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I am a homeless U.S. veteran who has found a life-saving respite in the mountains of North Carolina at the Veterans Restoration Quarters (VRQ). The VRQ is operated by a non-profit, non-denominational Christian organization: ABCCM (Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry, Incorporated).

ABCCM operates the VRQ campus (formerly a Super 8 Motel) with its primary funding coming from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The VRQ is comprised of 246 beds serving approximately 220 veterans and another 20 or more beds for non-veterans. The ministry provides “*free room and board, case management services, daily transportation to the Charles George V.A. Medical Center*” in Asheville, North Carolina.

Within a week of arriving here at the VRQ, I began training to be a Front Desk manager and paid ABCCM employee. But the reality of my employment: I am sometimes required to perform 40 hours in a “work week”, while only getting paid for 24 hours or less.

ABCCM claims that I am a “part-time” employee.

Service Hour Policy

When ABCCM takes in a homeless resident, that resident is assigned a service area where they are required to perform unpaid “service hours”. The VRQ service areas include: Housekeeping, Maintenance, Kitchen, Computer Lab, and the Front Desk which is operated twenty-four hours a day, in three shifts.

Having a basic understanding of the “service hour” requirement is essential to the core issue in discussion.

The amount of unpaid “service hours” a resident is required to work is dependent upon the residents’ work/school schedule:

- Resident veterans and non-veterans who are not employed are required to perform twenty (20) service hours a week.
- Residents who are employed “part-time” (less than twenty hours a week) are required to perform ten (10) service hours.
- Residents who are “full-time” employees perform no service hours.

- Residents attending school have a similar sliding scale, the break point between “part-time” and “full time” student is less than twelve credit hours.

(see attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Service Hour Policy.pdf)

“Service hour” performance earns a VRQ resident “reward points”. Earned “reward points” can be redeemed at the Points Room for necessities such as clothing and hygiene products. (see attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Reward Points.pdf)

The Grant and Per Diem Program

Financial support for the VRQ comes in part from a Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program set forth in U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 38, Part 61, VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program, Department of Veterans Affairs.

The GPD program pays GPD participants (e.g. ABCCM) to provide supportive housing, counseling, and vocational assistance to homeless veterans so they may transition back into a community. A veteran has up to three (3) Per Diems in their life-time, each Per Diem can last up to twenty four (24) months.

Briefly, the “Grant” portion of the GPD program:

Grant funds may provide up to 65% of the cost to acquire, renovate, or construct facilities that will be used to provide supportive housing (up to 24 months) and/or service centers (offering services such as case management, vocational development, crisis intervention, counseling, etc.) for homeless Veterans; and to purchase vans in support of these programs. Grants may not be used for operational costs, including salaries.

(source: http://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd_faq.asp)

And the “Per Diem” portion of the GPD program:

Funding for services in conjunction with supportive housing is limited to the daily cost of providing the services, minus other sources of revenue, up to a predetermined amount. At this time, the maximum amount payable under per diem is \$43.32. The maximum hourly per diem rate for a service center not in connection with supportive housing is 1/8 the daily cost of care not to exceed the current VA State Home rate for domiciliary care. Payment for a veteran in a service center will not exceed 8 hours in any day.

(source: http://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd_faq.asp)

Based on the ABCCM 2014 Annual Report, the annual income in 2014 from just the Per Diem portion of the GPD program was \$2,449,270 (see attached: ABCCM - 2014 Annual Report.pdf). During the Department of Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem review process ABCCM was required to show proficiency in its accounting practices as a Grant participant. The Department of Veterans Affairs requires all Grant and Per Diem participants to deliver accurate quarterly Technical Performance Reports.

Pattern of Practice and Policy

On September 2nd, I was a homeless veteran, sixty years old, unemployed, and nearly penniless, I arrived here at the VRQ; within a week I was offered the opportunity to perform my “service hours” at the Front Desk. Additionally, it was expressed to me that some Front Desk Managers become ABCCM paid employees, receiving an hourly rate of \$9.00 per hour.

