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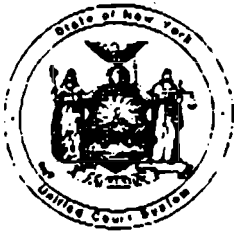
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Criminal Court
of the
City of New York



ROBERT G. M. KEATING
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

Rana
Just in case you
haven't seen this. *RL*
100 CENTRE STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10013

March 18, 1993

To: Herb Sturz

From: Robert G.M. Keating *RL*

Re.: The National Volunteer Corps and the Courts

Among the functions that volunteers might perform in most urban court systems are the following:

1) Traditional cadet type internships for college graduates (e.g. court officers, probation officers, correction officers, etc.)

The obvious problem in utilizing volunteers in these occupations is their strong union memberships. Additional temporary jobs, filled by other than civil service employees would be perceived as competition rather than help.

On the plus side of this proposal is the fact that minorities are represented in these job categories in large numbers. They might represent positive role models to graduates from inner cities who might not otherwise be interested in these career paths. Also, the addition of more and better educated personnel would clearly be of substantial help in elevating the capacity and performance level of this work force.

2) Prosecution and Defense Services.

Given the tremendous number of cases which enter our criminal courts each year, there are a number of functions which are not now being done that a volunteer corps might perform and which would increase the quality of justice for both defendants and citizens who are witnesses. Volunteers would certainly be helpful in locating witnesses and preparing them for trial. They

also might be used to identify and fill the social service needs of both defendants and volunteers which surface during the course of a criminal proceeding (e.g. housing, health, education).

3) Perhaps the most fertile fields for volunteers may be the creation and staffing of alternative sentencing projects and even alternative tribunals. (community courts, lay judge courts for non-criminal offenses and mediation).

In the area of sentencing and drug treatment there is no doubt that any court of criminal jurisdiction could utilize almost endless numbers of volunteers. They could be used to assess a defendants needs, match his needs with existing programs and actually staff the programs themselves.

Some other obvious programs which would have broad positive benefits for the local community would involve volunteers in supervising defendants who would care for the homeless, clean and paint public facilities and expand our stumbling recycling initiatives. The use of volunteers in drug treatment centers and public health facilities which treat and test defendants with the H.I.V. virus or tuberculosis, would also be a tremendous benefit to society as well as to those defendants who cannot avail themselves of these resources at the present time.

RGMK:dd

National Service at the Community Court

Providing Information

- Defendants, their family members and the public need information about the court system, court procedures, the status of individual cases, the meaning of dispositions, etc.

A national service volunteer could staff the court information booth, providing information about the community court and helping the public use the computer terminal.

- Some defendants will need explanations of court procedures and dispositions after their court appearance.

A national service volunteer could help defendants understand case outcomes, the supportive services that are unique to the court, and their obligations.

- Court project staff need to provide information to the Times Square community about the court's progress -- success stories, community service accomplishments, crime patterns, etc.

National service volunteers could design and produce a monthly Community Court Newsletter and promote broad distribution in the target area.

Supervising Work Crews

- Some community service crews will require additional supervisors.

National service volunteers could supervise crews of young offenders involved in community greening projects, graffiti clean-up, and projects at local senior citizen centers.

Assessing Community Conditions

- Court administrators will require an on-going stream of information about disorderly neighborhood conditions not only to determine where community service crews should be assigned but also to assess the impact of community service crews in particular locations.

National service volunteers could collect and tally information about what

locations are disorderly and unsightly, where drug dealers and users hang out, and other quality-of-life problems. A group of volunteers could be trained to apply systematic methods, like those used by the City's Operation Scorecard, to assess changes in the numbers of prostitutes, panhandlers and disorderly youth in local "hot spots".

- Both court administrators and the court evaluation team will require on-going information about community perceptions -- what neighborhood problems are seen as most important, how aware community residents are of the court's existence and purpose, the actual "visibility" of community service.

National service volunteers could help design and administer on-going telephone surveys of community residents and help evaluators process and analyze survey data.

Providing Links to Available Services

- Some defendants may need help in gaining access to services that they learned about through the court -- e.g., medicaid, immigration services, substance abuse treatment.

National service volunteers could serve as "ombudsmen", helping to link clients to various services, accompanying them to intake, and advocating on their behalf with program staff.

- Court staff would benefit from regular information about defendants' use of voluntary services.

National service volunteers could visit service programs linked to the court to gather follow-up information about the nature and extent of defendants' use of services, to encourage and support participating defendants and to serve as a liaison between the court and program staff.

Supporting Court Staff

- Defense attorneys, prosecutors and even judges often have insufficient clerical support in the routine administration of their jobs.

National service volunteers could serve as clerks for the legal staff of the court to obtain information about victims, interview family members of the defendant for defense attorneys and help prepare court documents.