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Volunteer Facilitator Recruitment

What Does a Volunteer Facilitator Do?

Nurturing Program Facilitators provide education and support to parents and children in small groups or one-on-one in homes. Many, though not all, agencies which provide Nurturing Programs use a combination of paid and volunteer staff. Generally, paid staff is highly experienced and serve as Coordinators and Lead Facilitators, and volunteer staff get experience with using the curriculum and techniques while serving as Co-Facilitators.

Volunteers have the responsibility to:

- Learn the weekly "lesson" and prepare to facilitate it properly
- Be consistently nurturing, dependable and committed to the families in their program
- Meet regularly with the team leaders, supervisor and program consultant
- Continuously develop their skills as nurturing human beings and facilitators

Depending on a particular agency's set-up, volunteers will need to commit from 4-6 hours per week for 14-20 consecutive weeks.

Why Become A Volunteer Facilitator?

Some of the benefits volunteers get are:

- The satisfaction of giving something back to the community
- The pleasure of building caring relationships with children, youth and parents
- Strengthening one's own nurturing skills and family life
- Learning about family dynamics and group dynamics
- Developing skills that can lead to jobs and careers

What are the Steps to Becoming a Volunteer Facilitator?

- 1) Selection:** To be a Nurturing Program Facilitator requires a certain commitment of time and energy, and a good match between the program's philosophy and goals and those of the facilitator. Therefore, volunteers send in their application form and have a personal interview to determine the "fit" between them and the Program.
- 2) Training (Classroom):** The key to success in working with families is the skill of the facilitator. The Nurturing Network requires facilitators to complete 24 hours of training. Trainees learn: effective child rearing practices; techniques for working with adults, children and teenagers; and group work, counseling and teaching strategies. Trainees who attend the entire 24 hours will graduate with a certificate of completion.

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- 3) **Placement, Service and Training (On-The-Job):** Graduated trainees are placed, whenever possible, in the agency of their choice as Children's Group Facilitators, Parents' Group Facilitators, or Home Visitors/Parent Aides, according to their preference. Some volunteers enter classroom training already knowing the agency in which they will be placed after training; others find a placement during or after training. Volunteer Facilitators must commit to serve through at least one complete "cycle" of the Nurturing Program, and to attendance at team meetings and consultations if required by the agency in which they are placed. The placement agency is expected to provide the volunteer facilitator with the supervision, assistance and support necessary to provide a high quality program to families and to continue the training and skill development of the volunteer.

- 4) **Opportunities to Continue as a Volunteer or Paid Staff.** Many facilitators find that the Nurturing Program adds a lot to their lives, and they continue to volunteer beyond one cycle of the program. Sometimes, to develop their skills even further, they volunteer for a different agency, or become a Children's Facilitator if their experience was as a Parents Facilitator, etc. Occasionally agencies hire experienced volunteer facilitators to become Lead Facilitators or Program Coordinators. In addition, nurturing skills training and facilitation experience have helped some volunteers to find jobs in social service agencies or to advance in their current positions.

Is There Help with Child Care and Other Costs of Volunteering?

Volunteers who are selected for training and who commit to and follow through on at least one cycle of the program can be eligible to receive stipends. Examples might be:

- On completion of Classroom Training: \$20 for travel and other expenses, and an additional \$20 for child care.

- On completion of one Program cycle: \$10-\$15 per session up to a total of \$210 for the while program, to offset travel, child care, etc.

Tips For Recruiting Community Volunteers

- Offer media programs showing clients being served by volunteers. Do an easy experiential NP activity or two to give them a "taste" of the Nurturing Program.

- Present a program about the project on TV, radio and through print outlets. Send out press releases.

- *Never* walk away from any meeting without doing a "commercial" about the program and passing out flyers. Take names and phone numbers of potential volunteers.

- Arrange for volunteers to make presentations to other groups about their experiences.

- Ask other local organizations to help your recruitment effort by putting you on their meeting agendas or posting information on their bulletin boards and newsletters.

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- Speak the language of the people you are trying to recruit. Ask yourself, “What do we do that would be of interest to them?” and highlight this in your presentation.
- Tell why you are personally committed to the project you are recruiting for. It personalizes the discussion as well as stimulates possible motivation.
- Always recruit volunteers on the basis of the needs of the clients, not the needs of the organizations. People work for people, not for things.
- Tell people what they will be doing, how long they will be expected to do it, and who will benefit. *Never* minimize the work or time needed.
- Avoid “first warm body through the door” recruitment. If you can’t get the right person, don’t take anybody.
- Ask current volunteers to recruit others.
- Think of jobs aside from facilitating that volunteers can do, such as organizing materials or preparing meals. Give potential volunteers a range of choices.

