

Assessment of the Hometown
Recruiter Assistance Program

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present an assessment of the Hometown Recruiter Assistance Program (HRAP), which is documented in US Army Recruiting Command Regulation No. 601-64, 1981. It describes the results of the investigation of the nomination, selection, and training of recruiter aides.

Background

The HRAP is a tri-service program that returns young military personnel to their hometowns to assist recruiters in a local recruiting station. Recruiter aides, as the Army's HRAP participants are called, come from Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Forces Command (FORSCOM) installations. Usually, TRADOC aides are sent after completing Advanced Individual Training (AIT); occasionally, aides may be deployed following Initial Entry Training (IET). FORSCOM recruiter aides are selected from regular duty units. All aides are nominated by their enlisting recruiters and approved by their AIT or duty units. The aides are volunteers and usually serve for 45 days on temporary duty (TDY). Their function is to bring in qualified applicants to meet recruiters rather than to recruit.

Evaluating the productivity of aides is difficult because there is no existing basis to fully rate their performance. Aides are credited for individuals they brought to the recruiter who subsequently enlist, but the total effect of the aide's efforts is more subtle than the sum of their recruits. For example, aides can "plant seeds" or lay the groundwork months in advance of an enlistment decision and receive no credit for an enlistment that occurs months after his or her departure. Also, the criteria for receiving credit are not standardized. Some aides might be given credit for the enlistment of an individual whom they did not initially bring to the station, but helped "sell," while others may get no such credit. (Much might depend upon the recruiter's feelings about the recruiter aide.) Finally, there are a myriad of criteria that could be used to evaluate aides, aside from enlistments, which would credit the aide's skill and effort, such as the number of appointments made for the recruiter, number of prospects seen, and level of effort as noted by the station commander or recruiter. Since the job of an aide is getting qualified people to the recruiter, perhaps the ability to bring in interested and qualified people is a better measure of aide performance than the total number of enlistments.

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Despite the difficulty in measuring a recruiter aide's productivity, there is some evidence that the contribution of recruiter aides is significant. Trautwein and Toomepuu (Note 1) found that recruiter aides made a positive contribution in the recruitment of high school diploma graduates in Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) categories I through IIIA. In this analysis recruiters produced an average of 3.5 of these recruits per quarter; aides contributed .5 of these recruits.

However, a more comprehensive measure of aide productivity is required before the program can be accurately evaluated. Productivity figures do not adequately differentiate among organizations that effectively use aides and those that do not. It is possible that if aides were employed to maximal advantage throughout the US Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), dramatic positive effects could be achieved.

Approach and Method

As previously mentioned, this research paper describes the results of the investigation of the nomination, selection, and training of recruiter aides. Information was collected from the personnel most familiar with the day to day performance of recruiter aides. Station commanders, recruiters, and where possible, recruiter aides were surveyed and interviewed between August and October 1981.

Surveys and Structured Interviews.

The survey consisted of a paper and pencil questionnaire that solicited information about demographics, recruiter productivity, job satisfaction, personality characteristics, and job preferences. The structured interviews covered several topics and the questions were identical for recruiters (RCs) and station commanders (SCs). Responses were usually open ended. Interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours per person.

Survey and Interview Samples.

Recruiters and station commanders were sampled equally from each of the 5 recruiting region commands. Within, each region, 5 district recruiting commands (DRCs) were selected at random; then 2 recruiting stations were selected from each of these designated DRCs. Due to problems with sample stations an additional 3 stations were visited. The sample included 53 station commanders, 103 recruiters, and 20 recruiter aides. Five ARI researchers conducted the interviews, with each collecting data at different sites. Interviews were conducted in a private location within the station (during normal duty hours).

Nomination and Selection of Recruiter Aides

Station commanders and recruiters were asked about their HRAP nomination practices, who they thought should select recruiter aides, and what qualifying criteria should be met by young soldiers returned to their hometowns to assist recruiters. Respondents also provided estimates of the percentages of their recruits that they nominated for the HRAP. They then estimated the percentage of their nominations that have been returned for duty as recruiter aides. Nominations for the HRAP range from 0 to 100% of recruits. Thirty-six percent of

SCs and RCs nominated between 0% and 10% of their recruits. Forty percent of all respondents nominated between 11% and 50% of their recruits; the remaining 24% of respondents nominated between 51% and 100% of their recruits, a total of 51 SCs and 92 RCs comprised the total of respondents. The pattern of nominations was similar for recruiters and station commanders; and, despite a wide range in nomination rate, most respondents actively nominate aides.

The pattern that emerges from the above analysis is not particularly revealing. Some respondents nominate very few of their recruits while others nominate a majority of their recruits. The clue to nomination practices could lie in a number of possible explanations. But for this discussion, the key question is, how effective is the nomination process? Are a reasonable number of aide nominations made and returned to the stations? The first question about nominating practices suggests that SCs and RCs are not reluctant to nominate recruits for the HRAP, though some appear to be more discriminating than others.

The next important consideration is the rate at which aide nominations are returned to the station. Nearly 75% of the respondents reported a return rate of 5% or less. An additional 14% of the respondents reported a return rate of fewer than 33% of their aide nominations. Four percent report a return rate of more than 50% of their nominations; however, these individuals are usually relatively new at recruiting and have made only 2 or 3 nominations and gotten one or two returned. The overwhelming number of respondents get a very low rate of return of their aide nominations.

This finding is supported in general comments or asides that respondents made during the interview. Often, complaints were made that individuals returned were not nominated and/or not qualified by the nominal requirements in USAREC Reg. 601-64. Nearly 30% of the recruiters reported dissatisfaction with aides returned or with the effectiveness of the selection process.