On September 8th, I began training as a Front Desk Manager. I am now an ABCCM paid employee (see attached: Armento - Pay Check Stubs.pdf). I am grateful for the work, I have a few modest monthly bills and the income from my Front Desk job allows me to pay: a storage space, a cell phone bill, and a credit card bill.

The plain and simple fact: I desperately need the income from employment at the VRQ Front Desk, otherwise, I lose everything I have ever earned and created.

Regrettably, there appears to be a pattern of practice at the VRQ that exploits the resident employees who work as Front Desk managers. Additionally, based on my conversations with my Front Desk Supervisor, the pattern of practice has been “policy” for an extended period of time, years. As an ABCCM paid employee and resident, I have often worked 40 hours in a “work week” but only get paid for 16-24 hours for the “work week”.

The Front Desk operates twenty-four hours a day, in three shifts; not all Front Desk managers are ABCCM employees, some are CWT (Compensated Work Therapy) paid by the VA, and some are unpaid residents working “service hours”.

Front Desk managers who are paid, are required to hand write their “work hours” on a timesheet. Instructions for filling out my time sheet were verbally communicated to me by the Front Desk Supervisor:

- Do not record any hours for working 1st shift (8am-4pm) Monday through Friday, you will not be paid for those hours, those are “service hours”.
- You may only record your 1st shift (8am-4pm) hours when working on Saturday and Sunday, those are the only two days that 1st shift is paid.
- You may record all of your hours for working 2nd shift (4pm-12am).
- You may record all of your hours for working 3rd shift (12am-8am).
- You may record all of your hours for working Code Purple (10pm-6am). (Code Purple provides emergency shelter for the homeless during hazardous freeze warnings.)
- You will only get paid for eight hours a day; extra hours must be approved.
- You must sign your Time Sheet to get paid.

The Front Desk Manager Policy or any other employee documentation that I have received does not codify any of the above timesheet requirements. (see attached: ABCCM_VRQ- Front Desk Manager Policy.pdf)

The Front Desk Manager Policy makes it a point to have Front Desk Managers show up 15 minutes before their shift to accomplish an effective shift change. However, fifteen minutes is not enough time for a complete shift change, experienced Front Desk managers show up 60 minutes to 30 minutes before their shift.

On or about Friday, October 30th I attempted to speak to my Case Manager about having to “work 40 hours and only getting paid for 16 hours”, I was directed to speak with my Front Desk Supervisor. Subsequently, the Front Desk Supervisor told me that I am required to work unpaid “service hours” and paid “work hours”.

In hindsight, the “service hour” program was discussed during my “intake interview” on September 2nd, I was asked to pick a “service hour” area of preference, at which time I choose the “computer lab”; no job description was offered. During my “intake interview”, I was told that I would be notified of my assignment in about a week (see attached notification which assigns me to the Computer Lab: ABCCM_VRQ- Service Hour Policy.pdf), but by the time I received the attached notification I had already accepted the Front Desk position.

Definitions

To properly frame the issue, establishing some definitions would be helpful.

Resident - The VRQ provides supportive homeless services to over 200 veterans and nearly 20 or more non-veterans. Some 50 veterans are Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) residents who have completed the two-year Per Diem Program at the VRQ. PSH residents pay a monthly “program fee” (\$425) to live at the VRQ; PSH residents are not subject to the “service hour” policy and meals are not included. For the purposes of this discussion the word “resident” will be considered to mean a veteran or non-veteran at the VRQ who is subject to the ‘service hour’ policy, unless specifically noted.

Work Schedule - A printed “work schedule” is posted for all Front Desk Managers to see their assigned work shifts. The printed “work schedule” is expressed in a “calendar” week, which runs Sunday through Saturday. (see attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Front Desk Work Schedule.pdf; *I added a red highlight to denote “service hours” for all Front Desk Managers.*)

Work Hours - Hours scheduled by one party (usually an employer) and assigned to another party (usually an employee) to perform a task or service.

