

Advice from Community Partners— What You Need to Know Before You Go



- ➔ **Availability/Reliability:** Establishing a regular schedule of your availability with the community partner is important so that you are both on the same page. If you say you are going to be there, be there. Try to volunteer for realistic time frames that you know you are able to meet. It is important to honor your schedule with the community partner to establish and maintain a professional relationship.
- ➔ **Past Experience Helpful:** Though it is not a necessity, community partners appreciate those who have experience in their line of work. Bringing past experience or skills (e.g. computer or marketing skills) to your community partner's organization not only builds upon your knowledge but also enhances the effectiveness of their organization.
- ➔ **Think Outside the Box:** At times it may be beneficial to think creatively about how your skills can support the organization. Additionally, understand that sometimes helping behind the scenes is essential.
- ➔ **Do Your "Homework":** Community partners appreciate not only the skills you bring to the table but also any foreknowledge you have of their organization. It shows that you have taken a sincere interest, and it better prepares you to work there. Do not be afraid to ask questions as you continually learn about the community partner and your role.
- ➔ **Know Your Community:** Part of serving the community to the best of your ability is knowing the demographics of the population you are serving. What is this population's economic status? What are their specific needs? Are mental-health issues an underlying concern? It is important to examine these questions to best meet the needs of the population. Additionally, don't forget to look at the "bigger picture." What is the root of these issues? What are the demographics of the community as a whole? Asking the "bigger" questions brings insight to your work.
- ➔ **Remain a Professional:** Treat your work with community service as if it was your full-time job. This means volunteering with a level of professionalism. As you would with any job, keep communication professional, use office supplies appropriately, stay up to date on any training and accomplish your service to the best of your ability. It does not go unnoticed.
- ➔ **Civic Advocacy:** Service contains two parts. One part is your actual service with your community partner. The other part is civic advocacy. Share your service experiences with professors, employers and peers who may be interested in participating in community service. By advocating, you educate others on how they can better respond to community needs. In doing so, you are increasing the level of civic engagement which supports the community as a whole.
- ➔ **Remember to Have Fun!**



I Want to Volunteer...

What Should I Do Next?

Questions to think about before you go:

- ➔ Why do I want to serve?
- ➔ With what populations or needs do I want to work?
- ➔ What is my commitment in regards to time, length of volunteering and number of people?

TOP 10 Most Wanted Traits of a VOLUNTEER

1. Reliability | 2. Availability
3. Past experience in service | 4. Professionalism
5. Skill set pertaining to organization/ability to utilize skills creatively
6. Ability to take the initiative (be a self-starter)
7. Flexibility | 8. Compassion | 9. Advocacy
10. Awareness of specific organization and community needs

Learn More about Service Opportunities and Regular Weekly CommServ Programs:
www.dickinson.edu/student-life/getting-involved/



For more information on college and community partnership meetings, special task forces in the community or the United Way please contact:

The Office of Religious Life and Community Services

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