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## **BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE:**

Supported Programs for  
Volunteers with Special Needs

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VOLUNTARY ACTION DIRECTORATE

Ottawa  
September 1992

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## FOREWORD

**S**UPPORTED VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS are an emerging trend in volunteerism. Their aim is to encourage the integration of volunteers who have special needs by offering them support they need to succeed in volunteer jobs. This exciting new development is spearheaded by a number of volunteer centres across Canada.

With the ever growing need for volunteers, it is vital for voluntary organizations to explore new ways of attracting volunteers. Supported volunteer programs are a creative way to tap into the diverse human resources in a community, while at the same time making volunteer opportunities accessible to those with special needs.

Traditionally, there has been a strong tendency for voluntary organizations to recruit volunteers from the middle and upper classes of the non-disabled, white population. However, there have been changes in recent years.

There is now a greater acceptance of the necessity of encouraging volunteers with special needs and from diverse backgrounds to become involved in 'mainstream' volunteering. Nevertheless, there are still barriers to the participation of individuals who have special needs due to disabilities or disadvantageous circumstances.

This text discusses the concept of supported volunteerism, examines factors in the success of programs supporting volunteers with special needs, and addresses key issues and challenges related to supported volunteerism. It also provides a brief review of the innovative programs that are being piloted by Canadian volunteer centres, as well as a list of the major resources in this field.

This book is aimed primarily at volunteer centres and bureaux, but we hope it will also be useful to other voluntary organizations and to government departments at all levels interested in social services and equality issues.

Supported volunteer programs are both a challenge and an opportunity for the voluntary sector. Volunteers with special needs may require special support at first, but they can bring a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience to the job. We hope that the information in this book will inspire more organizations to move in this direction.

\* \* \*

### ***A Note on Terminology***

*I have used the phrase `special-needs volunteer' throughout this book to mean not only disabled people, which is the usual scope of this term, but also people who are at a disadvantage as volunteers because of the circumstances of their lives. Such disadvantages may include poverty, illiteracy, unfamiliarity with an official language of the country, or discrimination because of race or ethnicity.*

*What is key in all these discussions is not the disadvantage but the fact that it hampers those who have it in their efforts as volunteers.*

*For a fuller discussion of terminology, see Appendix B of this book.*

## THE CONCEPT OF SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERISM

**T** HIS BOOK FOCUSES ON formal programs that have been established specifically to increase the involvement of volunteers with special needs. It should be recognized, however, that many volunteer centres and other organizations provide similar support informally to individual volunteers already.

### **Supported volunteer programs: definition and rationale**

There are various programs across the country that promote the involvement of volunteers from a specific group in the overall population. Programs geared to seniors or youth, for example, are among the most popular. By definition, such programs engage in active recruitment and targeted marketing, rather than simply responding to demand, as is the usual way.

The aim of 'supported' volunteer programs is to involve people who have special needs arising out of disabilities or disadvantaged circumstances and keep them involved in volunteering. Like other special programs, supported volunteer programs are a deliberate attempt to recruit volunteers from target groups that have been under-represented. However, supported programs have an extra dimension that is critical: **special arrangements for the placement of volunteers and individual support for them once the placement has been made.** This support may also extend to the manager of volunteer resources.

In supported volunteer programs, a concerted effort must be made to help volunteers who have special needs because of disabilities or disadvantaged social or economic circumstances to function at their best. To achieve this, barriers to their participation must be identified and removed, and suitable accommodations made so they can succeed at their volunteer jobs. The result is a supportive environment which puts the accent on abilities rather than difficulties.

Two basic tenets underlie the concept of supported volunteerism:

- no one should be denied the opportunity to volunteer for reasons unrelated to ability; and
- people with special needs have much to offer and to gain from volunteer work.

The target population for a supported volunteer program may include:

- people who have disabilities (although of course not all disabled people will need special support);
- newcomers to Canada from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds who are not yet fluent in the official language of the community;
- people who lack literacy and numeracy skills; and
- people who are disadvantaged by their social or economic background (for example, those who are chronically unemployed).

There is, of course, enormous variation between and even within these special-needs groups. For example, the job placement and support required to integrate a person with a disability will differ greatly from that required for a newcomer who is struggling to become fluent in English or French. Likewise, a person with a hearing impairment will have needs that are dramatically different from someone who has an intellectual disability. Beyond that, the precise nature and impact of the special need can vary tremendously from one individual to another.

Support for volunteers with special needs can come in many different forms, depending on the target group of the program and the needs of the individual. The range of possibilities for support (known as *job accommodations*) includes:

- individualized orientation and training;
- extra assistance and encouragement;
- flexible work schedules;
- information in alternative media;
- technical aids;
- ensuring physical access to and within the workplace;
- tailoring the position to suit the individual.

For some people, this support might involve just a technical aid like an amplifier for the telephone. For others, it might involve one-to-one training and extra guidance at the beginning. For still others, more complex support could be needed to ensure success. This might involve flexible work assignments, extended training periods, ongoing guidance and perhaps even a 'buddy' or 'mentor' system pairing the volunteer with another person.

Great care must always be taken to ensure that the placement is suited to the abilities and interests of the volunteer. In some cases, co-workers, both volunteers and staff members, may have to be sensitized to the special needs of the volunteer (with the consent of the volunteer). In all cases, the manager or supervisor will have to be knowledgeable, sensitive, and skilled in matching a volunteer with a position.

Supported volunteer programs are an effective means to ensure more equal access to volunteer opportunities. They are related to the concept of employment equity in that the ultimate goal is to achieve a volunteer work force in which the proportion of the various target groups is comparable to their numbers in society.

Supported volunteerism also relies on approaches similar to those of progressive programs that have begun to emerge to provide assistance and support to employees who have special needs because of disabilities.

## 2 • Bridges to the Future:

In one sense, supported volunteer programs could be considered to be both a social service and a catalyst for social change in their own right. By offering people with special needs the opportunity to participate as volunteers and to enjoy the benefits that volunteering can offer, they promote social equality.

By providing an avenue for social integration, they can help break down stereotypes and prejudices that have a negative impact on all areas of the lives of Canadians with special needs.

### **Supported volunteerism: philosophical underpinnings**

Supported programs for volunteers with special needs are based on the following principles:

1. *the universal right to volunteer* — an expanded definition of volunteerism that assumes that all people are potential volunteers and that anyone who can make a contribution to the community should be encouraged to volunteer.
2. *social equality and equal opportunity* — a fundamental belief that all people should have access to the benefits of volunteering as a fundamental part of Canadian life and that everyone has the right to a fair chance at success in their volunteer work; barriers which hinder fair access to volunteering should be eliminated; volunteers with special needs should be allowed the kinds of support they require to do the job.
3. *diversity as a positive force* — an understanding that a diverse community is a rich resource that can be used in a variety of ways and can provide a volunteer base which will more accurately reflect the make-up of the community's population; an assumption that a diverse and representative volunteer base will enrich and strengthen an organization.
4. *volunteering as a benefit to the volunteer* — an acknowledgement that volunteers themselves benefit in a variety of ways from their volunteer work; volunteering does, and should, fulfil unmet needs of the volunteers themselves; the development of knowledge and skills should thus be actively encouraged.
5. *sensitivity to individual differences* — acceptance of the fact that treating everyone fairly does not necessarily mean treating them the same.

