



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

STEPPING
STONES

WELCOME

Founded in 1963, Stepping Stones is a United Way partner impact organization that provides life strengthening programs for children, teens and adults with disabilities.

OUR MISSION

Stepping Stones' mission is to increase independence, improve lives and promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

OUR LOCATIONS

Stepping Stones offers programs for people with disabilities at four Greater Cincinnati locations.

ALLYN CAMPUS (BATAVIA)

Address: 1414 Lake Allyn Road, Batavia, OH 45103

Programs: Summer Overnight Staycations & Weekend Respite

Parking: Park in the parking lot then walk through the circle drive and follow the sidewalk to Pettengill Hall for volunteer check-in.

GIVEN CAMPUS (INDIAN HILL)

Address: 5650 Given Road, Cincinnati, OH 45243

Programs: Saturday Kids Club, Saturday Young Adults Club & Summer Day Camp

Parking: Park by the lake across from the main campus. Cross street safely at crosswalk and follow the pathways towards Hillside Hall - located at the top of the circle drive.

DREX CAMPUS (NORWOOD)

Address: 2300 Drex Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45212

Program: Adult Day Services

PARKCREST CAMPUS (WESTERN HILLS)

Address: 3330 Parkcrest Lane, Cincinnati, OH 45211

Program: Adult Day Services

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES



All volunteers should have a sincere interest in helping individuals with disabilities.

During your volunteer experience with us, you are responsible for:

- Signing in with staff upon arrival
- Demonstrating appropriate behavior and a respectful attitude at all times
- Exercising good judgement
- Supporting and interacting with participants during program activities
- Helping with the setup and cleanup of program activities
- Supporting participants as they navigate between activity locations
- Notifying staff immediately if you notice an unattended participant
- Following directions carefully
- Asking for help when needed
- Exercising patience
- Respecting boundaries

The following are prohibited:

- Taking any photos or recordings (visual or audio) of participants
- Picking up or carrying participants (including piggy-back rides)
- Using a participant's wheelchair or other belongings
- Use of cellphones
- Posting comments on social media about specific participants
- Possessing and/or using drugs and alcohol
- Willful neglect of a participant
- Fighting or using undue force with a participant, staff member or other volunteer
- Leaving your group during program without prior permission
- Negative and hurtful language
- Stealing

The Program Coordinator has the right to dismiss a volunteer at any time.

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU

WHAT TO WEAR:

- Comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing
- Comfortable, closed-toe shoes
- Coat and gloves in the winter months
- Face mask
- A watch, optional but encouraged

WHAT TO BRING:

- Backpack
- Refillable water bottle
- Packed lunch or dinner that does not require refrigeration
- EpiPen and/or Inhaler, if prescribed

WHAT NOT TO BRING

- Snacks or drinks for participants as they may have food allergies
- Games, gifts or any other item that would cause a distraction in program
- Personal belongings that may be lost or damaged



Stepping Stones is not responsible for personal belongings of volunteers and strongly recommends leaving items locked in vehicle or at home.





COMMUNICATION

The participants you meet while volunteering at Stepping Stones may have different ways than communicating.

Some speak verbally while others may be nonverbal. However, please note - being nonverbal does not mean a participant doesn't have anything to say or that they can't understand you. Those are nonverbal still very much understand what others are saying, but respond using different methods of communication.

During your volunteer experience, please continue to speak naturally and be considerate of the extra time it may take for a response.

Other methods of communication you may encounter are:

- Sign Language
- PECS – A Picture Exchange Communication System where participants point
- iPads or another communication device

BEHAVIORS

Behavior is a form of communication. When a participant acts out or becomes frustrated, it's important to recognize that they're trying to communicate.

If you notice a participant becoming upset or beginning to act out, let a staff member know immediately. Everyone on our staff team has been through training to know exactly how to respond to these situations. It is never your responsibility to intervene when any behaviors arise.

With that said, be respectful of the individual's privacy during these vulnerable moments. Focus your attention on other ways you can help the group and do not make any negative comments.

SAFETY GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information about Stepping Stones' participants is confidential. Never talk about participants on social media networks or release any private information. Never ask participants or parents for their phone numbers.

FOOD AND DRINK

- Staff are responsible for cutting up any food for participants. Volunteers may assist with small things like opening drinks or food wrappers.
- Please don't share any food or drinks with participants as they may have allergies.

MOBILITY

When helping a participant who uses a walker or wheelchair, remember:

- Before moving, always check that seatbelts are fastened and in place
- Always ask the participant if they're ready to move before pushing the wheelchair
- Pay close attention to any surrounding hazards (i.e. cracks in pavement, items on floor, wet pavement, mud, etc.)
- Always walk backward down hills. Staff can demonstrate this for you if needed
- Keep wheelchair and any adaptive equipment within reach when not in use
- Do not sit in or lean onto wheelchairs

PERSONAL INJURY

If you have an accident, need a band-aid or otherwise -- notify the staff in your group and they will direct you to see the nurse, if needed.

PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

Volunteers who bring personal possessions (i.e. cellphones, glasses, jewelry, etc.) are directly responsible for those items. Stepping Stones is not held responsible for any lost, damaged or broken personal belongings. We highly suggest that volunteers leave personal items locked in their vehicle or at home.



EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Stepping Stones uses a color code system to notify others of any emergency. These codes are to only be called by trained staff. Upon hearing a code in program, listen closely and follow staff direction on how you can best help at that time.

