

806

An Analysis of Student Achievement
Through a Volunteer Program:
An Evaluation Research Report of the
Visa Project

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Highlights and Summation

Section I

How Has The VISA Program's Effectiveness Changed From
Its First Program Year To The Second?
by Franklin D. Reinow

Section II

How Effective Are Volunteers In Dealing With The VISA
Child's Problems As Defined At Referral?
by G. Ronald Gilbert

Section III

What Did The Role Set Report About The Program Or
Children Via Their Open Ended Responses?
by Franklin D. Reinow

Section IV

Is VISA Diverting Youth From The Juvenile Justice System?
by Franklin D. Reinow

Section V

Participating Principals' Perceptions Of VISA And
Recommendations For Change.
by G. Ronald Gilbert

Section VI

VISA Volunteers: What Do They Do?
by Genevieve W. Carter

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Research Institute in Social Welfare, University of Southern California, is pleased to present this evaluation report on behalf of the VISA Project. The Institute, now in its fifth year, is supported in part by a grant under Section 1110 of the Social Security Act. The research focus of this Institute is service organization and delivery in fields to include public welfare, manpower, justice administration and voluntary service.

One of its most challenging activities has been its involvement in the evaluation of youth diversion demonstration projects funded by the California Criminal Justice Planning Council and administered by the Orange County Probation Department. This has been a formidable task, requiring the development of innovative evaluation research designs having the flexibility to adapt as changing project requirements dictate, as well as having the stability to measure project impact even though the project itself is undergoing continuous redirection due to its experimental nature.

The Institute has been associated with the VISA Project for 30 months. The evaluation process has included considerably more than that which is reflected in this summary report. The Institute's Project Director for this evaluation

2.

effort has maintained ongoing field contact with VISA personnel. Through his and other Institute staff efforts, continuous assessments and feedback have been provided those involved in planning and controlling the VISA Project. Since joining the Institute staff in September, 1973, Dr. Franklin Reinow aided in the final phases of the data collection, analysis and reporting of our research efforts. Both the Principal Investigator and the Project Director have worked with the VISA Project since its inception sharing responsibility for the research design. Credit is due to Ms. Barbara Levinson who undertook the task of developing the research instruments used to query the teachers, parents, principals and volunteers who work with the participating VISA children. She also supervised the data collection, coding, and computer analysis activities and prepared for presentation the descriptive statistics used in this study.

In this report, six separate evaluation perspectives are provided. Dr. Franklin Reinow analyzes the difference in program effectiveness as measured by the Institute in June, 1972 and June, 1973. In a second study, he provides a content analysis of the written, open-ended comments about the Project. His third assessment deals with diversion as measured by police contacts and the like. The Principal Investigator provides a functional job analysis of worker and volunteer activities. The Project Director provides further

3.

elaboration of the effectiveness of VISA from the standpoint of observed behavioral change of the children from their initial referral until the June, 1973 assessment. Additionally, he reports his interview findings which were conducted with the school principals participating with VISA--their opinions and recommendations for program improvement.

Evaluation has played an integral part in the overall management of VISA. VISA staff has encouraged negative feedback from the evaluation team on an ongoing basis and has continuously sought constructive adaptations when such were indicated. The evaluation findings in this study suggest the program is highly successful in helping youth exhibiting social, emotional and/or psychological problems improve their behavior through the use of community volunteers.

Ms. Margaret C. Grier; Ms. Betty M. Delaney; and Mr. Jim Husset, VISA Project Supervisor, have provided the direction necessary to create an effective program. Other VISA staff who have aided in the overall evaluation process include Mr. Toby Dickinson, Mr. Bren de Boer and Ms. Jean Herbert. Ms. Helen Kocaka and Ms. Janet Shellenberger of the VISA Project provided Institute staff excellent clerical support throughout the evaluation process. Special tribute is extended to Ms. Pat McAdams, Administrative Volunteer of the VISA Project, who spent many of her volunteer hours with the evaluation team reviewing tentative findings

and seeking means through which program changes could be initiated when the findings so indicated.

In summary, the findings suggest that VISA appears to be well on its way in demonstrating that volunteers can offer a valued community resource for youth programs as direct service workers and, equally important, as administrative volunteers. A continuing commitment and enthusiasm of the VISA volunteers have made our evaluation task more enjoyable.

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HIGHLIGHTS AND SUMMATION

In this study, VISA is evaluated from six separate perspectives. The findings suggest the project has demonstrated that volunteers, when provided professional guidance and other means of administrative support, are effective in helping elementary-aged children who have social, emotional, and/or academic problems. Representatives from police and school agencies indicate the project contributes toward diverting youth from the juvenile justice system.

The study findings indicate that children who were developing negative labels are being assisted through VISA to gain more positive labels. Those adults who are "significant others" to the VISA children report the child to have a more "successful" image following VISA referral and intervention. This might be the most important contribution to the youths that VISA has made. For if VISA has helped those most significant or influential to a child to view the child more positively, the child may also gain a more positive image of himself and act accordingly.

The project is currently in its final funding year. The findings reported in this study should be of assistance to policy planners who will be confronted with the issue of

2.

whether to continue on with the VISA concept and expand its purpose or to permit the project and the kind of assistance provided VISA children to terminate. It is our belief that the VISA staff should make every effort in the remainder of the project year to document their program design and avail themselves to key policy planners in the community so that the decision to continue or discontinue the volunteer services to children will be as rationally based as possible.

Highlights of Each of the Six Studies

I. How Has The VISA Program's Effectiveness Changed From Its First Program Year To The Second?
by Franklin D. Reinow, Ph.D.

The findings from a review of 51 children in 1972 and 105 children in 1973 reveal:

- In most cases the principals, teachers, parents and volunteers believe the VISA volunteer has directly helped the VISA child.
- The children are viewed as having experienced "improvement" in "Relationships with Peers" (76 percent), "School Attitude and Achievement" (79 percent), "Behavior in School" (85 percent) and "Parent-child Relationships" (57 percent).

3.

- In general, the parents, teachers, principals, and volunteers are more enthused about the effects the program is having upon the children in 1973 than they were in 1972.

II. How Effective Are Volunteers In Dealing With The VISA Child's Problems As Defined At Referral?
by G. Ronald Gilbert, Ph.D.

The study findings reveal:

- The problems for which children are referred to the program vary with 37 percent having serious problems in their relationships with other children, their school attitude, their general behavior and in their relationships at home.
- The most common reason for referral (89 percent) is their school attitude and achievement. While their relationship at home is the least common reason for referral (53 percent).
- When analyzed, the data reveals 88 percent of the children were observed by the majority of their teachers, principals, volunteers and parents to have experienced improved behavior in the categories for which they were originally referred to the program.

III. What Did The Role Set Report About The Program Or Children Via Their Open Ended Responses?
by Franklin D. Reinow, Ph.D.

A content analysis of the open ended responses of the parents, principals, teachers and volunteers (the role set members) indicates:

- The volunteer is viewed to be a "friend" to the VISA child more so than a professional counselor or other type of change agent.
- Communications between the volunteers and VISA program staff and the schools is a central concern to the principals, teachers, and parents.

IV. Is VISA Diverting Youth From The Juvenile Justice System?
by Franklin D. Reinow, Ph.D.

A review of police records and other social measures show:

- Police contacts with elementary-aged youths in the VISA target areas decreased by 35 percent from 1972 to 1973.
- Police arrests of juveniles decreased from 116 in April, 1972 to 43 in April, 1973.

V. Participating Principals' Perceptions Of VISA And Recommendations For Change.
by G. Ronald Gilbert, Ph.D.

Interviews with 14 principals in the Placentia Unified School District and recommendations are summarized as follows:

- All principals indicated the project was needed and is a valuable asset to the schools in working with problem children.
- "Communications" was most commonly identified as the area in greatest need of improvement on the part of VISA.
- VISA could function better if it were a "school program."
- Recommendations provided VISA staff by Institute personnel revealed the VISA staff to be accepting of "negative feedback" and able to effect positive change when indicated.

6.

VI. VISA Volunteers: What Do They Do?
by Genevieve W. Carter, Ed.D.

In this study, tasks, performance standards, and training content are summarized for administrative volunteers and service volunteers.

Section I

HOW HAS THE VISA PROGRAM'S EFFECTIVENESS
CHANGED FROM ITS FIRST PROGRAM
YEAR TO THE SECOND?

by

Franklin D. Reinow

INTRODUCTION

An important aspect of project evaluation is the assessment of program effectiveness. This element is even more significant in evaluating demonstration projects in that they are continually making adjustments in order to improve their services to the communities which they serve. At the time of this writing, the VISA project has been in the process of demonstration for two and a half years. It is our intent in this section of the evaluation study to assess the project over its first two years, denoting changes in the level of effectiveness when appropriate.

THE EVALUATION DESIGN

The present study is based largely upon data collected during the months of June through August, 1972 and 1973. A set of four interrelated questionnaires were initially developed during the months of May and June, 1972, and administered to all parents, principals, teachers and volunteers of VISA children, defining the "role set" for each particular child. The questionnaires were constructed to gain information about the children's progress during their participation in VISA and information concerning the perceptions toward and opinions about the program. Each member of the "role set" was

2.

independently asked to comment about specific behavioral areas by responding to both openended questions and attitudinal scales of the questionnaire instrument:

1. The child's degree of progress or lack thereof.
2. The specific behavioral changes observed by each member of the "role set."
3. The degree to which VISA was responsible for such changes.
4. The shortcomings of the VISA program.

The responses of the role set members (teachers, parents, principals, volunteers) were tabulated and the aggregate scores reported in the 1972 sample are compared with those reported in the 1973 sample. The differences noted between the two scores is believed to be indicative of the degree to which the program is either more effective or less effective than during its first year (1972).

THE LIMITATIONS OF ANALYSIS

In implementing the evaluation research design outlined above, two problems surfaced which were considered to limit the data analysis. First, the questionnaires utilized during the summer of 1972 and 1973 were not totally compatible in that revisions were made in order to improve upon the ability of the evaluation team to analyze the data and provide support to the VISA program staff. As a result, some of the questions remained unmatched, prohibiting a complete data

3.

analysis of the two instruments. Professional judgment by Institute staff was required in order to collapse the scales used in questionnaires during both the 1972 and the 1973 sample studies. This was necessary in order to identify behavioral change as either "improved" or "no improvement." In cases where the scales included options such as "no help, child worse," "no help, no difference," "some help" and "a lot of help," "improvement" was identified when help was indicated by the majority of the role set members. The scales used to assess the teachers' attitudes were more complex. The method by which "improvement" or "no improvement" was identified entailed comparing each teacher's rating in June with those which he or she originally made upon referral of the child to the VISA program. If the teacher's response showed no positive difference, then "no improvement" was indicated. On the other hand, if positive behavioral change was revealed through such comparisons, then "improvement" was adjudged to have resulted.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The Study Sample

At the time of the first study in the summer of 1972, (subsequently referred to as Y1) a total of 61 children were actively participating in the VISA program, of which 51 comprised the study sample. In the summer of 1973,

4.

