

SETTING & MAINTAINING VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS



Are you ready to bring volunteers into the afterschool setting to work alongside youth? Have you considered what steps to take to prepare both youth and adults for success? Before jumping ahead to volunteer recruitment, it's important to think about what you really need from your volunteers and why. You'll want to take advantage of many opportunities to successfully ready volunteers even before they're engaged. As with anything, your volunteers will benefit from clear, positive, and intentional communication about what is expected of them from the very beginning and throughout their engagement.

As the teacher, administrator, or coordinator of a STEM volunteer opportunity it's important to have a clear sense of what your program is designed to do, for whom and how. (links to planning your STEM Mentoring Program doc. & Program Timeline and Needs Assessment) Once you have an understanding of your program's purpose you'll find it's much easier to identify others who are passionate about and well-suited to your cause.

With a clear program plan you can first begin setting and maintaining volunteer expectations as soon as you start recruiting volunteers. But before you begin sharing opportunities to engage in your STEM program or activity make sure you think through your needs and expectations of volunteers. You should plan to clearly identify these expectations in a volunteer position description (link to sample).

To successfully recruit potential volunteers, a program representative should clearly articulate program goals, and volunteer expectations in both written and verbal communication. This initial contact is critical to a volunteer's successful experience, as unfulfilled expectations can lead to negative feelings that may prove damaging for participating youth. When a program focuses on targeted recruitment, higher numbers of potential volunteers are initially contacted, closely managed, and successfully transitioned to the program's screening process. A low attrition rate means that a majority of interested volunteers are successfully screen and placed in the program.

After you've established expectations for program engagement it's important to review these expectations with potential volunteers and community stakeholders in the form of an in-person orientation and training (link to). An orientation is an informational broadcast where volunteers learn the purpose of your program, and expectations. For example, during orientation you might review the afterschool schedule and why it's important for volunteers to show up before students do. During training volunteers learn and practice skills to help them succeed in their role. See the Teaching and Working with Adults Section of this toolkit for more information on training adults.

After you've reviewed established program expectations, it's important to make sure volunteers understand their role and can commit to relevant guidelines. This is easy to establish using a volunteer commitment statement ([link to](#)). Both the volunteer position description and commitment statement become helpful volunteer management tools.

Of course a volunteer's commitment to and interest in your program isn't the only information you'll want to verify before placing youth in their care. Volunteer screening is essential to prioritizing youth safety. You'll find more information and resources about volunteer screening recommendations in the SAFETY section of this resource. Part of maintaining appropriate expectations with volunteers means not only setting expectations but effectively managing them. If you notice a volunteer is unable to meet one or multiple expectations outlined in your commitment statement, it's time for a conversation to learn what's happening and what if any changes need to be made to support his or her on-going success. Check out the resource section [Managing Continued Volunteer Engagement](#) for more tools and resources.