### **Barriers to volunteering faced by individuals with special needs**

People who have disabilities or special circumstances face a variety of barriers (although usually not intentional) that have traditionally blocked or limited their access to volunteering and to many other aspects of society, as well.

In addition, appropriate support systems to make the volunteer experience possible for those with special needs generally do not yet exist in the voluntary sector.

Every special-needs group encounters barriers to volunteer participation that stem from external factors:

- For people with *mobility impairments*, there are physical barriers such as lack of access to and within the volunteer workplace and the need for special arrangements for transportation.
- For people with *hearing disabilities*, there are barriers caused by the absence

of sign language interpreters or appropriate communications technology in the volunteer workplace, as well as other people's ignorance of effective communication techniques.

- For people with *visual disabilities*, there are communication barriers resulting from the lack of access to information in alternative media and appropriate communications technology.
- For people with *mental health disabilities*, a major barrier is the social stigma and stereotyping that put the focus on their difficulties and disregard their skills and abilities.
- For people with *intellectual disabilities*, a major barrier is prejudice and other people's failure to understand that they have many useful skills to offer.
- For people with *learning disabilities*, the main barrier is other people's lack of understanding about the nature of particular learning disabilities and a lack of awareness of how to compensate for them.
- For *newcomers to Canada*, the barrier might be limited ability in the language of the mainstream population, and insufficient knowledge of Canadian society and its customs.
- For people from *ethnocultural communities and visible minorities*, there are barriers of social segregation and systemic discrimination stemming from a lack of understanding and acceptance of different cultural traditions or racism.
- For those who are at a disadvantage because of their *social or economic situation*, the barriers might be a lack of literacy and numeracy skills, of formal education, of relevant job skills or of previous experience.
- For *ex-offenders*, barriers include negative stereotyping, regardless of the nature of the offense.
- For *seasonally unemployed* skilled workers, the barrier might be a lack of opportunity for short-term volunteer assignments.

### **Social and attitudinal barriers**

*The greatest obstacle to integrating individuals with special needs is public attitude.* All too often, attention is focused on the disability or difficulty. There is also a common tendency to overlook abilities, skills and strengths and to assume the worst case. Although based on myth and misconceptions, discrimination remains deeply entrenched throughout our society.

Attitudes and stereotypes are complex psychological processes that have emotional, intellectual and behavioural elements. They are sets of fixed ideas that have been built up over time, and they are very resistant to change. Most of us hold stereotypical attitudes (both positive and negative) towards specific groups of people, even though we may make an effort not to.

Negative stereotypes about individuals who are different in any way are very common. There may thus be reluctance in any organization to accept 'unusual' volunteers. Whether conscious or not, this lack of acceptance on the part of others may show up as obvious discomfort or patronizing attitudes towards individuals with

special needs. For some, the very idea of involving volunteers with special needs may push strong prejudices based on ignorance and fear to the fore.

### *Economic barriers*

For individuals from any of the groups mentioned above, there may also be economic deterrents to volunteering. For many, their special needs or circumstances will have affected their chances of obtaining employment or earning a living wage. If their lives are in constant economic turmoil, the costs of volunteering could be a major barrier to their involvement. Paying out-of-pocket expenses such as transportation, parking, child care, meals, and materials would be prohibitively expensive for them.

### *Personal Barriers*

Beyond the roadblocks mentioned above, there are a range of psychological barriers to volunteering for people who have had chronic difficulties gaining access to activities that would otherwise be considered a normal part of the Canadian way of life. These internal barriers may include:

- lack of self-confidence and self-esteem;
- anxiety about trying something new, or fear of failing at the volunteer job;
- inability to recognize their own abilities and strengths; and
- an assumption that they won't be welcomed or appreciated by a voluntary organization.

### *Awareness Barriers*

Finally, people with special needs or circumstances may not understand the concept of volunteerism in general and supported volunteerism in particular. Examples include:

- a lack of awareness of the opportunities and benefits that volunteer work can offer;
- a lack of awareness that training is often available for volunteer positions;
- a negative stereotype of volunteer work as peripheral, amateur work that has no real worth in a society where monetary value is the only thing that matters; and
- a perception that supported volunteer programs are really intended to fill a public-relations need of the organization and that the placement of volunteers with special needs is just tokenism.

## **Benefits to the volunteer with special needs**

It has been recognized for a long time that volunteering offers many advantages that serve as psychological incentives to the volunteer, whether conscious or not. In fact, recent studies have shown that volunteering can have a very positive effect not only on the volunteer's mental health and sense of well-being but also on physical health.

Volunteering meets some of the most basic needs that we all have as human beings, for example feeling needed and productive. And, if it is an enjoyable and rewarding experience, it offers the opportunity for self-satisfaction and self-fulfilment that comes from doing something worthwhile. By expanding one's network of social

contacts and offering the chance for social interaction, it also breaks down feelings of isolation.

Because volunteering provides opportunities to use existing skills and knowledge and to draw upon one's own experience, it fosters personal growth. It also gives people a chance to try out new skills or activities in a less threatening environment.

Many people who have special needs may experience low self-esteem because they have been marginalized by society. For them, the positive aspects of volunteerism can be even greater.

Volunteering can be a 'normalizing' experience because it offers an avenue for increased social contact and a way to integrate into mainstream society.

It allows individuals with special needs to be part of a team, to be accepted by peers, and to develop a sense of belonging and community. It also has the potential to provide recognition for those who have been largely marginalized by society.

As it confirms the volunteer's value to society and his ability to make a meaningful contribution to the community, volunteering has the potential to build self-confidence and self-esteem.

It can strengthen an individual's control over her life and help her become self-sufficient, thus increasing her capacity for self-help. In this way, volunteering can be a means to achieve personal empowerment.

Volunteer work can also be a stepping stone to paid employment or expanded career horizons. It develops skills and practical knowledge and provides valuable work experience that can help people enter, or return to, the labour market.

These benefits may be of particular importance to individuals with disabilities since their involvement in the labour force has traditionally been very limited. Many are unemployed or underemployed and are denied access to the work experience they need to compete fairly in the labour market.

### **Benefits to the organization**

Programs to support volunteers who have special needs offer advantages to organizations that go far beyond a sense of satisfaction from striving for fairness and equality. They can also enrich the organizations.

To design, market and deliver services that are appropriate to a given community requires the active involvement of a broad spectrum of the population. When they are exposed to a wider range of experience and ideas, organizations are likely to make better decisions. And they are likely to become more innovative and creative.

