

Quaker Voluntary Service conversation 3.9.22

Hilary, Claire, Lisa, Susan

Project: QVS Fellow placement in Aging Services

What problem was being addressed? Interest young adults in aging services

What actions have been implemented to address that problem? Established placement in Boston at Friendship Works

What went right? The placement has worked for the past 3+ years

What went wrong? The Fellow placed this year is non-binary and found the environment to be quite hostile, leading to termination of the placement and re-placing the Fellow elsewhere.

Any surprises (good or bad)? QVS is having a hard time recruiting applicants and may have to close a site this year.

Notes: This was a tough phone call. QVS has extended its deadline for candidates for 2022-3, and may have to close one city site (think shutting down a house for 6-8, all the placements, other support system...) They are part of the Catholic Volunteer Network which is seeing the same reduction in youth programs across its network. Many relationships they used for recruiting were disrupted during the pandemic. A couple contacts were suggested.

QVS is grateful for the conversations we have had about our partnership. It inspired them to apply a sliding scale to the fee structure to enable small non-profit partners in each city.

It has been a tough year at the Friendship Works site. The Fellow assigned there is non-binary, using "them" pronouns. They found the organization unsupportive, which was a surprise as they specifically have a program for LGBTQ+ elders. The Fellow from last year validated this perception, and although she was hired at the end of the year, she too recently left Friendship Works. The Fellow was reassigned to Cambridge Friends School in January so they could finish the QVS year. The Boston Coordinator is appreciated for the significant effort dedicated to this situation. 10-20% of Fellows are non-binary, a growing community among their generation.

Hilary and Claire asked how we are seeing other organizations address similar situations. Our personal experience confirms that some older adults are racist and insensitive to people different from themselves (race, gender, ethnicity), exhibiting microaggressions, name-calling, refusing service from a caregiver, and more. I have not seen organizations addressing how to support trans or non-binary residents or staff.

We suggested seeking consultation with SAGE to build awareness and skills of QVS staff, Fellows, placements and local Friend support groups. The focus for QVS must be to give Fellows a safe supportive space (their homes, cohorts) to talk about what they are encountering in their placements, their families, the world around them. It is also to ensure that the placement organizations do not violate the non-discriminatory inclusion values that we hold dear. Any attitude that contradicts this, whether for a woman, a person of color, or a non-binary person cannot be tolerated. QVS is an advocate for its Fellows. Had we known earlier, FFA might have been able to help find another aging-serving organization in Boston.

At the end of the conversation, we agreed not to do another proposal until another aging service organization joins the program. Also, the QVS model does not rely on grant funding, which requires extra expenditure of staff time.

The remaining funds (\$3545) which subsidized the placement organization will be refunded to FFA.

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