to the vast amount of driving that some CASA's have to do (see Chapter 1), it was suggested that retirees be reimbursed for their mileage. In addition, when DeKalb CASA does schedule events that cost, retirees should be exempt from paying the amount, or they should be allowed to pay a reduced price amount.

Limitations to the Study

The external validity of this study is low because of the small sample size of retirees as well as the convenience sample of non-retirees. In addition, all of the participants within this sample were female. Future research should include male
participants to determine if there are any differences in the findings. Additionally, The GRQ had never been used before, therefore, reliability of the instrument was not assessed. In addition, in order to better evaluate health, the researcher should have asked participants to provide a list of health related illnesses that they possess. This would have allowed the researcher to compare the number provided by the participants to their self-perception of their health, thus increasing the validity of the questionnaire. Moreover, three participants within the study were omitted when evaluating the number of completed advocacy reports between September and November 2004, as well as, the number of hearings attended between September and November. The reason for omitting these participants was because two of them were “on-leave” (see methodology) between these months, and the other participant was a new volunteer who had recently been assigned a case in November. This same volunteer was omitted when evaluating the number of hours spent per month advocating for assigned cases. Thus, a convenience sample of five was used to measure the number of hours per month spent on assigned cases, and three were used when evaluating the number of hearings attended and the number of completed monthly advocacy reports submitted between September and November 2004.

Summary

This section described in detail the findings of the study. Suggestions on how to recruit future retirees, as well as, how to improve the program to become more accommodating to retiree’s limited income were discussed. Additionally, limitations to this study were provided. Chapter Six provides implications for social work practic.
CHAPTER SIX
IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

This chapter provided a discussion on the overall evaluation as well as its findings and its benefit to DeKalb County CASA, as well as to other CASA programs within the state of Georgia and Nationally. Additionally how the findings of this study could be used to enhance social work education and practice were also provided.

Staff at DeKalb CASA were interested in recruiting adult retirees as volunteers for their program. Thus the purpose of this study was to provide the benefits of recruiting and the challenges that are experienced by this target population. Findings from the study would aid staff in developing an effective recruitment strategy. Volunteers are the foundation of the DeKalb CASA program, thus, recruiting and retaining the most reliable volunteer provides for better service of the abused and neglected children serviced by the program. Chambre (1993) stated that recruitment of retirees is a cost-effective strategy because they live longer, have fewer children and longer periods of retirement, thus they are able to devote more time than other groups. Staff, likewise, believed that retirees would be profitable volunteers to the programs because of the same attributes. However, Berger (2001) assets that as people continue to age they become more susceptible to disease. Moreover, Elwell & Maltbie-Crannel, 1992, stated that retirees, due to their decline in income, have low morale and profess dissatisfaction in their lives. Thus, these two variables, health and income, are challenges that retirees experience that could have a possible effect on their ability to volunteer.

The findings from this study found that retirees are potentially more dependable volunteers that non-retirees. Moreover, the majority of the participants stated that they
were in excellent health and did not experience any hindrance to volunteering due to their limited income. The findings of this study will be beneficial to other CASA programs throughout the state of Georgia, as well as nationally, which may be interested in identifying if retirees would be advantageous volunteers for their programs.

According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) one of the purposes of Social Work Education is to prepare social workers to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Due to many social workers working in non-profit organizations, which utilize volunteers, it is the recommendation of the researcher that curriculum should concentrate on recruitment and retention of volunteer staff. In addition, understanding the motivations of individuals in different life stages would also be beneficial so that administrators can effectively determine which volunteer would be best for his/her organization. Although administration in social work is covered during autonomous social work practice, a concentration on how to effectively recruit and retain volunteers is not. Moreover, although CSWE does state that social workers should use research, knowledge and skills to advance social work practice, typically most curriculum for master’s level social work institutions only require students to enroll in one semester of research. It is the opinion of the researcher that enrollment in one course of research is ineffective in preparing students to effectively understand, conduct and analyze research into practice. Social work statistics as well as evaluation should become mandatory courses in social work. These courses would provide a greater level of knowledge of research as well as an understanding of program evaluation and needs assessment. Without these additional courses many social workers would be unequipped to effectively fulfill one of the purposes of the social work profession that is listed by CSWE: to formulate and implement social policies, services and programs that meet basic human needs and support the development of human capacities.
Evaluating one’s effectiveness whether working as a consultant, in private practice, social welfare or non-profit organizations is vital as a social worker. It is imperative that social workers have the knowledge and the skills to assess their effectiveness and how to continue to make needed improvements. Thus, the findings from the study are beneficial to social workers who are working in non-profit agencies that utilize volunteers. Possessing an understanding of which type of volunteer would prove most effective for one’s program is essential to the program’s success and survival.

