

Talking Points to introduce the Independent Living Curriculum, Facilitators Guide, and Volunteer Training Plan

How did we get here?

- An RFP was developed to have a standard curriculum for Senior Corps' Senior Companion and RSVP project directors (and other qualified individuals) who have volunteers delivering independent living services to seniors who will in turn train their volunteers.
- The Corporation released a request for proposal in 2007 for a Contractor to develop a Train the Trainers Curriculum for Senior Corps Programs for training volunteers to work in independent living projects.
- JBS International, Aguirre Division (JBS) won the contract and worked with the National Senior Corps Association to develop this curriculum and facilitator's guide that augments this curriculum.
- The National Conference (June 1, 2008) served as the launch for this curriculum and guide.
- In 2009, CNCS Senior Corps office contracted with JBS to form a Working Group of 25 Senior Companion and RSVP project directors interested in sharing their experiences developing volunteer training strategies using the information and methods from the curriculum. The goal of the Working Group was to work collaboratively with JBS to develop tools to assist Senior Corps projects to train volunteers providing independent living services. The Working Group developed, and is currently piloting, the volunteer training plan.

What are these materials?

Providing Independent Living Support: Training for Senior Corps Volunteers consists of the curriculum and guide:

- The curriculum consists of the following material:
 - Train the Trainers Independent Living Curriculum
 - Detailed facilitator's script and notes including the outline and estimated times
 - Support materials (handouts)
 - Exercises (instructions and worksheets)
 - PowerPoint slides
 - The *Facilitator's Guide* is customized to complement the curriculum
 - The *Volunteer Training Plan* can be used with the curriculum and Facilitator's Guide to plan trainings over a period of time.

What do the Workshop Modules include?

- The curriculum consists of eight workshop modules, each workshop module designed for a 60-75 minute group training.
- Each module can be independently presented and contains a warm-up activity, key content information, an exercise for skill development, and a final worksheet for reflection. Each module contains additional tips for the facilitator and a feedback survey.

- The eight modules cover the following topics:
 1. ***Types of Independent Living Services Delivered by Volunteers.*** SCP and RSVP volunteers deliver a wide variety of services to support seniors living independently in the community. This module describes some of the most frequently provided services and volunteers' contributions to delivery of these services.
 2. ***Becoming an Effective Care Partner: Helping Volunteers Recognize Benefits to Themselves.*** This module describes some of the research findings on mental and physical health benefits of volunteering, and offers tips for maintaining health and enthusiasm for volunteering.
 3. ***Understanding the Physical, Emotional, and Social Challenges Experienced by Clients.*** This module looks at some of the challenges clients face, including loss or limitations around mobility, self-care, activities of daily living, and companionship, and offers tips to better assist them.
 4. ***Effective and Respectful Communications.*** Many clients are frail and may be dealing with several chronic conditions in addition to taking a number of medications. Depression, anger, confusion, and hearing difficulty are some of the many issues that affect how they communicate. This module reviews tips and techniques volunteers can use to respectfully and effectively engage and interact with their clients.
 5. ***Understanding Dementia.*** This module looks at what is normal in the way of cognitive shortcomings and what are signs and symptoms that indicate a more serious problem. Participants will learn basic information about the different types and causes of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, and how they can help clients and their family members/caregivers learn to cope.
 6. ***Paying Attention to Body Language.*** Body language, or nonverbal communication, is the use of body movements or gestures relevant to communication. This module describes nonverbal communication and cultural aspects of body language, and offers tips for volunteers to better use and respond to this type of communication when assisting clients.
 7. ***Home Safety.*** This module provides information about household hazards and basic steps volunteers can take to help their clients make their homes safer, as well as be better prepared to respond to natural disasters and emergency situations.
 8. ***Beyond Companionship Services: Helping Clients Improve Quality of Life.*** This module offers tips, ideas, and suggestions that volunteers can use to help clients improve quality of life and alleviate loneliness and social isolation, feelings of uselessness or helplessness, and effects of physical or cognitive limitations.

What is the Facilitator's Guide?