Pay Period - The ABCCM accounting department establishes a Pay Period as being two weeks long, beginning on a Thursday and ending on the second following Wednesday. (see attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Pay Period.pdf; and, Armento - Pay Check Stubs.pdf)

Work Week - Commonly defined in the United States as “any seven consecutive 24-hour days”. Using the ABCCM accounting department’s two week Pay Period as a reference and dividing the Pay Period in half, one “work week” is: Thursday through the following Wednesday (seven consecutive 24-hour days).

Service Hours - Hours spent by a VRQ resident performing assigned duties. The ABCCM-VRQ Service Hour Policy as it is written, is based on weekly performance; however the written policy is unclear regarding which weekday the “service hour” week will begin and end; this is important distinction to note. (see attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Service Hour Policy.pdf)

Establishing a very distinct meaning for the words “work week” is necessary for this discussion. An ABCCM paycheck is computed by using an accounting “work week”, while unpaid “service hours” appear to be computed using a calendar “work week”.

Attached are two spreadsheets, both show the same total hours of work performed by myself at the VRQ Front Desk since September 8th, 2015:

(see attached: Armento - Spreadsheet Hours by Accounting Work Week.pdf)

(see attached: Armento - Spreadsheet Hours by Calendar Work Week.pdf)

While both spreadsheets show the same total hours, it is the accounting method of computing work hours verses calendar method of computing work hours that seems to be one source of bias.

For the benefit of equivalence, this discussion will use the accounting definition of a “work week”, rather than the “calendar” meaning of a “work week” unless specifically noted.

Agree to Disagree

By Thursday, November 12, I had voiced my concerns regarding my unpaid “service hours” verses my paid “work hours” to the VRQ staff on four different occasions. It became clear to me that I did not have an advocate at the Veterans Restoration Quarters, so I visited the offices of the U.S. Department of Labor in downtown Asheville. My purpose was to research any “special exemptions” that may be extended to a non-profit organization regarding Labor laws. There appeared to be no special Labor exemptions available to ABCCM due an annual income that exceeds \$500,000 a year. (see page 5 of attached: ABCCM - 2014 Annual Report.pdf)

On November 12th, I next visited the ABCCM’s corporate offices where I voiced my concerns to a woman who appeared to be in Accounting - not Human Resources. I explained to her that I am not getting paid for all of the hours I work. I also mentioned to her that I had just visited the U.S. Department of Labor to research non-profit Labor exemptions and it appeared to me that there were no special Labor exemptions to which ABCCM was entitled.

Upon my return to the VRQ, I was invited to an office meeting with Mary Sczudlo, ABCCM Director of Homeless Services; Mark Monacelli, VRQ Assistant Director; and Randy Gamble, Front Desk Supervisor. During the meeting it was explained to me that I am a “part-time” employee and I am required to perform twenty (20) “service hours”.

During the meeting I voiced some of my concerns:

- As an ABCCM paid employee, I am working 40 or more hours in a week and only getting paid for 16 hours.
- As an ABCCM paid employee, I have the protection of Labor laws and based on my conversations at the U.S. Department of Labor, I believe ABCCM (as a non-profit) is not entitled to any employee Labor law exemptions. I showed the literature that I was given to me by the U.S. Department of Labor to support my research, and I offered the names of my contacts.
- Any VRQ resident who works off campus as a “part-time” employee (working at Bojangles for example), is only required to perform 10 unpaid “service hours” a week, yet, as a paid “part-time” employee for ABCCM I am being required to perform 20 unpaid “service hours” a week.
- Additionally, any VRQ resident who works off campus as a “part-time” employee (working at Bojangles for example), who’s employer requires them to work extra hours during the week”, for a total 40 hours or more, they are exempt from performing any “service hours” that week. The resident just needs to alert their Case Manager of the extra shifts; and, the off-campus employee gets paid for the extra hours of work by their employer.
- As an ABCCM “part-time” employee, my Front Desk hours often total to 40 hours or more in a week, therefore, I should not be require to perform any “service hours”.
- Yet, as an ABCCM “part-time” employee, when I work 40 hours or more in a week, my extra hours are called “service hours” and I am not paid for those hours.
- Also, during this meeting, my accrued “service hours” were communicated to me, to which I responded with the experience of another VRQ resident. He works less than 10 hours a week to satisfy his “service hour” obligation. [I mentioned the instance to illustrate that “service hours” are either: not properly counted and reported, or not assigned pursuant to policy and thereby not equitable to all residents.]
- When the tenor of the conversation, directed at me, turned sharp, I countered with composed intelligence, “if you look up the word ‘exploitive’ in Black’s Law Dictionary, it will provide an example: paying low wages to illegal immigrants.”

