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ABSTRACT

Services were provided for 16 deinstitutionalized developmentally disabled adults (DDA) through the use of senior citizens as advocates. Program objectives included provision of 20 hours per week of supervised one-to-one training in daily living skills for each DDA and the development of helping relationships between the DDA client and the senior advocate. Senior citizens were paid the minimum wage for 20 hours a week and participated in an ongoing inservice training program. The program enhanced the capability of the DDAs for independent living in the community.
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SENIOR ADVOCACY PROGRAM FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED ADULT

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SENIOR ADVOCACY PROGRAM FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

INTRODUCTION

Normalization and deinstitutionalization were adopted as a Commonwealth of Virginia concept in 1972-73. The purpose is to provide a means of facilitating adjustment to community living for those who have been institutionalized due to developmental disablement. The state of Virginia descriptive code on developmentally disabled refers to any developmental handicap attributable to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, or any other neurological impairment originating in an individual prior to the age of 18. This said disability requires that it be ongoing, predicted to continue indefinitely, and must constitute a significant handicap to the person.

For the purpose of facilitating resocialization and reintegration of the deinstitutionalized DDA's, a foster home, a half-way house and 3 group homes were established in Norfolk and Portsmouth, two cities in Tidewater, Virginia. Based on studies of the community counselors program at Fort Logan, Colorado, and Arlington and Green Valley Developmental Centers in Tennessee (1972), Senior Citizens serving as trained advocates are regarded as having the potential to enhance the adjustment and resocialization of the DDA into the normal community life pattern.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goals include developing a satisfactory degree of client independence, extending the training of Seniors as advocates in Tidewater, Virginia, and the developing a meaningful training program for senior advocates and the DDA clients. The objectives of the program are two-fold: (a) for the client and (b) for the advocate.

FOR THE CLIENT

1. To provide 20 hours of supervised training for 16 DDA deinstitutionalized clients per week for the purpose of facilitation physical and mental development.
2. To expose DDA clients to a sequential program related to the individual needs of the client.
3. To provide opportunities for 16 DDA's to expend and strengthen experience in community living.
4. To provide one-to-one training and counseling to the DDA clients for the purpose of developing information and skills in utilizing community resources for the purpose of achieving more independent living status.

Much of the responsibility for the aforementioned objectives is vested with the Senior Advocates.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE SENIOR ADVOCATES INCLUDE:

1. Assisting in identifying unmet client needs.
2. Participated in locating and/or organizing services pertinent to the unmet DDA's needs.
3. Training and facilitating the resocialization and reintegration of the DDA clients into the mainstream of community living. This contact is initially on a 1:1 basis for 20 hours per week.
4. Developing helping relationships (i.e. use of money, places of interest, shopping skills, etc.) with the DDA client so as to enhance their physical and social development and competency.
5. Developing pertinent expectancies regarding the physical and mental development of the DDA client.

In order to prepare the Senior Advocate so that the DDA client can be best facilitated, the following aspects are seen as relevant in a training program:

1. Knowledge of pertinent community and state human resources agencies serving the needs of DDA clients.
2. Techniques in utilizing human resources to enhance the quality of life of the DDA client.
3. The acquisition of and/or upgrading of teaching skills relative to the location and utilization of human resources for the DDA client.
4. Acquisition and/or upgrading of information relative to the human growth and development of the DD adult.
5. Acquisition and/or upgrading of skills in techniques of helping relationships.

To support the program, a group home was established to provide an alternative to institutionalizing the Tidewater DDA and to facilitate the utilization of existing community resources. The training program was developed to support the goals and objectives stated above in order to enable the clients to function more adequately in the community and avoid reinstitutionalization. These goals are congruent with, and in support of, the "1972-73 Priority Goals" established by the State Plan. Further, collaborative support was established between Old Dominion University and Hampton Institute and with the Tidewater Association for Retarded Citizens (TARC) and SEVAMP for the purpose of facilitating public education and counseling, in addition to assisting the DDA client and the senior citizen in their own continued growth and development.

