



# THE ABILITY EXPERIENCE

A PI KAPPA PHI PHILANTHROPY



BERGSTROM  
FOUNDATION

## VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIP MANUAL 2019

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## **THE ABILITY EXPERIENCE MISSION, VISION & VALUES**

### **Mission**

We use shared experiences to support people with disabilities and develop the men of Pi Kappa Phi into servant leaders.

### **Vision**

Create a community, one relationship at a time, where the abilities of all people are recognized and valued.

### **Values**

Abilities, Teamwork, Empathy and Integrity

## VOLUNTEER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

At The Ability Experience, we aim to give every member of Pi Kappa Phi an Ability Experience *experience*. Chapter volunteer partnerships create an opportunity to spread our impact to new communities and provide the ongoing opportunity for members to engage with individuals with disabilities. This program was designed to provide the opportunity for all Pi Kapp members to get involved in their chapters and help to bring our two-part mission to life!

### GETTING STARTED

#### How to find an organization:

A great place to start is doing simple Google search of organizations in your area. You will want to look for organizations that support individuals with disabilities. Some places to start your search would be your local chapters of organizations like The Arc, Best Buddies, or Special Olympics.

#### Initiating Volunteer Partnerships

Think of it like recruiting a prospective member to join your chapter. If you don't express interest in them, they will not be interested in you. Whether you're starting from scratch or approaching an organization that you've worked with before, don't be afraid to put yourself out there!

The key is being able to articulate the mutual benefits of the partnership and the reasoning behind your interest. MUTUAL BENEFITS

#### Sample Emails

*Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member of the fraternity Pi Kappa Phi. I lead the philanthropy effort for a local chapter of college men here at \_\_\_\_\_ College/University. We are looking for ways to get involved here in the \_\_\_\_\_ area, and believe that volunteering with your organization would be a great way to do that. I would love the chance to speak with you to coordinate the needs of your organization for local volunteers and how we could best fit into those spaces.*

## Chapter Responsibilities

An effective partnership is a two-way street. What a partner organization expects from a chapter may vary based on the type of organization. A chapter may be able to volunteer their time to enhance the organization's facilities, spend time during the week mentoring individuals with disabilities, hosting joint-events with the organization or all of the above! When trying to ensure that all needs are met, reviewing the following items are a good place to start:

- *Frequency* - How often will the chapter be needed? Are there times of the year that require more/less volunteers?
- *Density* - How many men would be best per visit? Is there a minimum or maximum number of volunteers that would be appropriate?
- *Types of Project*
- *Materials/Resources*
- *Labor/Construction*

Often times, partner organizations make specific accommodations in preparation for events with a chapter. In the instance that a chapter won't be able to send volunteers, make sure that you let them know! Many times, they begin to count on having the regular chapter helping them and not having it could be extremely detrimental. Communication is key!

It is important to know that some organization disallowing volunteers to take photos on-site. Make sure you inquire about these policies and inform your men of any limitations prior to arriving.

## Sustaining Partnerships

Chapter leadership always experiences annual transitions, making documentation a key factor in continuing partnership success. Keeping a one-pager with the contact information for the organization, the address, and a brief explanation of the intangibles goes a long way. Being able to set up dates for the next semester is a good rule of thumb for aiding with the transition process.

Like any good partnership, it takes time and effort to keep the relationship strong. Incorporate events early on in your semesterly calendar and don't go extended periods of time without communicating with the organization. These relationships should be able to grow over years and get better. Progress takes patience and persistence but will eventually lead to a very mutually beneficial partnership for both the organization and your chapter.

In order to establish a culture of philanthropy, where everyone seeks out participation, you'll need to incorporate your volunteer relationship into your associateship program. All members coming into your chapter should be familiar with the organization and comfortable to continue volunteering as an active member. Invite associates to volunteer with their big brothers for their first time help them get comfortable at friendship visits.