Footnote: At the time of the meeting above, I was not aware of the different "accounting verses calendar" computing methods, so when using the word "week" during the meeting I was expressing "calendar week". The only real difference between accounting hours verses calendar hours would seem to be in computing paid over-time hours and "service hours".

At all times, I conducted myself professionally, with integrity and respect. The Director ultimately favored a review of my concerns and offered to tender an ABCCM spreadsheet review of my hours.

In the week following the meeting, I was informed by my Front Desk Supervisor that I am now only required to perform 10 service hours a week.

In the attached, ABCCM_VRQ - Front Desk Work Schedule.pdf, I added a red highlight to illustrate unpaid "service hours", a couple of patterns are revealed: several ABCCM paid employees are not working any "service hours", they have been working paid shifts exclusively, three days on and three days off, a complete disregard of equity.

The same collection of work schedules reveals another pattern: some unemployed Front Desk managers are sometimes scheduled to work 32 unpaid "service hours" in a calendar "work week"; this in excess of the purported 20 hour requirement. From my personal conversations with two of the unemployed Front Desk managers, they would prefer being paid for their hours.

About three weeks after the November 12th meeting, my Case Manager asked me to enter his office, he produced a spreadsheet of my hours. My Case Manager said, the spreadsheet was given to him by the Director of Homeless Services. The bottom line, ABCCM owes payment on just 20 unpaid "service hours". When I asked for a copy of the printed spreadsheet review, I was denied a copy.

As of Wednesday, December 9th, I have worked 13 calendar weeks as a Front desk manager. "Part-time" employees are only required to perform 10 "service hours" weekly. Multiplying 13 calendar weeks by 10 "service hours" totals 130 "service hours" by ABCCM standards. However, ABCCM claims to owe payment for just 20 "service hours". The "Grand Total of unpaid hours" is 223 hours (see the bottom of attached Armento - Spreadsheet Hours by Accounting Work Week.pdf).

ABCCM's accounting proficiency is not inspiring.

The stated Service Hour break point for “part-time” to “full-time” employment is “less than 20 hours/week” (see attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Service Hour Policy.pdf).

For the three “work weeks” following the November 12th meeting, my “work hours” were 32, 30, and 28 hours. For each of those “work weeks” my total “work hours” exceeded the “part-time” threshold of 20 hours, but ABCCM still considers 10 of those “work hours” to be “service hours”.

In week one (32 “work hours” total), I exceed the 10 “service hour” requirement by two hours, but payment for the extra two hours is not offered by the end of the same Pay Period on November 25th. In the third week ending December 2nd, my “work hours” total 28 hours, two “service hours” short of the required 10 “service hours”. I have not been asked to work the extra two “service hours”.

Perhaps the shortage of two “service hours” in week three was resolved by the two extra “work hours” in week one. Except, the “service hour” policy, is a weekly policy, and week one’s “pay period” ended before week three began. Are the extra two “service hours” in week one arbitrarily reconciled weeks later?

ABCCM’s accounting is opaque and seems to conveniently favor ABCCM.

ABCCM accepts the full benefit of the man-hours worked, but does not pay employee wages or taxes on “service hours”. It appears the ABCCM “service hours” policy trumps United States and State of North Carolina Labor laws and Tax laws.

Also, attention to detail is important when reviewing ABCCM business practices. Attached are copies of the ABCCM employee forms I signed on October 1, 2015. For two weeks prior to signing the attached employee forms, I was already working as a paid employee. (see signature dates on attached: Armento - Signed Employee Forms.pdf, and compare the Pay Period Ending: 09/30/2015 on first check number 18929 in attached: Armento - Pay Check Stubs.pdf).

