



Best Practices

for the successful inclusion of
volunteers of varying abilities

collected and presented by:

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MCCSC Work Study Program for Students with Disabilities

- ❑ For special education students who are unable to develop employability skills without staff support and training.
- ❑ Provides students with opportunities to identify their strengths, interests, and employment goals.
- ❑ Consists of in-class activities, volunteer work experiences in their school building and in the community, and paid employment.

Volunteer Student Placements in Monroe County

- ❑ Boys and Girls Club of Bloomington
- ❑ Buskirk-Chumley Theater
- ❑ Cardinal Stage Co.
- ❑ City of Bloomington Animal Care & Control
- ❑ City of Bloomington Parks & Recreation
- ❑ Community Kitchen of Monroe County
- ❑ Goodwill Industries Thrift Store
- ❑ Hoosier Hills Food Bank
- ❑ IU Hilltop Garden and Nature Center
- ❑ Monroe County Public Library
- ❑ Monroe County Solid Waste Management
- ❑ Monroe County United Ministries
- ❑ Monroe County YMCA
- ❑ People & Animal Learning Services
- ❑ Salvation Army
- ❑ Shalom Community Center
- ❑ The Rise
- ❑ WonderLab Museum of Health, Science and Technology
- ❑ Wylie House Museum

Providing Positive Experiences for Students

- ❑ Opportunities to be involved in the community, interact with others and build new relationships
- ❑ Participating in volunteer training, volunteering in same capacity as other volunteers and receiving same benefits
- ❑ Learning and developing skills that can lead to future employment
- ❑ Increase in self-esteem and personal growth

Participants are more likely to continue in volunteer positions when:

- ❑ They perceive that what they are doing is valuable
- ❑ They receive appropriate equipment and support
- ❑ There is a feeling of belonging
- ❑ There are opportunities for personal growth
- ❑ Mutual expectations are met
- ❑ They are being treated as part of a team
- ❑ They are being challenged

Participants are less likely to continue in volunteer positions when:

- ❑ They perceive they are given “make work” assignments
- ❑ There is a lack of appropriate accommodations or inconsistent or unreliable accommodations
- ❑ There is a failure to recognize the importance of participation; saying “Just sit this one out.”
- ❑ Assignments are “dead-ends”
- ❑ They perceive a lack of effective and open communication
- ❑ They feel they are being ignored
- ❑ There is unwarranted praise that can be perceived as insincere

Questions to address

Consider this...

1. Describe your vision of people with disabilities in your organization.
2. What is your motivation for wanting to involve people with disabilities in your organization?
3. What expectations do you have for your organization and for people with disabilities?
4. What role do you see people with disabilities playing in your organization?
5. How do people with disabilities already participate with your organization?
6. What resources in your organization exist to ensure success for involving people with disabilities in meaningful service?
7. What organizations exist in your community that might be potential partners in supporting your efforts to engage people with disabilities?
8. In what ways do you hope to expand meaningful service for people with disabilities in your organization?

*Adapted from "A Practical Guide For Developing Agency-School Partnerships For Service-Learning"

Elements of Inclusive Environments

- ❑ Accepting and accessible
- ❑ Willingly and proactively provide accommodations
- ❑ Welcome and value people with disabilities for their contributions as individuals. The presence of a disability is not seen as a detriment, but as part of the range of diversity that exists.
- ❑ See individuals, not stereotypes

Building Inclusive Environments

- ❑ Thinking about what someone can do rather than thinking about an individual's limitations
- ❑ Using "people first" language demonstrating respect and an awareness that individuals with physical or mental limitations are people before they are disabled
- ❑ Working to ensure equal expectations and contributions

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- ◆ Always be aware of barriers, both physical and attitudinal (attitudes, fears, and assumptions that prevent people with and without disabilities from meaningfully interacting with one another).
- ◆ Don't assume a person with a disability needs your assistance. Ask first and wait for a reply before acting.
- ◆ Do not interfere with a person's full control over his/her own assistive devices. Don't touch them without permission from the user.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- ◆ When you talk to a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, try to sit down so that you will be at eye level with that person.
- ◆ Be considerate of the extra time it might take a person with a disability to get certain things done.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- ◆ When interacting with a person who has difficulty with attention, short-term memory, or processing information, face the person and maintain eye contact. Use short sentences and give instructions in increments.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- ◆ Speak directly to a person with a disability. If there is an assistant or interpreter present, always direct your comments to the person with the disability.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- ◆ Avoid excessive praise when people with disabilities accomplish normal tasks.
- ◆ Living with a disability is an adjustment, one most people have to make at some point in their lives, and does not require exaggerated compliments.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- ◆ Be patient with a person who has difficulty speaking.
- ◆ Don't pretend to understand when you don't; ask the person to repeat the message.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- ◆ Speak calmly, slowly, and directly to a person who is hard of hearing.
- ◆ Don't shout or speak in the person's ear. Your facial expressions, gestures, and body movements help in understanding.
- ◆ If you're not certain that you've been understood, write your message.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- ◆ Greet a person who is visually impaired by telling the person your name and where you are.
- ◆ When you offer walking assistance, let the person take your arm and then tell him or her when you are approaching inclines or steps or turning.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- ◆ Be aware that there are many people with disabilities that are not apparent.
- ◆ Just because you cannot see a disability does not mean it doesn't exist.

- ◆ Adapted from: Effective Practices Guide to Creating Inclusive and Accessible Days of Service (2002) and The National Service Inclusion Project Inclusion Handbook (2004).

Reasonable Accommodations

1. Changes to facilities, equipment, and schedules: adjusting workstations, providing assistive technology, modifying schedule
2. The provision of special services: interpreters, readers, coaches
3. Involve the individual in determining proper accommodations and explore through trial and error
4. Be creative and flexible!

Interacting with People with Disabilities

- For participants with disabilities, an inclusive environment, effective accommodations, and open communication are critical.

To create and maintain inclusive environments:

- ❑ Hold participants with disabilities to the same levels of accountability as other participants
- ❑ Develop clear expectations and hold participants to these expectations
- ❑ Keep the lines of communication clear and open
- ❑ Develop clear position descriptions that outline tasks, essential functions, and expectations
- ❑ Take action when you see that a participant is not participating

Resources

- ❑ Effective Practices Guide to Creating Inclusive and Accessible Days of Service (2002)
<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/711/InclusiveAccessibleService.pdf>
- ❑ The National Service Inclusion Project
<http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/>
- ❑ Toolbox/Disability Inclusion Manual
<http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/index.php?page=toolbox>
- ❑ National Service Resources: Working with Youth with Disabilities
<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/print/17270>