## Circle of Giving Grants

This grant is an opportunity for chapters to financially impact a local organization serving people with disabilities with whom they visit regularly throughout the year. All chapters recognized for having a volunteer relationship, and have raised \$50 per man or \$5,000 during the calendar year (whichever is lower), will be eligible to apply for a Circle of Giving Grant to present up to 25% of annual chapter fundraising to their Partner Organization.

## Friendship Visits

A Friendship Visit is defined as any interaction between men of Pi Kappa Phi and individuals with different abilities. Often times, these are simple events that enable these shared experiences to take place. Whether it be spending an hour helping at an organization or planning an Ability Dance, we hope to provide you with guidance for you to be successful. Below you will find a list of event ideas you may find helpful.

- Event Ideas: Bowling, Ability Dance Party, spirit night at a sports game, wheelchair basketball, kickball game, wiffle ball, painting, partner with an organization's event, volunteer in a special needs classroom.
- What to Consider:
  - **Ratio of brothers to participants.** Will it be overwhelming? Are there enough brothers at the event?
  - **Contingency plan:** If you're planning an outdoor event, you will need to have a backup just in case of bad weather.
  - **Pictures:** Make sure the organization allows pictures as many require photo releases.
  - **Phones:** A balance needs to occur with phone usage. They are great for capturing moments, but members should focus on interacting and not overusing their phones.
  - **Timespan:** A great visit can be tiring for everyone involved. A suggestion is to limit a visit to 1-2 hours long.
  - **Food:** If your event involves food make sure to account for allergies and other needs.
  - **Communication:** An event runs smoothly when you work closely with the organization and expectations are clear.

## Interacting with People with Disabilities

It is normal to be hesitant the first time interacting with individuals with disabilities, but they are just like you! Here are a few things to remember, but most importantly, be yourself!

- Talk with the person with a disability, not their spouse, parent or assistant.
- Maintain the eye contact and body language you would normally use during any other conversation.
- Assume nothing! If you have a question about what to do, what language to use, or what assistance they might need, the person with the disability is your first and best resource. Do not be afraid to ask their advice.
- Be patient - not only with the person with the disability, but with yourself. Frustration may come from both sides of the conversation and needs to be understood and dealt with by both parties.
- The most important thing to focus on during a conversation with a person who has a disability is the overall goal. It is simply communication between two individuals. Since about 20% of people in our society have some type of disability, you never really know when that will be a factor in one of your conversations.
- Put the person first. You are interacting with individuals with disabilities; not a disabled person.
- If you are asked to fold, carry or store a wheelchair, treat it with the same respect that you would if you were holding someone's eyeglasses. They are similar in many ways.
- When you meet someone seated in a wheelchair (or any person), extend your hand to shake if that is what you normally do. A person who cannot shake hands will let you know. You may shake a fist and that is okay. They will appreciate being treated like you treat everyone else.
- When speaking to someone who uses a wheelchair, remember to give the person a comfortable viewing angle of yourself. Having to look straight up is not a comfortable viewing angle.
- Every person with a developmental disability will display characteristics differently, with varying levels of intensity. Not all people with developmental disabilities look disabled, nor will they act in the same way.
- People with developmental disabilities may not have any speech or may have very limited speech. Avoid frightening a person with developmental disabilities, as they may be unable to respond because of fear. They may, however, respond to questions, especially those requiring a "yes" or "no" answer. Try to find a common hobby or liking, such as a sport, sports team, etc.
- Do not make assumptions about the intelligence of persons with Cerebral Palsy. Cerebral Palsy is characterized by an inability to fully control motor functions. It is neither progressive nor communicable and has no relation to intelligence.
- The preferred terminology is "disability" or disabled, not "handicap" or "handicapped." Never use terms such as "retarded, dumb, psycho, moron" or "crippled."
- Remember to put people first. It is proper to say "person with a disability", rather than "disabled person."