(subsequently referred to as Y2) 127 children were actively participating in the program, of which 105 comprised the study sample. It should be noted that active participation more than doubled from Y1 to Y2. At Y1, 100 percent of the questionnaires were returned by both teachers and principals, 98 percent by the volunteers, and 86 percent by parents. In those instances wherein participating families did not speak English, the questionnaire was administered in their native language through oral interview. At Y2, 100 percent of the questionnaires were returned by the principals, 93 percent by teachers, 72 percent by volunteers, and 51 percent by parents.

As an overall judgment of VISA impact, the members of the role set at Y1 were asked to estimate the percentage of children who they consider to have been directly helped by the VISA program (Figure I). The principals and parents indicated that in 90 percent of the cases the VISA program was directly responsible for helping the child, while the teachers estimated that 72 percent were directly helped by the program.* Conversely, principals and parents estimated that ten percent of the VISA children were not directly helped by the program. At Y2, the principals, parents, and volunteers estimated that

* The volunteers were not asked this question at Y1.

Figure I

HAS THE VISA VOLUNTEER PROGRAM DIRECTLY HELPED THE CHILD?

	Y1				Y2				Y1 - Y2	
	Help		No Help		Help		No Help		Help	No Help
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%	%
Principals	38	90	4	10	65	81	15	19	-9	+9
Teachers	26	72	10	28	52	68	24	32	-4	+4
Parents	37	90	4	10	36	82	8	18	-8	+8
Volunteers					53	83	11	17		

between 81 to 83 percent of the children were directly helped by VISA (see Figure I). Teachers were generally more skeptical about the impact of the program as they estimated that in only 68 percent of the cases was VISA directly responsible for help. This estimate at Y2 was the lowest among the role set members as was the case at Y1. By reference to Figure I, it may be inferred from the third set of figures (Y1 - Y2) that the VISA program, according to the perceptions of the role set, was not able to directly help as many children at Y2 as at Y1.

A second judgment of overall VISA impact concerns the child's progress. In both studies respondents were asked to indicate whether the child had progressed since he became a part of the VISA program (see Figure II). At Y1, 88 percent of the principals believed that the children had exhibited improvement, while the volunteers (84 percent) and parents (81 percent) followed closely behind in their judgments. The teachers, however, were not as optimistic as they rated a greater number of children as showing no improvement than did any of the others questioned. At Y2, the role set members indicated that fewer students were improving as demonstrated by the slightly increased responses in the "no improvement" category by all role set positions. The teachers reported the lowest percent of improvement in Y2 (64 percent) while the principals reported the highest (83 percent).

Figure II

WHAT PROGRESS HAS THE CHILD MADE SINCE HE BECAME PART OF THE VISA PROGRAM?

	Y1				Y2				Y1 - Y2	
	Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.	No Improve.
	#	%	#	%	#	#	#	%	%	%
Principals	37	88	5	12	68	83	14	17	-5	+5
Teachers	24	69	12	31	51	64	28	36	-5	+5
Parents	34	81	8	19	32	73	12	27	-8	+8
Volunteers	36	84	7	16	55	80	14	20	-4	+4

Persistent Disruptive Behavior

More specifically, the two studies explored several areas involving the VISA child's psychological, social, and emotional behavior through observations of the role set. The first of these was the child's observed disruptive behavior. At Y1, respondents were asked to indicate whether the VISA child exhibited persistent disruptive behavior and, if so, whether the child's observed behavior was improving. The principals indicated the greatest degree of observed improvement (82 percent), while volunteers (72 percent), parents (68 percent) and teachers (51 percent) followed in that order. Only about one-half of the teachers rated the children as demonstrating improvement, the least of any role set position. Comparative data is unavailable at Y2, as the respondents were queried as to specific observed behavioral changes in the VISA children rather than the more generalized approach taken at Y1. The data indicates, however, a strong sense of agreement among teachers, parents, volunteers, and principals that positive behavioral changes were observed among the VISA children.

Peer Relationships

In dealing with peer relationships, the respondents at Y1 indicated that many VISA children have improved their ability to relate to other children (see Figure III). The

Figure III

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHILDREN

	Y1				Y2				Y1 - Y2	
	Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.	No Improve.
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%	%
Principals	23	66	12	34	39	75	13	25	+9	-9
Teachers	22	52	20	48						
Parents	24	80	6	20	16	76	5	24	-4	+4
Volunteers	19	90	2	10	17	77	5	23	-13	+13

volunteers indicated 90 percent of the children "improved" while the parents rated 80 percent, the principals 66 percent, and the teachers only 52 percent. This data notes a significant difference of opinion in terms of those who see the child primarily in the home or neighborhood environment and those who see the child in an institutional setting. The respondents at Y2 were generally not as enthusiastic in their observations regarding improved peer relationships of VISA children although the principals indicated increased improvement (75 percent as the adjusted ratio) while the remaining role set members were not as positive in their observations (see Figure III).

School Attitude and Behavior

Respondents were asked to assess the children's attitude toward school and achievement (see Figure IV). At Y1, the volunteers tended to rate more children as more improved (78 percent) than not (22 percent), while the teachers were less likely to rate the children as improved (40 percent). Principals and parents were closest in their judgments concerning school attitude and achievement as the ratio between improvement/no improvement was approximately three to one. At Y2, the respondents were generally more enthusiastic about the child's school attitude and achievement as all role set positions indicated improvement at least

Figure IV

SCHOOL ATTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT

	Y1				Y2				Y1 - Y2	
	Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.	No Improve.
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%	%
Principals	21	62	13	38	45	80	11	78	+18	-18
Teacher.	17	40	25	60						
Parents	20	67	10	33	22	76	7	30	+9	-9
Volunteers	21	78	6	22	37	80	9	43	+2	-2

76 percent of the time (see Figure IV). The greatest magnitude of change from Y1 to Y2 was among the principals who reported an 18 percent increase in improvement.

Behavior in School

When asked about the youths' behavior in school at Y1, the volunteers (74 percent), principals (71 percent), and parents (68 percent) viewed the children as having improved more than not (see Figure V). The teachers' ratings indicated more children had not improved (52 percent) than improved, although the ratio was nearly one to one. At Y2, the members of the role set generally viewed the children as having improved, although the magnitude of improvement varied significantly in dealing with the raw data. As presented in Figure V, the volunteers did not observe improvement (34 percent) as often as did the other members of the role set, although the adjusted percentage indicates a significant level of observed improvement.* It is apparent, however, that based on the data presented in Figure V, VISA children are showing a marked improvement in school behavior.

* The redistribution of percentages based on the collapsed categories has a decided impact upon the ratio of improvement versus no improvement.

Figure V

BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL

	Y1				Y2				Y1 - Y2	
	Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.	No Improve.
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%	%
Principals	25	71	10	29	35	81	8	19	+10	-10
Teachers	20	48	22	52						
Parents	24	68	11	32	22	88	3	12	+20	-20
Volunteers	23	74	8	26	20	87	3	13	+13	-13

Parent-Child Relationship

It was the parents' perception at Y1 that the VISA children had shown improvement (76 percent) in their ability to get along with their parents at home (see Figure VI). This observation was supported by the volunteers (64 percent), the majority of whom interact with the child in his home environment. School principals and teachers were more guarded in their observation (40 percent and 44 percent respectively); it should be readily apparent that their contacts with VISA children are not normally conducted in the home, and as a result their responses may not define the child's familial relationships. Approximately the same observations were made by the parents (70 percent) and volunteers (57 percent) at Y2 as those which were reported at Y1 (see Figure VI). The raw data indicates that the majority of principals was unable to say whether an improvement had been made in the parent-child relationship (82 percent). The percentages presented in Figure VI suggest that the respondents at Y2 were more cautious in their observations concerning improvement in the parent-child relationship.

Although discrete statistics were unavailable at both Y1 and Y2, it was noted that certain VISA services or activities were considered helpful to the child. In each instance, foremost among these was the volunteers' display of friendship and companionship for the child, an individual

Figure VI

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

	Y1				Y2				Y1 - Y2	
	Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.	No Improve.
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%	%
Principals	6	40	9	60	2	22	7	78	-18	+18
Teachers	12	44	15	56						
Parents	26	76	8	24	16	70	7	30	-6	+6
Volunteers	16	64	9	36	16	57	12	43	-7	+7

who would encourage more socially acceptable behavior, give him or her attention, and provide a "model of behavior." The volunteer's tutoring efforts were considered as significant, as was the child's participation in new and varied experiences.

DATA ANALYSIS

Figure VII provides an overview of the relationship between the behavioral categories explored in the previous section of the study and improvement versus no improvement responses. By reference to Figure VII it is apparent that the respondents at Y2 generally rated the child's progress higher than did the respondents at Y1. In three of the four behavioral categories utilized for analysis, improvement was observed by over 75 percent of the respondents yielding a four to one ratio of improvement versus no improvement. At Y1, the ratio between improvement and no improvement was approximately three to one, although the responses on school attitude and achievement were below this ratio. In the fourth behavioral category, parent-child relationship, there appears to be an insignificant change of two percent in the overall responses of the role set between Y1 and Y2; a percent shift occurred from Y1 to Y2 between the number of respondents who observed "improvement" (from 59 percent to 57 percent) and

Figure VII

TOTAL OF ALL RESPONSES BY CATEGORY

	Y1				Y2				Y1 - Y2	
	Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.		No Improve.		Improve.	No Improve.
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%	%
Relationship with peers	88	69	40	31	72	76	23	24	+7	-7
School attitude and achievement	79	59	54	41	104	79	27	21	+20	-20
Behavior in school	92	64	51	36	77	85	14	15	+21	-21
Parent-child relationship	60	59	41	41	34	57	26	43	-2	+2

"no improvement" (from 41 percent to 43 percent) (see Figure VII). As noted in the previous section of this study, the principal's responses to this behavioral category tended to skew the data in favor of "no improvement" due to the high frequency of "not able to say" responses.

The data presented in Figure VII indicates that at Y1 the greatest improvement in any one area was "relationship with peers," and the least improvement was indicated in the "parent-child relationship" category. At Y2 the behavioral category indicating the most improvement was the child's "behavior in school," while the least improvement was observed in the parent-child relationship category. The data also tends to indicate that the greatest changes from Y1 to Y2 occurred in the categories of "school attitude and achievement" and "behavior in school."

