BUILDING BLOCKS FOR YOUTH VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT
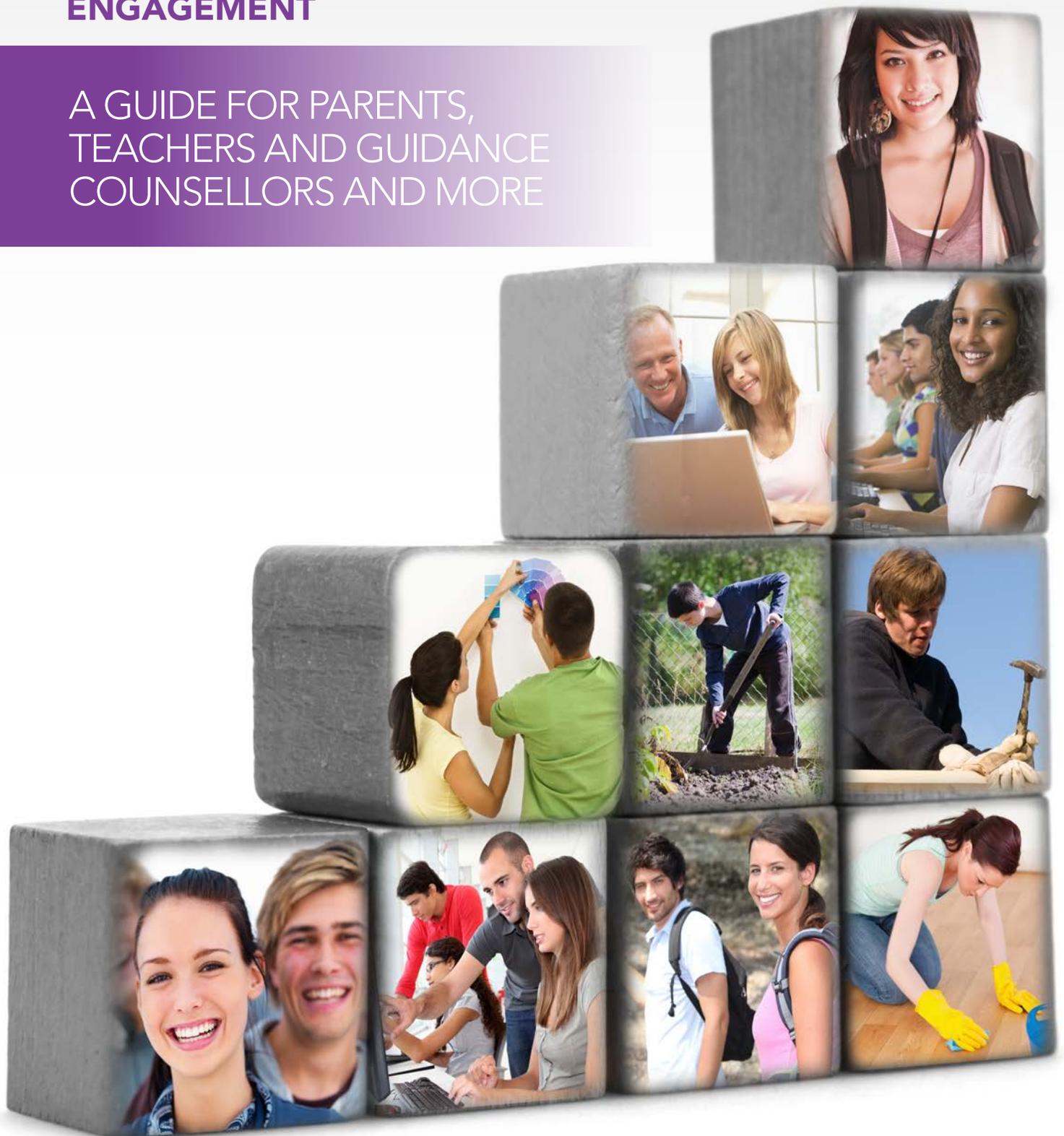
A GUIDE FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS AND GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS AND MORE

volunteer
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VOLUNTEER
BÉNÉVOLES
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Layout & Design

Lenny Kuiper, LKDesign.ca

Translation

Roxane Delisle

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR YOUTH VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT:
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How can we
SUPPORT
YOUTH
involvement?

