

VOLUNTEERING FOR THE DRUG-ADDICTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Well-being and Development Association (ABD) has the basic mission of promoting a model of social convergence, in engagement and solidarity, which promotes the quality of life of people and facilitates the social integration of groups that are less favoured or suffer a higher risk of exclusion.

I have readily accepted the commission to write this notebook, hoping that it may bring some effective help to volunteers who are willing to put their time and capabilities to service the integration of people suffering from drug-addiction. From its beginning, our Association has considered Volunteering a generator of civic values of solidarity and justice, and an agent of transformation and social improvement

The values guiding our action are:

Respect, participation, professionalism, creativity, transparency and quality.

ABD is one of the NGO's that, since the eighties, have started the new Third Sector, aiming at the establishment of the society of well-being and the defense of the basic values of democracy, such as freedom, tolerance, equality, justice and participation, among others.

This responsibility, shared with the public sector, would not be possible without the growing group of volunteers who carry out at social level each and every one of the specific programs and projects being developed in this sector.

Volunteers are those persons who develop activities of general interest out of altruism and solidarity, freely, without any economic compensation, through private organizations and on the basis of specific programs or projects.

The programs executed by our organization promote the action of volunteers, because we view volunteering from the following angles:

- Subsidiarity as a responsible acknowledgment that public services can be supplemented, adapted and perfected by members of the own community, and by those who are assisted, who cease to be beneficiaries to become participants in a common project.
- Corresponsibility in the engagement to promote a common culture, towards common objectives, which will allow to identify the mechanisms of exclusion and to assume the engagement to eradicate it.

The upkeep, promotion and fulfilment of the volunteers requires the implementation of resources towards the organization and sustained improvement of volunteering action in the different entities, resources that have a direct impact on social improvement.

Programs intended to recruit, promote and train volunteers lead to an improved approach to the beneficiaries, because the volunteer transmits the image of a social model of solidarity which likely the paid up professional cannot transmit.

In view of the growing number of people ready to work voluntarily and without compensation in areas of social assistance, as an expression of the struggle towards fairness and solidarity with the needy, we became interested in the establishment and operation of a program to reinforce volunteering in the field of drug-addiction, and to provide an adequate training therefor.

It is necessary that volunteer members of the community become actively integrated in programs of attention to drug-addicts, as a way to prevent and alleviate the social effects resulting from this problem.

The active integration of volunteering in the treatment of drug-addiction, requires to see this problem as one in which civil society can and should cooperate.

Volunteering brings to the field of drug-addiction certain values that supplement the professional work and add quality to the treatment of the problem.

These values are:

- Solidarity: As an expression of human sensitivity, which leads to act in response to other people's needs.
- Participation: As a democratic principle of direct and active presence in the community's responsibilities. The citizens feel as their own the problems and solutions of their environment, once these are identified, not as something external with which one "may cooperate", but rather as something of one's own, with which one "must cooperate".
- Sharing: From a conscience of community, volunteer action should no longer be seen as an act of charity, a pastime or an escape from personal situations, but rather as a way to self fulfilment.
- Decentralization: As a essential tool for rationalization, democratization, agility and efficiency in decision making.

FIELDS OF ACTION ON DRUGS:

Prevention:

- Prevention of risks related to the use of drugs in leisure areas open to the young.
- Preventive action in schools and youth centers.
- Telephone service of information and counseling on the use of recreational drugs.

Insertion:

- Socio-labour insertion workshops for drug-addicts under treatment.
- Reduction of damages:
- Prevention and reduction of damages for drug-addicts and drug users.

JOB OF THE VOLUNTEER ON DRUGS:

Prevention:

- Preparation and distribution of preventive materials
- Action in leisure areas
- Educational workshops for the prevention of use
- Telephone consultation service.

Virtual forum (Upkeep)Cultural workshops:

In Catalan language: traditional celebrations; in Spanish: literature and general culture, library, data processing, theatre, guitar, dancing, etc.



Manual workshops:

Needlework, bookbinding, painting, murals, collage, etc.

Body treatment workshops:

- Chiropractic, chiromassage, acupuncture, swimming, yoga, podal reflexology, reiki, massage, shiatsu, meditation, etc.

Other workshops:

Conversational sessions, social abilities, cultural visits, leisure opportunities, celebration of catalan popular festivities, etc.

Point of contact VIH-AIV:

Workshops on secure sex, information lectures, information on resources for VIH-AIV, emotional support for the seropositive and their families, organization of activities for the World Day on VIH-AIV, participation in celebrations, memorials, encounters and conventions.

Personal support:

Accompanying to the doctor, to the hospital, to carry out commissions, visiting the sick in hospital, paying company or administering metadona at home.

Reduction of damages:

Support in interchange of syringes
Support in food distribution
Logistic support
Support in the distribution of accessories and products for the personal hygiene
Accompanying



Other services:

Support in workshops, incidental cooperation: talks, chats, advice, interchange of experiences... Support in the administration, in the organization, logistic support.

