

# Thriving Connections Youth Community Volunteer Manual



# Thriving Connections Youth Community Volunteer Handbook

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# Overview of Thriving Connections

## In Monroe County...

- National poverty rate in 2013 was 14.5%
- The poverty rate for children under the age of 18 in 2013 was 19.9% (1 in 5)
  - Of people over age 25 who are in poverty, 29.6% are employed
- 60.2% have worked part-time or for at least part of the year in the last 12 months
  - 67.6% have less than a high school degree or GED
- Bloomington Census Data: poverty rate increased by nearly 7% - from 34.7% to 41.6% from 2006 to 2007

Thriving Connections is an intentional way for people to build relationships across class and race lines to end poverty in their communities. Thriving Connections is a *high impact strategy* that will:

- Change the mind-set of the community so it wants to end poverty
- Change goals, policies, and approaches to end poverty
- Empower people in poverty to help solve community problems while transitioning out of poverty themselves

**A Circle** is a supportive, intentional, reciprocal, befriending relationship made up of one Leader who is living in poverty and two to five Allies who usually are from middle class. A Circle typically meets once or twice a month to build friendships and to work on the Leader's dreams, plans, and goals.

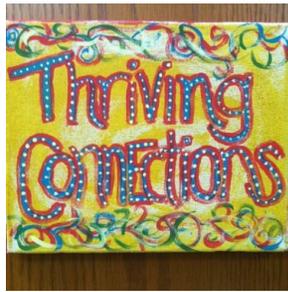
**A Leader** is an individual or family with a low-income who is interested in meeting her/his household needs on a consistent basis and becoming self-sufficient. The Leader is responsible for her or his Circle; convening, leading, and giving and receiving support. She or he will work with the Allies to complete her/his plan that was developed in an 18 week Leader training. This training prepares Leaders to take a leadership role in the Circle and to use their knowledge and skills as problem solvers to work on poverty issues in the community as well.

**Allies** are community members who have enough resources to be stable and want to be in a supportive, intentional, befriending relationship with an individual or family working to get out of poverty. Allies work with the Leader to figure out how to accomplish her or his plan. Within the guidelines set by the Community Guiding Coalition, Allies do what makes sense and what brings joy to the relationship. Allies are trained in *Bridges out of Poverty* as a way to work with Leaders in supporting their plans to get out of poverty.



**Thriving Connections provides support, making the sort of personal and community connections that are important to success.**

# How Volunteering with the Youth Community Works



**Requirements for Volunteers** – We require criminal background checks for all volunteers in the Youth Program. We ask that you sign a form acknowledging certain rules pertaining to childcare, including a No Striking policy and the “Two-Adult Rule,” requiring that two adults must be supervising any room of kids at any one time.

**Times** – Thriving Connections meets every Thursday (except major holidays) from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. At 6:00, we eat dinner – we encourage you to join us for this free, fun, community building meal. It’s important to get to the know the kids, the parents, and the other volunteers, and it’s part of what makes Thriving Connections so much different from your average volunteer experience – we are truly a community! At approximately 6:30, parents turn their children over to you, the volunteer. We generally have a few activities planned, and all you have to do is show up, have fun, and be flexible.

**Sign-in Form** – When you enter each meeting on Thursday, you will see a sign-in form. Everyone who attends the meeting should sign, from volunteers to Leaders and their children.

**Face Books** – Thriving Connections maintains binders containing profiles of each child in our care. Please take a look at these. All parents complete an information sheet for their child that includes an overview of any behavioral or health issues the child may have. You will also find a photo of each child, which will help put faces to names. The records we keep are confidential, so no one except Youth Community volunteers and staff are to see these.

**Group Captain** – You can feel free to change your job title to whatever you’d like it to be - Manager, King/Queen, Benevolent Ruler – but you will be responsible for overseeing that your group is following the guidelines, that activities are planned, that parents are signing children in and out, and that a log/journal is being kept and turned in periodically to the Volunteer Coordinator.

**Age Groups** – We typically divide children into four age groups: 0 – 2; 3 – 6 (kindergarten); 6 (first grade) – 11 (fifth grade); 12 - 18. Some weeks, particular age groups may only have a couple kids, and in that event, we may combine some of the age groups.