It is thus to the benefit of voluntary organizations to attract a much broader cross-section of the population than in the past. (This applies to clients, staff and board members, as well as to volunteers on the front line.) In the 1990s, diversity and appropriate representation from the community may even be critical to ensuring the survival of an organization.

Supported volunteer programs are one way to address this need. By encouraging open participation, voluntary organizations are able to tap into a broader range of human resources from all segments of society. They can then develop a team of volunteers with diverse skills, backgrounds and languages. And, as a result, they will receive valuable input from different perspectives.

Volunteers with disabilities or special circumstances can meet needs of an organization that could not be met as effectively through other means. A balanced mix of volunteers can increase the organization's understanding of its clients' needs.

For example, because of their own experiences, special-needs volunteers might be especially sensitive to the needs of alienated and neglected members of the community. Former clients of an agency make excellent volunteers, whether to deliver services, develop programs or serve on the board of directors.

Studies have shown that employees with disabilities have better records than their non-disabled co-workers for performance, attendance, job stability, and even safety. Although supported programs are relatively new, evidence is beginning to suggest that the same may hold true for volunteers.

In general, organizations report that most volunteers with special needs are highly motivated and hard-working if they are properly nurtured. Thus, when given the support they require, they may well be among those volunteers who are the most productive and most committed to the work of the organization in the long run.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT REQUIRED FOR SUPPORTED VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS**

### **Prerequisites for success**

Effective outreach to new segments of the community requires an investment of time, energy — and probably also money. If a supportive environment does not exist, volunteers with special needs are being set up for failure. When an organization establishes a supported volunteer program or accepts volunteers with special needs, it must be prepared to meet certain conditions.

In addition to a broad social vision and a commitment to social equality, these prerequisites are:

- a corporate culture that is open to new approaches, encourages creativity, and is flexible enough to redirect its policies, procedures and practices with relative ease;
- a willingness to examine itself and look critically at current practices, and weed out the ones that are discriminatory; to have organizational and personal value judgements questioned; and to deal with prejudices openly and directly;
- the determination to eliminate, or at least minimize, the barriers that hinder the participation of volunteers with special needs;
- a willingness to support people with special needs by designing new volunteer positions that recognize and are sensitive to their individual needs; and by making reasonable 'accommodations' to enable them to do the job in existing positions;
- the determination to build positive attitudes towards people with special needs and ensure sensitive behaviour through all levels of the organization;
- a recognition that a supported program demands a special, expanded role for the manager of volunteers and that this position is the key to the success of special-needs volunteering; and
- a willingness to make an increased effort to invest in the future of individuals with special needs and to develop a volunteer base that reflects the diversity of the community more accurately.

Finally, to have a successful program that encourages the participation of

volunteers with special needs, it is critical to foster the concept of *self-help*. This is a philosophy of helping people to help themselves.

Individuals with special needs and circumstances should be seen as moving along a path towards self-reliance and personal empowerment. They should be encouraged to play an active role in planning their volunteer careers. If the unspoken objective is to do something *for* them, the program will likely be regarded as patronizing, and as a result, will alienate potential volunteers.

### **Approaches to organizing supported volunteer programs**

There are various ways supported volunteer programs can be organized. Each has its own particular advantages.

So far, supported programs have been established by organizations that serve a 'brokerage' function by helping volunteers find appropriate placements in a community organization or agency. Typically, these have been volunteer centres.

In Winnipeg, however, the Independent Living Resource Centre, a cross-disability group run by people with disabilities themselves, has established a supported volunteer program.

The promotion of volunteerism and the recruitment of volunteers are key parts of the mandate of volunteer centres. The centres have also established links with a wide variety of organizations in their community and are a source of information and support for those organizations. A volunteer centre could thus be considered a logical 'home' for a supported program.

Another workable option is an organization that works for the rights of a specific disadvantaged group, such as the Independent Living Centre in Winnipeg mentioned above. This option offers the advantage of expertise in special needs and a focus on the overall development and empowerment of the individual.

It would also offer the possibility of a support network for volunteers with special needs. (The ideal situation would probably be to have such an organization run a program in partnership with the local volunteer centre, and so offer the best of both worlds.)

Alternatively, a larger voluntary organization with a well developed program for volunteer management could choose to run a supported volunteer program on its own.

A supported volunteer program could either target a single group or encourage the involvement of individuals representing a wide range of special-needs groups. However, when it comes to government support, the reality is that the funding sources tend to be very fragmented. (For example, mental health issues may come under a ministry of health, while issues relating to physical disabilities may come under a ministry of social services.)

This means that government funding will likely be tied to specific target groups. Although access to a more targeted program will be limited, it will allow the hiring of a program manager who has specialized experience.

### **Implications for the organization**

To be successful, the process of integrating volunteers who have special needs will

take extra time and effort. A supported volunteer program will thus likely require additional human and financial resources. For this reason, the small number of programs for supported volunteerism that have been created in Canada have tended to be financed through special grants, usually from government.

In the case of volunteer centres, there is a general consensus that the program manager for a supported volunteer program must be a staff person to ensure consistency. (Frequently, the responsibility for interviewing and referring volunteers lies with a group of volunteers who work on a part-time basis.)

Special training and knowledge are also considered necessary for this kind of position. These would include an understanding of specific disabilities and special needs (depending on the target group for the program), the ability to provide appropriate support to the individual volunteers, familiarity with the social services network in the community, and marketing and presentation skills. In short, this would not be an entry-level position in a volunteer centre.

Likewise, the agency or organization receiving volunteers should be aware that the manager of volunteers will need encouragement and support, especially since she is probably already stretched to the limit by regular duties. The manager will have to devote extra time and energy to integrate volunteers with special needs and must be allowed the freedom to go beyond traditional methods and approaches to recruit, place, orient, train and support these volunteers.

Awareness or sensitivity training may well be needed for the manager of volunteers, as well as for staff and other volunteers. Ideally, the Board of Directors should also have a special orientation to the concept of supported volunteering in order to develop a commitment to the cause.

For example, special training may be required to:

- dispel stereotypes and stress the value of individual differences in order to ensure that each volunteer with special needs will be regarded as a productive individual with many skills and talents;
- increase understanding of specific kinds of special needs and their implications for the volunteer workplace; and
- increase awareness of cultural differences and eliminate racial biases.

Policy changes may also be in order. For example, it will be necessary to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses where there is an economic barrier to volunteering for individuals with special needs. Some organizations have already adopted this as a general policy for all volunteers.

There are, of course, many potential constraints on change. A manager of volunteers or senior staff member may want to initiate change but may consider this impossible because of shrinking resources or perceived blockages at critical points in the decision-making chain.

On the other hand, the corporate culture of an organization (especially if driven by a persuasive Board member or chief executive officer) can provide a spur to change. So, too, can external pressure from community groups or funders.