Summary

This chapter summarized the study, its findings and the implications for social work practice. More evaluations need to be conducted to evaluate any differences in findings when male retirees are sampled. In addition, a larger sample should be used to evaluate the impact of limited income on retiree’s health and ability to volunteer. It is the hope of the researcher that this study will provide additional knowledge on the benefits that retirees provide to organizations which they volunteer, as well as potential challenges experienced by this population.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Dear Research Participant,

Thank you in advance for your participation in my study. The purpose of this study is designed to assist the staff of The De Kalb County CASA program in developing a recruitment strategy targeting retirees as volunteers. Thus, this research evaluation will examine the benefits and challenges that you experience as a De Kalb CASA volunteer. Your participation in this study is strictly confidential and purely voluntary. You may choose not to answer some of the survey questions. However, you should know that your anonymity and confidentiality are protected, and that answering truthfully to all of the answers will in no way impact your existing volunteer position.

This study is being completed for my thesis requirements. If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at (678)518-7222 or Ann Eagerton, executive director of De Kalb CASA at (404)378-0038.

Thank You,

Kelli Wood
APPENDIX B
Retiree Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender? Female Male
3. What is your marital status? Married Single Divorced Separated Widow(er)
4. What is your ethnicity?
5. What is your annual salary? $0-$10,000 $11,000-$20,000 $21,000-$30,000 $31,000-$40,000 Other
6. How long have you been retired?
7. How long have you been a CASA volunteer?
8. How would you rate your health? Excellent Good Fair Poor
9. How many hours a week do you volunteer?
10. Do you have any part time or full time employment?
APPENDIX C

The Greene Retiree Questionnaire

Opening question to get volunteer relaxed: Where did you retire from?

a. If it was from another state then ask: Why did you move here to Atlanta and when?
b. Do you like it here?

Tell me about one of you cases here at CASA that is most memorable to you

What motivated you to become a CASA volunteer?

Did you volunteer for other agencies/organizations prior to retiring?

a. If they had, then ask: What were you motivations for volunteering then?
b. Has volunteering become more important, less important or remained the same since you retired? Please explain

Do you currently volunteer at other organizations? Why? It could be said by some that since you are retired you should remain at home all day, do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Tell me what you think when you hear these statements:

Volunteering increases feelings of better mental and physical health.

a. Do you think that your health would be better or worse if you did not volunteer? Why?

Volunteering increases feelings of self-esteem.

Volunteering helps to relieve negative feelings associated with role loss.

Has your decrease in salary affected/challenged your ability to volunteer?

According to previous research, some older adults have had negatives experiences with several staff members in the organizations that they have volunteered for. Have you had any negative experiences with staff here at CASA?
APPENDIX D

Letter of Request for Face-to-Face Interview

We regret that you were unable to participate in the In-service for Retirees Only on October 30th. We had a wonderful time! This in-service was designed especially for retirees because DeKalb CASA is interested in recruiting retirees as volunteers. Thus the in-service provided active, retired CASA volunteers the opportunity to share their opinions and thoughts regarding their CASA volunteer experience, both good and bad. Several volunteers discovered that they had similar experiences regarding both retirement and CASA.

Although you were unable to attend the in-service, your contributions and opinions are very essential to this organization, and your inputs will be the basis for helping DeKalb CASA’s staff to create a rewarding, supportive and productive place for retirees to volunteer. Therefore, I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with you at your earliest convenience. I am more than happy to do this at a place in which you are most comfortable: at your home, a nearby coffee shop or here at the CASA office. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and you will receive in-service credit for your participation.

Your confidentiality is of most importance. The results of the interview are reported as a total, with your responses merged with those of the other retired volunteers. Thus, you can feel free to express your opinions openly and honestly.

I am available Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00-5:00, I will also be available on Saturdays if you would prefer. I may be contacted at (404) 245-3233 or you may call the CASA office (404) 378-0038. Please help us achieve our goal of 100% participation.

I thank you in advance for your assistance and for all of your hard work in advocating for DeKalb County’s abused and neglected children!

Kelli Wood, CASA MSW Intern.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