The philosophy of the project has also undergone a transition since its inception. As originally conceived, the VISA program was aimed at providing volunteer services to fourth, fifth and sixth grade elementary school students of the Placentia Unified School District. The target population for Y2 has expanded to include first grade through sixth grade. VISA has continued with some children into junior high school or intermediate school. In the project year 1971-1972, a total of 137 children were referred to the program, of which 123 actively participated. In the following year 1972-1973, a

total of 100 children were referred, while 88 students were carried over from the previous project year; a total of 169 children were actively participating in the program. These figures indicate a decrease in referrals; however, the intensity of interaction between volunteer and student and family has increased.

It was determined that at Y1, the volunteers, on the average, reported contacts of one visit per week with VISA children. At the same time it was learned that the degree of behavioral improvement was directly related to the amount of time the volunteer has spent with the child. Of 37 total volunteer responses, it was reported that 17 volunteers (46 percent) made contact with the VISA child on an average of two to three times per week, while the remaining 20 volunteers (54 percent) made contact approximately two to three times per month. It was found that in the former group of volunteers, 82 percent of the VISA children registered improvement, while in the latter group 75 percent of the children improved. In a similar study conducted at Y2, it was reported that of a total of 60 volunteer responses, 34 volunteers (54 percent) reported contact with VISA children on an average between one and three times per week, while 26 volunteers (46 percent) indicated contact of between one to three times per month. If we accept the data presented above at Y1 and its related percentages of improvement, and

we assume that an equally high level of service has been provided at Y2 based on the responses reported in Figure VII (indicating increasing improvement), we may state that the VISA program has increased its effectiveness from Y1 to Y2.

CONCLUSION

Based on the questionnaire studies conducted during the summers of 1972 and 1973, it may be concluded that the VISA program has increased its effectiveness in meeting the needs of the students and families of the Placentia Unified School District. Based on the data collected at these two time intervals, it can be shown that children participating in the VISA program have experienced behavioral changes both at school and at home as observed by parents, teachers, principals, and volunteers, and that VISA is directly helping them learn how to relate with others in a more socially appropriate manner. Of significance to VISA staff is the generally high level of improvement indicated by all role set positions across all behavioral categories in both studies, 1972 and 1973. Of more importance, however, is the increased enthusiasm indicated by parents, principals, teachers, and volunteers for the VISA program as demonstrated by the increasing frequency of respondents indicating behavioral improvement across all categories in the summer of 1973.

Section II

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE VOLUNTEERS IN DEALING WITH THE VISA CHILD'S PROBLEMS AS DEFINED AT REFERRAL?

by

G. Ronald Gilbert

INTRODUCTION

The major thrust of the VISA program is directed toward providing volunteer services to those youths between the ages of six and twelve years who are experiencing psychological, emotional and social adjustment problems. This section of the overall VISA evaluation study will examine the degree to which volunteers were able to help VISA children improve their functioning in the specific behavioral problems for which they were referred.

In previous studies of VISA, the Institute staff did not isolate the main problem areas which were manifest in the child's behavior at time of referral and then analyze the degree to which the child's behavior changed (improvement or no improvement). It is believed such additional analysis as this would be highly appropriate as the volunteers are selected and matched by the VISA staff on the basis of their willingness and adjudged ability to assist the child in overcoming the particular behavior anomalies for which he was referred.

If one assumes the volunteers effectively directed their efforts at enabling the child to resolve the particular problem for which he was referred to the program, then a positive change in his behavior in that area would be expected. In other words, while the VISA child's overall behavior has been perceived as

2.

generally improved, according to the findings reported in Section I of this report, it is important to determine if, and to what extent and direction, the dysfunctional behavior manifestations which led to referral to VISA have changed. Greater improvement in this specific area of behavior than that identified in other areas would suggest that the volunteer intervention has been effective.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

In attempting to generate data from which judgments could be made regarding behavioral changes of participating youths, a questionnaire survey was conducted in late spring, 1973. Four interrelated questionnaires were developed and administered to all the principals, parents, teachers, and volunteers working with the VISA children. The questionnaires were developed during the months of April and May, 1973, and administered during the latter part of May, 1973, prior to the end of the school year. The parent(s), teacher, principal and volunteer associated with each child (child's role set) were identified and independently queried about specific areas of the child's behavior in addition to his home and school situation.

Two general types of questions were utilized for this questionnaire--study; open ended type questions and attitudinal

3.

scales. On each question, the frequency and percent of responses to the alternatives listed were tabulated and analyzed. The following questions appeared in varying forms in each of the four questionnaires:

1. What kind of progress do you think this (VISA) child has made since he became part of the VISA program?
2. How much do you think the VISA volunteer program has directly helped the child?
3. Which of the following behavioral changes have been observed:
 - a. He feels better about himself.
 - b. He feels better about his parents.
 - c. He makes friends easier now.
 - d. He is happier with his friends now.
 - e. He finds it easier to go to school.
 - f. He feels better about his schoolwork.
 - g. He feels better about his teacher.
 - h. He finds it easier to stay out of trouble.
 - i. He is not basically angry or unhappy all the time.
4. In what areas has the (VISA) child improved?
 - a. Relationships with other children.
 - b. School attitude and achievement.
 - c. General and school behavior.
 - d. Home situation/parent-child relations.

The questionnaires were coded in order to insure confidentiality of responses; the same numbers given to the VISA child and his corresponding role set.

In this section of the overall VISA evaluation, analyses are made only about the observed behavioral changes of the respondents as they pertain to:

4.

1. Relationships with other children.
2. School attitude and achievement.
3. General and school behavior.
4. Home--parent and child relationships.

It was in these specific areas that judgments about the child were made at the time the child was referred to the program. Thus, baseline data was available for each child and could be used for comparison purposes with judgments made at a later date. Judgments made about children in these four behavioral categories serve as assessments of the VISA child prior to VISA treatment and after having had contact with VISA volunteer services.

For the purpose of analysis, the four general categories were based on the original referral forms and the four questionnaires given to each child's school principal, teacher, volunteer, and parent. They were as follows:

1. Relationship with other children.

Is the child aggressive or assaultive? Is he withdrawn and lonely? Is he suggestable and passive and easily led by deviant companions? Does he demonstrate an apparent disregard for the feelings of others? Does he show an inability to have fun?
2. School attitude and achievement.

Does he have an apparent lack of interest and motivation in regard to school? Is he unable to profit by praise

5.

or punishment? Is his school attendance problematic?
Is he not working at appropriate grade level in his
school work?

3. General behavior and school behavior.

Does he display persistently disruptive behavior in
school, such as restlessness, attention seeking behavior
or uncooperativeness? Is he easily frustrated, irrespon-
sible, lethargic, preoccupied, unsure, fearful, or shy?

4. Home--parent/child relationships.

Is there trouble in the parent/child relationship? Is
he neglected? Is his family situation disorganized? Is
his behavior at home problematic?

Since it was the purpose of this study to determine the
extent of behavioral change observed in VISA youths, the
initial population for the study consisted of all children who
participated in VISA since its inception in December, 1971.
The population included ongoing, "open cases" as well as those
terminated or "closed," where both youth and role set could be
located. The duration of participation by youths ranged from
less than three months to eighteen months. The final sample
of the study was 127 cases, of which 98 complete responses
were received by the evaluation team. Of this total, the
principals completed all questionnaires, while teachers
returned 93 percent, volunteers 72 percent, and parents
51 percent. The high rate of return from the elementary schools

6.

might in part be attributed to the fact that questionnaires
to the schools were hand carried by the evaluation staff and
their importance to the project was communicated to the
participating principals. It might also be indicative of the
schools' willingness to participate in VISA. A mailing
procedure was used for questionnaires to volunteers and
parents. Included with each questionnaire mailed to the
parents and volunteers was a stamped envelope addressed to the
Research Institute at the University of Southern California
in Los Angeles. Despite a systematic and personal telephone
follow-up technique applied to volunteers and parents, these
two groups had a high shrinkage rate, with 49 percent of the
parents failing to complete and return the questionnaire.
Three Spanish-speaking families were administered the
questionnaire by a Spanish-speaking interviewer. Approximately
five weeks were allowed between the initial mailout or delivery
of questionnaires and the final cut-off date when data analysis
was begun.

There were separate steps taken in the data analysis in
order to determine the degree to which each VISA child's
behavior changed since being referred to the program.
Step 1: Coding, compilation and labeling outcome of each child.

Questionnaire responses of each member of each child's
role set, that is his teacher, parent, volunteer and principal
were coded and compiled on a master form. From this master form,

judgments of the child's observed behavior change (pro or con) were then compared and contrasted.

Figure I below illustrates how the teachers' responses were coded for purposes of Step I compilation:

Figure I

Step I Coding

TEACHER'S ASSESSMENT OF CHILD #135'S
"RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHILDREN"

Type of Behavior	Performance Rating			
	Not a Problem	Moderate	Frequent	So Serious Child Needs Immediate Attention
Demonstrates inability to have fun.		(R) N		
Assaultive (verbally or physically).		(R) N		
Withdrawn (a loner).	(R) N			
Passive, suggestible.	(R) N			
Strong allegiance to selected peers.	N		(R)	
Callous, little concern for others.		N		(R)
Has bad companions.				(R) N

Legend: (R) = Teachers rating at time of referral.
N = Teachers rating now (June, 1973, following VISA intervention)

The teachers' ratings were analyzed by the Institute research team for purposes of identifying the child's outcome as shown in Figure II. In situations where there was a favorable difference between the teacher's rating at referral (R) to his/her rating in June, 1973 (N), the outcome would be coded as "improvement." Where no change was noted, or the child improved in some areas and regressed in others, then the outcome would be labeled as "no improvement."

Figure II below illustrates how the coded ratings were compiled for purposes of comparison among the "role set."

Figure II

Step I Compilation

CHILD #183'S "RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHILDREN"

Role Set Position	Outcome			
	No Improvement	Improvement	Not Able To Say	Not An Area Child Needs Help
Parent	X			
Teacher		X		
Principal		X		
Volunteer			X	

Given a matrix (Figure II) which indicates how the various role set members adjudged the child's outcome following VISA intervention, a panel of Institute staff determined to

what extent behavioral change was realized. If, as in the case illustrated in Figure II, a simple majority of the role set members indicated agreement in their observations of the child's behavior change, then the child would be rated as either "improvement" or "no improvement." On the other hand, if there appeared to be no simple majority, or, because only one respondent felt able to indicate improvement or no improvement, then the determination was considered "inconclusive" and was not used for purposes of analysis in this study.

Step 2: Identification of each child's primary behavioral problem at time of referral.