Achieving a more representative volunteer base means bringing about change —

and change is often difficult for both organizations and individuals. Dealing with issues of diversity and change can stir up confusion, feelings of vulnerability, avoidance behaviour, and possibly even fear. Working through these feelings should be considered an essential part of the process of change.

### **Forging links with other organizations**

With a supported volunteer program, a positive attitude towards outreach is critical. The manager of the program must develop relationships and foster liaison with organizations and agencies that are able to either place potential volunteers or refer them. Experience has shown that this process can be time-consuming.

As a first step, community organizations should be approached to determine how receptive they would be to volunteers with special needs and what level of support they would require. This first contact also provides an opportunity to sensitize other organizations to issues in supported volunteering.

Organizations such as the Independent Living Resource Centres, the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Canadian Association for Community Living can be very helpful in providing information on specific needs and ways to accommodate them. Ethnocultural organizations should be consulted, where appropriate. All of these organizations could also be excellent sources both for volunteers and for trainers with the skills and experience to sensitize staff and other volunteers to the needs of their members or clients.

Before developing a supported volunteer program, it is important to consult with some of the 'consumer' groups run by people with special needs. It would also be a good idea to set up a steering or advisory committee that includes individuals with special needs.

## **MANAGING VOLUNTEERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

### **Essentials for the manager of volunteers**

To run any volunteer program successfully, the manager of volunteers needs the interpersonal skills of a counsellor, the strategic approach of a planner and the acumen of a marketing executive. With a supported volunteer program, these assets are even more important, and creativity and flexibility are also essential.

To provide opportunities for meaningful experiences for volunteers who have special needs or circumstances, the manager of volunteers must have solid background information. As in any other endeavour, knowledge comes before understanding.

For example, it is essential to learn about various disabilities and their impact on the individual. In certain cases, it might even be necessary to become aware of specific details of the special needs of the volunteers (in a way that does not violate their human rights). Medication, for instance, could be an issue if the volunteer is having difficulty adjusting to it.

An appreciation of a particular person's special needs and the types of placement that would be the most appropriate to his abilities and interests is necessary to assure a positive volunteer experience.

Screening (including the method of interviewing), placement, orientation and training, supervision and follow-up may have to be tailored to the needs of the individual.

The ability to empathize is equally important. The manager of volunteers must have an understanding of what it means to a person to have limited mobility, to have impaired sight or hearing, to have learning disabilities, to be in a new country and unable to speak the language of those around you, to be functionally illiterate, to be unable to find a job, or to be trapped in the poverty cycle. The manager must be sensitive to the special needs or circumstances of these individuals and to the ways they deal with their situation.

With special-needs volunteers, the manager may have to think carefully about factors that would not even be considered for other volunteers. In weighing the options, it is important to bear in mind that people with special needs have the same hopes and emotions as everyone else. Likewise, they will progress or stagnate

depending on the opportunities and the environment to which they have access.

As a general principle, the volunteer position should be as closely suited as possible to the skills and interests of the individual, while taking into account her special needs. This may require redesigning an existing position. Potential positions have to be scrutinized, and the specific tasks and skills required must be analyzed carefully. Where necessary, modifications are made to the position and the appropriate support structures are put in place.

To ensure that volunteers who have special needs are fully accepted within the organization and treated with dignity and respect, it is important to ensure that the consciousness of others in the organization has been raised. Also, both staff and other volunteers may be worried that their already busy schedules will be further congested by new volunteers who have special needs.

Beyond formal 'awareness' training, it is important for the manager of volunteers to encourage others in the organization to talk about their concerns and fears and to be willing to respond in an honest and factual way. In enlisting the commitment of those who will be working with the volunteer, the manager is preparing them to help the volunteer succeed. For example, the staff member or volunteer who will be directly supervising the volunteer might be invited to become involved in planning the placement and the training sessions.

Finally, there is the issue of confidentiality. What information should be passed on to others in the organization? To whom and by whom? While it is certainly neither necessary nor advisable to share all personal details, there are advantages to giving enough information to those who work directly with special-needs volunteers for them to appreciate the difficulties the new volunteer may encounter on the job. However, it is vital to discuss with volunteers precisely what information they wish to share, and in what way.

In essence, a supported volunteer program calls for the same basic principles of volunteer management as are being used in other programs, but these principles have to be pushed a little further.

### **Placing volunteers with special needs**

Since recognizing the potential in a placement is the first step to a great match, existing positions should be analysed carefully. Is the orientation towards technical skills or social skills? What skills could be acquired and what are the other possible benefits of the volunteer position? Are all the 'requirements' for the position absolutely essential or do they create artificial barriers for potential volunteers? Can the job description be modified to reduce the demands? What support structures could be organized to ensure success?

The other half of the process is gaining an understanding of the skills, abilities, and interests of the volunteer. This is even more important if the individual has not had previous, or recent, paid or volunteer work experience.

When both the potential volunteer positions (whether existing or redesigned) and the skills and interests of the volunteer have been identified, the next step is to bring the two together. Although challenging, this is a matter of common sense rather than magic. Care and creative thinking, combined with close consultation among the

manager, co-workers and volunteer, are the key elements of an appropriate match.

A personal plan is then developed for each volunteer. This will include the requirements of the job, training needs, personal contacts and special support or accommodations.

It is critical to establish goals and objectives that are not only suitable to skills and abilities of the special-needs volunteers but also compatible with their personal interests and goals.

The volunteers should be actively involved in the process of developing this plan. Rather than making assumptions about what they can or cannot do, allow them to identify tasks which may prove difficult, if any. The individual is also the most able to advise on what type of support and accommodations may be required. Where the volunteer has a serious lack of self-esteem or life experience, however, he may have to be guided in the choice of assignment.

Similarly, it is crucial that the tasks assigned give the volunteers a real sense of purpose and that the value of their volunteer job extends beyond their personal gain. The advice from those with experience in this area is to avoid make-work projects at all costs. If people with special needs sense that they are being used as tokens, they are not likely to stay in their volunteer position for long.

### **Retaining volunteers with special needs**

As with all volunteer programs, the goal of a supported program is two-fold: to recruit and to retain volunteers. So, with the placement decided, the job of the manager of volunteers is only half done.

To be carried on over the long term, commitment must be cultivated. For volunteers with special needs, this means ensuring that the appropriate orientation is offered and that the required support is available. It is also essential that they feel fully accepted by the organization and that their contributions are appreciated.

New experiences can be unnerving to all of us, no matter how independent we may feel. For those whose experience is limited because of their special needs or circumstances, their first volunteer job may carry with it feelings of insecurity and anxiety.

In these situations, it can be critically important to their success to prepare the volunteers by ensuring that they fully understand the nature, scope and importance of the job they will be doing and how it fits into the organization. A visit to the job site to meet her new colleagues and to see the physical surroundings in which she will be working could also make her feel much more comfortable.

