



**Teen REACH Staff/Mentor/Volunteer
Handbook**

Introduction

Welcome

We wish to welcome you and thank you for your desire to serve the youth of our community. We look forward to working with you to provide students the opportunity to enrich their lives through maintaining a safe and engaging environment. Teen REACH is often the turning point in our students' lives and can be a very rewarding place to work. We often see our efforts rewarded as struggles transform into successes.

Teen REACH

Teen REACH is not a latchkey program. It is a long-term intervention program for students who are at-risk for problems that could inhibit future success. Students are enrolled in the program with the understanding that the students and their families make a commitment to participate in all facets of the program. We view the staff, volunteers, school, student, family, and even the community at large as partners in the success of the student. Teen REACH provides a variety of services to support students and their families that include; academic assistance, life skills, parent involvement, recreation, sports, cultural activities, positive adult mentors, and service learning. In order to provide solid programming and an engaging environment our staff and volunteers will employ all of these core services.

Teen REACH

Coordinator

Site Supervisors

Staff Duties

An effective staff is a key factor in having a successful program. Knowing what's expected of us, whether it is staff or students, is the first step in being effective. Having the freedom to be creative and express our talents is the second step. The following are general guidelines of what we are expected to do and how we are expected to be while we are doing it. These guidelines provide structure to help us be more effective in working with youth, while being general enough to afford us freedom to use our creativity.

While working with Teen REACH you are expected to be engaged in one or more of the following duties:

- Build rapport with students, be respectful
- Be an appropriate & positive role model
- Assist with recreational and life skills activities
- Help maintain order and structure during activities
- Tutor students in academics
- Maintain communication with Site Supervisor, report any issues immediately

While engaging with students or others you are expected to be able to:

- Respectfully communicate with adolescents and adults
- *Display professional behavior*
- Be a team player
- Maintain appropriate boundaries

Professionalism

You are Youth Development Staff, which puts you in the category of professionals that work with children, such as teachers, social workers, and counselors. As professionals there are certain types of conduct expected for your position.

- Scheduling - We expect our staff to be where they are supposed be, when they are supposed to be there. We understand that many of you have very hectic schedules. If for some reason you will be late or can't come in we need you to notify the supervisor as soon as possible. You are also not allowed to be on the premises when you are not scheduled to be.
- Dress - The general rule with professional dress for Youth Development Staff is business casual. Jeans can be acceptable as long as they are in good condition with no holes or rips. Dress that is not acceptable includes; low cut or mid-drift blouses, clothes that are

too short or too tight, pajamas, t-shirts or other clothing with questionable printing, hats or hoodies up indoors, or visible piercing jewelry other than ears. If a staff member will be teaching recreation or sports appropriate athletic clothing is acceptable.

- Conduct - Students often learn by example. As Youth Development Staff part of our job is to set a good example. Always using appropriate language, resolving conflicts respectfully, and displaying a positive attitude are expected from Teen REACH Staff. Negativity towards students or other staff members is unacceptable.
- Work duties - As part of setting a good example, we expect our staff to remain on task and stay engaged with the students. Unacceptable work behavior would be: not following the supervisor's directions, using a cell phone during work time, or doing personal business during work time.

Teen REACH Policies

The following Teen REACH policies relate to staff working in the program. These policies are important for the safety and efficiency of our program. Below is an overview; the actual policies are at the end of this Manual.

- Medical Issues
 - Administering medications - *No medication of any kind, over the counter or prescription, will be administered by Teen REACH staff. The one exception is that staff may assist students with their emergency asthma medication.*
 - Asthma - *Children will have access to their asthma sprays at all times in the program. All staff will become familiar with the Asthma Policy and Asthma Plan.*
 - Head Lice - *Staff will observe signs of head lice and immediately inform supervisor*
- Child Abuse - *We are all Mandated Reporters, Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-2873*
- Staff Communication - *All staff working in the Teen REACH program will report directly to the Site Supervisor upon arriving at the site. Any concern or issue will be brought to the attention of the Site Supervisor as soon as the circumstances allow.*

- Positive Discipline - *Discipline is the on-going process of helping children to develop self-control in order that they may manage their own behavior in socially approved and acceptable ways.*

How staff will implement Discipline:

- *Avoid problems by offering an organized, stimulating program.*
- *Reinforce positive behaviors.*
- *Model appropriate behavior.*
- *Redirect to a more acceptable behavior.*
- *Set clear limits.*
- *Offer choices.*
- *Ignore negative behavior (when appropriate).*
- *Acknowledge good behavior.*
- *Use “time-outs” or removal of child from the area, for short period of time.*
- *Include the child in the resolution of conflict.*

*The following discipline techniques are **PROHIBITED**:*

- *Physical punishment.*
- *Screaming at child.*
- *Ridiculing a child or the child’s family.*
- *Blaming, teasing, insulting, name calling or threatening the child with punishment.*
- *Withholding food, rest, or restroom breaks.*
- *Withholding of affection or positive attention.*

Discipline/Problem Solving

Our goal is to provide a structured and safe environment with a warm and inviting atmosphere that motivates our students to achieve their potential. Consistent discipline is key to achieving that goal. Remember, discipline is the process of helping children develop self-control; discipline does not equal punishment. Setting clear ground rules and schedules lets people know what to do and where to go. Giving students a say in setting the ground rules instills ownership and helps them to make good choices. We believe in

supporting students' choices. Should a student make an inappropriate choice we work to make sure that student is held responsible for the natural or logical consequences of the choice. *Only Site Supervisors are allowed to administer consequences. Other staff are to follow the discipline policy and problem solve with students when appropriate.* Problem Solving is Teen REACH's primary method of discipline. Problem solving is a respectful way to enable students to fix their mistakes.

Our discipline procedure has four components:

- Expectations - If students don't know what they are supposed to do or how they are supposed to behave they will have the tendency to get into trouble. Students not only need to know the rules and procedures of the program, they need to be reminded consistently, beforehand. Reminding students of the rules after they have gotten in trouble is reactive not proactive. Frequently going over the rules and procedures, at the beginning of the day, lets students know what is expected of them and that you are going to be consistent in enforcing them. This doesn't have to be a daily practice but at least once a week or especially before something not ordinarily on the schedule like a field trip or guest speaker.
- Observation - It is easy to get distracted while working with students. A major part of our job is to keep the entire student population safe, physically and emotionally. We need to stay alert to possible problems that could arise. The goal is watch for signs of problem behavior and redirect students before the problem escalates.
- Documentation - When a student does choose to behave inappropriately the behavior needs to be documented. For this purpose we have behavior documentation form or yellow sheets. Documentation can be brief and to the point, just the details of what happened. We document specific observable behaviors only. If Sally said Johnny hit her in the face with the ball and we didn't see it, we don't write, "*Johnny hit Sally in the face with the ball.*" Rather, "*Sally reported that Johnny hit her in the face with the ball. Sally had a red mark on her face.*" Also, we are not therapists, we don't diagnose - "*Johnny has been having troubles at home that could be leading to aggression.*" These sheets will help us

intervene with good students who might be having some other difficulty and allow us to identify and dismiss any student not appropriate for our program. We also use these sheets to assist in determining student eligibility for field trips. A binder to file the documentation forms will be kept in the Teen REACH room. Any time you have a discipline problem with a student document the behavior, if necessary report it to a site supervisor or the coordinator, and file the yellow sheet in the binder.

- **Problem Solving** - Once a student is observed behaving inappropriately we should process with the student using the Problem Solving method. Problem Solving is a respect based, solution focused process that can be used as a formal or informal method depending on the difficulty of the problem. Sometimes when a student is acting out it can be difficult to respond respectfully. When we properly use a problem solving method it separates the person from the behavior or problem. It can send the important message that a person can make a mistake and fix it and not be the mistake. We can then focus on a way to solve the problem instead of focusing on why a person did what they did. While it is important to identify the problem, we only use this step to assist in developing viable solutions. An important guideline of this step is that a person can never be the problem!