I was in the ABCCM corporate offices at the time of signing the employee forms on October 1st, I was not given an Employee Handbook. Now that I have policy questions, I noticed the lack of an Employee Handbook. What holidays are observed and paid? Does working on a holiday earn overtime pay? Is overtime paid? Are sick days paid or unpaid? How many paid sick days are allowed? Which hours of the week are “service hours”? Where on my paycheck stub does it show the accrued “service hours”.

I did not knowingly, voluntarily, intentionally enter into a contract or agreement that obligated me to accept any alternate currency or compensation as payment for my labor as an ABCCM employee. What other agreements and terms are not fully disclosed or revealed?

Service Hour Analysis

To review, VRQ “service hours” are required, and “service hour” performance earns a resident “Reward Points”; and “reward points” can be redeemed at the Points Room for necessities such as clothing and hygiene products. (see attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Reward Points.pdf)

The “service hour” policy may be a contract for services between two parties.

An offer is made; consideration is given in the form of “goods, food, housing”, in exchange for “service hours”; and a contract appears to be accepted by two competent parties. Offer, consideration, and acceptance are the simple elements of a contract.

However, one party in this case, happens to be a non-profit corporation that is paid to provide the “offer” of supportive homeless services (“goods, food, and housing”) to veterans by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. The other party is a veteran who is often destitute, dejected, hungry, and often willing to submit to any contract for “three hots and a cot”; I know this from my own immediate experience. An easy case of “duress” can be made on behalf of the veteran under these circumstances.

Personally, I think I understand the intention of the required “service hours” policy. 1) Showing up on-time for a “service hour” job will help a resident build a work ethic. 2) Occupying a residents’ time with a “service hour” contribution to their immediate culture will breed esteem. These are important vocational constructs for homeless veterans. And, 3) the daily maintenance and operation of the VRQ campus requires costly man-hours, and the unpaid “service hour” policy would seem to keep campus maintenance and operational costs down.

The “service hour” program is a requirement. (see attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Service Hour Policy.pdf) Provisional exemptions are available to residents who are employed or going to school. But a closer look at the facts suggests the actual practice of the policy may not be *legal*.

- “Service hours” are required for veteran residents and non-veteran residents.

- “Service hours” earn “reward points”.
- The amount of “service hours are provisional upon employment or academic enrolment and determined on an ambiguous weekly schedule.
- There is a “service hour” exemption for a “part-time” employee whose employer needs to extend their “work hours” past 20 work hours in a week. In such a case, the part-time employee is exempt from the “service hour” policy for that week. But, that exemption is not codified anywhere I could find, it was verbally communicated to me by the Director of Homeless Services during the Thursday, November 12th meeting.
- The accounting of “service hours” is opaque to the VRQ resident. When I complete “service hours” I do not get a receipt showing me how many service hours I completed and how many I have accrued.
- ABCCM claims that I am a “part-time” employee and that I have paid “work hours” and unpaid “service hours”, yet there is no statement on my paycheck stub that shows me my total “service hours”.
- A resident cannot perform a random, independent review of his “service hours”. The only time I have had my total “service hours” communicated to me was verbally by the ABCCM Director of Homeless Services during the Thursday, November 12th meeting.
- The accounting of “service hours” is not equitable, I personally know unemployed VRQ residents who work twelve or less “service hours” a week and get full credit for their 20 “service hour” requirement.
- Unemployed residents and ABCCM employees are not paid wages for “service hours” performance, yet ABCCM gains the labor benefit of their man-hours.
- The State of North Carolina and United States Federal taxes are not paid on “service hours” performance, yet ABCCM gains the labor benefit of unemployed residents and ABCCM employees’ man-hours.

As far as I can tell, the “service hour” program is not a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs concept or obligation, it is an ABCCM-VRQ compulsion. There are several veterans here at the VRQ that have come from other Per Diem programs around the country, and from my discussions with these veterans they were not required to perform “service hours”.

Perhaps, the unpaid “service hour” program is a barter contract since no actual money has been exchanged. Well, the IRS requires a “Form 1099-B, Proceeds From Broker and Barter Exchange Transactions” to be filed in barter circumstances. I have not signed any agreement to barter my man-hours.