PURPLE: Missing participant

ORANGE: Fire emergency

GREY: Severe weather

BLACK: Tornado. Staff will direct you and the group to a tornado-safe location

BLUE: Water emergency. Listen closely to direction from lifeguards

GROUP ASSIGNMENTS AND TRANSFERS

Volunteers are assigned to participant groups based on age, experience level and specific needs. Although we will do our best to place volunteers in their preferred area, it is not always possible.

Please be patient, flexible and willing to get to know new participants!

Any volunteer wishing to transfer to a different assigned area must see the Program Coordinator. We try to accommodate wishes, however - we encourage everyone to stay with their assigned group.

SAFETY MEASURES

- If partnered with a specific participant, NEVER leave that participant alone.
- If a participant has an accident or injury, notify program staff immediately.
- Report any injury to yourself to your group leaders and see the nurse.
- Always know the first and last name of the participant that you are with.

WATERFRONT GUIDELINES

Stepping Stones' Given and Allyn locations have lakes available for fishing and other waterfront activities. In these spaces, participants and volunteers must wear life jackets. Never enter the dock or fenced-in waterfront areas without a certified lifeguard present.

INTRODUCTION TO DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

The participants you will meet while volunteering at Stepping Stones have varying levels of developmental disabilities.

Keep in mind: a disability does not define a person. Our participants have their own interests, personalities and abilities. We celebrate everyone's unique attributes and ask that our volunteers do the same.

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

When discussing disabilities, always use what is known as "People First Language." What does this mean? Putting the individual ahead of their disability.


For example, we say:

- "Person with a disability" rather than "disabled person"
- "Uses a wheelchair" rather than "wheelchair bound"
- "Has autism" rather than "autistic"

WE DO NOT USE THE "R" WORD

We do not permit use of the "R" word or any other hurtful, negative language.

If you have questions on this, we encourage you to visit the InclusionProject.org or ask a staff member for more information.



***Always Remember:
the disability does not
define the person!***

AUTISM

A spectrum of disorders characterized by challenges with socializing, communicating and unusual or repetitive behaviors. Those with autism engage in behaviors like rocking back and forth and flapping their hands. They also have difficulty with changes in routine, during transition periods and in typical social interactions.

CEREBRAL PALSY

Abnormal motor function caused by damage to the brain. Three types are spastic (tight muscle tone), athetoid (uncontrollable fluctuations or writhing movements) and hypotonic (flaccid or weak and floppy muscle tone).

DOWN SYNDROME

A syndrome caused by a genetic abnormality in chromosome 21. Possible intellectual disability ranging from mild to severe.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Below average intellectual function & lack of daily living skills. May also be over or under sensitive to sensory input.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

An anxiety disorder characterized by unreasonable thoughts and fears that promote repetitive behaviors.

SENSORY INPUT

Sensory input includes anything that affects your senses (light, smell, sound, touch, and taste). Those oversensitive find background noises and other sensory factors to be the center of attention - making it difficult to focus on anything else. Those under-sensitive may need an increased level to perceive their surroundings.



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

As a volunteer, you're an important part of our program community! Your time at Stepping Stones supports us in providing the best program experiences possible for all of our participants.

Find some pointers below to prepare you for volunteering with us and how you can be a big help to our staff!

ASSIST & ENCOURAGE

In our programs, help by encouraging participants to participate in the activities and assist them when needed. They might need help picking up a ball, holding a marker or otherwise.

BE PATIENT AND SUPPORTIVE

Participants of all ability level attend our program. During activities, be supportive and exercise patience. Some may need a little extra time to complete a task.

HELP WITH SETUP AND CLEAN-UP OF ACTIVITIES

Our program leaders prepare all activities and supplies in advance and have them waiting for groups in the activity space. At that start of each activity, help our program staff distribute project supplies and tidy up when the activity is complete.

SOCIALIZE & GET TO KNOW OUR PARTICIPANTS

It's important to remember that we all share more similarities than differences. Participants love to talk about their favorite music, sports teams or hobbies. In program, engage them in conversation and get to know what they most enjoy.

USE FIRST/THEN STATEMENTS

Use first/then statements with participants to help them successfully navigate the program schedule. For example, "First we're going to go to the playground, then we can eat our lunch."

MANAGING YOUR SERVICE HOURS & SCHEDULE

Stepping Stones uses Better Impact software to manage our volunteer application.

Better Impact also empowers volunteers to conveniently make their own schedule and track their service hours online.

When applying to volunteer with us, you will create a username and password. These login credentials can be used to access your personal dashboard!

SSVOLUNTEERLOGIN.ORG

Visit SSVolunteerLogin.org and use your Better Impact username and password to sign up for volunteer shifts, cancel dates if needed and track your service hours.

ADDING SHIFTS TO YOUR SCHEDULE

Once logged into your account, visit “Opportunities” from the menu navigation and review all the different options available in a calendar view or list, organized by program location.

When you find an opportunity that interests you, click the “Sign Up” button and it will now be added to your schedule.

CANCEL VOLUNTEER SHIFTS

Stepping Stones understands that schedules change and at times you might need to cancel a volunteer shift. This can also be done at SSVolunteerLogin.org. After logging into your dashboard, navigate to “Schedule”.

There you will see a list of all the shifts you have signed up for. Beside each specific shift there is a “Remove” button that you can click at any time to cancel.

TRACK SERVICE HOURS

Lastly, at SSVolunteerLogin.org you have direct access to your accumulated service hours.

If you have any questions on scheduling or tracking service hours, contact:

Volunteer@SteppingStonesOhio.org

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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