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Screening Facilitators

Tips for Screening Potential Facilitators

There are five basic tools for assessing the potential of an applicant to excel at Nurturing Program facilitation. Any of these can be used in combination, according to the needs of the organization, with the ideal being to use all five:

- 1) Giving a formal written application
- 2) Administering the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) (and, perhaps, the Nurturing Quiz)
- 3) Conducting a personal interview
- 4) Checking personal and professional references
- 5) Observing during and assessing following Facilitator Training

The Application of the AAPI

Whether the applicant is applying for a paid or volunteer position, a formal organized application procedure will let that person know right away that you value the job that is to be done, that it cannot be done by just anyone, and that he/she will be important to the organization. The AAPI-2 (or its Spanish version, the IPAA) can help you screen for potentially high-risk attitudes and behaviors in Facilitators, just as it can in parents.

An application and AAPI-2 can be sent by mail, with a welcoming cover letter. Be sure to include a job description and outline the hours of service and training required. The applicant can bring these back to you at the time of the personal interview.

The Personal Interview

What to Look For...

- Attitudes and Personal Characteristics
- Knowledge and Skills
- Congruence and Fit

The Facilitator Screening Interview Form lets you rate the applicant on twenty-three factors. You may not be able to form a clear impression of all of these factors during the interview: on some you may have to wait until the person is in training. However, using the form, as well as carefully reviewing the application form and AAPI-2, and using that information to guide your interview, you should be able to learn much of what you need to know in a relatively short time.

Listen attentively and observe non-verbal behavior as well. You may learn a lot about the applicant's life management skills, for instance, for how s/he handles setting up the interview appointment, getting there, bringing completed paperwork, and so forth. You might learn something about his/her warmth and ability to connect with people by how you and your staff are greeted and how the applicant says good-bye.

Let your intuition as well as the "facts" guide you. Ask yourself: "As a parent or a child, would I feel comfortable with this person, trust them with my problems, and seek them out for help?" "What might this person be like as a teammate?"

It can be very helpful to have another staff person, advisory board member or experienced volunteer participate in the interview as well. Each of you can rate the applicant independently and then share your impressions.

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Sample Interview Questions

How did you hear about this position, this program?

What interests you about it?

What did you imagine would be involved in this position?

What do you hope to get out of it for yourself?

How would you define nurturing? What qualities does a nurturing person have or exhibit?

What experiences have you had working with adults or children (counseling, Scout leading, self-help support groups, church youth groups, etc.)?

What do you imagine adults (children) need most in a facilitator?

What strengths, talents or special gifts would you bring to this role?

What do you imagine might be your areas of weakness or limitations?

What makes for a positive, successful group (or home visit)?

What makes for an unpleasant or unsuccessful group (or home visit)? How can that be prevented?

Under what conditions do you work best? What qualities do you most appreciate in co-workers? In supervisors?

How do you handle conflicts? Hurt feelings? Anxiety or stress?

How comfortable are you in handling these feelings in others? How might you handle them as a facilitator?

What is your philosophy of discipline with your own children?

Is there anything in your background that you could draw on to help you empathize with the program participants?

Are you able to make a time commitment for the full ___ weeks, plus training and consultation meetings?

Will you have any problem arriving at ___ and staying until ___ each week?

Do you have child care or would you want to bring your children to the session? If you do want to bring them, how would this affect your ability to 1) focus on the participants and 2) participate in team meetings after each session?

How do you feel about working (or volunteering) for \$___ per week?

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me about the program or the Facilitator role?

Some Additional Special Questions**For potential Parent Facilitators:**

How might you handle, or respond to, the following situation:

- Parent says, "I lost it with my kids yesterday."
- Parent never speaks in group.
- Parent monopolizes group time with personal issues and stories.
- Parent says, "What is wrong with spanking? My parents spanked me and I turned out okay. Besides, I usually deserved it."
- Parent discloses for the first time that s/he was sexually abused as a child.

For Potential Children's Facilitators:

How might you handle, or respond to, the following situation:

- Child refuses to join the circle, hides under a table.
- Child does art project, says, "It's ugly," rips it up and then starts to rip up other children's work.
- Child refuses to join the circle, creates chaos while the activity goes on, and refuses to stay in time out.
- Child discloses sexual abuse during an activity.
- Child speaks for brother or sister consistently.