Other evidence describing the view that RCs do not have adequate control of the selection process is found in responses to the question, "Who should select recruiter aides?" Overwhelmingly, SCs and RCs declared that recruiters should be at least part of the selection process and given a powerful voice in aide selection. Eighty-seven percent of all respondents named recruiters solely or in combination with duty or training unit cadre as the individuals who should select recruiter aides. Thirteen percent of the respondents named the training or duty unit only or a board of varying composition.

In addition to the call for increased recruiter control in the selection of aides, respondents detailed a comprehensive list of criteria for determining qualification for selection as a recruiter aide. The thirteen most frequently mentioned criteria are enumerated in Table 1.

Perhaps, one important way to improve the current system would be to make the nomination for the HRAP more discriminating by providing recruiters with a list of criteria and ask that they justify each nomination.

TABLE 1

Recommended Aide Selection Criteria by SCs and RCs

Objective Criteria	SC* %	RC* %
1. High School Degree Graduate	16	30
2. AFQT Category IIIA (or higher)	20	15
3. Delayed Entry Program Performance	26	28
4. Training/Duty Performance	28	21
5. Good Military Appearance	51	34
Subjective Criteria		
1. Popular	22	11
2. Good Attitude & Character	22	11
3. Can communicate	29	28
4. Motivated	15	--
5. Gregarious	66	40
6. Sensible/Smart	12	25
7. Positive Attitude toward Army	52	38
8. Desire to be an aide	32	40

N=53 SCs N=98 RCs

*Percentages do not add to 100%, as respondents often suggested more than one criterion. Each category, however, reflects a respondent only once.

Recruiter Aide Training

Respondents' perceptions of recruiter aide training form the basis for this section. RCs and SCs were asked, "What, if any, training problems exist in the aide program?" The views expressed suggested that current training is inadequate.

Most respondents identified training problems. When RCs and SCs were asked if they thought there were aide training problems, 56% said yes and 26% said no. An additional 18% (of all recruiters) expressed no opinion. Several kinds of problems were identified by respondents, the largest being the inadequacy of training prior to the aide's arrival at the recruiting station (43% of SCs and 59% of RCs).

When asked to enumerate the problems, respondents who had previously stated that there were none were usually consistent and either stated that there were no problems or made no response. Several other SCs and RCs followed up their no problems response by saying that there was virtually no training prior to the aide's arrival at the station because there was too little time and/or money for the provision of training.

The opinion that RCs and SCs expressed about the lack of adequate training for aides prior to their arrival at the recruiting station is supported by the recruiter aides interviewed. Of the 20 aides interviewed, 17 reported fewer than 2 hours of briefing or training prior to being sent to the recruiting station. Often the briefing concerned administrative matters only, i.e., how to fill out forms. There was very little training in the activities that the aide would need to be successful in assisting recruiters. Twelve of the aides requested additional training; they most often desired training that would help them attract qualified individuals to the station. Aides most often desired training in the use of the telephone and in prospecting. They also felt that they needed more product knowledge to successfully perform in the field.

What emerges from these responses is the view that there is little or no training of recruiter aides prior to their arriving at the recruiting station. Even some respondents who do not label this deficit in training a problem are aware of it. Of course, some other respondents may feel that the station can adequately provide the training, and that there are no problems.

Then, respondents were asked whom they thought should train recruiter aides; a majority of respondents (51%) felt that the recruiting station should do the aide training. Fifty-five percent of the respondents who expressed the view that the station should provide training did not mention another command level; forty-five percent of respondents who mentioned that training should be provided by the station felt that other command levels should provide training, as well. The most frequently mentioned command levels were the DRC and/or the area (39%).

Of the remaining respondents, 44% named one or more command levels other than the recruiting station to provide recruiter aide training. The most frequently named single command level was USAREC (12% of the total sample). The DRC in conjunction with USAREC (10%) and Area (11%) was the next most frequently mentioned command for assuming aide training responsibility.

Additional evidence for the need of higher command assistance in the training of recruiter aides was found in examining the curriculum recommended by SCs and RCs (see Table 2). This list of topics requires a sound instructional design, which station personnel could help develop. However, RCs and SCs lack the time and training to design and implement what would be a relatively sophisticated training program. Future efforts need to be directed at developing and testing alternative training programs, in order to identify the most effective and efficient training to be provided.

TABLE 2

Recommended Recruiter Aide Training

	SCs		RCs		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
<u>Knowledge</u>						
Product knowledge	12	24	26	27	30	26
Prequalification & Eligibility	16	31	35	35	51	35
<u>Skills</u>						
Prospecting	17	33	14	15	31	21
Interpersonal/Social	9	18	9	9	18	12
Persuasiveness/Sales	8	16	34	35	42	28
Telephone	19	37	24	25	43	29
General Skills	26	51	70	73	96	65
<u>Conduct</u>						
	5	10	4	4	9	6
<u>Other</u>						
	9	18	8	8	17	12
	121*		224*		345*	

N= 96 RCs

N= 51 SCs

147

* Respondents often made more than 1 response so that column percentages add to more than 100%.

In order to develop an effective training program a curriculum and a method of delivering training need to be selected. The results (Table 2) of this research effort could be used as the basis for a training curriculum, although final approval should rest with representative samples of SCs and RCs. Next a field test should compare efficient ways of delivering training to recruiter aides. Sharing of training between the DRC (or Area) and the station could be compared with the station alone providing training. A final decision could be made on the basis of immediate outcomes from the training and later recruiter aide productivity.

Reference Note

Trautwein, M. and Toomepuu, J. Analysis of the Contribution of Recruiter Aides to Recruiter Mission Accomplishment. Program Analysis and Evaluation Directorate. US Army Recruiting Command, Ft. Sheridan, IL. July, 1981.