- The Facilitator's Guide is designed specifically for Senior Corps staff who will be implementing the curriculum. This guide:
 - Includes tips, strategies, and ways to work with a variety of different types of group participants.
 - Is geared toward the needs of new facilitators, but veterans may find it useful for improving their group facilitation skills.
 - Is arranged to help you quickly find answers to particular questions, browse those sections you are interested in, or read the Guide from front to back.
- The Facilitator's Guide consists of four topical chapters. Each chapter is subdivided into sections using a "*Frequently Asked Question*" format. The subject areas of these four chapters are described below:
 - **Chapter 1: Logistics.** Detailed suggestions that address how to determine the location, how to develop program announcements, budget limitations, participants' schedules, local regulations, and any number of unanticipated conditions.
 - **Chapter 2: Adult Learning, Training Techniques and Application.** Brief examination of what we know about adult learners, different learning styles, and a review of strategies employed in the modules to help you become a successful facilitator, including how to manage challenging situations that are commonly encountered in facilitating workshops.
 - **Chapter 3: Group Management.** How to create a safe learning environment, manage conflicts, and motivate and support participants.
 - **Chapter 4: Training Feedback and Facilitator Self-Assessment.** How to create opportunities for participants to comment on their learning experiences, both during and after events, and what to do with the information.

What is the Volunteer Training Plan?

The volunteer training plan was designed to assist SCP and RSVP project directors and volunteer station managers train volunteers that provide independent living services to frail seniors and persons with disabilities. The volunteer training plan, available online, is a process that consists of six components to assist project directors plan and schedule trainings for a period of time (quarterly, annually). Components include:

1. Training Requirements: Reviews the basic training requirements for SCP and RSVP projects.
2. Preparation: A worksheet helps you consider and prepare for the training needs of different volunteers and how/where the training should be conducted.
3. Independent Living Curriculum and Facilitator's Guide: This component links to the curriculum and facilitator's guide to review and consider.
4. Training Content and Resources: A document of possible training topics that can be used to both prioritize training and to consider resources (who might facilitate or contribute).

5. Volunteer Training Plan and Schedule: Use this form to pull your information together into a volunteer training plan and schedule. Plan for the quarter or the whole year.
6. Individual Training Agenda: A sample template and description to help you develop individual training agendas.

How can I access these materials?

The Curriculum, Facilitator's Guide, and volunteer training plan can be found at the Resource Center website: www.nationalserviceresources.org; search for "independent living training", or go directly to:

- <http://nationalserviceresources.org/indep-living-training-curriculum> for the curriculum and guide
- <http://nationalserviceresources.org/indep-living-training-plan> for the volunteer training plan

Materials can be printed from the website, or downloaded and copied to your computer or a CD.

Questions that may come up about the curriculum:

Is this supposed to replace the training I already provide to my volunteers?

No, you can use this to supplement the training you already provide.

Do I have to use all eight modules? Can I just use the ones I need?

You do not have to use all eight modules; use only those modules that will be helpful to you. The modules can be used individually or in combination.

Are the modules complete? Do I have to provide anything?

In a few cases (Modules 1, 5 and 6), you will need to provide materials for the exercise. You will also need standard workshop materials such as access to a blackboard, poster paper, or newsprint, and chalk/markers. "Facilitator Tips" are provided in each module that suggest additional activities you might try during the workshop or variations on the included exercises, or other handouts you might provide such as a list of local resources for seniors. However, these tips are only suggestions; you can conduct the workshop without them.

Can I modify the materials in the modules to fit my group and program?

Yes, customize your workshop! Some of the curriculum material, such as the worksheets and the PowerPoint slides, are available in a format that will allow you to modify them electronically. Other sections of the curriculum are in a PDF format that does not allow electronic changes. However, you can still add your own notes to the PowerPoint facilitator notes, choose and modify handouts, activities and exercises, slides, and lecture pieces that meet the needs of your group.

We don't do group trainings. Our volunteers come in one or two at a time and we train them individually. How can I use the curriculum?

The modules were designed for group training, but you may still find the lecture notes and handouts helpful for training new volunteers individually. The exercises were designed for small groups or pairs; however, you could try them yourself with a new volunteer (e.g. two-person role playing, brainstorm problem-solving), or ask a seasoned volunteer to assist.