It is equally important to pay attention to volunteers' personal needs once they begin their volunteer jobs. As with all people, some volunteers with special needs will be content to continue in a job they enjoy, while others will strive for change and a sense of progress. Some will prefer, or will only be able to handle, relatively routine tasks; others will enjoy taking on challenges. Some will feel much more comfortable with the security of having a fair amount of direction; others will relish responsibility and the chance to take the initiative. In this they are no different from any other group of volunteers.

Nevertheless, everyone should be offered the chance for continued self-develop-

ment. Since learning and personal growth are closely linked with commitment and duration of service, these can be a powerful magnet in retaining volunteers.

If a volunteer craves challenge, the manager of volunteers and the volunteer herself will have to determine which duties can be added in order to offer opportunities for growth and personal development. The position should also allow such volunteers to earn increasing responsibility. This will help them to see the progress that is being made.

As is true for anybody, individuals with special needs have varying learning styles. Some will gain the most from a formal training program with systematic instruction; others will learn best from the work experience itself. Some will want to talk with others who have relevant experience; others will prefer quiet reflection with written material.

To manage volunteers effectively, it is important to communicate clearly what is expected on the job and to encourage discussion with the volunteers on a regular basis. This is even more critical with special-needs volunteers since it is necessary to ensure that the job itself is suitable and that the accommodations are working effectively. If not, changes have to be made.

For individuals who have psychiatric disabilities, developmental handicaps or learning disabilities, supportive and consistent direction may be particularly important. (Gentle structure and direction, with the limitations and possibilities made clear, can actually give people more freedom.)

It can be very motivating to hear positive comments about work accomplished and to have your contribution recognized. Nevertheless, it is important to avoid being overly protective of volunteers with special needs. Feedback should always be honest — praise where it is deserved and tactful suggestions where there are shortcomings.

In certain situations, the probability of success will be greatly increased by assigning an experienced volunteer or a staff member to work one-to-one with a special-needs volunteer as a 'buddy' or 'mentor'. For example, a volunteer with limited knowledge of the language of the organization could be paired with another volunteer who is bilingual.

Assigning a buddy or mentor may be a particularly good option for those who need extra direction or those who are seriously lacking in self-confidence. (In some cases, a person with a disability may have an attendant or life skills worker from an outside agency or may be accompanied by a volunteer from an organization such as Citizens' Advocacy.)

If the first match is not as effective as it might be, it may be necessary to change the buddy or mentor. It could also be beneficial to change buddies as the volunteer's responsibilities increase, in order to emphasize the progress that has been made.

The duration and nature of such personalized support can vary greatly. It might be needed only at the beginning, or it may be required over a much longer term. It could be needed only in certain areas, or it could be very intensive.

Nevertheless, as a basic principle, on-the-job support should be as non-intrusive as possible, and it should be phased out as soon as the volunteer is fully trained and feels comfortable with the job.

## Special accommodations and support

A 'job accommodation' or 'work adjustment' is a modification to the work environment that makes it possible for someone with special needs to succeed. The concept can be applied in either a salaried or a volunteer position.

The objective is to ensure that a disability or special need is not preventing the individual from doing a job that he or she is otherwise qualified to do. Its purpose is to neutralize the impact of the special needs and maximize the effectiveness of the skills and abilities.

Accommodations must be determined according to the needs of the particular person as these relate to a specific job. It is crucial to consult the volunteer to ensure that the proposed accommodations are both necessary and suitable. Some volunteers may already have their own special equipment available, which might make finding a placement easier.

Consider how much a potential accommodation would enhance the capacities of the volunteer and whether there are other ways to achieve the same purpose. Where technological assistance is involved, the potential for other volunteers or staff members to benefit from the accommodation as well would be an incentive to make the change.

A wide range of on-the-job accommodations is possible. They fall into four main categories:

- *physical access (for people with mobility impairments)*  
Examples include: ramps, rails, power doors, lever-type door handles, non-skid strips for the floor, washrooms adapted for people in wheelchairs, adjustable desks and chairs, and a workspace arranged to allow comfortable space for a guide dog.
- *technical aids (to allow people with specific disabilities to 'read' information)*  
Braille printers, dictating equipment, devices to enlarge print, magnifying devices for computer screens, talking calculators and voice synthesizers (to translate what is written on a computer screen into the spoken word) are possible ways to accommodate people who are blind or visually impaired.  
Amplifiers on telephones and TDDs (tele-communications devices for the deaf) are available to assist people who are deaf or hearing impaired.  
Computer software to check spelling and grammatical errors can be used by people who have learning disabilities or low levels of literacy skills or fluency in the working language of the organization. •*support services and individualized assistance*  
Examples include: special training and tutorials; special assistance and monitoring; a buddy or mentor system that pairs the special-needs volunteer with another person; sign language interpreters to assist those who have hearing impairments; linguistic interpreters to assist those who are not fluent in the primary language of the organization; and readers for those who have sight impairments or severe dyslexia.
- *modifications to policies or practices to allow special work arrangements*  
Examples include: restructuring a position to eliminate tasks that will be

difficult for the volunteer and adding others that represent areas of strength, job-sharing, flexible or shortened work schedules, more frequent rest periods, and distraction-free work spaces.

In short, an accommodation is whatever is appropriate to enable a person with a specific disability or special circumstances to successfully adapt to the requirements of a position. For these individuals, accommodations are the keys that open the doors to new opportunities.

## ISSUES, CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

### **Criteria for volunteer readiness**

While traditional volunteer programs focus on the benefits that volunteers confer on clients or the organization, supported volunteer programs expand that focus to include benefits to the volunteers themselves. Nevertheless, the concept of a universal right to volunteer may have to be tempered by the practical need for volunteer readiness.

When the level of support required to integrate a special-needs volunteer is very high, the organization will have to weigh the case carefully. Depending on the type of placement, issues of safety and liability can also come into play. If one accepts the basic premise that all people have the right to seek dignified means to be productive and independent, these decisions may be very difficult to make.

Every disability or other special need occurs along a spectrum, ranging from minimal to severe in its impact on specific activities. For example, compare the case of a newcomer to Canada who has virtually no knowledge of the working language of the organization with that of another who has already completed basic language training.

For volunteer centres, the 'social service' aspect of supported volunteering may be regarded as a justifiable part of their mandate. Their mission is to recruit and refer volunteers and to promote volunteerism in their community. The centres could even opt to recruit their own volunteers to provide personal assistance to volunteers with special needs.

However, for an agency or organization that relies on volunteers to fulfil its objectives, the involvement of volunteers with special needs would likely have to be regarded as a means to an end — that is, to productivity. Of necessity, there are limitations to what a voluntary organization can offer when additional time and money are required.

