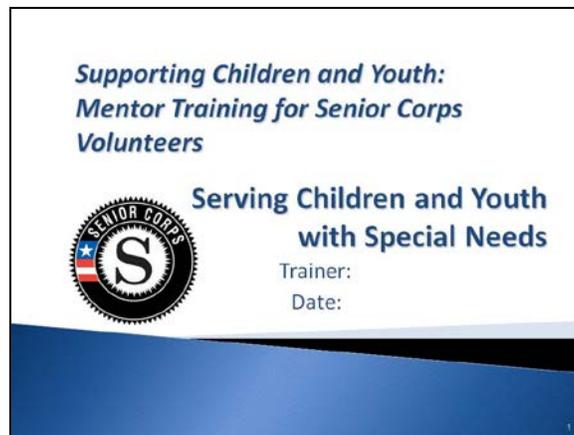


Module 6 Handouts

The following handouts are included in this module:

1. What are Learning Disabilities? (optional)
2. Exercise Role Play Cards
3. Tips for Helping Children and Youth Build Resilience
4. Reflection: Use Your Past Experience for Inspiration
5. Recommended Resources for Volunteers Assisting Children and Youth with Special Needs (optional)
6. Training Feedback Survey



What are Learning Disabilities?

- Learning disabilities are disorders that can affect the ability to understand or use spoken or written language, do math, coordinate movements, or direct attention.
- People may have one or more disorders, and symptoms can vary from mild to severe.
- Learning disabilities are usually not recognized until a child reaches school age.
- 8 to 10 percent of American children under 18 years of age have some type of learning disability.
- Identifying the child's particular strengths and weaknesses is the first step to getting the right kind of help.
- Special education involves teaching learning skills by building on the individual child's abilities and strengths, while correcting and making up for disabilities and weaknesses.
- Other professionals (e.g. speech and language therapists) also may be involved in the child's special education.

Types of Learning Disabilities

Dyslexia is sometimes referred to as a reading disability or reading disorder. A person with dyslexia may have trouble understanding written words and spelling, for example. Listening to recorded text (e.g. books on tape) helps some people compensate.

Dysgraphia is a disorder where a person may have trouble writing letters or writing within a defined space. Using a computer to write helps some people compensate.

Dyspraxia is a disorder where a person may have great difficulty planning out the steps, and following through with tasks that require fine motor skills (e.g. drawing, buttoning, writing, reading, or speaking). They may have trouble with balance, vision, perception, or memory.

Dyscalculia refers to a wide range of learning disabilities involving math. A person may have trouble solving arithmetic problems and understanding math concepts.

Auditory Processing Disorder affects the way the brain processes sounds. A person may have trouble learning to read, remembering things they have heard, following spoken directions, blocking out background noise, and telling the difference between words that sound similar.

Visual Processing Disorder affects the way the brain interprets what is seen. A person may have trouble reading, telling the difference between things that look similar, and hand-eye coordination.

Role Play Card #1

You are 8 years old. You have a learning disability that makes it very hard to read. You go to a special tutor for part of the school day. You believe the other students think you are dumb and so you keep to yourself.

Tell your mentor: "I hate school. Why do I have to learn this junk?"

Role Play Card #2

You are 10 years old. English is not your first language but you are learning. You did really well at your old school, but now you are at a new school. Recently, a group of kids has started calling you names and making trouble for you. You don't want to go to school anymore.

Tell your mentor: "I don't belong here. I wish I could go home."

Role Play Card #3

You are 10 years old. Your father is a Marine. He has finally come back from his deployment but he isn't the same easy-going person. You also have a hard time controlling your temper and have been getting into trouble at school lately.

Tell your mentor: "My mom is always mad at me. I get blamed for everything! That stupid dog shouldn't have come in our yard anyway. I was just trying to teach it a lesson."

Role Play Card #4

You are 15 years old. You have a hard time paying attention in school and have never done well there. You have started to learn to play another instrument and feel good about it.

Tell your mentor: "I am getting really good at the guitar now. I think I have a good chance at making it. Finishing high school would be a waste of time at this point."

Role Play Card #5

You are 14 years old. You live with your grandparents because your mother is in jail. Your father has remarried and his new wife "doesn't like kids." Lately, you have made friends with some older kids who like to stay out late. You love the attention.

Tell your mentor: "Sorry I'm late. I was out with Leah and Jake and they are so fun! Jake took his brother's car and we found a party downtown. It took me a while to get up this morning."

Role Play Card #6

You are 9 years old. People always seem to be getting angry with you. For example, they say you don't listen and you interrupt when someone is talking. Sometimes they say you are trying to make them mad, but you don't know what they are talking about.