- If you are unfamiliar with someone, or their disability, it is better to wait until they describe their situation to you than to make your own assumptions about them. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics, and your assumptions may be wrong.
- Unless you know that you are speaking with someone who has a cognitive or hearing disability, use your normal speaking speed. It is always a good idea to speak clearly, without mumbling or slurring words.
- Don't be overly friendly, paternalistic, or condescending when speaking to a person with a disability. Most people, even if they are unable to speak to you in a "normal" manner, have normal or above-average intelligence. Your use of abnormal speech or simplistic language will lessen the chances of having a successful conversation.

## **People-First Language**

### **Who Are People with Disabilities?**

People with disabilities - are first and foremost, people - people who have individual abilities, interests and needs. They are ordinary individuals seeking to live ordinary lives. People with disabilities are moms, dads, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, friends, neighbors, coworkers, students and teachers. About 54 million Americans - one out of every five individuals - have a disability. Their contributions enrich our communities and society as they live, work and share their lives.

### **What Should You Say?**

Be sensitive when choosing the words you use. Here are a few guidelines on appropriate language:

- Recognize that people with disabilities are ordinary people with common goals for a home, a job and a family. Talk about people in ordinary terms.
- Never equate a person with a disability - such as referring to someone as retarded, an epileptic or quadriplegic. These labels are simply medical diagnosis. Use People-First Language to tell what a person HAS, not what a person IS.
- Emphasize abilities not limitations. For example, say a man walks with crutches, not he is crippled.
- Avoid negative words that imply tragedy, such as afflicted with, suffers, victim, prisoner and unfortunate.
- Recognize that a disability is not a challenge to be overcome, and don't say people succeed in spite of a disability. Ordinary things and accomplishments do not become extraordinary just because they are done by a person with a disability.
- Use handicap to refer to a barrier created by people or the environment. Use disability to indicate a functional limitation that interferes with a person's mental, physical or sensory abilities, such as walking, talking, hearing and learning. For example, people with disabilities who use wheelchairs are handicapped by stairs.
- Do not refer to a person as bound to or confined to a wheelchair. Wheelchairs are liberating to people with disabilities because they provide mobility.
- Do not use special to mean segregated, such as separate schools or buses for people with disabilities, or to suggest a disability itself makes someone special.

- Avoid cute euphemisms such as physically challenged, inconvenienced and differently abled.
- Promote understanding, respect, dignity and positive outlooks.

## Promoting Relationships through Social Media

- Be sure to check rules the organization has when it comes to taking pictures. Some individuals cannot be photographed. You want to make sure you are in accordance to their policies.
- Responsible for working with Historian to get pictures/videos for social media
- Create a posting ideas list.
- Utilize all the chapter's social media platforms.
- Coordinate with partner to either tag and share each other's post.
- Reach out to local news outlets, to have them come out and do a story on events you do with your partner.
- Be sure to encourage brothers to share pictures and mission moments on their personal accounts to help promote what the chapter and the organization are doing together.
- If you are doing an event, reach out to National Office Communication team at [commteam@pikapp.org](mailto:commteam@pikapp.org) to do Snapchat and Instagram takeovers.
- Submit any social media content to your Regional Director to be highlighted on The Ability Experience official social media accounts.

## Partner Organizations

For some, the hardest part of the process is finding a local organization to reach out to! Every community has a local opportunity. For very remote communities, if there are not many organizations, there will at least be some annual opportunities (a Special Olympics event for example). Here is a shortlist of places to inquire about an opportunity in your area:

### *Best Buddies*

- There are 83 campuses where both Best Buddies and Pi Kappa Phi have a chapter. You can search for a chapter near you on their website - [bestbuddies.org](http://bestbuddies.org).
- Steps to establishing a chapter of Best Buddies
  - Speak with Best Buddies Staff □ Contact the Best Buddies State Director to discuss the expectations and timeline.
  - Identify Key Players and Host Site
    - Chapter President or Philanthropy Chairman: student who will lead the chapter
    - Faculty advisor: school staff who will support the chapter
    - Host site coordinator: staff from host site who will coordinate members with IDD
    - The host site: an organization in the area that serves adults with disabilities with whom students will be matched. Information on securing a host site can be found by reviewing our host site resource.
  - Garner Interest Spread the exciting word that Best Buddies is coming to town! Identify officers and people with and without IDD who want to be matched in a one-to-one friendship.