SKILLS
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What
are the
BENEFITS?

GETTING
STARTED

SKILLS
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Matrix

FAQ'S about
YOUTH
Volunteering

How can we SUPPORT youth involvement in community?

Community involvement is personal, and while some youth are excited at the prospect of a new challenge and are keen to gain new experiences that teach them important skills, others are less interested in getting involved.

This is where YOU as a parent, teacher or mentor come in! You can help a young student consider both **formal** and **informal** VOLUNTEER involvement options that best match their skills, interests and comfort level.

INFORMAL VOLUNTEERING –

Start by recognizing the work they do in their own home, school and community with family, neighbours and friends. Acknowledge that volunteering does not have to be a huge commitment, even though it may seem overwhelming to them at first.

Examples: Joining a group at school, taking the classroom attendance to head office, caring for a sibling, setting up chairs at a church or family event, raking leaves or shovelling the driveway, walking a dog or keeping score at a sporting event.

These experiences and skills can be TRANSFERRED into a formal volunteer role.

FORMAL VOLUNTEERING –

Help youth find information and encourage them to consider various volunteer organizations in your community. There are many volunteer options that may suit their own interests or personalities, which can create an engaging and satisfying experience either in the short or long term.

Examples:

- Connect to social justice clubs available at school or church

- Local volunteer centres provide access to a large network of community organizations and their volunteer programs. Visit Volunteer Canada's website for a list of centres.

- Local sports or arts organizations that they already belong to may have opportunities or special events.

- Ask the school guidance office for leads on local resources.

What are the BENEFITS of volunteering?

Volunteering provides an opportunity for *all of us* to learn more about ourselves and our community. Volunteering particularly helps teens and young adults learn about different career paths that may interest them, and allows them to develop useful skills. Many volunteer opportunities offer youth a head start in their professional lives. Employers seek out employees who demonstrate they are able to adapt to new environments and are willing to learn new skills.

INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS:

- Opportunity to discover new skills, talents and interests

- Hands-on experience builds greater self esteem

- An inside look at how organizations operate

- Critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork development

- Take a look at the "real" working world

- Networks to future opportunities and professional references

COMMUNITY BENEFITS:

Volunteering is not just about personal career development, it is also about;

- Working with others to accomplish greater things

- Improving lives of people in the community

- Creating healthy, sustainable communities

Volunteer contributions make a difference! Volunteering is a great way for young people to learn about themselves and to develop new skills and interests.

SKILLS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Students can reflect on their skills alone or with family members, teachers and friends. Learning how to identify skills and the benefits gained from individual experiences will help youth become aware of what they can gain through community engagement.

This Skills Self-Assessment exercise can help identify personal talents and can boost self-confidence when young people are deciding on volunteer options, determining post-secondary education choices, conducting a job search and planning for a career. These categories can also be considered when building a resume!

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Skills Self-Assessment ✏️

SKILLS	GOOD AT	ACTIONS	TO DEVELOP
Communication	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	■ Reading – comprehending ■ Writing – editing ■ Talking – explaining – teaching – facilitating ■ Questioning – resolving conflicts – listening ■ Persuading – self expression – building relationships	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Leadership	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	■ Making decisions – risk taking ■ Directing/supervising – coaching ■ Initiating – planning – time management ■ Organizing – self management	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Teamwork	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	■ Serving – assisting ■ Cooperating – facilitating ■ Advising/counselling – supporting ■ Collaborating – following – helping	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Problem Solving	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	■ Investigating/researching – tracking trends ■ Assessing – analyzing – synthesizing ■ Adapting – collaborating – visioning ■ Critical thinking	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Organizational	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	■ Managing information ■ Managing multiple responsibilities ■ Administering – scheduling ■ Coordinating – planning	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Numeracy	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	■ Counting – calculating – measuring ■ Estimating – budgeting – sorting ■ Filing – scheduling – classifying ■ Managing money	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Technical	☐ ☐ ☐	■ Using computers – operating equipment ■ Maintaining equipment ■ Constructing – repairing – building	☐ ☐ ☐
Creative	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	■ Creating/inventing – designing/displaying ■ Performing/entertaining – presenting ■ Drawing/painting/sculpting ■ Writing/playwriting/composing	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Skills Matching Matrix ✏️