Tell your mentor: "Josh's mom said I can't come over anymore. No one wants to be friends."

Role Play Card #7

You are a 13 year old girl. You live with your father who works at two tiring, low-paying jobs, six or seven days a week. Your mother lives in another state. Last month, you met a boy you really like. He is 17 and your father doesn't know about him.

Tell your mentor: "David is so awesome. Our relationship is getting serious now so I won't be able to spend as much time with you."

Role Play Card #8

You are an 11 year old boy. You live in a rough neighborhood with your grandmother and two younger brothers. Recently, some older boys have been pressuring you to join their gang. You don't want to join and are afraid of them.

Tell your mentor: "I don't want to join, but if I do, no one will mess with me or my family. I need to be a man now."

Tips for Helping Children and Youth Build Resilience

In a nutshell, resilience is the ability to recover from hard times or move forward despite difficulties. Resilient people tend to have these traits:

- Social competence (the ability to develop positive relationships)
- Problem-solving skills (the ability to plan, think creatively, and ask for help if needed)
- Autonomy (e.g. strong sense of personal identity and ability to act independently)
- A sense of purpose and future (e.g. goals, purpose, optimism, hope for the future)

As a trusted, caring adult in the child/youth's life, you can help build his/her resilience in many ways. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Support the child/youth's efforts to develop friendships.** Encourage him/her to get involved in positive group activities where s/he can make new friends and develop good social skills. Talk to him or her about friendship – that friends support and respect each other, have fun together, cooperate and make decisions together. If s/he has difficulty with social situations or feels awkward, in a playful way, act out (role play) situations (e.g. meeting new people, getting into a group, or disagreeing in a respectful way).
- **Help the child/youth learn to stand up for him/herself.** Show that it is okay to say “no” or disagree. Encourage his/her efforts to express feelings in a respectful manner.
- **Help the child/youth think through problems and solutions.** Ask: What is the problem? What would you like to happen? What ideas do you have for solutions? What would happen if you did that? What are the steps you need to take to solve the problem? What help do you need?
- **Teach the child/youth to feel comfortable asking for help.** We all need help at times, but no one likes to ask. However, self-advocacy is a necessary skill to learn. Show the child/youth that everyone needs help from time to time, and this is how we support one another and live together. In fact, most people are happy to help.
- **Encourage the child/youth to contribute.** This might be as simple as helping someone with a task, or getting involved in a goal-oriented group project or a service activity.
- **Help the child/youth uncover or develop talents.** There may be groups or activities you can encourage that support his/her talents and interests. Ask questions and show that you support his/her efforts and believe in his/her abilities.
- **Let the child/youth experience accomplishments and learn from mistakes.** This means you must resist temptation to do too much. Trial and error is the way we learn, and when we can get something to work, we have a sense of control and achievement.
- **Be the child/youth's cheerleader.** You can inspire optimism by showing that you believe in him/her. Convince the child/youth that s/he can do it, and offer help if needed.

General Tips for Serving Children and Youth with Special Needs

- **Everybody is unique.** Get to know the child/youth as an individual. While some diagnosis may be helpful in understanding a child/youth, labels can limit our ability to see the full range of a person's talents and gifts.
- **Know the child/youth's strengths and build on them.** Focusing activities on strengths rather than deficits shows that you believe in the child and helps him/her experience success.
- **Use your creativity!** This may involve finding new ways to communicate or do something.
- **Take advantage of support and resources available to you.** Talk to your supervisor about how you can best assist this person. Ask questions if you are unsure or uncomfortable. As you gain knowledge and experience, you will feel more confident.
- **Keep in mind you are a role model for all the children.** When others see you engaging someone with special needs in a positive way, they will feel more comfortable.
- **Help them make connections.** Encourage children and youth (with and without special needs) to play/work/study together. Provide assistance if needed.

Reflection: Use your Past Experience for Inspiration

No doubt you have overcome difficult times during your lifetime, maybe even as a child. Take about 5 minutes to think about a problem you overcame in the past.

1. Was there someone who helped you? Who believed in you and stood by you during this time?

2. Write down 3 things that that person did or said that helped you:

1)

2)

3)

3. Is this a story you could share with a child/youth? If not, think about a different problem you overcame in the past and someone who helped you. (Of course, the story should be “age-appropriate” and something that you feel comfortable sharing.)

Recommended Resources for Volunteers Assisting Children and Youth with Special Needs

This is just a sample of some of the many informational resources about children and youth with special needs. Many agencies/organizations have a section on their website “for parents” that contains helpful information in plain, jargon-free language.