The project directed its efforts initially toward 16 clients, male and female, black and white ranging in age from 22-62. The age of 40 has been suggested as an appropriate parameter which constitutes again for the mentally retarded person. DDA clients were released from both Lynchburg and Petersburg Training Centers in Virginia. All deinstitutionalized clients were domiciled in one of the following facilities sponsored by TARC: Holiday house in Portsmouth, Hardee, Hope and Westover in Norfolk and/or in domiciliary homes. All clients were diagnosed as moderate or severely retarded. Of the clients in the program, one yet remains prone to seizures, two continue a history of mental disturbance and one is only ambulatory. Language communication skills of the clients ranged from poor to very good. Regarding personal and social development, five clients were adequate, two required some assistance, and one was in need of intensive remediation. For the most part, the deinstitutionalized clients had potentially good work skills and training and facilitation; 12 were eventually employed.

SENIOR ADVOCATES

SEVAMP made available an outreach component (seven workers) to assist in the identification of eight senior advocates. In addition, medical and dental screening was provided for each senior advocate to insure that the physical and mental health of the advocate was such that they could function in a helping relationship to potentiate their clients.

The following selection criteria for senior advocates were employed:

- a. To be able to relate to others (i.e., to be warm flexible, and sympathetic).
- b. To possess adequate physical and mental health so as to function maximally in a helping relationship with their clients.
- c. To be sensitive in anticipating a crisis.
- d. To be able to offer preventive counseling.
- e. Potential for and willingness to learn (Krieger, 1974).

White initial screening of Senior Advocates by SEVAMP the final screening was a cooperative effort to SEVAMP, TARC, and consultants from Old Dominion University and Hampton Institute.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

A joint effort was initiated among agencies SEVAMP and TARC and two colleges (Old Dominion University and Hampton Institute) and their respective personnel to develop the training program and supply technical and professional assistance for implementation as needed. Dissemination of information (e.g., training packages, manuals, films and other products) eventuating from the pilot program are regarded as essential towards facilitating additional advocacy programs with developmentally disabled clients by developing programs and materials for senior advocates. Further benefits of the program include improvements of the functional levels of the developmentally disabled adult as well as in the feelings of self-worth of the senior advocate.

Two full-time university faculty, one from Old Dominion University and the other from Hampton Institute served as co-directors of the project. They coordinated the efforts of the participating agencies, established the training program that was disseminated, worked with TARC personnel to reinforce and augment the ongoing program of the developmentally disabled, served as consultants and counselors to the senior advocates, maintained an on-going, in-service training program, and participated in the screening and selection of project personnel.

TARC consulted in problems related to the developmentally disabled adult. In addition, they furnished space to house the project at the TARC facility, Norfolk, Virginia. The coordinator of Halfway House and its program director provided the senior advocates with programs relevant to those established for the individual residents.

The Senior Advocacy Project secretary was responsible for all administrative duties such as time schedules, salaries, stipends given to the senior advocates for the developmentally disabled adults. In addition she sought and obtained medical assistance as needed, coordinated the training program for the senior advocates, contacted other appropriate agencies as needed to assist the developmentally disabled adult in the normalization process, consulted with the project directors, coordinated and carried out programs set forth by TARC and SEVAMP personnel, and facilitated in the in-service program for the duration of the project.

The project secretary was responsible to the project co-directors, The senior advocates were employed for twenty hours per week at the prevailing minimum wage. Payment of salaries is regarded essential to enhancing the senior's self-worth, raising morale, improving work effectiveness, and insuring commitment. The senior advocate is then able to perceive himself as a valued member of the community, and hence, his reinvolvement with society at large is enhanced.

It was anticipated that the demonstration training program would assist the senior advocates in acquiring and/or updating skills necessary to work with the developmentally disabled client. It was also expected the training program might then be utilized with some modifications by trained seniors to facilitate additional advocates. Further, the project is also regarded as possessing transferability for senior advocates to work with groups other than the developmentally disabled; e.g., other seniors, persons with other problems (e.g., juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, etc.) and other developmentally disabled persons in other communities.

Products associated with this project are two-fold. A training program was developed with input from Old Dominion University and Hampton Institute consultants, TARC and SEV MP personnel. The training manual was coordinated with Developmental Disabilities Grant No. 72-05 (B) "Training Program for Paraprofessionals," and includes the scheduled course outline, materials, bibliography, and suggested activities for the training of senior advocates. The manual will be made available statewide to interested parties through the use of a mailing list compiled by the project directors.

The program set forth in the project is regarded as having enhanced the capability of developmentally disabled adults for independent living in the community. In addition, senior advocates were facilitated also so that they could be regarded as capable role models for similar programs utilizing advocacy.