While researching “service hours, an interesting footnote was discovered: the attached ABCCM 2014 Annual Report (page 2) claims 39,384 volunteer hours in the year 2014 by “residents” of the VRQ. That seems excessive, so some division was necessary, the results:

39,384 volunteer resident hours ÷ by 52 weeks = 757.38 hours per week;
then divide,
757.38 hours per week ÷ by 20 “service hours” a week = 37.86 residents working;
or,
757.38 hours per week ÷ by 10 “service hours” a week = 75.73 residents working.

Over a one week period, 37-75 resident veterans will not voluntarily do anything other than show up to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the VRQ. The resident “volunteer” hours in the ABCCM 2014 Annual Report are more than likely required “service hours”.

And interesting enough, one footnote in the same annual report cites a National Volunteer Association Study, “volunteer hours are computed at \$22.55 per hour”. (see bottom of page 6 in attached: ABCCM - 2014 Annual Report.pdf)

Reward Points Scrutiny

“Reward points” are offered to a resident in exchange for “service hour” performance; and “reward points” can be redeemed at the Points Room. However, the implementation of the “reward points” system is arbitrary, vague, and poorly conceived:

- “Reward points” are earned through “service hour” performance, but not all residents are required to perform “service hours”; not all residents perform the same amount of “service hours”, not all residents are eligible for “reward points”; and not all residents need or use “reward points”.
- The actual value of one (1) “reward point” has been not codified. Presumably, 10 points are equal to one “service hour” for an unemployed resident; and “part-time” employees earn 20 points per “service hour”. On Thursday, October 29th it was announced at an monthly Resident Meeting

that weekly “service hours” earns 200 “reward points”; and “a resident will earn 4 points each day for making up their bed”; but there is no daily authentication of a residents’ bed making performance.

- A resident cannot perform a random, independent review of his “reward points”. There is no receipt tendered to show accrued “reward points” after their “service hour” performance; and there is no monthly statement of accrued “reward points”. The accounting of “reward points” is opaque to the resident.
- And of deep concern, a resident can forfeit “reward points” if it is determined that the resident has committed a VRQ policy infraction - in spite of earning “reward points” through satisfactory “service hour” performance. No alternate compensation is offered. So forfeiture of earned compensation can be imposed with no reprieve.

The “reward point” policy lacks definition, accountability, and it is poorly conceived.

The “rewards point” system seems to be a form of “scrip”, also known as a “truck currency” where individuals are paid in commodities by one party issuing a alternative currency. The policy seems to have some similarities to a monopolistic company store where “scrip” was issued by a company, but it was only redeemable at the company store. One major difference being that the tangible “scrip” can be held and counted by the recipient, as opposed to the “reward points” policy that ABCCM favors.

Just for the record, the VRQ Resident Handbook is attached and it offers even less information regarding the “service hour” program and the “reward points” program than the previously noted attachments on the same subjects. (see attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Resident Handbook.pdf)

Closing

The words in this discussion are purposefully direct, but meant in the spirit of loyal opposition.

During my first week here at the Veterans Restoration Quarters, I quickly noticed how my professional skill set could benefit the VRQ regarding some serious communication weaknesses. Originally, I saw my arrival as “a call to service”. I was born into the traditions of the military life and my professional skill set dovetails

with the needs of the VRQ. My skill set can greatly impact VRQ operations and the veterans in residence; I have even designed a preliminary internet/phone application to that end; I want to be part of the solution. But, we need to resolve the critical issues that are contrary to Labor laws and Tax laws first. Without these issues being addressed and resolved, any other constructive effort on my part is moot.

By creating policies that ignore Labor laws and Tax laws, ABCCM opens a window of risk, liability, fines, and damages that could be catastrophic; opening this window is irresponsible administration and management. In the very least, the policies, practices, and accounting at the ABCCM-VRQ raises some serious red flags.

I went to art school, yet I can count the “work hours” I have performed; I can count my weeks of residency. By December 9th, my Front Desk work performance was 13 weeks old, and by ABCCM “service hour” policy standards I should only owe 130 hours. ABCCM’s compensatory response of paying 20 additional hours on 223 unpaid hours is simple pacification, if not accounting incompetence.

