

Providing Independent Living Support: Training for Senior Corps Volunteers: **Guest Speaker Suggestions by Module**

Below is a list of the eight module topics in the independent living curriculum with suggestions for guest speakers and other resources to supplement your training, if desired. In some cases, national organizations (e.g. Red Cross, AARP) are suggested that may have offices/chapters in your service area.

Module 1: Types of Independent Living Services Delivered by Volunteers. Describes some of the services most frequently provided by RSVP and SCP and the contributions volunteers make to delivery of these services.

Guest Speaker/Resource Ideas:

- Public Information Director of Area Agency on Aging
- Case Manager of Area Agency on Aging/Home Health Service
- United Way Resource Center
- Red Cross
- Service Coordinator/Social Worker at Senior Housing
- Senior Community Centers
- SCP/RSVP Station Supervisors

Module 2: Becoming an Effective Care Partner: Helping Volunteers Recognize Benefits to Themselves. Describes some of the research findings on mental and physical health benefits of volunteering, and offers tips for maintaining the health and enthusiasm of volunteers.

Guest Speaker/Resource Ideas:

- Chaplain/Spiritual Leader
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Faculty of Gerontology
- Active volunteer/volunteer group
- AARP (www.aarp.org)
- OASIS (www.oasisnet.org)
- Mental Health Associations
- Healthy Aging Programs offered by Hospitals
- Research and articles available online, at sites such as United Health Group (www.unitedhealthgroup.com); see “Volunteers Report Improved Physical, Emotional Health”, April 16, 2010.

- Other evaluation research, survey data, or pertinent observations that you/your community partners have conducted
- Documentaries (for example, see POV's "The Way We Get By", premier date November 11, 2009, www.pbs.org/pov).
- SCP/RSVP Volunteer Mentors - trained group providing peer-to-peer education/information

Module 3: Understanding the Physical, Emotional, and Social Challenges Experienced by Clients. Looks at some of the challenges clients face, including loss or limitations around mobility, self-care, activities of daily living, and companionship, and offers tips to better assist them.

Guest Speaker/Resource Ideas:

- Psychologist, Counselor, Social Worker
- Faculty of Gerontology
- Clergy or church representative
- Visiting nurse/home health care services
- Friendly visitors/SCP volunteer
- Family physician
- Caregiver of older adult

Module 4: Effective and Respectful Communications. Reviews tips and techniques volunteers can use to respectfully and effectively engage and interact with their clients. Many clients are frail and may be dealing with several chronic conditions in addition to taking medications. Depression, anger, confusion, and hearing difficulty are some of the issues that affect how they communicate.

Guest Speaker/Resource Ideas:

- Case Manager, Nurse or Social Worker
- Educational program/workshops dealing with patients with chronic conditions
- Wellness community centers with educational programs
- Resources online, such as the Indiana Center for Parish Nursing (www.indianaparishnurses.org/wellness)

NOTE: This module would be an excellent tool for staff development.

Module 5: Understanding Dementia. Looks at what is normal in the way of cognitive shortcomings and what are signs and symptoms that indicate a more serious problem. Participants learn basic information about the different types and causes of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease and how they can help clients and their family members/caregivers learn to cope.

Guest Speaker/Resource Ideas:

- Alzheimer's Association (www.alz.org)
- Recreational Therapist, Nurse or Social Worker at Long-Term Alzheimer's Unit
- Symposiums on dementia
- Support groups
- Faculty at college or university with a specialty in aging
- Adult with early onset Alzheimer's

Module 6: Paying Attention to Body Language. Body language, or nonverbal communication, is the use of body movements or gestures relevant to communication. This module describes nonverbal communication and cultural aspects of body language, and offers tips for volunteers to better use and respond to this type of communication when assisting clients.

Guest Speaker/Resource Ideas:

- Counselor
- Faculty or Students of Speech, Communications, etc.
- Diversity Specialist
- Internet sites, such as YouTube (www.youtube.com), that contain a wealth of "visual aids" to illustrate nonverbal communication
- Library resources, such as self-help books and videos

NOTE: This module would be an excellent tool for staff development.

Module 7: Home Safety. Provides information about household hazards and basic steps volunteers can take to help their clients make their homes safer, as well as be better prepared to respond to natural disasters and emergency situations.

Guest Speaker/Resource Ideas:

- Occupational or Physical Therapist
- National Safety Council (www.nsc.org)
- Fire Fighter
- Citizen Corps (www.citizencorps.gov)
- Home assessments by case managers
- Geriatric assessments
- CAPS-certified aging-in place specialist (certified contractor)

Module 8: Beyond Companionship Services: Helping Clients Improve Quality of Life. Offers tips, ideas, and suggestions that volunteers can use to help clients improve quality of life and alleviate loneliness and social isolation, feelings of uselessness or helplessness, and effects of physical or cognitive limitations.

Guest Speaker/Resource Ideas:

- Psychologist
- Counselor
- Chaplin/Clergy
- Senior Center Staff
- Recreational Therapist
- Volunteer Mentors discuss how they design a day with their client – arm chair exercises; play music; sing familiar songs; read, etc.
- Staff or volunteer from a congregate meal sites
- Community Center staff or volunteer
- Friendly caller volunteer
- Staff or volunteer from a senior transportation service
- Pet Therapy volunteer

Beyond the Modules . . .

Tap into the creativity of your volunteers by providing regular opportunities for them to suggest additional training topics:

- For in-service topics, have small pieces of paper on the table and allow volunteers to make suggestions for future topics.
- Occasionally, as a group activity, have volunteers brainstorm and make one list of topics that they think of together.
- During the annual assessment/evaluation, ask for suggestions from site supervisors on the training needs of the volunteers and possible challenges they have with their clients.

To find speakers for the topics suggested by your volunteers, consider the following:

- Ask the volunteers themselves: “Does anyone here have a connection to a specialist in _____?”
- See if any of your sites have expertise in any of the areas.
- Partner with a college or university in a health related field. For example, one Senior Companion Program partners with a school of pharmacy. The SCP Coordinator initially met with the Department Head to brainstorm ideas on helping their students get service hours. Quarterly, the program asks for a speaker on one of the suggested health related topics. The school provides up-to-date research on the topic, while the SCP provides a large, caring audience. The pharmacy students receive experience in public speaking. It is a win-win situation.
- Use Google to search for resources in your area (www.google.com).

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