VISA staff reviewed their records and provided Institute staff their analysis of each child's primary problem at the time the child was referred to VISA. Some children were adjudged by VISA staff as having only one serious problem area while other children were viewed to be exhibiting serious problems in all four categories. VISA staff adjudged a child to have a serious problem when: (1) The teacher's referral indicated behavior on the part of the child to be occurring "frequently" or was "so serious, child needs immediate attention," and (2) Such was confirmed by personal knowledge of the child by VISA staff.

Step 3: Comparing children having similarly "serious problems" with outcome.

Children identified as having similar problem profiles at time of referral by VISA staff were grouped together and analyzed in terms of their outcomes--"improvement" or "no improvement." It will be recalled that outcome is related to Step 1 analysis while assignment of behavioral problem category is a result of analysis that occurred in Step 2. In Step 3 we brought the two sets of data together in order to compare the degree to which there was observed change among children identified as exhibiting serious behavioral problems upon referral to the VISA program. A review of Figure III sheds further light upon how the data were analyzed.

The example below is proffered for illustrative purposes only. However, from it we can identify how the overall group outcome was identified. Overall outcomes for each child were identified by a research panel. Improvement or no improvement was identified only when a simple majority existed. In cases where there was contradiction among the adjudged outcomes, such as with child #119, the case was dropped (Insufficient Evidence) for purposes of this analysis because the child's overall outcome was not known to the researchers.

Figure III

Step 3 AnalysisAGGREGATION OF CHILDREN WITH A LIKE SET OF
IDENTIFIED BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS AND
OBSERVED BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

Child Number	Outcome by Behavioral Problem Category			Overall Outcome
	(A) Relationship With Other Children	(B) School Atti- tude and Achievement	(C) Behavior-- School and General	
112	Improvement	Improvement	Improvement	Improvement
119	No Improvement	Insufficient Evidence	Improvement	Insufficient Evidence
136	Insufficient Evidence	Improvement	Improvement	Improvement
178	No Improvement	No Improvement	Insufficient Evidence	No Improvement
212	Improvement	No Improvement	Improvement	Improvement

STUDY FINDINGS

Among the original sample of 101 children, 100 children were identified as having at least one behavioral problem, as defined in this study, at the time of their referrals. Most children had been referred for more than one behavioral problem category. As is revealed in Figure IV below, about two-thirds of the children were referred to the program because they were perceived as exhibiting dysfunctional behavior in three or four

categories. About a third of the children were viewed to be behaving dysfunctionally in all areas investigated. Most children had, at time of referral, been identified as having unique problems requiring unique interventions on the part of the VISA volunteer and other members of the child's particular role set. Likewise, this data would indicate that while VISA works with many multi-problem children, most of the children are perceived to be rather problem free in some categories as well.

Figure IV

YOUTHS BY PARTICULAR PROBLEM AREA OR SET
OF PROBLEM AREAS IDENTIFIED AT REFERRAL

Problem Category*	Number	Percent
B	13	13
C	1	1
D	4	4
A,B	1	1
B,C	6	6
B,D	4	4
A,B,C	24	24
B,C,D	6	6
A,C,D	2	2
A,B,D	2	2
A,B,C,D	37	37
No Problems	1	1
	<u>101</u>	<u>100% (101%)</u>

*Code: A = Relationship with other children.
B = School attitude and achievement.
C = Behavior--school and general.
D = Home--parent/child relationship.

The VISA staff analysis based upon referral information and screening is summarized in Figure V below.

Figure V

YOUTHS BY SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREA AT TIME OF REFERRAL

Problem Area By Category	Number*	Percent
A-Relationship with other children	63	23
B-School attitude and achievement	89	32
C-Behavior--school and general	72	26
D-Home--parent/child relationship	<u>53</u>	<u>19</u>
	277*	100

* Number is larger than study sample size as most children (73 or 73%) were referred to VISA as exhibiting more than one major behavioral problem difficulty.

As is revealed in Figure V, no one behavioral category seems to stand out as the main reason children are referred to VISA. Rather, the "average" VISA child at time of referral was seen to have two or three behavioral problems which were believed to be serious. "School attendance and achievement" was most frequently identified (23 percent) while "Home--parent/child relationships" was least identified (19 percent).

In Figure VI, a comparison is made between improved behavior, as observed by the VISA childrens' role sets, and behavior which has not improved or possibly regressed. The totals reveal that 88 percent of the VISA children analyzed improved while 12 percent did not. The data reveals that even among the children exhibiting the greatest extent of dysfunctional behavior (A,B,C and D combined) over 80 percent were viewed to have generally improved in all areas. This data suggests VISA children are experiencing positive change. These changes are occurring among the specific behavioral categories for which the children originally were referred to VISA for volunteer assistance.

Figure VI

OUTCOME OF YOUTHS BY TYPES OF BEHAVIORAL
PROBLEMS AT TIME OF REFERRAL

Behavioral Problems At Time of Referral (Categories)*	Improvement		No Improvement		Number Inconclusive	Total #
	#	%	#	%	#	
1. B	7	100	0	0	6	13
2. C	1	100	0	0	0	1
3. D	0	0	0	0	4	4
4. A & B	1	100	0	0	0	1
5. B & C	2	100	0	0	4	6
6. B & D	0	0	1	100	3	4
7. A, B & C	8	89	1	11	15	24
8. B, C & D	1	100	0	0	5	6
9. A, C & D	1	100	0	0	1	2
10. A, B & D	1	100	0	0	1	2
11. A, B, C & D	<u>14</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>37</u>
TOTALS	36	88	5	12	59	100

- * A = Relationship with other children
 B = School attitude and achievement
 C = Behavior--school and general
 D = Home--parent/child relationship

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study we have attempted to measure the degree to which VISA children's behavior changed since referral and participation in VISA. Of particular interest here were changes observed by the children's role sets in areas of behavior for which the VISA volunteer was expected to provide assistance. As this study only analyzed the observed changes in the children's behavior which gave cause for the initial referral to VISA, it is more sensitive than other measurements undertaken thus far to assess the volunteer impact. While no direct cause/effect conclusions may be drawn due to the limitations of the study design, it appears that the volunteers are aiding the children. The evidence suggests they are helping the children overcome certain behavioral problems which their school teachers and others believe will otherwise detract from the children realizing their own potential and goals.

The data collected reveals that 88 percent of the children were reported by their role sets to have "improved" in the behavioral areas for which they were initially referred to VISA. This suggests the VISA program and its volunteers are yielding positive impacts upon the VISA children.

While it is to be understood that VISA is still in the "demonstration" phase, the results, as evidenced in this study, would tend to indicate it is well on its way toward contributing meaningful services to children who exhibit serious behavior problems in their schools. The data suggests the behavior of VISA children is improving to a greater extent in the areas for which the children were referred to VISA than in other areas of behavior for which they were assessed as well.

The extent to which the VISA volunteer has helped the children overcome some of their problems is not known. However, the volunteer along with the teacher, parent and principal have been enabled through the VISA program to enjoin their resources in a manner which resulted in positive outcome for 88 percent of the children. These findings are very promising. It appears the VISA program merits careful consideration by community institutions for its continuation following the demonstration phase. As support of this inference was provided in the VISA Program Assessment of August, 1973* where the majority of principals, teachers, parents and volunteers indicated VISA has demonstrated its value and should be continued.

* G. Ronald Gilbert, "VISA Program Assessment," Los Angeles, Regional Research Institute in Social Welfare, University of Southern California, August, 1973.

Section III

WHAT DID THE ROLE SET REPORT ABOUT THE
PROGRAM OR CHILDREN VIA THEIR
OPEN ENDED RESPONSES?

by

Franklin D. Reinow

In this section of the VISA program evaluation, it is our aim to further examine the openended, voluntary responses of principals, teachers, parents, and volunteers to the VISA evaluation questionnaire of summer, 1973. This will enable us to more fully characterize their perceptions and opinions toward VISA youth and the program in general. More specifically, it is our objective to compare and contrast these responses in order to assess differences in perceptions toward the overall program. This analysis can provide the VISA staff with useful data which can be used for the purposes of future program planning and development, as well as enable VISA to provide feedback to questionnaire respondents.

In attempting to assess the effectiveness of demonstration projects, the evaluator should be cognizant of the multiple perceptions, assumptions, and opinions held by the various individuals and groups who interact with the project. These groups and their representatives oftentimes have different program interests which may or may not be compatible with one another. As such, they may view a specific project in different ways, although their overall intentions may be strictly compatible. As an example, although the overriding aim of the VISA project is to assist elementary school age youth in meeting social, emotional, and psychological

2.

problems through the use of volunteer services, the specific interests of school principals as opposed to volunteers may be considerably different. Although the school principals are committed to serving the needs of the individual child, his sphere of concern must become more generalized to include more students due to the constraints of his position, while the volunteer is more apt to be interested in the one-to-one relationship developed with VISA youth. The differences in these perspectives may limit the effectiveness of a given demonstration effort unless the project staff is able to coordinate these groups and develop programs to fit the needs of each.

THE PRINCIPALS' RESPONSES TO VISA PROGRAM EVALUATION

In general, the elementary school principals indicated very favorable responses to both the assistance provided to VISA youth and to the effectiveness of the overall program. In approximately 65 percent of the responses, principals indicated that VISA children had exhibited behavioral and/or academic improvement. The most frequently described changes of the VISA youth were in the areas of improved attitude and motivation, academic skills, and the development of friendships with volunteers. Responses such as, "He considers his volunteer a friend...(who has provided him with) many new experiences," is representative of one of the positive

3.

changes initiated by the program. The remaining 35 percent of the respondents were either critical of the assistance provided by the VISA program or were unable to comment upon the child's progress due to: (1) A lack of information and (2) Could not attribute the change to VISA. The highest frequency of negative responses to this question revolved around attitude and motivation; "Attitude and motivation unchanged...lacks responsibility," were most common responses among this group.

In response to the question concerning those services or activities which have been most helpful to the child, approximately 50 percent of the principals indicated that the "friendship and counseling" activities provided by the volunteers were most helpful, while 17 percent of the respondents indicated either "tutoring" or "initiating new experiences" were most helpful to the child. The principals believe that additional child counseling (30 percent), psychological assistance (20 percent), parental counseling (20 percent), and tutoring services (20 percent) could benefit VISA children.

Respondents further indicated a need to increase the frequency and level of communication between the school and the VISA program. The principals were concerned about the feedback of information from the volunteer to the school as well as information exchange sessions with teachers, parents,

4.

volunteers and VISA staff for the purpose of increasing program awareness and active participation. "We need closer communication with the VISA agency and the school," was a common concern voiced by the principals. Since the completion of this evaluation in the summer, 1973, the VISA staff has increased its interface with the schools, resulting in improved communication.