I contend, as an ABCCM employee, I am owed for all hours that I have performed as a Front Desk manager, including training hours.

The core issues of employee compensation, service hours, and reward points needs to be resolved; not just for me, but for all ABCCM employees who are subjected to the same issues.

If the “service hour” and “reward points” policies are to continue, then I suggest the accounting and reporting become systematic and transparent; but I question the legitimacy of these policies. Perhaps some sort of “stipend” would better motivate and serve the residents.

I do not claim to know the legal remedies that are available to resolve the systemic policy issues at ABCCM; but I do know this: *I have no interest in seeing two hundred and forty veterans become homeless again because of poor choices by administration and management.*

If there was a gracefully way to remedy the issues in discussion, I would pursue that course; but the tendency of senior staff is demur, delay, or deliver a summary discharge to any seemingly difficult resident living at the VRQ. Therefore, I am seeking protection from summary resident discharge and discharge from ABCCM employment for seeking what I believe are my legal rights.

I seek protection in the form of a **Temporary Restraining Order** and a **Preliminary Injunction**.

As a homeless veteran, it is reasonable and valid to assert that if discharged from ABCCM's Veterans Restoration Quarters I would suffer irreparable injury:

- homelessness bears the threat of death or serious physical harm by way of freezing temperatures;
- increased risk of suffering from street violence and abuse;
- lack of personal security while sleeping;
- and further suffering from reduced access to health care;
- preparing and storing food;
- obtaining and keeping personal and essential contacts without a permanent location or mailing address;
- loss of clothing and possessions.

There is no undue burden placed on ABCCM to continue providing the established supportive services and employment to myself.

ABCCM is paid by the U.S. Department of Veteran affairs to provide housing, meals, counseling, vocational assistance, and access to the Veterans' Hospital to homeless veterans.

My employment and conduct has been representative of excellence: I report to work on time; I worked my scheduled work hours and unscheduled work hours as needed; I follow my training; I work to be an asset. In fact, as of this writing, I have been promoted to the highest stage of VRQ residency, "Pillar". (see page 6 of attached: ABCCM_VRQ - Resident's Handbook.pdf)

The merits of this case as presented in the above discussion would seem to establish a significant likelihood of success.

ABCCM's willingness to manipulate the labor pool in their care; and ABCCM's creation of policies that ignore Federal and State Labor laws and Tax laws; combined with ABCCM's lack of accounting proficiency would seem to merit a serious examination of senior staff's competency, the policies they create, and ABCCM's accounting practices.

I do work with some of the VRQ staff on a daily basis. Committed, knowledgeable, and professional staff members do exist here at the Veterans Restoration Quarters. Yet overall, I have found ABCCM-VRQ training, procedures, policy creation, performance, accounting, reporting and communications to be sophomoric.

The issues I have raised in this discussion have been carefully considered, thoughtfully organized, and presented in a dispassionate, factual manner. It should not require the caliber of dialogue contained in this discussion to apply for help and relief. The fact that it is necessary is evidence and cause for a serious inquiry.

A brief summary of my dilemma would be: homeless and destitute, offered a respite, formally employed, and only to become exploited labor. Who is the advocate for the veterans existing under these circumstances?

Sincerely,

Gregory G. Armento

Attachments

This document:

ABCCM Wage Hour and Service Hour Representations.pdf

Supporting documents:

ABCCM - 2014 Annual Report.pdf

ABCCM_VRQ - Front Desk Manager Policy.pdf

ABCCM_VRQ - Front Desk Work Schedule.pdf

ABCCM_VRQ - Pay Period.pdf

ABCCM_VRQ - Resident Handbook.pdf

ABCCM_VRQ - Reward Points.pdf

ABCCM_VRQ - Service Hour Policy.pdf

Armento - Pay Check Stubs.pdf

Armento - Signed Employee Forms.pdf

Armento - Spreadsheet Hours by Accounting Work Week.pdf

Armento - Spreadsheet Hours by Calendar Work Week.pdf