	WHAT AM I PASSIONATE ABOUT?	EXAMPLES OF RELATED VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES	USING THESE SKILLS...	WHICH COULD LEAD TO...JOBS
A	Protecting the environment	Cleanups at community centre, trails or parks; community gardening; supporting environmental sustainability programs.	Organizational Teamwork Related knowledge Technical skills	Environmental engineer; land use planner; waste management; recycling; ecologist; horticulturalist.
B	Fighting poverty	Building homes; advocacy or information campaign; support group program; shelters and food programs; food, clothing and supply drives.	Leadership Organizational Teamwork Communication Problem solving	Social worker; social services worker; documentary or report writer; community worker; advocacy; politics.
C	Caring for people/ Caring for animals	Friendly visiting or buddy programs; tutoring; literacy; community support and outreach programs for seniors, adults, children, or people with special needs; crisis centre help line; spiritual support; cleaning; language translation. Animal shelter helper; pet visitor to seniors; dog walker; horseback riding therapy programs.	Communication Problem solving Teamwork Organizational Technical skills	Teacher; social worker; hospitality; child care; personal support worker; counsellor; mediator; police / security; customer service . Veterinarian; animal trainer; animal biologist; pet store assistant/manager; pet therapist.
D	Event planning and promotion	Planning special events and programs for seniors, adults and children; cross-cultural events; social media and website management; fundraising; canvassing; presenting; creating promotional material.	Leadership Organizational Teamwork Communication Technical skills Creative skills	Hospitality & tourism; Event planner; fundraiser; community programmer; Marketing / sales manager; entrepreneur; motivational speaker; educator; information specialist.
E	Sports and recreation	Sports coaching; recreation therapy; after-school or camp programs; training; sport workshops.	Leadership Communication Problem solving Organizational Teamwork	Sports medicine practitioner; personal trainer; physical or recreation therapist; recreation facility management.
F	Healthy living and healthcare	School nutrition programs; community centre health and wellness programs; emergency / first aid programs.	Leadership Communication Problem solving Organizational Technical skills	Health care practitioner; nurse; physical therapist; dietician; paramedic; doctor; fitness instructor; food service worker.

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Skills Matching Matrix ✏

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G	Community development	Board member; events / fundraising committee member; advocacy campaign; city or neighbourhood planning committee; grant writing.	Organizational Communication Teamwork Problem solving Leadership	Corporate / financial management; business planner; executive director; negotiator; consultant; research and development.
H	Managing resources and information	Reception; information services; library / resource centre assistance; computer support or instruction; board treasurer; managing/ sorting / delivery for food bank/ meal programs.	Organizational Technical skills Numeracy Teamwork Problem solving Leadership	Office manager; IT technician; supervisor; government services; Librarian; researcher; accountant; customer service.
I	Creating and building	Music or arts program for children, seniors or people with special needs; promotional and campaign materials; speaker's bureau; community theatre/museum display or wardrobe; theatre set building; painting; gardening; landscaping.	Problem solving Technical skills Teamwork Communication Organizational Creative	Designer; artist; artisan; seamstress/tailor; construction or trades worker; gardener/landscaper; musician; museum curator; theatre management.

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Getting Started

AFTER youth have found suitable organizations or volunteer ideas, they can visit websites and review organizations' missions as well as the types of volunteer positions available to youth.

Ask these questions:

- Does the volunteer position match the interests, time availability and values of the youth?

- Is the location of the volunteer position easily accessible?

- What will young people learn from volunteering there?

- Will the youth be comfortable with the people they will be working with? Are they willing to try?

- Is there an insurance policy that covers (young) volunteers?