Child/Youth Health (general)

KidsHealth provides information and resources for health, behavior and development from before birth through teen years. Pages are designed for children, youth, and parents:

www.kidshealth.org

Child Welfare

Childhelp® is a national nonprofit organization that focuses on the prevention and treatment of child abuse: www.childhelp.org.

Child Welfare Information Gateway, a service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families by connecting child welfare, adoption, and related professionals as well as the general public to information, resources, and tools covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and more: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/>

The *National Center for Children in Poverty* (NCCP) is a public research interest group that aims to promote the economic security, health, and well-being of low-income families and children. NCCP publishes research on child poverty by state, adolescent health, early care and learning, immigrant families, and other topics: <http://www.nccp.org/>

Disabilities (general)

The *National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities* (NICHCY) is a clearinghouse on disabilities and related issues. NICHCY provides information on disabilities in children and youth; programs and services; IDEA, the nation's special education law and No Child Left Behind, the nation's general education law; and research-based information on effective practices for children with disabilities. www.nichcy.org. NICHCY also provides information specifically for **military families**:

<http://www.nichcy.org/FamiliesAndCommunity/Pages/militaryfamilies.aspx>

University of Illinois Extension provides information and resources on different special needs, including causes, characteristics, and suggestions for serving children and youth:

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/specialneeds/>

Disabled World lists famous people with different disabilities. Children often like to know famous people who have similar situations: http://www.disabled-world.com/artman/publish/article_0060.shtml

Autism

Thinking in Pictures is a book by Temple Grandin, a highly accomplished woman with autism. Published by Doubleday; 1st edition (October 1, 1995)

Autism Now is a PBS NewsHour series and website developed for a general audience. The website contains resources, personal stories, and project ideas:

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/news/autism/>.

Learning Disabilities

The *National Center for Learning Disabilities* is a nonprofit organization that provides information and resources to assist children, adolescents and adults with learning disabilities:

<http://www.nclld.org/>. The National Center for Learning Disabilities also provides information specifically for **military families**:

<http://www.nclld.org/at-school/your-childs-rights/advocacy-self-advocacy/military-families-and-students-with-ld--an-overview>

GreatSchools is a national nonprofit organization that provides research and tools for parents and educators of children with disabilities: <http://www.greatschools.org/special-education.topic?content=1541>

Richard Lavoie: How Difficult Can This Be? Understanding learning disabilities (PBS Video 1996) is a learning disabilities workshop DVD from F.A.T. City Workshop, Eagle Hill Outreach, WETA Washington, DC.

Mental Health

Power of One: Using Adventure and Experiential Activities Within One-On-One Counseling Sessions is a book by D. Lung, G. Stauffer, A. Alvarez. Published by WoodNBarnes: OK (2008).

The *National Institute of Mental Health* (NIMH) provides information on child and adolescent mental health topics, including prevention and treatment, up-to-date research and resources. NIMH is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/index.shtml>

Cope Care Deal is a mental health site for teens that provides books and online materials on topics including depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, schizophrenia, and suicide prevention. The website is administered with the assistance of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania: www.copecaredeal.org.

Mental Health America (formerly known as the National Mental Health Association) is a national nonprofit that promotes mental health and wellness through advocacy and public education: www.nmha.org.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

The mission of the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration* (SAMHSA) is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness. SAMHSA provides up-to-date research and information for professionals and the general public, including resources on prevention, treatment, and recovery for children, youth, and adults: <http://www.samhsa.gov/>.

SAMHSA also provides information specifically for **military families**:

<http://www.samhsa.gov/MilitaryFamilies/> .

Domestic Violence Prevention

The *Family Violence Prevention Fund* (FVPV) works to prevent violence within the home and in the communities. FVPV raises awareness on this issue and offers prevention programs aimed at children and youth, immigrant women, and others: <http://www.endabuse.org/>

Homelessness

The *National Center on Family Homelessness* is a national nonprofit that offers fact sheets, publications, resources, and toolkits for programs aimed at families, children, and veterans:

<http://www.familyhomelessness.org/>

Training Feedback Survey

Please help us improve our training sessions by providing feedback on the training you attended. Thank you!

Training/Session Name: _____ Date: _____

Lead Facilitator: _____

Program you serve with: Foster Grandparent RSVP Other: _____

Please rate this session using the following scale:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The subject matter was presented effectively.					
2. The facilitator was knowledgeable.					
3. The facilitator responded to questions.					
4. There were enough opportunities for discussion.					
5. The written materials are useful.					
6. The session met my expectations.					
7. As a result of this training, I gained new knowledge applicable to my volunteer assignment.					
8. I plan to apply what I learned at this session.					

9. What did you like best about this session?

10. What would have improved this session?

Thank You! Your feedback will help us to improve our training!