Unit 4: Working With Volunteers

CERT Program Manager

Unit Objectives

- At the conclusion of this unit, the participants will be able to establish a process for working with volunteers:

  – Describe how to recruit volunteers

  – Describe how to orient volunteers

  – Explain why to track volunteers

  – Describe methods for managing volunteers

  – Identify techniques for retaining volunteers

  – Identify strategies for firing volunteers

Unit Topics

- The Program Manager and the CERT Volunteer

- Recruit Volunteers

- Orient Volunteers

- Track Volunteers

- Manage Volunteers

- Retain Volunteers

- Terminate a Volunteer

PM 4-1

Program Mgr and Volunteers

- Volunteers are backbone of program
  - Provide administrative support
  - Run parts of program
  - Train CERT volunteers
  - Make up teams that serve community

Working with Volunteers

- Program Manager must know how to work with volunteers
  - Skills are same as working with paid staff
  - Difference is in how you apply those skills

Prepare for Volunteers #1

- Identify ways that volunteers will be used in CERT program
  - May be described in the program description
  - If they aren't in the program description, write them down
  - Documentation applies to program administration as well as to CERT activities!

Uses for Volunteers

How can a CERT program use volunteers?

- As a CERT member
  - Disaster response
  - Special events
  - Community preparedness

- To help run the program, e.g.,
  - Data management
  - Communicating with volunteers
  - Working with funders and sponsors
  - Tracking equipment
  - Training

PM 4-2

- Write job descriptions
  - Team member role
  - Other volunteer positions

PM 4-6

Written Job Descriptions

- Why is it a good idea to have written job descriptions?
  - They let the volunteer know what your expectations are
  - They give you something to evaluate performance against and something to fall back on if performance is inadequate or unacceptable

#1 Recruit Volunteers

Gateway to CERT

- Through *CERT Basic Training*

- Helps participants identify preferred role
  - To be an active member of program
  - Just want information for personal use

Volunteer Sources

- How do you find people to take the *CERT Basic Training* course?
  - Word of mouth is **best** way
  - Readymade groups
  - Groups with similar interests
  - Anyone or any group you speak to

The Dilemma

- "Established Group" Advantage
  - Pre-existing reason(s) for working together
  - CERT can become part of their mission

- "Established Group" Disadvantage
  - Members of some groups are not geographically connected
  - But CERTs are organized geographically

Recruitment Message Elements

1. Opening
2. Statement of need
3. Statement of solution
4. Statement of level of knowledge needed
5. Statement of benefits
6. Contact point

Stress Expectations

- Be very clear and upfront about program's expectations

- What are you asking?
  - That they complete CERT Basic Training?
  - That they build a local team?
  - That they help coordinate the local CERT program?
  - That they participate in other non-disaster activities?

Draft Program Plan:

Identify Recruitment Options

#2 Orient Volunteers

- Provide information on National CERT Program

- Provide information about local CERT program

- Set standards

- Form relationship with new volunteer

- Determine volunteer assignment

Set Standards

- Volunteers should know the standards from beginning of their CERT membership
  - Acceptable participation in program
  - Maintaining active status
  - Standards of behavior
  - Following the team chain of command
  - Deferring to professional responders
  - Maintaining any equipment issued

Behavior is important!

- Volunteer behavior determines how program viewed by emergency responders, public officials, and community members
  - Negative incidents can bring down program

Perception of Volunteers

- Some officials concerned about volunteers working without supervision

- Team must be viewed as competent group of trained volunteers who:

  - Diligently follow directions from chain of command

  - Provide valuable support for professional response efforts

Form Relationship

- For volunteer to become official CERT volunteer

  – Volunteer completes membership application

  – Program Manager completes background check (may be optional)

  – Program Manager has CERT ID card made (if part of local program)

  – Program Manager adds volunteer's contact info to CERT member database

Determine Volunteer Task

- Member of CERT or other or both?

- Tell volunteers during orientation about other opportunities

- Talk with volunteers; find out special strengths that might serve program

- Include question on volunteer application about skills that might be useful to program

- Race, national origin, or birthplace

- Marital status

- Religious affiliation

- Credit card or home ownership

- Age, height, or weight

- Pregnancy or childcare arrangements

- Arrest record (criminal background checks are permissible)

- Discharge from military service

- Length of residency in the community

- Health (with exception)

PM 4-13

Make Orientation Fun

Keep Volunteer Information

- What information is important to maintain on a volunteer?
    - Contact information
    - Date of graduation from *CERT Basic Training*
    - Active/non-active status
    - Established role within team or program
    - Number of hours they have served
    - Training and exercises completed and dates
    - Equipment issued to them
    - Their abilities and specialties

PM 4-14

Why Track Volunteers?

- Why do you need to track this information?
  - To account for who is in program
  - To know whom to mobilize for special response
  - To know who has what skills and if current
  - To know where your equipment is and what to get back when someone leaves
  - To know how to contact family of volunteer if there is an emergency
  - To be able to justify your program

- CERT members are valuable community asset

- Trained CERT members perform tasks that would otherwise need to be performed by paid employee

- CERT members can:

  - Save jurisdiction thousands of dollars
  - Enhance other programs at little or no cost

#4 Manage Volunteers

- Tasks similar to managing paid staff
  - Train
  - Assign
  - Monitor
  - Evaluate

- Program Manager may share these responsibilities with team leader

Maintain Program Integrity

- Why do volunteers need to be managed?
    - To make sure CERT program is accountable
    - To make sure standards are met
    - To keep strong group of volunteers

- Managing volunteers is different from managing staff
    - Volunteers can leave without warning
    - One or more unhappy volunteers can be quite damaging

- Program Manager tasks
  - Keep volunteers happy about being part of CERT program
  - Sustain their commitment, their skills as individuals, and their capabilities as a team
- It takes time!

PM 4-17

Managing a CERT Event

#5 Retain Volunteers

- To retain volunteers you have to understand:
  - What volunteers need
  - How to meet those needs
- Volunteers are crucial to program's existence
- Keeping them involved and pleased with their participation is essential!

Why Volunteer?

- Why do people volunteer?
  - To serve
  - To help
  - To learn
  - To belong

- What needs do volunteers have once they are with CERT? Might be emotional, physical, or intellectual
  - To be respected
  - To feel capable
  - To feel needed
  - To not be asked to do more than they can
  - To feel attended to
  - To be appreciated

To Keep Volunteers

- Provide training and exercises

- Ask them to help

- Recognize volunteers

- Match assignment to abilities and interests

- Provide resources that volunteers need to do their assigned tasks

- Pass on feedback that program receives about impact of volunteers' work

- Have fun!

Volunteer Recognition

Meetings

- Use volunteer meetings
  - Training
  - Recognition
  - Socializing

Draft Program Plan:

Capture Retention Ideas

Terminating a Volunteer

1. When all other measures have failed

2. For gross misconduct:
   – Theft
   – Abuse
   – Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol

Guidelines

- Document your concerns and your actions
- Make sure comments are fair
- Focus on work, not on individual
- Follow program protocols for disciplinary procedures

Unit Summary

- The Program Manager and the CERT Volunteer

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- Orient Volunteers

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- Manage Volunteers

- Retain Volunteers

- Terminate a Volunteer