### *Special Olympics*

- To get contact information for specific states, search “Special Olympics of (State)”
- On the web site, look for the contact information of the person in charge of the region that the university is located in

- Some counties and/or cities have their own chapter of Special Olympics and may have more local volunteer opportunities
- Possible opportunities can include, but not limited to, assisting with the seasonal games, become coach/volunteer for different sporting events, host the team for a dinner and/or dance, etc.

#### *The Arc*

- Go to [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)
- Click on 'Chapters'
- Select corresponding state
- Find the local chapter closest to university and try to make contact

#### *Easter Seals*

- Go to [www.easterseals.com](http://www.easterseals.com)
- On the right side of the page, click 'Connect Locally'
- Enter your local zip code and click 'go'
- Look through list of locations near university and contact one's chapter would like to look in to

#### *UCP (United Cerebral Palsy)*

- Go to [www.ucp.org](http://www.ucp.org)
- Scroll to the bottom of the page and click 'Find your local affiliate'
- Enter your state and zip code to search for a local affiliate.
- Contact local chapter to look into volunteer opportunities

#### *Local Schools (Special Education Programs/Schools)*

- Some school districts may have a school specifically for children with disabilities
- Many schools have a special education classroom or department that may need volunteers
- Finding these schools may be tougher than other organizations. You could search on the school district's web site or try to search for disability schools on the web.
- If you have contact information for another organization that serves people with disabilities in the area, they probably know of a school for children with disabilities or at least a school the has special education classrooms you could get in contact.

If you need further assistance finding an organization, further information/suggestions on how to go about setting up a volunteer relationship or have any other questions contact your Regional Director of Chapter Services.

## Reporting Process

Your volunteer relationship should be discussed with your Regional Director as you work with them throughout the semester. We keep record of your relationship and ensure the frequency and quality of relationship is of a high standard. The shared experiences and servant leadership opportunities are an important part of our mission and enable more Pi Kapps to have an Ability Experience *experience* than would ever be possible through our own national events. During the semester, you should keep track of the following information about your volunteer relationship.

- Partner organization info including name, address and lead contact
- Frequency of volunteering: Semesterly, monthly, weekly, etc.
- Average number of chapter participants
- Number of chapter members who participate per semester
- Average number of clients at disability organization

You should expect to provide us with data about your relationship during those phone calls, as well as at Pi Kapp College, in Circle of Giving Grant Applications, and while working with your Leadership Consultant while reporting all your chapter's progress for seven objectives and awards. Please be prepared with this information and look out for opportunities to let us know about your volunteer relationship success!

## Recognition/Award Structure

For every year that a chapter meets the minimum requirements for a volunteer partnership, a plaque and a framed certificate will be presented. The plaque will be for the chapter, and the certificate will be for the chapter to present to their partner organization. The Ability Experience will recognize three levels of chapter volunteer relationships:

Level 1: Chapter has confirmed volunteer relationship with organization and has at least 50% of their chapter participate each semester.

Level 2: Chapter has confirmed volunteer relationship with organization and has at least 50% of their chapter participate each semester, AND participates with the organization at least once per month.

Level 3: Chapter has confirmed volunteer relationship with organization and has at least 75% of their chapter participate each semester, AND participates with the organization at least once per month.

Additionally, each year there will be six winners for Regional Chapter Volunteer Partnership, including one Chapter Volunteer Partnership of the Year.



**THE ABILITY  
EXPERIENCE**

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