THE TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO VISA PROGRAM EVALUATION

The teachers were not as enthusiastic about the VISA program as were the principals, as approximately 53 percent responded favorably to the research question concerning whether VISA did or did not help. In almost 30 percent of the responses, teachers indicated that they had either no knowledge of the child's progress or had no contact with the volunteer. Among the positive responses given by the teachers, the greatest frequency of response was centered around the child's better attitude about self and others, increased motivation and maturity, and personal responsibility. The teachers also indicated that the VISA child's academic skills were also improving, while several teachers considered the friendship and personal interest demonstrated by volunteers to be of help to the child.

As was the case in the principals responses, the teachers strongly believe, as stated above, that the development

5.

of friendships between the volunteer and the child (40 percent) was the most helpful VISA service/activity provided the child. Tutoring and extracurricular activities were less frequently mentioned by the teachers as being beneficial to the child (approximately 11 percent), as was the case with the principals. Additional services/activities to include extracurricular activities, tutoring, and child and parental counseling were considered beneficial for the VISA child. The tutoring and counseling services were likewise mentioned by the principals.

The problem of communication between VISA, home, and school was alluded to in approximately 67 percent of the responses involving suggested improvements in the overall VISA program. The teachers also noted (to a lesser degree) that the quantity and quality of volunteers should also be increased. Seventy (70) percent of the respondents indicated that they could personally increase two-way communication between the volunteer and themselves; "(to) meet more frequently to discuss the child and help each other in understanding him." This response complements the problem statement presented above. As reported earlier, the evaluation team's experience since the summer, 1973, indicates that the VISA staff has pressed for increased communication with the schools.

THE PARENTS' RESPONSES TO VISA PROGRAM EVALUATION

The parents of VISA children were generally supportive of the program. Sixty-seven (67) percent of the responses indicated that VISA had helped their child primarily in his school attitude and academic skills, and developing friendships and secondarily in his attitude toward self and others and extracurricular activities. Parents indicated that the program had not helped (24 percent) due primarily to the volunteer's inability to maintain an ongoing relationship with the child; they reported that volunteers either stopped seeing the child without letting the child know or broke promises to the child in over one-half of these cases.

As in the prior two instances, the volunteer's friendship and interest was noted as being the most helpful service/activity provided by VISA (40 percent). Tutoring and extracurricular activities were of next importance according to this group. It is interesting to note that approximately 25 percent of the respondents were unable to enumerate those services provided by VISA which were or were not helpful to their child; these parents noted an absence of any services performed by the project. Tutoring, child and family counseling, and additional activities were enumerated as other benefits which could benefit the VISA child.

The parents indicated that not enough has been done to increase communication with the VISA program and the schools. The program could thus be more helpful to the child, the school, and themselves if parents were better informed as to their child's progress. In enumerating the ways in which they could be of more help to the VISA program, parents were generally uncommunicative. A few respondents noted, however, that by giving support to the program and cooperating with the volunteer and VISA staff, the project would benefit.

THE VOLUNTEERS' RESPONSES TO VISA PROGRAM EVALUATION

The volunteers were more positive than other groups towards the VISA program, as 85 percent of the responses were favorable in assessing whether VISA has helped the child. Of the positive responses enumerated, approximately 40 percent of the volunteers observed that VISA children had exhibited better attitudes about themselves and others, more maturity and responsibility, and increased motivation. Volunteers were also very supportive of their development of friendships with VISA children as an overriding benefit of the program (38 percent). Approximately 20 percent of the respondents indicated that the child's academic skills had improved. Negative comments were much less frequent; however, the largest single response from volunteers was that they had not spent enough time with the child to have an effect.

8.

Respondents indicated that the development of friendships and personal interest in the child is the most helpful service provided by the project (40 percent). Almost 30 percent of the respondents indicated that extracurricular activities and new and varied experiences were most helpful to the child, while tutoring was mentioned in 22 percent of the responses. In reference to the additional services which could benefit the child, the volunteers felt that providing group activities for VISA children was most important (43 percent), while increased help with academic skills was also considered beneficial.

The volunteers indicated that further training in teaching reading and math skills, dealing with handicapped and gifted children, and counseling with parents were necessary in helping the VISA child. Psychological and psychiatric services and teaching/learning specialists were considered necessary as supportive resources for volunteers.

The volunteers recognized that increased interaction with the child would be beneficial, thus indicated that increasing their time commitment to the program and the child would be an important contribution for them to make to the VISA effort. Their concerns, as enumerated above, differ from those of the principals, teachers, and parents, as would be expected due to their roles in the program.

Section IV

IS VISA DIVERTING YOUTH FROM THE
JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM?

by

Franklin D. Reinow

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Research Institute in Social Welfare, University of Southern California, has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the VISA program during its first two years of demonstration. One of the primary objectives of the program is to reduce the number of juveniles between the ages of six and twelve years of age who enter the juvenile justice system, thereby assisting the child, his family, and the larger community in which he resides. It is thusly important for the project staff to determine the degree to which the VISA project has succeeded in diverting youth from the juvenile justice system. This segment of the VISA evaluation will provide an analysis of the diversion issue and will define, within stated limits, the degree of diversion which the project has succeeded in achieving during its first two years of demonstration.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In defining the degree of diversion which the VISA project has achieved from December 1, 1971 until October 31, 1973, it was our immediate task to establish an appropriate indicator of "diversion." In discussions with project staff and representatives of the Orange County Probation Department,

it was determined that the most accurate indicator of "diversion" would be the number of referrals made to VISA through its two years of demonstration. Normally, diversion can be assessed through program follow-up; due to the short duration of the program, this was considered inappropriate. This decision appeared to be the only realistic approach to defining the diversion question, in that the juvenile justice system seldom makes formal contacts with juveniles between the ages of six and twelve years, the target population for the VISA program. Most contacts are made informally, and are usually referred either to school authorities or to parents. However, it should be pointed out that the vast majority of juveniles who do enter the juvenile justice or other service systems normally exhibit social, emotional, and/or learning problems prior to entrance into the system. Thus, there is a likelihood that behavior, which is perceived by their schoolteacher as dysfunctional, could lead to formalized contact in the future. We cannot be certain that all cases of juvenile maladjusted behavior will result in contact with the juvenile justice, mental health or other service systems. Our perceptions seem to indicate, however, that younger juveniles exhibit problems that require an immediate response, rather than postponing it until formal contact is made with a service system. The program neither attempts to predict typologies of youths who would enter the

3.

juvenile justice system nor generates the characteristics of success in dealing with youths in a volunteer program.

Rather, program resources are expended for prevention purposes, and, as a result, aims to divert youth from the juvenile justice system.

The research problem can be further divided into the following components: (1) To identify the number of youths between the ages of six and twelve years who were referred to VISA from the Placentia Unified School District, parents who reside within the Placentia Unified School District boundary, and other agencies; (2) To identify the number of youths referred to VISA who would have been referred to the juvenile justice system had not the VISA program been in operation; and (3) To compare the number of youths of target age referred to the Placentia Police Department with similar referrals to the Fullerton Police Department and Brea Police Department over a two-year period in order to (a) identify trends in police contact with youths within the target age group and (b) examine the possible impact of VISA upon the rate of diversion.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study is based largely upon available data collected over the two-year period of demonstration supplied by the VISA project staff, Placentia

4.

Unified School District, and the police departments of Placentia, Fullerton, and Brea. In addition, interviews were held with members of each of the forenamed organizations as well as with selected school principals in Placentia, Fullerton and Yorba Linda School Districts, in order to inquire about their perceptions of the VISA program.

More specifically, the research methodology of the study attempted to define the degree to which the VISA program diverted youth from the juvenile justice system by examining the juvenile crime statistics of the Placentia Police Department and those of the adjacent jurisdictions of Fullerton and Brea. This was done in order to determine whether VISA, serving the Placentia Unified School District, was having an impact on the number of youths between the ages of six and twelve years who make formal contacts with their local police departments. The second stage of the study methodology centered on interviews conducted with personnel from police departments (juvenile division) and school districts, for the purpose of: (1) Defining whether a volunteer effort such as that organized by VISA can have an impact on diversion, and (2) Estimating the number of juvenile referrals which school district personnel believe to be in critical need of assistance. The last phase of the study methodology concerns itself with a normative assessment of the impact of volunteer programs upon diversion vs. prevention.

As outlined above, the study methodology has limitations. First and foremost among these was the difficulty in securing available, relevant data to answer the questions posed. For the purposes of the present study, comparative data was chiefly drawn from local police department records, as reported to the Orange County Sheriff's Department, Central Juvenile Index. It was originally planned to collect the data directly from police department records. However, it was determined by the evaluation team that such information is not usually tabulated in terms of age differentials and as such the task of gathering the necessary data directly from records would have required an excessive allocation of time and effort on the part of the research team. As an alternative procedure, the Central Juvenile Index was utilized to assess the magnitude of juvenile arrests between the ages of six and twelve years. It is recognized that there may be some inherent weaknesses in these measures: (1) The police agencies of Orange County participate in this service voluntarily, and as such not all agencies furnish information for tabulation every month; (2) The criteria for reporting juvenile contacts to the Index are not uniform, severely limiting the ability to analyze the data; and (3) The tabulation of information per month does not coincide with the calendar month, making comparisons difficult between various years and/or months.

Second, the problem of jurisdictional boundaries complicates data analysis. The Placentia Unified School District extends into the cities of Fullerton, Brea, Yorba Linda, and Anaheim, and county territory in addition to encompassing the City of Placentia. Thus, in attempting to examine the magnitude of contacts between youths six to twelve years of age residing within the school district and local police agencies, Fullerton, Brea (to include Yorba Linda) and Anaheim Police Departments were also planned for inclusion because their jurisdictions overlap the school district boundary. Due to the difficulty of identifying contacts with these adjacent agencies, it was decided to utilize statistics from the Placentia Police Department in order to examine the impact of VISA upon diversion from the juvenile justice system. Approximately 75 percent of the youth in the school district reside in Placentia and are thus under the jurisdiction of the Placentia Police Department.

Last, the data presented in this study may not reflect the actual magnitude of police contacts with juveniles. As stated earlier, police agencies seldom have formal contacts with younger juveniles. In those cases where contact is made, the local police agency often disposes of it "in-house" rather than reporting the incident to the Central Juvenile Index, resulting in further action.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The findings to be presented in this section of the study are the result of an examination of reports furnished by the VISA project staff, the Orange County Sheriff's Department, and the police departments of Placentia, Fullerton and Brea. Although the data is incomplete, the findings tend to indicate that VISA has had a significant impact upon diversion from the juvenile justice system. For the purposes of this study, data has been drawn from calendar years 1972 and 1973 to reflect the two years of the VISA project.