Building Relationships (Rapport)

The goal of building relationships with our students is to use our leadership skills to motivate our students to be successful. Building relationships means that we have rapport with our students. Rapport building is not about being well liked or letting our students get by with making poor choices. Being a good leader is a balancing act between enforcing the rules and building rapport. Traditional leadership principles are based on power, having to power to influence another's behavior. However, there are different types of power. Expert power means you have knowledge the other person needs. Legitimate power means that you are in an agreed upon position that allows you to dictate what others do. Having these types of power might be necessary to enforce the rules but don't help in building rapport. Another type of power is called referent power, which means that people relate to you and trust you. Referent power is

developed by listening, being respectful, and being genuine. Building rapport does not mean you can't set limits with young people but it means that you are willing to respectfully listen and be affected by what they say. Being able to assertively communicate is an important skill for a Youth Development Worker to learn. Practicing these skills will help you to earn the mutual respect that will make you an effective professional in this field.

Setting Boundaries

One of the pitfalls of trying to build rapport is losing the boundary between you, as a staff person, and the youth. It can be difficult to enforce the rules after you and a student have become closer through rapport building. You may feel you are breaking the student's trust, and the student may even tell you so. However, it is respectful to set appropriate boundaries with young people to let them know what you can and can't do as a staff member. As a staff member, it's ok to listen to a young person share personal thoughts and feelings. It is even ok to genuinely share yourself as long as you are doing it to relate to build rapport. Students are not our confidants; they are not there to solve our problems. We must also remember that we are mandated reporters. If a student shares that someone is harming them, they are harming or planning to harm himself or herself or someone else, or they know someone else is being harmed it must be reported immediately. This must be done even if you've promised confidentiality. Being a professional means knowing your boundaries and not crossing them.

Professional Development

Professional Development is an essential and indispensable process. It is an experience shaped by the willingness and readiness to change at a personal and programmatic level. The purpose of Professional development is to open our awareness to new ways of doing things, to build our skills, and to help improve the program overall. Some Professional Development activities are offered in-house, but it is ultimately your responsibility to continue the life-long pursuit of improving yourself.



Observable Behavior Form
Teen REACH Program

Student: _____

Date: _____

Referring staff: _____

Observable behavior	X	Notes
Lack of respect for self, others or environment		
Not following school rules		
Not following directions		
Out of area		
Inappropriate language		
Excessive horseplay		
Refusing to work or participate		
Other		



DECISION MAKING/PROBLEM SOLVING MODEL

The Decision Making/Problem Solving Model provides a process that people can use to help in making decisions or solving problems. It can be used for most situations in life.

STEPS IN THE PROCESS

1. **CHECK YOUR THINKING** – What is your present level of well-being? Before you can start the process of problem solving it would be advisable to be in as good a mood as possible. That way you will be more solution focused. Your thinking will be clearer and more efficient. If you can't wait until your thinking is more relaxed seek assistance from someone who is clearer.
2. **DEFINE THE PROBLEM** – State exactly what the problem or situation is which needs to be dealt with. This may seem obvious, but often people do not identify the real problem.
3. **CONSIDER ALL ALTERNATIVES** – list all possible ways to resolve the problem or possible decisions that could be made. List at least 3 alternatives because people with problems often only see in black and white. Frequently, not always, the third option is best.
4. **CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF EACH ALTERNATIVE** – List all the possible outcomes for each alternative course of action that could be taken. Many alternatives can yield both positive and negative consequences. It is important to list the pros and cons for each proposed action. Neglecting to consider the consequences often compounds problems.
5. **CHOOSE ONE OR MORE ALTERNATIVES** – After carefully considering the consequences of each alternative, with a relaxed mind, choose the most appropriate alternative.
6. **IMPLEMENT THE DECISION** – In simple words --- “JUST DO IT!” Do what is necessary to carry out the decision you have made. Many people have trouble putting their decisions into action. Make a commitment to your decision and set a timeline to put it into action.
7. **EVALUATE THE RESULTS OF THE DECISION** – Evaluate whether or not you are satisfied with the results of the action you took. If you are, leave well enough alone. If not, go back to step one and relax your mind, then proceed to step two (you may have identified the wrong problem) and go through the process again.



Problem Solving/Decision Making

The Three C's

1. **Clarify** the problem or the decision to be made.

2. **Consider** the possible alternatives (think about the different things you might decide to do) and the consequences of choosing each alternative; collect any additional information needed. (If you are solving a problem, think up as many solutions as possible.)

3. **Choose** the best alternative and take the necessary action. Be sure to follow through on your decision.