Realistically, the cost/benefit analysis will probably have to tip in favour of the amount of work that can be accomplished, rather than the value of the volunteer's involvement in and of itself. Where extensive continuing support is needed, it is probably not possible for a voluntary organization to provide it without special funding or a partnership with an organization that was able to contribute such a level of support.

At the heart of any volunteer assignment is the work to be done. If volunteers require a great deal of extra time and effort on a continuing basis, it could be argued that they are more like clients than volunteers. At times, it may be premature to consider an individual with special needs for a volunteer position.

Think of a balance beam: the support needed to involve a special-needs volunteer is at one end, and the output (or level of productivity) of the special-needs volunteer at the other end. In finding its own balance point, each organization will have to develop criteria for volunteer readiness.

### **The concept of `reasonable' accommodation**

The very thought of having to make special accommodations or to provide extra support may deter some organizations from considering a volunteer with special needs. Lack of knowledge in this area may lead to the assumption that accommodations are prohibitively expensive, in terms of either money or time. But this is not necessarily the case.

What on-the-job accommodations would it be `reasonable' to expect a voluntary organization to offer? Presumably, an accommodation would become a hardship, and therefore `unreasonable', if it involved a substantial outlay of time or money.

It also seems logical to assume that the nature and cost of the accommodations must be weighed against the overall size of the organization, its financial resources and the availability of human resources (both staff members and volunteers).

The criteria for assessing whether a particular accommodation is reasonable are not absolute. What might be considered reasonable for one organization may create undue hardship in another.

For example, while it could be argued that it is reasonable to expect a large, established charity to provide one-to-one support for a volunteer with special needs, this kind of accommodation would likely create undue hardship on a very small agency. For this reason, each organization would have to develop its own guidelines as to what constitutes `reasonable' accommodations.

Although it seems appropriate for an organization to consider whether specific accommodations are reasonable, potential volunteers should never be automatically rejected simply because they have special needs that require on-the-job accommodations. Each situation has to be evaluated individually.

Accommodations should be viewed as investments — in both the individual with special needs and the organization itself. In the case of physical accommodations and technical devices, later volunteers will be able to take advantage of them. And if imagination and creativity are used, accommodations may not have to be costly either.

Fortunately, services are now available to assist organizations, both for-profit and voluntary, to identify ways to accommodate specific disabilities and to determine the cost. See Appendix D.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The demand for volunteers is expanding as our social needs increase. There are also distinct advantages for the voluntary sector if a concerted effort is made to create a volunteer force that reflects the makeup of Canadian society more accurately.

To meet these needs, new sources of volunteers have to be tapped. Organizations will have to find ways to ensure greater access to volunteer participation by individuals in their community who have been denied this opportunity in the past.

Supported volunteer programs are an effective way to integrate volunteers with special needs or circumstances. Yet, for these programs to be successful, the commitment must be made at the highest level of the organization to ensure that the philosophy is well integrated into its operations.

Even when the will is there, financing remains a major barrier to the spread of supported volunteerism. In the current climate of strenuous competition for public funds and corporate donations, it will be a challenge to increase opportunities for volunteers with special needs. Clearly, significant movement in this direction will take unflinching commitment and sustained enthusiasm.

Nevertheless, change can take many forms. It can be either wholesale or gradual. Any efforts made to provide more opportunities for volunteers with special needs will be of great value in developing the necessary expertise, awareness and commitment in an organization. A willingness to accept volunteers with special needs individually, before a formal program is in place, is an important beginning.

Ideally, access to volunteering by *all* individuals with special needs should be actively promoted. Practical consideration may weigh against this, however. A program aimed at people with all kinds of special needs may be too overwhelming for an organization to contemplate at the beginning.

A gradual approach may be the only practical way. One specific group of individuals with special needs could be targeted at a time to build the range up gradually. Regardless of the nature of the special needs, the experience gained from running a smaller, specialized program will be applicable to programs for people with other needs. With the addition of each new group, the process should be less daunting and time-consuming.

Hopefully, efforts to open up opportunities for volunteer work throughout the community will become much more active in the near future. While volunteer centres

and other voluntary organizations cannot be expected to make up for society's years of negative conditioning, they can help balance the scales by encouraging the involvement of volunteers with special needs or circumstances.

Supported volunteer programs can have a very positive effect on individuals with special needs. It is also likely that the organizations for which they volunteer will be strengthened. In this way, these programs are bridges to the future.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Some Supported Volunteerism Programs in Canada**

#### ***Pathway Program***

##### **Central Volunteer Bureau of Ottawa-Carleton**

This program promotes the involvement of individuals with mental health disabilities as volunteers. It offers continuing support to the placement organizations to maintain the volunteer in position or to make adjustments or changes as needed.

The program has been operating continually since 1984. It was funded by Health and Welfare Canada (National Welfare Grants Program) from 1984 to 1987 and by the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada (Disabled Persons' Participation Program) from 1988 to 1989. The Ontario Ministry of Health is providing financial support from 1991 to 1993.

#### ***Transitional Volunteer Program***

##### **The Volunteer Centre**

##### **Community Service Council, St John's, Nfld**

This supported volunteer program is designed to assist people with a variety of special needs. These include individuals with physical, intellectual or mental health disabilities, as well as those who are socially or economically disadvantaged, and the long-term unemployed.

Support is given by assessing the interests and abilities of volunteers, arranging appropriate placements in volunteer positions, and providing ongoing follow-up and evaluation. Vocational counselling (including career planning, résumé-writing and job-search skills) is also offered.

One full-time counsellor and a part-time assistant work with approximately 80 volunteer a year. The program has been in existence since 1985, and is funded by the Outreach Program of Employment and Immigration Canada.

#### ***Volunteer Work Support Program***

##### **Independent Living Resource Centre, Winnipeg**

This program assists people with all types of disabilities and of all ages to find volunteer jobs of their choice within the community. Run by and for

people with disabilities, this program encourages volunteers to explore options and make their own choices. It also incorporates the concepts of peer support and peer learning.

Established in 1986, the program provides personalized support that ranges from practical advice to personal assistance. Training and support are also offered to the coordinators of volunteers in the voluntary organizations where the volunteers work.

### ***Multicultural Outreach Program***

#### **Volunteer Centre of Metropolitan Toronto**

This volunteer project encourages the participation of members of ethnocultural groups as volunteers in mainstream voluntary organizations. Students in the final stages of ESL (English as a second language) programs are a major source for recruitment.

The program manager works with community organizations to increase understanding of cultural differences and to encourage organizational change that will make volunteer organizations more receptive to volunteers from various ethnocultural and racial backgrounds.

The program has been in existence since 1986, and has been funded by various sources.

### ***Integration Through Volunteering Program***

#### **Greater Coquitlam Volunteer Bureau**

This program provides individual training and support to volunteers with intellectual disabilities. Managed by a part-time coordinator, the program has been running since 1988 under a contract from the British Columbia Ministry of Social Services (on a fee-for-service basis). It has served approximately 200 individuals during that time.