According to figures supplied by the Placentia Police Department, youths between the ages of six to twelve years comprise a rather small part of the juvenile population contacted by the department. As an example, in calendar year 1972, total juvenile contacts amounted to 1082, of which 107, or nine percent were between the ages of six and twelve years of age. These statistics are compatible with those of 1973; of a total of 709 contacts reported in 1973 through October 31, 61 youth or eight percent were between the ages of six and twelve years of age. Thus, over the 22 months duration of the VISA project, a total of 1791 youths were contacted by the Placentia Police Department, of which 168 youths, or nine percent were between the ages of six and twelve years. A comparison between the figures for the first

demonstration year and the ten months of the second demonstration year indicate a reduction in both overall juvenile contacts as well as those of our target population. Over the first ten months of calendar year 1972, a total of 920 youths had contacts with the police department, of which 95, or approximately ten percent were within the ages of our target population. As reported above, during the first ten months of 1973, 709 youths were contacted by the police department, of which 61 were between six and twelve years of age. These figures represent an overall reduction of 211 contacts over the first ten months of 1972 and 1973, or a 22 percent reduction among all youth. Even a more significant reduction is apparent in examining such changes in our target population, as a 35 percent decrease was realized over the first ten months from 1972 and 1973. It is projected by the Placentia Police Department that the number of contacts made with juveniles, particularly those of our target population, will be reduced even more significantly during the remainder of 1973, due primarily to existing intervention programs in the public school system of the City of Placentia. VISA is one such program that serves to complement the efforts of the school district. Although the incidence of police contact with the target population is rather small when compared to the total number of juvenile contacts made, city police department personnel and school

9.

district officials credit the VISA project with diverting problem youth away from the juvenile justice system and in addition assisting those youths who exhibit acute social, emotional, and/or learning problems, thus preventing rather than postponing their entrance into the system.

During the first year of demonstration, 137 youths were referred to the VISA project, of which 123 or 89 percent were actively participating. In the subsequent action year, the project received 100 new referrals while 88 youths continued participation from the first action year, with a total of 169 youths participating in the project during the second action year, as 19 youths were not matched. This number has decreased to 113 participants as of November 1, 1973, due primarily to attrition of first-year participants. The duration of an individual youth's participation in the project is subject to several factors, among them are: (1) The completion of a prescribed course of study or activity with his or her volunteer; (2) The relocation of youth participants or volunteers; (3) The inability of a volunteer to reach a youth; or (4) The completion of the school year and/or lack of follow-up by VISA staff to assess continued need in the following school year. Each of these factors may contribute to the length of time a youth is involved in the VISA project.

The figures summarized above represent a wide cross section of youth from the Placentia Unified School District.

10.

The scope of problems represented by participants may range from the most acute or poor study habits to the more severe conditions of emotional instability and social maladjustment. As stated previously, it cannot scientifically be predicted exactly which of these individuals would find themselves under institutional care at some further point in time; however, it is possible to make a subjective judgment about the likelihood or probability of such an occurrence based on one's experience with youth. In order to further refine our indicators of diversion, six of the elementary school principals within the Placentia Unified School District were selected at random and asked to estimate the percentage of youths referred to VISA from their respective schools whom they consider to be potential referrals into the *juvenile* justice system had not VISA existed. Although four of the principals indicated that they could not estimate such a figure due to their low level of participation in the program, the remaining two principals responded with an estimate between 33 and 50 percent. Generalizing the above responses, it is their judgment that approximately one-third to one-half of the referrals made to VISA are potential referrals to the *juvenile* justice system. It should be pointed out that in the summer of 1973, 58 percent of the principals rated VISA as more than a good prevention program.

A comparison of juvenile arrest statistics between Placentia and the adjacent jurisdictions of Fullerton and

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Brea provide us with another means of assessing the diversion capabilities of the VISA project. Although data on the three jurisdictions is incomplete, it can be seen that the number of juveniles under twelve years of age who are arrested is paralleled in each of the communities. As an example, according to statistics furnished by the Orange County Sheriff's Department, the Placentia Police Department arrested 90 juveniles in April, 1971, 11 percent of whom were below the age of twelve years; in April, 1972, 116 juveniles were arrested, ten percent of whom were below twelve years of age, while during the same period in the following year, 43 juveniles were arrested, 11 percent were below the target age limit.*

The experiences of Brea and Fullerton are similar to those reported above. In April, 1971, the Brea Police Department reported a total of 58 juvenile arrests, eight percent of whom were twelve years old and below, while 11 percent of total juvenile arrests in April, 1973, were within the VISA target age group. The Fullerton Police Department reported that in April, 1971, ten percent of the juvenile arrests were below twelve years of age, while in the

*The sharp decrease in arrests of juveniles by the Placentia Police Department between 1971 and 1973 can be credited, in part, to the implementation of juvenile intervention programs, notably VISA and Alternate Routes.

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subsequent two years these figures indicate that the percentage of juvenile arrests below twelve years of age in the three jurisdictions is approximately equitable during a sample month over three years. Comparison figures for the total number of juvenile contacts made by either police department are inconclusive, as each police department determines its own standards for reporting contacts. In addition, a certain degree of latitude and discretion is normally given to the field officer in reporting such contacts. As an example, in calendar year 1972, the Fullerton Police Department "handled" a total of 2634 juveniles, of which 420 (or 15 percent) were below twelve years of age. When this figure is compared to the nine percent rate recorded by the City of Placentia over the same period of time, one would be led to believe that the latter police department had experienced fewer contacts with this target population, where in retrospect, the procedures and guidelines for reporting such contacts may have been different. However, on the basis of the above figures, it can be noted that existing intervention programs in Placentia may account for the lower percentage of target population youth who are contacted by the police department, in that they are referred to the VISA program prior to formal contact with the juvenile justice system. Thus, the program would serve as a diversion effort.

Although the juvenile arrest and contact figures reported above for Placentia, Fullerton, and Brea do not indicate dynamic differences over the two years of the VISA project, interviews with police department and school district personnel have emphasized the diversion and prevention elements of the program. It is the opinion of Detective Barbara Scriven of the Fullerton Police Department, Juvenile Bureau, that police agencies cannot effectively deal with youth of the VISA target population. Once the referrals to the Probation Department, North Orange County Child Guidance Center, and Family Services are exhausted, there does not exist many other local agencies that can be mobilized to assist these youth. As pointed out by Sergeant Wender of the Brea Police Department, elementary school district personnel indicate that many juvenile problems of social and emotional maladjustment are not being treated by existing local agencies and as a result the police department is often contacted for assistance. According to the estimates of elementary school principals, Ken Mackey and Frank Cosca, of the Fullerton Elementary School District, between six and ten percent of their respective school enrollments could benefit from a VISA-type program, which could ultimately divert a percentage of those youths from the juvenile justice system; an exact percentage could not be estimated.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The data presented in this report, although inconclusive, tends to support VISA's thrust as a diversion and prevention program. Due to the lack of uniform police reporting practices and standards, however, it remains a difficult task to statistically determine whether the VISA project's impact on Placentia is significant in comparison to the experience of other jurisdictions faced with the same problems. The determination as to whether VISA provides a significant diversion effort can only be analyzed realistically ex post facto through the use of a follow-up study on project participants and others who constitute a "control" population. Such a study would theoretically evaluate the extent to which VISA youth and the control group youth had entered the criminal justice system at some future date, assuming that such information were available.

According to data presented herein, the VISA project seems to be having a positive influence upon diversion. More data and analyses are needed, however, to aid policy planners in their attempts to create a more effective criminal justice system. Uniform data collection practices among police departments is essential. Such uniformity would increase evaluation researchers' ability to determine population trends, problem areas, and project impacts.

Section V

PARTICIPATING PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS
OF VISA AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR CHANGE

by

G. Ronald Gilbert

INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the assumption that in the course of the formulation of a demonstration program, it is important to stop and take time to analyze how well the program has been designed and to initiate "midcourse corrections" where indicated. Thus, it is a task of this study to analyze VISA by reviewing the perceived performance of it as shared by those in its environment. Of special interest is their level of support for the program as well as areas in which they think VISA may improve. In the past such analyses have had considerable "payoff" for VISA program planners.

Brief Theoretical Perspective

There are many techniques available to the systems analyst to use for evaluating program design. The choice of technique depends upon the analyst's academic and philosophical perspective, the level to which the project lends itself to the classic experimental design, the degree to which change may be measured and the kind and quality of data collected.

The technique employed in this study was developed in order to assess the degree to which the program is perceived to be relevant or irrelevant by key persons

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(school principals) in the VISA service environment, and the type of program practices and/or designs which merit change from the perspective of representatives from the schools with which VISA operates.

Through an analysis of principals' attitudes, beliefs, and insights, the degree to which VISA is relevant was assessed, barriers were identified and recommendations for change were presented to staff. It is within this context that the findings, recommendations and VISA staff actions are reported.

In other studies in the overall VISA evaluation, parents, children, school principals, teachers, staff and volunteers have been, to one extent or another, queried and their responses analyzed. In this study, personal interviews were held with representatives of the educational institutions with which VISA depends upon for referrals, institutional sanction, and, most probably, eventual adoption.

A prime referent for such analysis in the VISA program is the elementary school principal, for this individual occupies a key role in the VISA service delivery network. The principal serves as a linkage between the teachers, VISA program personnel, and participating children and their families. In such a capacity, principals share an important perspective with regard to the appropriateness of the VISA program itself and the quality of the VISA professional

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staff. They also are able to critically assess the program, identifying concerns with regard to the quality of service provided the children and their families, communications and case coordination, the political climate and context within which VISA operates, and make recommendations with regard to the design of organizational and service systems.

Description of Community

A brief statement about the participating schools and their neighborhoods would help place this study in perspective. The Placentia Unified School District serves a comparatively affluent suburban area. Most adult citizens in Placentia have lived in the area less than five years and they are employed outside their city. Three-quarters of the adult population over 25 have completed high school and about 42 percent indicate they have a bachelor's degree or better from college. According to 1970 census data, the average income per household was \$14,429 with about five percent below the poverty level. The median value of a house was \$31,996. A survey conducted by the USC Institute staff in 1972 revealed that in 35 percent of the families residing in Placentia, the household income was \$18,000 and over, while in 20 percent of the cases, it was less than \$10,000. The same data indicated that about 20 percent of the population was minority, with 16.3 percent of these being classified as "Spanish speaking or Spanish surname." Such data as this would suggest VISA and

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the Placentia Unified School District serve a heterogeneous community. There are clearly identifiable upper income and lower income neighborhoods. Bussing among schools for purposes of integration and "income leveling" does not exist. Thus, the individual schools in the district serve different types of populations. Some elementary schools such as Golden, Wagner and Brookhaven serve people who live in homes valued at \$40,000 to \$50,000. Others, such as McFadden and Ruby Drive, serve lower income families with a relatively higher percentage of minority children in attendance than do schools throughout the rest of the district. These demographic features would seem to indicate that there are differing environments within which VISA functions. Appropriate program behavior for one environment may promote discordance if practiced with another.

