



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.

Summer Day Camp: Check in with staff at the covered tent located by the parking lot entrance. There you will receive a group assignment.

Saturday Clubs: 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 to receive your group assignment
- Demonstrating appropriate behavior and a respectful attitude at all times
- Exercising good judgement
- Supporting and interacting with participants during 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
- Assisting with the personal care of a participant
- Use of cellphones
- Posting comments on social media about participants
- Possessing and/or using drugs and alcohol
- Willful neglect of a participant
- Fighting or using force with a participant, staff member or other volunteer
- Leaving your assigned group without permission
- Negative and hurtful language
- Stealing

Stepping Stones 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
- 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
- One-piece swimsuit and towel (summer months)

WHAT NOT TO BRING

- Snacks or drinks for participants as they may have food allergies
- Games, gifts or any other items for participants
- Personal belongings of value that may be lost or damaged

POLICY ON PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

Volunteers are directly responsible for their personal items (i.e. cellphone, jewelry, etc). Stepping Stones is not responsible for lost, damaged or broken belongings.

We strongly suggest that volunteers leave personal items locked and not visible in their car or at home.





COMMUNICATION

The participants you meet while volunteering at Stepping Stones may have different ways of 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 that 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
- Hand gestures

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 personal information.

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

- Help participants gather their belongings when traveling between activity spaces
- May hold hand or guide participant between activity locations
- Be aware of surrounding hazards (i.e. cracked or wet pavement, item on floor, etc.)
- Keep any adaptive equipment within reach of the participant when not in use
- Do not sit in or lean onto wheelchairs
- Note: A participant in a wheelchair can only be pushed by a staff member

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.

SAFETY MEASURES

- 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 name of the participant that you are with.

WATERFRONT GUIDELINES

Stepping Stones' Given and Allyn locations have lakes for 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.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY GUIDELINES

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Stepping Stones uses a color code system to notify others of any emergency. These are to only be called by trained staff. If you hear a code while volunteering, listen closely and follow directions from staff on how you can best help at that time.

PURPLE: Missing participant

RED: Medical emergency

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

YELLOW: Intruder. Stay put with your group.

GREEN: Behavior

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. Be flexible and willing to assist 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.

MAJOR UNUSUAL INCIDENT (MUI)

Alleged, suspected, or actual occurrences of an incident when there is reason to believe the health and welfare of a person may be adversely affected or the person is placed at a likely risk of harm

UNUSUAL INCIDENT (UI)

An event or occurrence involving a person that is not consistent with routine operations, policies, and procedures, or the person's care or service plan, but is not a major unusual incident.

Exploitation
Misappropriation
Neglect
Physical Abuse
Rights Code Violation

Sexual Relations
Verbal Abuse
Peer-to-Peer Act
Exploitation
Theft

Death
Medical Emergency
Missing Participant
Significant Injury
Unapproved Behavior Support

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 [SpreadtheWord.global](https://www.spreadtheword.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. You may also encounter someone with hearing or visual impairments.



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

As a volunteer, you are an important part of our program community! By sharing your time, you support Stepping Stones in providing the best program experience possible for the individuals we serve.

Find pointers below that will help prepare you for volunteering:

SOCIALIZE & GET TO KNOW OUR PARTICIPANTS

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

ASSIST & ENCOURAGE

Encourage participants to take part in the activity and assist them when needed. They may need help picking up a ball, holding a paint brush, etc.

BE PATIENT AND SUPPORTIVE

Participants of all ability level attend programs at Stepping Stones. As a volunteer, be supportive and practice patience. Some may need a little extra time.

HELP WITH SETUP AND CLEAN-UP OF ACTIVITIES

Our program staff appreciate the help of volunteers when distributing project supplies in an activity space and tidying up before leaving a program space.

USE FIRST/THEN STATEMENTS

Help participants successfully navigate the program schedule by using first/then statements. For example, say "First we are going to the playground -- then we will can eat our lunch."

MANAGING YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS & SCHEDULE

Stepping Stones uses a software named “Better Impact” for volunteers.

When applying, you’ll create a username and password that will allow you to sign into your personal online dashboard to sign up for volunteer shifts and track service hours.

You can login at any time by visiting:

SSVOLUNTEERLOGIN.ORG

HOW TO SIGN UP FOR SHIFTS

Log into your account at SSVolunteerlogin.org and navigate to “Opportunities”. There you will be able to review all the volunteer opportunities available and sign up for shifts that best meet your schedule.

Click the “Sign Up” button to add a shift to your schedule.

SUBSCRIBE TO REMINDER EMAILS

Volunteers can sign up to receive weekly email reminders for upcoming volunteer shifts. To sign up, log in at SSVolunteerLogin.org. Then travel to “My Profile” followed by “Contact Information” where you’ll find the option to subscribe for reminders under “Subscriptions”.

CANCEL VOLUNTEER SHIFTS

We understand that schedules change and you might need to cancel an upcoming volunteer shift. To do so online, login at SSVolunteerLogin.org and navigate to “Schedule”. Beside each specific shift on your schedule, there’s a “Remove” button 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

Facebook.com/SteppingStonesOhio

Twitter: @SSOhioInc

Instagram: @SteppingStonesOhio

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