A similar program for individuals with mental health disabilities is being set up with funding from the Ministry of Health.

### ***Supported Volunteering Program***

#### **Central Volunteer Bureau of Ottawa-Carleton**

This program aims to provide volunteer opportunities for individuals who have severe physical disabilities. Continuing support is available to both the volunteer and the placement agency. Counselling is available to the volunteer both before and after placement. Depending upon availability, a 'buddy' (a volunteer, student, or staff member) may be assigned. A monthly travel allowance is also provided, if needed.

The program began in 1988 under a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and was still operating in June of 1992.

### ***The Volunteer Access Project***

#### **Victoria Volunteer Bureau**

This is a program to encourage the involvement of volunteers with a variety

of special needs, with particular emphasis on individuals who have mental health, intellectual or physical disabilities, and individuals for whom English is a second language.

Managed by a part-time coordinator working 21 hours a week, the project deals with about 110 individuals a year. Some 50 per cent of these were successfully placed in volunteer positions (equivalent to the Bureau's results for all volunteers).

The project began in January 1990 and continued until June of 1992 with funding assistance from the Vancouver Foundation and the Disabled Persons' Participation Program of the Department of the Secretary of State. Funding from September 1992 to March 1993 has been secured from the B.C. Ministry of Social Services. It is hoped that funds can be found to continue the program permanently.

### ***Community Integration Project***

#### **Richmond Volunteer and Information Centre**

The volunteer program offers personalized support for individuals who are making the transition from a mental health environment to the larger community. The program is run by one full-time coordinator, who provides support to both the volunteer and the agency during the training process.

Based on a seven-month pilot project that took place in 1990, this program formally began in September of 1992. It is jointly run by the Richmond Information and Volunteer Centre and the Richmond Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, with funding from the Greater Vancouver Mental Health Services Society.

### ***Project Positive***

#### **Volunteer Action Centre**

#### **and Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Edmonton**

TBA (for volunteers who have brain injuries).

### ***Ethnocultural Project***

#### **Central Volunteer Bureau of Ottawa-Carleton**

This project aims to identify and overcome barriers that discourage newcomers to Canada from volunteering in mainstream organizations, and to promote volunteerism among ethnocultural minorities. Personalized support is offered to volunteers with special needs.

The project was launched in the summer of 1992, with funding from the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton. It is managed by a part-time coordinator.

### ***Volunteer Support Program***

#### **Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary and the Volunteer Centre of Calgary**

This joint program is designed to help people with all types of disabilities

find volunteer placements within the community.

The program will provide personalized support to the volunteers, as well as training and support to the organizations receiving them. It also incorporates the concept of peer support between participants.

The consultation and planning has been completed, and it is hoped that the program can be launched by January 1993.

## APPENDIX B

### A Note on Terminology

Anyone who intends to pursue this subject should be aware that, because supported volunteering is a new area, the terminology is still evolving.

A variety of terms have been used in the literature to refer to 'supported volunteerism'. The most commonly used terms are 'special-needs volunteering', 'equal-opportunity volunteering', 'equal-access volunteering', 'transitional volunteering' and 'difficult-to-place volunteers'.

However, precise definitions of these terms and the target groups to which they are applied differ greatly from one source to the next.

The term *supported volunteerism* has not been widely used until now, but seems to best convey the concept without pulling a train of other connotations behind it. I have used it here to refer to the personalized support offered to individuals with special needs, without regard to the particular type of disability or support required.

This usage parallels 'supported employment' and 'supported integration' (referring to the assistance given to individuals with special needs in the paid workplace and in regular classrooms in schools, respectively), which are now accepted terms.

As with those two concepts, the focus in this text is on the individuals themselves and on the special support and accommodations they require to integrate successfully into volunteer positions.

By this definition, targeted recruitment programs (such as those focusing on youth, seniors or ethnocultural populations) would not necessarily be considered supported programs simply because they are targeted. Only programs which make a special effort to accommodate the on-the-job needs of individual volunteers would be so defined.

Nevertheless, there will certainly be individuals from these other groups who, because of disabilities or special circumstances, could also be described as 'special-needs' volunteers as the term is used in this text.

In a recent publication from Volunteer Ontario entitled *Special-Needs Volunteering: A Directory of Programs in Canada*, (Linda Graff, 1992), the terms 'special-needs volunteering' and 'supported volunteering' are used more broadly. They encompass *all* programs which make a special effort to recruit and place volunteers from specific target groups that have traditionally been under-represented in volunteering.

On-the-job support to the volunteer is not the determining factor in that definition. Rather, the emphasis is on the organization and the special effort that it makes to include all sectors of society in volunteering.

It should also be noted that the Volunteer Ontario publication makes a distinction between `supported volunteerism' and `special-needs volunteering'.

The term `supported volunteerism' is used in that publication exclusively for programs which serve a brokerage role (primarily volunteer centres), recruiting special-needs volunteers in order to refer them to other organizations.

`Special-needs volunteering', on the other hand, refers to activities undertaken either by the receiving agency or by an organization which recruits its volunteers directly.

## APPENDIX C

### **The Missing Link in Supported Volunteerism: Volunteers with Learning Disabilities**

Individuals with learning disabilities are rarely included in the groups targeted by existing programs that offer supported volunteerism. Since this group would seem to be seriously under-represented in volunteering, it appears that more attention would be warranted here.

As 'invisible' handicaps, learning disabilities are very poorly understood by the general public. Essentially, they are information-processing disabilities that affect one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, and oral language (for example, comprehension, sequencing of thoughts, expression of ideas). Not uncommonly, there are associated difficulties with attention, memory, organization, psycho-motor coordination and social skills. However, the individual is usually within the normal ranges of intelligence.

Because there are many different types of learning disabilities and many possible combinations, it is perhaps more difficult for the average person to understand the precise nature of an individual's particular learning style and needs. For this reason, it can be challenging to integrate individuals with more severe or more complex learning disabilities into volunteer jobs.

To be effective, a program must be specifically designed for a particular learning-disabled individual. It must take into consideration the various facets of his disability and the interplay between them, as well as the particular learning style and the specific strategies required to compensate for the disability. As with all special-needs volunteers, it is also important to encourage these individuals to use and develop their areas of strength as much as possible.

Some individuals with learning disabilities will need only minimal assistance at the outset to make the adjustment, while others will require ongoing support and an adapted environment to function effectively. Depending on the needs of the individual, the volunteer position may have to be restructured and a distraction-free work space may have to be provided. Additional time to do a task and special guidance may be also be necessary. Instructions may need to be given in a very clear way and broken down into smaller tasks that involve a limited number of steps at one time.

A volunteer with learning disabilities may need instructional and other basic

information in alternative forms or media. For example, someone with a reading disability may benefit more from oral or taped information rather than written material. Someone with a language disability may work much more effectively if information is presented in written form rather than orally. Similarly, these individuals should be given the freedom to do their reports in the form that is best suited to their needs, whether that is oral or written.