Interview and Data Analysis

On May 10 and 11, 1973, G. Ronald Gilbert and Barbara Levinson of the Regional Research Institute in Social Welfare, University of Southern California, conducted interviews with the principals of all public schools participating in VISA. The participating principals included:

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<u>Principal</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>No. of Children Participating in VISA</u>
Clayton Credell	Brookhaven Elementary	0
Gordon McKay	Fairmont Elementary	6
Dorothy Freeman	Glenknoll Elementary	6
Earl Pratt	Glenview Elementary	5
James Bemis, Ed.D.	Golden Elementary	1
David Highes	McFadden Elementary	10
Nicholas Siokos	Morse Elementary	1
John McClanahan	Orchard Elementary	5
Sally Morton	Rio Vista Elementary	6
Wallace Curl	Ruby Drive Elementary	23
Duane Mendell	Sierra Vista Elementary	10
John Jimenez	Topaz Elementary	29
Delos Eyer	Van Buren Elementary	8
Clayton Lee	Wagnew Elementary	8

The length of time for each interview ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. The principals were assured their responses would be confidential and were encouraged to be as candid as possible. They were asked to describe what they perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of VISA. Miss Levinson recorded detailed minutes from each interview. A content analysis was made of these minutes, the results of which constitute the basis for the findings which follow in this report.

STUDY FINDINGS

Appropriateness of VISA

While there seemed to be a difference in perception among the principals as to the kind of child VISA has been designed to serve, all principals voiced belief that VISA is providing an important service to the children participating

6.

in the program. They indicated VISA is filling many needs enabling youth to improve their academic performance at school, developing among the children a better self-image and improving communication between the child and his family, thereby assisting him in several areas. As one principal indicated, "Quite a few children might have been sent into the juvenile justice system if it had not been for VISA this past year. While not all credit can go to VISA for keeping them out of the system, VISA certainly helped." Specific services provided by the volunteers which were considered appropriate to the VISA child included: (1) Good tutoring relationships; (2) Meaningful friendships; (3) Improved communication between parent and child; (4) Effective liaison between the home and the school; (5) Additional and oftentimes needed adult role models for children; and (6) Sound preventive services for children having moderate social and academic problems. More guarded interpretation of VISA services was noted in responses of two principals. In one case, a principal believed VISA could only help at the tutoring level and was not geared to assist children having other than academic adjustment-type problems. Another principal interpreted VISA as a program designed to help only hardcore problem children. These impressions represented two extremes of the program. In either case, such misinterpretation might be considered as a rationale for low participation in VISA by some schools.

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On the basis of collected data, it is interesting to note that principals of schools serving middle and lower income populations participated more fully in the VISA program, particularly in referring children to VISA. VISA was seen as a less appropriate program by principals whose schools were populated by children coming from more affluent families in the Placentia Unified School District. According to those principals, whose student populations were more affluent, the reason for this difference is identified with their commonly held perceptions that such parents are: (1) Less accepting of outside help; (2) Less willing to accept the services of a volunteer; and (3) Would rather pay for professional services than have the school suggest volunteer assistance through VISA. It is important to note that among the principals there was no distinction between those serving more affluent children and those serving the less affluent in their perception that children need volunteer services such as those provided by VISA. Those previously serving the affluent "economically successful" parents were clearly more reticent to take an active role matching a VISA volunteer with a child in need, as it was felt among these principals the parents would take offense to such actions. This concern was not noticeable among principals serving middle and lower income children. It was also stated that the program was much more effective this past year than it was the previous

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year because it is reaching children at a younger age than before.

Staff Performance

Comments were directed by the principals toward two types of VISA staff: The paid professional and the volunteer working directly with the child. Paid staff, in general, were perceived to be highly dedicated and competent; "They are doing a good job." Some concern was raised with regard to a lack of follow-up by the professional VISA staff. This was perceived by the interviewers to be a serious criticism which merited corrective action by the VISA program. (Personnel adjustments were initiated by the VISA Project Director in August, 1973 and appear to have resolved this situation).

There was considerable difference of opinion among the principals with regard to the quality of service provided by the VISA volunteer. In general, the volunteers were seen by the principals to be highly dedicated and competent people who were able to establish a needed friendship and provide a positive role model for the VISA child. The principals did not view the volunteers as highly competent in the area of family counseling, child counseling and in providing needed psychological services. The perceived need for additional male volunteers remains to be as great a problem as was pointed out following the first year demonstration phase of

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1 OF 2

VISA. Principals desire more male volunteers as well as a greater bank of volunteers from which specific developmental needs of children being referred to VISA could be analyzed and matched.

In general, it was stated that volunteers and VISA administrators should make more contact with the principals (or his/her designee) and the teacher working with the child, as the principal and teacher seem to be out of touch with the kinds of services provided by many of the volunteers. Lastly, it was suggested that volunteers be provided additional training to enable them to develop broader skills so that they may be more effective in dealing with the problems that they encounter in dealing with the VISA child and his family.

One principal was most critical of the VISA volunteers by stating that VISA children need professionals, not amateurs, and that the volunteers cannot do the job as they need training in psychology and social work. This position was not held by the remaining 12 principals interviewed. They expressed a high degree of appreciation for the type of helping relationship and interest the adult volunteers can have with a child whose behavior is dysfunctional either academically, emotionally or socially. In some cases, volunteers were seen to be more helpful than professionals because they could establish the kind of friendship that the majority of VISA children appear to need.

Summary of Concerns Voiced by Principals

The participating principals voiced several concerns, some perceived as important by the majority while others were more unique and sometimes in direct contrast with the perceptions of other principals. Most widely shared concerns were centered around communications between the school and VISA.

Feedback to Schools

Most principals indicated that they received little or no feedback from the project with regard to the VISA child's progress. Teachers and principals did not seem to know what the volunteer was doing with the VISA child and, therefore, as principals, could not evaluate VISA as thoroughly as they would like. One principal indicated he did not know which children were participating in the VISA program.

Staff Response

One principal indicated he had referred 12 children to the VISA program and only four were matched with a volunteer during the past year. This same principal indicated that better follow-through on the part of the VISA professional staff was necessary if the program was to succeed.

Institutional Identity

VISA is seen as a Probation Department program. Because of this, many principals indicated that the VISA child being referred to VISA or participating in VISA is often stigmatized. It would be better, according to the principals, if VISA were identified as a school program, as such stigmas which are generally associated with children coming in contact with probation would not occur.

Institutional Control

It was stated that if VISA were based out of a local school district office, it might have better impact. That is, the principal might be more prone to use VISA because it would be an internal activity under the control of the school administration.

Parent Resistance

Parents, particularly from the affluent section of the district, are perceived to refuse to have their child enter the program as they don't want outside volunteer help. This perceived resistance seems to be associated with a reticence among some principals and teachers to encourage parents to accept the assistance which VISA is trying to provide children in need of volunteer help.

Teacher Resistance

Many teachers do not want an outside agency involved with children with whom they work. The teachers will hesitate to contact the parents about a volunteer program when they do not know the volunteer and the kinds of skills the volunteer can provide. They also are hesitant to contact the volunteer once the child has been matched.

Referral to VISA

At least one-half of the principals indicated that it takes too much time to get the child enrolled in VISA. For once a child is identified as being in need of VISA, the parents must be contacted, give their approval and the VISA staff must be contacted prior to the time the child is referred to the program. Then VISA must find a volunteer who is qualified to work with the child. The principals indicated VISA professional staff are the greatest delaying factors in this matching process. Whether or not this delay was caused by inadequate staff performance or misunderstanding by the principals as to all the work involved in the process, it is an important finding in that the school representatives' perceptions suggest a lack of "belief" in the VISA professionals' dependability. Perhaps the VISA Project Director's personnel action served to correct this situation. A follow-up study at the end of the current school year will shed further light on this matter.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESULTS

Recommendations Conveyed to VISA Staff by Institute Personnel as a Result of These Interviews

Institute staff provided several recommendations to VISA staff for program change immediately following interviews with the principals of the participating elementary schools (August, 1973). VISA staff reviewed these recommendations and initiated corrective actions when deemed appropriate by them. The recommendations and corrective staff actions taken as of November, 1973 fall within either the "communications" or "program design" categories discussed below.

Communications

There was a feeling among many of the principals that they felt they did not know enough about what was going on; that is, they did not have a strong sense about the kinds of services VISA was providing the children. Some principals did not know how many children in their schools were actually involved in the VISA project, others did not know what staff and volunteers were doing in conjunction with teachers and other classroom aides to work out treatment plans for youth who were referred to VISA.

Thus, the specific recommendations provided VISA by the Institute staff to improve communications and their actions to date include:

1. Staff should have more personal contact with principals and teachers.

VISA staff has initiated several changes to deal with this issue. VISA staff (salaried and volunteer) has increased the frequency of meetings with school personnel. For example, they informally eat lunch with the faculty at the various participating schools and discuss child progress and consult with or be consulted by them. While VISA staff have not held regular meetings with all principals or delegates, they have held at least one meeting per month with all of the principals. The salaried VISA staff and administrative volunteers now introduce all new volunteers to the involved school teachers when matching the child with the volunteer.

2. VISA staff should prepare quarterly status reports for principals and teachers. Such status reports would indicate the kinds of service activities provided the child by VISA.

Due to their commitment to protect the child and his family from the abuses which have occurred from misuse of case records by others, the VISA staff elected to discuss child progress more personally with the principals and teachers. Thus, no formally written report is provided the school faculty. (The evaluation team strongly supports VISA staff for taking this position).

Status reports are provided orally. There is no evidence, however, that staff has devised a systematic means to do this. VISA staff estimates that since August, the status of 75 percent of the children has been provided the principals and teachers on a quarterly basis.

3. VISA staff should plan strategies to aid principals in their contact with parents and provide such assistance to the principals and teachers on an as-needed basis.

The VISA staff members have secured 80 percent of the signed parental consents this year through correspondence, telephone calls and personal contact. In cases where only Spanish was spoken in the home, VISA provided a trained and qualified Spanish-speaking staff member from other community development programs (SMILE and Alternate Routes) in Placentia to make the home call and explain the VISA program and get the consent form signed. Since making this change, a total of 40 home calls has been made since August by VISA staff.

