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# Providing Independent Living Support

## Training for Senior Corps Volunteers

### Curriculum



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 

# Providing Independent Living Support: Training for Senior Corps Volunteers

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## Introduction

*Providing Independent Living Support: Training for Senior Corps Volunteers* was developed to provide a standardized and easy-to-use training curriculum for Senior Corps' Senior Companion and RSVP project directors who have volunteers delivering independent living services to seniors, to enhance the services delivered by the volunteers. The curriculum meets the need for creative and practical strategies and ideas that volunteers delivering independent living services can adapt when serving their own clients.

*Providing Independent Living Support: Training for Senior Corps Volunteers* consists of the curriculum (eight workshop modules) and accompanying Facilitator's Guide. The Facilitator's Guide is designed to support the facilitation of the workshop modules in the curriculum. Therefore, you are encouraged to use both documents when preparing for and conducting the workshop modules.

## Curriculum

### Content and Design

Each of the eight workshop modules is organized as a 60-75 minute session. These workshops can be conducted individually or in combination of two or more. The module topics are presented as follows but do not need to be implemented in this order:

1. *Types of Independent Living Services Delivered by Volunteers*
2. *Becoming an Effective Care Partner: Helping Volunteers Recognize Benefits to Themselves*
3. *Understanding the Physical, Emotional, and Social Challenges Experienced by Clients*
4. *Effective and Respectful Communication*
5. *Understanding Dementia*
6. *Paying Attention to Body Language*
7. *Home Safety*
8. *Beyond Companionship Services: Helping Clients Improve Quality of Life*

Each module includes a session outline with estimated times, facilitator notes and instructions, optional PowerPoint slides with abbreviated facilitator instructions, worksheets for activities and exercises, informational handouts for participants, and a feedback survey. The structure of each workshop follows this format:

- Introduction with a brief warm-up activity
- Short lecture (before and/or after the exercise)
- Exercise for skill development
- Short reflection activity that summarizes the topic or helps participants consider an important related issue
- Closing with opportunity for feedback

*Providing Independent Living Support: Training for Senior Corps Volunteers* incorporates methods to fit different adult learning styles and varied approaches to presenting material. Included are large group discussions, small group cooperative exercises that stress practical application, brainstorming, and role-playing. The curriculum also provides opportunities for individual or pair reflection, and sharing of experiences. Every module utilizes experiential learning by asking participants to consider hypothetical but realistic client problems and client-volunteer situations. In several modules, participants are asked to identify the problem described and offer possible solutions. Additionally, the workshops appeal to different senses and use a multi-media approach (easel pads, PowerPoint, props).

The workshops were designed for group training, but the lecture notes and handouts can also be helpful for training new volunteers individually.

## **Preparation**

Most of the material needed to conduct each workshop is provided. However, facilitators will need standard training materials such as access to a blackboard or easel paper, chalk/markers, and in two workshops (Modules 1 and 5), the facilitator will need to gather materials for the exercise.

To prepare for facilitating a workshop module, the following steps are recommended:

**Step 1:** Review the module at least one week before conducting the workshop.

- Look closely at the exercises and the “large group callout” sections. Understand how the activity works and the key messages to be covered in processing that activity.
- Review and choose the handouts you wish to use. The handouts elaborate on the main points of the lecture, build on lessons from the exercise, offer participants practical tips and suggestions, and provide additional resources to further participants’ knowledge.
- It is not essential to use the PowerPoint presentation provided. Facilitators may prefer to copy information from key slides onto easel paper (e.g. exercise instructions) and post them on the wall, make transparencies for an overhead projector, or make handouts of the slides.

**Step 2:** Modify the workshop as needed.

- Review the time estimates in the session outline and adjust the time and number of activities according to previous experience with the group. For instance, if participants enjoy small group discussions and they are productive, consider increasing the suggested time allotments for the exercise and omit another section of the workshop, such as the reflection piece.
- If necessary, add or omit text in the facilitator’s notes. The PowerPoint presentation contains abbreviated facilitator’s instructions and can be modified electronically.

- If needed, revise the exercise worksheets, particularly those that ask participants to consider hypothetical client situations and problem-solving exercises. The facilitator may prefer to substitute actual situations for the descriptions, or develop new hypothetical situations relevant to volunteers that will encourage discussion on an important topic (e.g., client-volunteer cultural differences and potential misunderstandings that arise, ethical dilemmas around confidentiality that a volunteer may encounter, etc.).

**Step 3:** Practice and know the material; the facilitator should be comfortable with all of the content.

- The facilitator should be able to emphasize key concepts in discussions and answer most questions that come up around the topic. Of course, the facilitator is not expected to know everything but should be committed to help participants find answers.
- The facilitator will need to give clear directions for the activities, keep track of time, and distribute materials at different points in the workshop. For example, if an exercise calls for small group collaboration, the facilitator will need to know how he/she will form the small groups, the questions participants will be asked to consider, how/if answers should be written down, and how much time to give participants.

## ***Facilitator's Guide***

The Facilitator's Guide is designed for facilitators who will be presenting the curriculum, and includes tips and strategies for working with a variety of participants. The Facilitator's Guide is geared toward the needs of new facilitators, but veterans may find it useful for improving group facilitation skills. The Facilitator's Guide consists of five chapters subdivided into sections using a "Frequently Asked Questions" format. The five chapters include:

**Chapter 1: Logistics.** Discusses considerations involved in setting up the training: time and location, program announcements, supplies, budget limitations, and unanticipated conditions that might influence the success of the event.

**Chapter 2: Adult Learning, Training Techniques and Application.** Discusses training methodologies that address different learning styles, adult learning theory, and tips for managing challenges such as timing.

**Chapter 3: Group Management.** Discusses how to create a safe learning environment, manage conflicts, and motivate and support a diverse group of participants.

**Chapter 4: Distance Learning and Web Conferencing.** Discusses distance learning technologies and web conferencing as an alternative or supplement to face-to-face training. Reviews training needs and considerations, including how to keep the training interactive and participants engaged.

**Chapter 5: Training Feedback and Self-Assessment.** Discusses why and how to evaluate the workshop and use the information to improve of your training event and facilitation skills.