Looking for a volunteer opportunity can mirror the experience of acquiring a paying job. Volunteering is a privilege, not a right. If the organization is not convinced that the youth is ready and willing to volunteer, they won't necessarily select him/her for the position. Young people must demonstrate a commitment to volunteering, and their goals must be in line with those of the organization.

	SIMPLE STEPS TO START VOLUNTEERING	
1	Review online interactive VOLUNTEER SEARCH mechanisms to find positions for youth.	**Consider:** ■ how to get there ■ time availability ■ genuine willingness ■ can it be done with a friend?
2	CONTACT the person responsible when you find a position you might like.	Phone or send an email to the volunteer coordinator to find out if the position is available.
3	COMMUNICATE what is needed to complete the process.	■ Introduce yourself ■ Get more details about position ■ Find out what to do next to apply
4	FOLLOW UP as soon as possible to demonstrate your intentions are real.	Ask for a time to meet or visit to determine if it is a good fit. (This is good practise for social skills.)
5	Be sure to show up.	Students should show up on time and prepare for a great learning experience!

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FAQ's about youth volunteering

WHAT IS SCREENING ALL ABOUT?

Safety is important! Everyone has a right to know they are safe and in good hands, which is why organizations that engage volunteers should have a screening process or policy.

This process is often seen as a "complicated application process" that students (and adults) may not enjoy or completely understand. It is important to note that screening serves the volunteer as well as the organization; it is a process intended to match volunteers to a suitable and satisfying volunteer opportunity, so they have the best experience possible.

An organization has a responsibility to protect its clients, staff, volunteers and the community. It must do everything reasonable to protect all these groups from possible harm. More intensive screening (such as Police Checks) is required to protect the most vulnerable populations being served in more isolated settings (such as children or elderly in their own homes).

Volunteer Canada's 10 Safe Steps to screening involves the following:

1. Determine the risk.
2. A clear position description.
3. A formal recruitment process.
4. Application forms.
5. Interviews.
6. References.
7. Police records check, when appropriate.
8. Orientation and training sessions.
9. Supervision and evaluations.
10. Follow up.

Organizations will ask to provide any information needed to make an informed decision about whether or not to accept an application.

Minimum ages may be listed for opportunities and parental consent may be required. If a youth is living with parents or guardians and is not of the age of majority, the organization may ask parents to indicate they are aware of the volunteering activities the youth wishes to get involved in. In some situations, the organization may not permit the teen to participate without full parental knowledge and consent.

CAN FAMILIES VOLUNTEER TOGETHER?

If a youth wants to volunteer but is nervous about getting started alone, there are opportunities to volunteer as a family or a group. Search for GROUP volunteering opportunities such as SPECIAL EVENTS or FOOD DRIVES. Family volunteering is a great way to spend quality time with your kids, while connecting with your community and showing your child the value of lifelong learning and giving back.

Here are some ideas for volunteering as a family:

- Participate in special events or fundraisers
- Visit the elderly
- Host a family that is new to Canada
- Support an after-school program
- Work with a wildlife sanctuary
- Clean up a nearby park or playground
- Help at a shelter or soup kitchen
- Help with holiday hampers (food, toys, etc.)
- Paint or make repairs to a hostel or mission
- Plant a garden at a shelter

For more information about volunteering as a family, check out the family volunteering tools available through Getvolunteering.ca or volunteer.ca.

The possibilities are limited only by your imagination! For more ideas contact your local volunteer centre or voluntary organizations.

Content adapted from materials previously produced by:

Volunteer Centre of Ottawa-Carleton

Volunteer Centre of Hamilton and District.

"Family Volunteering: The Ties that Bind" by Kristen Porritt. Voluntary Action Program, Department of Canadian Heritage, 1995

"Volunteering Works! Be a part of shaping your future"

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Tips for Youth

Check the local school board website or guidance office for local community involvement guides.

If you are choosing to volunteer as part of a school community involvement program, remember to always check with guidance counsellors or school principals to verify eligible positions.

The school may have deemed some activities ineligible for volunteer hours, so check with them first to ensure that your proposed activities will count.

Tools and Reference

Building Blocks for Family Volunteering – Tools and Resources for Organizations

Skills Plus – Bridging Volunteer Experience and Career Development