Supporting Children and Youth: Mentor Training for Senior Corps Volunteers

Serving Children and Youth with Special Needs

Trainer:
Date:
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the session, participants will better understand:

- Key special needs of children/youth that volunteers serve
- Situational or family circumstances that can contribute to challenges that children and youth face
- How volunteers can help children and youth build resilience
Children and Youth with Special Needs

- How is it different than when you were in school?
- What concerns do you have?
Learning Disabilities are disorders that affect the brain's ability to receive, process, store, respond to, and communicate information.

- Do not reflect how smart a person is (IQ)
- Can impact how someone learns to read, write, hear, speak, and do math.
- May affect social skills and behavior
- Can range from mild to severe and are lifelong
- No cure, but there are ways to overcome challenges (specialized instruction, accommodations)
Special Needs

- Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Intellectual Disability
- Emotional Disturbance (mental health)
  - Depression, Anxiety
- Physical Disabilities
  - Hearing, Sight, Speech, Mobility
Special Needs

Examples of Challenging Circumstances

- Children/Youth in Poverty
- Family Trauma
  - Domestic abuse, parent substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, divorce
- Active Duty Military Families
- English Language Learner
  - Migrant, new immigrant, refugee
Resilience is the ability to bounce back after difficult times.

Traits of resilient people:
- Social competence
- Problem-solving skills
- Autonomy
- A sense of purpose and the future

Resilience is the ability to bounce back after difficult times.

What makes the difference?

- A positive connection with another person
- Caring relationships
- High expectations
- Support
- Opportunities to contribute

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Roadmap to Seclusion and Restraint Free Mental Health Services*
Role Play Exercise

Instructions:

- Get together in pairs for this role play. You should each have one Role Play Card.
- One person will be the mentor; the other person will be the child/youth described in the Role Play Card.
- After 5 minutes, switch roles with your partner. The person who was the mentor should use their Role Play Card and be the child/youth described.
- Be ready to discuss your experience.
Role Play Debrief

Participants who played the “mentor” role:
- Which tip from the handout did you try out? How did it work?
- What would you do differently? What more did you want to know to help the child/youth?

Participants who played the “child/youth” role:
- What did the mentor say or do that helped? What is the message that you got from the mentor?
- What would have improved the talk?
Be a cheerleader. Let the child/youth know you believe in him/her.

Know his/her strengths and interests and build on them.

Provide encouragement but let the child accomplish things on his/her own.

Create an environment where s/he can talk honestly with you; don’t judge.

Talk to your supervisor to find out how best to assist the child/youth.

Talk to your supervisor if you need help or advice.
Who believed in you during a difficult time?

What did that person do or say to help?
The future is completely open, and we are writing it moment to moment.

-Pema Chodron