PROFILE OF THE VOLUNTEER

- The volunteer who decides to cooperate with entities working in the field of drug-addiction must be over 18 years of age, mature and balanced, and have a capacity for empathy.
- He or she must know the problems of drug-addiction, in order to be able to understand the diverse situations he or she will have to face in the exercise of the volunteer service; consequently the volunteer will have to be trained in this specific field, and also in all the required qualifications, such as social capabilities, mediation in solving disputes, etc., so that the volunteer job may be exercised with adequate tools for the required assuredness and confidence.
- In the programs of prevention of the risk of drug consumption in areas intended for the young, the presence of volunteers is an extremely important tool to convey the preventive messages, because the service is rendered through the implication of also young people, using the same language to convey preventive messages which do not entail a prohibition in themselves, but rather lead to responsible decisions.
- The support of professionals is always absolutely necessary in order to share and solve any incidence that may arise in the relationship between volunteers and users. This entails team work and a sustained supervision to improve the attention to the drug-addicts and their families.
- We do believe that the volunteers need to have available useful and practical information providing the knowledge and security required to face the challenges awaiting them. The new volunteers want to know the reality in which they work and against which they fight, and also the resources and systems with which they cooperate.
- Volunteers taking part in the different systems of attention to drug-addiction are members of a family, a neighbourhood, a town; some of them belong to civic organizations: neighbourhood groups, cultural or sports associations....

We are dealing then with volunteers enjoying a significant sensitivity and potential, qualified to provide the help and mediation required to obtain the acceptance of the drug-addict by the social environment.

The programs for volunteering in drug-addiction should have very much in mind the aspects of formation, as a convenient tool towards the qualification and cohesion of the volunteers. The objectives should be addressed to:

- Contribute to promote volunteering, in order to be a real support for those whom we wish to help, remembering that true assistance is based neither on paternalism nor on judgements of value.
- Guarantee the success of the jobs that have to be undertaken, and to develop the volunteers themselves through a sustained support, and through team work with professionals, towards the competence required for a volunteer action of the best quality.
- To obtain self-satisfaction and personal fulfilment by the conscience of a work well done, both in the volunteer action itself and in the active and democratic presence within the Association
- To provide the volunteer drug-addiction program with means for a continual quality improvement through the reevaluation of each service and the attainment of its objectives.

It is necessary to inform and stimulate the consciousness of volunteering groups and entities operating in the field of drug-addiction, in order to stimulate their cooperation, and subsequently to carry out campaigns spreading information through leaflets, magazines and bulletins of associations and neighbourhood groups.

Information is spread with the purpose to recruit volunteers and to provide them with a model of continual formation in a process adapted to their needs and expectations, towards their engagement in drug-addiction volunteering, while helping them also in the development of their volunteer work.

THE VOLUNTEERS OF THE WORKSHOP OF ACTIVITIES IN THE “CAS” (DISTRICT OF SANTS), IN BARCELONA, SAY:

Teresita Belen is a retired teacher and operates a workshop in the “CAS” of Sants: "The Volunteer who decides to cooperate in the support to drug-addicts and their treatment for disintoxication, has to possess some very precise human and social qualifications.

1. He or she must be capable of setting aside their own personal opinions, of avoiding judgments on values, and of staying by this type of persons.
2. They must be adult persons, mature and with a proper formation, with a very clear idea of respect for others. Empathy, and a positive and dynamic character are also required in our action, which faces the risk of disappointment on feeling that the results are slow to come, or are not so positive as expected.
3. Other basic tools are for example: communication, capacity to gain the confidence and respect of the own group, approaching people as a matter of fact, with proper manners and respect".

"THE WORKSHOP OF ACTIVITIES"

The workshop of activities is a completely atypical place of work. Attendants change day to day. On a given day you may find around the table twelve or more people, on another there may be only four, and some days nobody wants to sit there because everybody has "extremely important things" to do somewhere else.

Even so, I go there one or two days a week. The relationship is always very warm. Those present show a deep interest, and discuss the subjects that are submitted. Occasionally we read poetry, part of it quite difficult to understand, and we are all stimulated by the capacity to understand metaphors and suggested ideas.

I use to tell them that there are very intelligent people in the workshop, and I think that they do not believe it really. But I am completely sure of it.

Whether the subjects discussed are formal or pleasurable, everybody participates, everybody feels at ease and enjoys this interchange of experiences, ideas and affection. This is what I find more valuable in the workshop: fondness spreads like an invisible cloud which envelops us all: professionals, volunteers and users.

The opportunity to take part in the activities of the workshop in the CAS center is no doubt an interesting and gratifying experience.



THE USERS SAY...

..." Now I want to thank heartfully the volunteers of this centre, from the first to the last, but above all three of them who have exerted a great influence on my life and on the lives of many others".

A...

| "I shows me how to live with disattachment.
To respect myself as a step towards respecting others.
To take decisions in my benefit without damaging others.
To take care of my body.
To cease listening in order to continue learning"

M...

"It teaches me to be patient and persistent in things that interest me.
To put no boundaries at the time of learning.
Not to surrender even when the results of the effort cannot be seen.
To go on when everything is against me".

A...

"I learn to be affectionate without hypocrisy, simply warm and affectionate, no more. To give affection with open hands and open heart, to feel the body of others as my own body.

To feel loved because I am what I am. It teaches me to love not only those who are dear to me, but also ordinary people, those sitting on a bench in any park. To feel comfortable with any company. It teaches me love as a form of living.

"Thanks to you, volunteers, each morning I can be a better person".

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