



Tutor Handbook 2024-2025

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."

- Elizabeth Andrew

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Academic Tutoring Program is a free program offered to provide an ongoing opportunity for individuals to maintain and build their academic and independent living skills. Members with Down syndrome who have completed their formal education (e.g., high school) and are at least 18 years of age are eligible to participate. Members who are not receiving any other support in these areas will take precedence over others with services already in place.

Members and Tutors with interest are encouraged to complete the [Personality Survey](#) to be matched according to their similarities and differences. An initial introduction meeting is recommended to outline the goals and abilities of the member and complete the [New Goal Sheet](#). Parents may be helpful to disclose particular areas in which they would like to see their son/daughter improve. Special needs or requests regarding the member can also be discussed during this interview.

Tutors are volunteers who have sought out our organization as a site for a long-term volunteer opportunity. They have agreed to a minimum commitment of 6-months of tutoring weekly for an hour. A tutor must attend the standard orientation that DSL requires of all of its volunteers and must submit to a background check and confidentiality agreement.

The tutor will be expected to schedule a recurring meeting with their member and identify the location in which they will meet. Trained tutors will then conduct goal related activities with their member each week and complete all program documentation.

Each participant should do their part to ensure a successful experience is offered. If assistance is needed, it is important to seek help as soon as possible so that adequate assistance can be provided. Members are expected to complete any assignments given by the tutor and return it by the date established. If either participant has to cancel a session, it is expected that they will communicate that with the other and communicate any significant barriers or repetitive absences to the Transitions Manager.

There is no termination date for this program. Members and tutors will remain participants until the intent to vacate is communicated. In rare instances in which a participant is not complying with the guidelines (e.g., excessive absences without notice, inappropriate behaviors, etc.) dismissal from the program may occur.

Please watch the "[Just Like You](#)" video to learn a little more about Down syndrome!

EXPECTATIONS

- 1) We know that tutors volunteer because they are caring, dependable people want to be involved in their community! Therefore we have little worries about their behavior. However, we must note that we expect tutors to treat their members with the same **kindness and respect** as they expect in return.
- 2) Each tutor must attend our **volunteer orientation**, complete a **background check** in order to participate in the program. Failure to fulfill these requirements will result in the inability to tutor.
- 3) Tutors are expected to be **on time** and **attend scheduled sessions**. If you are running late, please communicate with your member and/or their family. It is the responsibility of the pair to ensure each session occurs.
- 4) It is imperative that tutors complete the monthly session confirmation so participation in the program can be tracked. Inability to complete the confirmation can result in the assumption that neither party desires to continue with the program.
- 5) Because the tutor is in primary contact with the member, we allow trained tutors to select which of the provided activities from the **member's goals** will be conducted during each session. If you have ideas or suggestions for additional goals, those are welcome to be used at any time.

HOMWORK AND GOALS

Each member has a goal sheet that will be provided to the tutor pair upon enrollment into the program. It is the responsibility of the tutor pair to update the goals as needed. The tutor may request materials to utilize during the sessions toward progress with the goals.

HOMWORK

Members may receive homework after sessions for additional opportunities to engage in academics throughout the week. It also acts as a mechanism of communication to caregivers giving a snapshot of the skills they are working on at that time. The homework should be written down each week for the member to take home and complete with supervision from another adult at home. It should then be reviewed at the beginning of the next tutoring session.

GOALS

Goals are typically designed for 8-10-week periods and are based on recommendations from tutors or family members and consist of a breakdown of types of assignments to be used. These are done during the initial interview and will be sent to the tutor and the family. Once a tutor has completed the training period, the specific activities to be completed each session are chosen by the tutor and member each week. Every activity in a session should support the goals and can include a worksheet, computer game, oral exercise, written exercise, game, etc. If goals are not completed within 8-10 weeks, the tutor should continue working on the goals until they believe it is appropriate to create a new goal in that area.

- Example of goals:
 - Increase reading comprehension**
 - Read and answer the questions from informational passages found on any of the supporting websites.
 - Stop often and discuss.
 - Help member visualize what is happening.
 - Help member make connections to themselves, other passages, and real world.
 - Use the internet to supplement the informational passages.

TYPICAL SESSION ROUTINE

- ✚ Members and their tutors should spend about 5 minutes at the beginning of the session catching up and sharing fun experiences that occurred since the last meeting.
- ✚ Next, the tutor should collect the member's homework (if assigned) and review it, making the necessary corrections with the member.
- ✚ Then the pair should discuss the goals for the current session and begin a warm-up activity. This warm-up activity could be a fun game, "quick-recall" practice using one of the member's favorite subjects as a topic, or a quick hobby.
- ✚ After the warm-up activity is completed, the lesson affiliated with the day's goal should begin.
- ✚ During the last 15 minutes of a session, new homework should be assigned (if applicable) and reviewed for the member. Tutors can also use this time to wind down with the member using a calming activity such as coloring, listening to music, or deep breathing exercises.