Misperceptions tend to abound where learning disabilities are concerned. Difficulties with expressive language, reading, or writing may be equated with lack of intelligence or a lack of interest in the job. Difficulties with organization may be viewed as laziness or inefficiency, while difficulties with concentration may be interpreted as lack of initiative or motivation.

As well, the more subtle aspects of learning disabilities (particularly, a lack of *savoir faire* in social activities) could impede success on the job unless those working with the volunteer are tactfully made aware of this.

There is a general tendency to underestimate the potential of individuals with learning disabilities. And, as noted above, it may be somewhat difficult for those unfamiliar with learning disabilities to understand why accommodations are needed and how to make them.

For this reason, it is advisable to forge a partnership with a local or provincial chapter of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada and seek the active involvement of people who are trained in the field. In some cases, the involvement of an outside advocate may be useful to give credence to the reality of the invisible handicaps.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Job Accommodations: Services to Assist Organizations**

Employment and Immigration Canada sponsors a free service called the Job Accommodation Network, or JAN. JAN is a joint Canada-US telephone consulting service with a data bank containing thousands of examples of how organizations have successfully accommodated workers with disabilities.

Counsellors are also available to provide detailed information and advice on how jobs and worksites can be adapted to compensate for functional limitations of employees or volunteers. (JAN's toll-free number is 1-800-526-2262. Services are available in French or English).

In addition, some provincial government departments offer consultative services and grants covering the needs of people with disabilities. Community agencies and local branches of organizations dealing with specific disabilities will also be able to provide advice on options for accommodation.

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### Recommended Reading

The following resources are highly recommended for anyone interested in supported volunteerism. They are all recent publications available free of charge or at a modest price.

**Graff, Linda.** *Special-Needs Volunteering: A Directory of Programs in Canada.* Etobicoke: Volunteer Ontario, 1992. 64 pp.

Based on an extensive survey, this resource provides information on the various types of volunteer programs across Canada that make a special effort to recruit and place volunteers from specific groups. These target groups include: youth, seniors, ethnocultural populations, people with mental health disabilities, people with intellectual disabilities, people who have physical disabilities and people who are economically or socially disadvantaged.

The introduction outlines crucial issues in special-needs volunteering, and each section provides an overview of volunteer programs that target a specific group. Key resources on these subjects are also listed.

Cost: \$10 plus GST and \$2.75 shipping and handling

Orders: Volunteer Ontario  
Suite 203  
2 Dunblow Road  
Etobicoke, Ontario  
M9A 2E4

(416) 236-0588

**MacKinnon, Jean.** *Volunteer Access: A Manual for Special-Needs Volunteering.* Victoria: Victoria Volunteer Bureau, 1991. 34 pp.

This manual is based on the experience of the Victoria Volunteer Bureau's Volunteer Access Project in integrating individuals with special needs into the community through the medium of volunteering.

The target groups for the project include individuals with mental health, intellectual, and physical disabilities, newcomers to Canada and individuals for whom English is a second language.

The booklet offers advice on establishing a supported volunteer program within a volunteer centre, including interviewing, placing, and supervising volunteers with special needs. An overview of the special needs of various

target groups and key advice for managing volunteers in each category are also provided.

Cost: \$10 plus \$2 shipping and handling  
Orders: Victoria Volunteer Bureau  
Room 211  
620 View Street  
Victoria, British Columbia  
V8W 1J6 (604) 386-2269

**Strachan, Kathy. *Opening Doors: Volunteers with Disabilities in the '90s*. Winnipeg: Independent Living Resource Centre, 1991. 53 pp.**

Aimed at coordinators of volunteers, this is a guide to integrating volunteers who have disabilities. Issues addressed include sensitizing staff members and supporting volunteers with disabilities. Tips on interviewing, placing, orienting and evaluating volunteers with special needs are provided. The final section deals with ten specific disabilities and offers suggestions on each one.

Cost: \$5.00 plus \$2 shipping and handling  
Orders: Independent Living Resource Centre  
Suite 201  
294 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3C 0B9 (204) 947-0194

**Central Volunteer Bureau of Ottawa-Carleton. *Volunteering: A Pathway to Integration*. Ottawa: 1988. 44 pp. Also available in French.**

This handbook provides detailed information on a model for a supported volunteer program for individuals with mental health disabilities that was developed by the Volunteer Bureau. It offers step-by-step guidance on how to interview clients, determine volunteer readiness, find appropriate placements and support the volunteers.

A full set of sample documents and forms is included, as are answers to questions frequently posed to the Pathway staff.

Cost: Free of charge (although the supply is very limited)  
Contact: Central Volunteer Bureau of Ottawa-Carleton  
256 King Edward Avenue  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1N 7M1 (613) 232-4876

**Thompson, Mal. *Involving Volunteers with Extra Support Needs: A Self-Study Pack for Volunteer Organisers*. Hinckley, UK: Hinckley Area Volunteer Bureau, 1991.**

Written for program coordinators in volunteer centres, this workbook offers practical suggestions on recruiting, placing and supporting volunteers who have special needs.

It also addresses issues such as the benefits of involving volunteers with special needs, attitudinal barriers to their participation, the need for confidentiality of information, and the importance of a support network for the program coordinator.

This resource would be useful to anyone who works informally with special-needs volunteers or who is considering a formal program. It could be used either for individual study or as a resource for training others.

Cost: £5 (includes postage and handling)  
Orders: Hinckley Area Volunteer Bureau  
12 Waterloo Road  
Hinckley, United Kingdom  
LE10 1QJ

**McCaffray, Charles J. *Seniors' Volunteer Job Support Program: An Introduction and Training Manual*. Whitehorse: Challenge, 1992. 33 pp.**

This resource describes an innovative program through which senior volunteers provide one-to-one job support to employees with disabilities. It gives details of the employment support system run by Challenge, including tips for volunteers who provide employment support and the criteria used to determine when this support can be withdrawn.

Although the focus is on individual assistance in employment situations, this manual would also be very useful to managers of supported volunteer programs.

Contact: Challenge: Community Vocational Alternatives  
1148 First Avenue  
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory  
Y1A 1A6 (403) 668-4421

**Graff, Linda. *Volunteer for the Health of It*. Etobicoke: Volunteer Ontario, 1991. 45 pp.**

This study explores the relationship between volunteering and health, both physical and mental. It provides a review of the pertinent literature and summarizes the discussions of focus groups from five communities in Ontario.

It also examines barriers to volunteering faced by five specific target groups: seniors, youth, people who are unemployed, people with physical disabilities and people with psychiatric disabilities.

Cost: \$10 plus GST and \$2.75 shipping and handling  
Orders: Volunteer Ontario  
Suite 203  
2 Dunbloor Road  
Etobicoke, Ontario  
M9A 2E4 (416) 236-0588

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