Program Design

The interviews with the principals also seemed to suggest VISA make some design changes in its program. The evaluation team believed that would result in more effective service delivery. They include:

1. Recruitment of additional volunteers. Volunteers having skills in such areas as remedial education, family counseling, social work and the like would seem to enrich the kinds of services VISA can provide the children and their families. Additionally, male volunteers would enrich the kinds of services provided to VISA youth. VISA staff maintain this to be among their foremost challenges. "The attrition rate of volunteers in a program like this is extremely high. Therefore, it has been an ongoing challenge just to maintain enough volunteers to handle the referrals we have." A check on the records suggests that VISA staff have recruited some specialized volunteers (for example, a volunteer to work with the deaf muted parents of a child). However, this is the exception rather than the rule. It would appear that in designing a program such as VISA it should be recognized that volunteers will be difficult to recruit and retain over any substantial period of time. Furthermore, at least one professional staff will be needed in an effort to coordinate the volunteer recruitment, training and supervision.
2. VISA staff should develop specific training programs geared to aid the schools in identifying other community service resources.

VISA staff prepared a "Community Resource List" and

presented it to all school nurses and secretaries. It was also made a part of the VISA handbook which is presented to all volunteers. A follow-up study by the Institute team should reveal if this reduced the perceived need for resource aid on the part of the schools.

3. Professional VISA staff should undertake a more active role with the volunteers, aiding the volunteers as case consultants.

Professional VISA staff are now carrying a "caseload" which is comprised of the VISA volunteers. These volunteers are receiving direct supervision from the VISA coordinators. Progress report interviews are convened monthly. This is a change from the first 18 months of the program where administrative volunteers supervised the line volunteers.

4. Continuous efforts be made to develop a team approach in identifying youth service needs and providing such services consistently and cooperatively. The team approach would include the teacher, parent, volunteer and principal.

A total of 42 team meetings have been held since August, 1973. The VISA staff maintain that scheduled meetings with complete staff involvement are oftentimes difficult to arrange. Thus, VISA staff serve as "linking pins;" making contact with all involved and relaying information

and suggestions. The VISA staff report that, "This saves considerable time and effort while increasing results."

5. Decentralize VISA to increase communications and promote further control by the schools themselves.

VISA staff indicate that when the principals were contacted in late summer of 1973 and queried about their interest in having an administrative volunteer at the school one day per week, the principals indicated that they did not have adequate space to carry out such a plan. In effect, VISA coordinators did not find the same endorsement of such a decentralization among a few of the principals as did the Institute staff. Thus, there is a clear need for VISA personnel and the Institute staff to further discuss this recommendation and the tactics which may be employed to put it into effect. It would seem essential for VISA to decentralize throughout the district and enable the schools to gain greater control of the program if it is to continue in the schools beyond the demonstration period.

Section VI

VISA VOLUNTEERS: WHAT DO THEY DO?

by

Genevieve W. Carter

Recently at a meeting of State CCCJ and Regional OCCCJ consultants the question was raised, "Just what do the VISA volunteers do? Can the USC evaluation staff advise us about the kinds of activities that constitute the volunteer work?" Preventive programs such as the VISA project are not readily interpreted, and the granting decision-makers have little at hand on what is done to or for children enrolled in a prevention program.

This brief section of the evaluation report attempts to describe volunteer activities with the use of functional job analysis techniques. The raw material for analysis was gleaned from volunteers and staff of the VISA project. Not all the tasks performed by VISA volunteers were analyzed for job functions. These examples illustrate some of the principal tasks of administrative volunteers and direct service volunteers. The work of the administrative volunteer may appear to overlap with some of the professional level job activities. This is as it should be, since many volunteers are professionals, but they do not earn income from their volunteer contributions.

The first tasks which follow analyze the activities of administrative volunteers.

ADMINISTRATIVE VOLUNTEERS

(Recruitment)

<p>TASK: Talks, telephones, writes to agencies, colleges, organizations, encourages invitations for recruiting meetings, gives speeches (often in conjunction with professional staff), distributes recruiting pamphlets and applications to potential volunteers, answers questions about program in order to recruit sufficient number of qualified volunteers to maintain personnel needed for the VISA program.</p>	
<p>PERFORMANCE STANDARDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .. Presentations are adapted to various audiences--students, parents, professionals. .. Personality and bearing which offer convincing enthusiasm and a spirit of an experienced volunteer recruiting volunteers. .. Manner is tactful and diplomatic in demonstrating the volunteer <u>model</u> who has a commitment to help children in need but not to use them for their own needs. 	<p>TRAINING CONTENT</p> <p><u>Functional:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .. How to identify likely community resources for efficient volunteer recruitment. .. How to interpret the VISA (agency) volunteer functions. .. How to assess the payoff of various volunteer recruitment efforts in terms of the yield of workers for the program. <p><u>Specific:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .. Knowledge of community volunteer programs. .. Skills in meeting people, making speeches, capability for follow through.

ADMINISTRATIVE VOLUNTEERS

(Matching Interview)

<p>TASK: In a 45 minute to one hour interview, orients service volunteer applicants to agency and program, follows outline of structured interview schedule allowing for free questions or additional explanation, takes notes on schedule during interview, makes tentative decision as to suitability of applicant, calls in professional or other to meet applicant if doubtful about decision, gives applicant packet of material, calls attention to training dates and urges review of volunteer obligations in manual, advises volunteer on next steps and time for next contact, (after applicant leaves) completes last page of schedule on assessment of applicant and child matching points, sets up file for volunteer clearance procedures--all this in order to base decision for matching the applicant service volunteer to one or more children referred to VISA for a volunteer.</p>	
<p>PERFORMANCE STANDARDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .. Manner is pleasant, encouraging and helpful to applicant volunteer in her initial interview. .. Listens to applicant's responses while unobtrusively taking notes and completing applicant volunteer form. .. Uses sound discretion in applying criteria for assessing maturity, motivation, skills and expected performance of applicant volunteer. 	<p>TRAINING CONTENT</p> <p><u>Functional:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .. How to interview volunteer applicants with a structured interview. .. How to interpret VISA program. When, how and why to vary the sequence of questions to meet specific barriers, i.e., anxiety, reticence. <p><u>Specific:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .. Relationship of task to the next steps in matching volunteer to child. .. Agency procedures for recruiting, screening and processing service volunteers. .. How to set up files and report service statistics to agency administrators office.

ADMINISTRATIVE VOLUNTEERS

4.

(Initial Interview)

<p>TASK: Conducts an initial interview with newly selected VISA volunteer in order to acquaint volunteer with child suggested for matching, to review obligations of service volunteer, to orient volunteer to sponsoring agency and to her volunteer supervisor, to offer guidance on appropriate community resources for children, explain VISA handbook on resources, discuss next training session, explore volunteer's ideas about her own expertise and possible plans for the child, to answer questions, and to test understanding of volunteer's perception of her volunteer role--all this with the purpose of helping the volunteer implement her planned ideas for her initial contacts with child. Makes next appointment.</p>	
<p>PERFORMANCE STANDARDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .. Maintains enthusiastic, pleasant demeanor; shows volunteer she wants to be friendly, helpful. .. Listens, gets clues from volunteer, builds on ideas presented by volunteer. .. Can conduct interview satisfactory to the volunteer, covering all essential points within a one hour or 45 minute period. 	<p>TRAINING CONTENT</p> <p><u>Functional:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .. How to interview service workers based on personal, individual knowledge about this particular volunteer. .. How to encourage service volunteer to ask questions, to try out her ideas, to gain confidence in her new job. .. How to allow volunteer to change sequence, interrupt but still cover all the points for this initial interview. <p><u>Specific:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .. Has application information well in mind before this initial interview. .. Has handbook material, list of resources, map of city, and other materials ready in a VISA volunteer kit. .. Has sample record ready to show as a model.

5.

DIRECT SERVICE WORKER

The direct service worker has the person-to-person contact with the child. Volunteer and child have been matched for compatibility and the meeting of the child's needs. The direct service volunteer works with the child as a friendly adult who wants to share some happy excursions and developmental experiences with a child who needs this special attention. The direct service volunteer does not get into formalized parent counseling, directed child therapy or treatment. The volunteer-child relationship is on an educational, experiential level. It is a trusting, happy relationship with no underlying motives that the child would not understand. It is a friendly relationship with the child's parents.

The tasks identified for the service volunteer are usually centered around a trip, an excursion or an event. The "happening" may range from a cookie making event at the home of the volunteer with her own children, a tutoring session at school, or an excursion to the Lion Country Safari.

Some service volunteers are very creative in planning and executing learning and socializing experiences, such as planting a garden with another child, giving lessons in chess, taking child and friend to the Planetarium or placing child in small group for guitar lessons. Children who have needs for tutoring sessions have shown remarkable gains. For some

reason, tutoring makes a direct impact on the problem while other types of activities have more of an indirect impact on the child's social life and self-image.

The advanced volunteer has additional qualities which lead to positive, observable changes in the child's behavior and attitudes. In most cases, the special attention and planned experiences give the child feelings of being wanted, having a friend, experiencing fun and laughter and being happier in his social relations. The advanced volunteer has been able to build into her work with the child a capability for assessment, a sensitivity to a child's needs and problems, and a talent for building the next experience so that the contacts and relationships are cumulative. The trips, lessons, or friendly conversations add up to attaining a few feasible objectives which the volunteer hopes he and the child can accomplish together with benefit for the child. This latter is expressed in the last task analysis.

SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Direct Service to Child
(Volunteer-Child Outing or Session)

TASK:

Plans outing or visit with or for child. Talks with child about subjects of his interest--school, his friends, growing up, baseball, etc.; takes child on outings, such as lunch in the park, kite flying, miniature golf, fishing, to planetarium, Lion Country Safari, library; helps child with homework, with tutoring, to learn chess, make a scrap book, build sand castles at the beach, make hand puppets, plant a vegetable garden; gives child guitar lessons, swimming lessons, riding lessons; develops child's socialization through tour of police station, surprise birthday party, reading street signs, eating out in a restaurant, going to a concert--in order to offer developmental opportunities geared to the identified needs and interests of the VISA child.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

- .. Builds trust relationship with child, maintains friendship role, shows interest.
- .. Listens to child, encourages child in joint planning of activities.
- .. Maintains positive relationships with child's parents, school. Sensitive to parents' possible distrust of volunteer.
- .. Sees his assigned child at least every two weeks and keeps supervision of frequency or lapse in child contacts.

TRAINING CONTENT

Functional:

- .. How to understand and participate with child of this age and sex.
- .. How to seek guidance, locate resources for child as needed.
- .. How to objectively assess the benefits or results of the volunteer child activities.

Specific:

- .. Knowledge of community, transportation, driving.
- .. How to keep records according to agency rules.

END