**Rules for the Children** – The rules can be summarized easily – as a volunteer, ask yourself, *“Is the behavior being displayed by the children in my care conducive to a safe environment, both physically and emotionally?”* If the answer is no, do not hesitate to politely, but firmly ask the child or children in question to change their behavior. If at any time you feel frustrated or that you aren’t in control of a situation, seek staff for assistance. **You will not be interrupting.**

# Thriving Connections Youth Community Volunteer Guidelines

## 1. Two Adult Rule

During any family program, event, or service where children are present, the “two adult” rule will be observed. This requires at least two adults, 18 years of age or older, be present at any given time with one or more children, including for trips to the bathroom. If a situation arises in which only one adult can be present, the door must remain open for the entire length of the session.

## 2. Restroom Policy

Because Thriving Connections shares public spaces, children and youth must be accompanied by two adults when using the restroom and the main door of the restroom shall remain open. One adult will knock/and or shout out to gauge occupancy at the restroom door. Wait for a response before allowing children to enter. If there is a response and the occupant is a stranger (not a Thriving Connections member) wait until the occupant leaves the restroom. If there is no response, one volunteer shall enter the restroom and check the status of 1) restroom order/cleanliness and 2) whether any stalls are occupied. Once the restroom has been checked for safety and order, volunteers may allow children to enter the restroom. One volunteer will wait at the door and the other may wait in the hall by the restroom until all children have finished using the facilities. Both volunteers and all children walk back as a group. It is advised that volunteers not use the restroom at the same time as the children and that both volunteers always be able to see each other.

## 3. Application Procedures

Any person wishing to work with children or youth in our community on a regular basis will complete our application process and a criminal history background check. All volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.

## 4. Volunteer Training

All volunteers working with children shall be informed of agency policies and state laws regarding child abuse and ways to identify child abuse.

## 5. Reporting Abuse

All staff and volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behaviors which seem to suggest abuse. Volunteers shall report to the child care coordinator or a staff member. These individuals shall follow SCCAP policy for reporting.

## 6. Supervision Policy

Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times, both inside the building and on the grounds. Children are only allowed in the child care wing, and under supervision in Garton Hall during dinner. If a volunteer ever feels that they are not in control of a situation, or if any kind of emergency arises, they should immediately seek help and support from a staff member.

## 7. Ratios

At all times, adults working with children shall maintain (child/adult) at least the following minimum ratios:

Infants – 4:1	Toddlers – 5:1	3 year olds – 10:1
4 year olds – 12:1	5 year olds – 15:1	6 year olds – 20:1

Regardless of numbers, the ‘two adult rule’ will apply

## 8. No Striking /Discipline Policy

No adult or youth care giver (including paid staff, volunteers, parents, acquaintances or visitors) may strike any child or youth during an event for any reason, including corporal punishment. Discipline is the responsibility of the staff person. Non-staff persons are never to discipline a child, other than redirection. Our policy is aimed at increasing a child’s problem solving skills, increasing the knowledge of his/her feelings and promoting self-discipline.

## 9. Church Property

We must be respectful of the church building and property at all times. Balls may not be thrown, kicked or rolled inside the church. Hallways are always off-limits for play.

I have read the above policies and agree to abide by them. If I have any questions, I will contact the child care supervisor and/or staff. If for any reason there is an issue with any of these policies immediate disciplinary action will be carried out at the discretion of the TC supervisor.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR YOUR  
RECORDS**



Thriving Connections Youth Community Volunteer Manual 09.08.16

All SCCAP services are provided without regard to race, age, color, religion, sex, disability, national origin, ancestry, or status as a veteran.

# Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Adapted from the Bloomington Volunteer Network <http://bloomington.in.us/volunteer>

## As a Volunteer, It is Your Right:

1. **To be assigned a job that is worthwhile and challenging** with freedom to use existing skills or develop new ones.
2. **To be trusted with confidential information** that will help you carry out your assignment.
3. **To be kept informed** through via email, phone call, or newsletter about what is going on in your organization.
4. **To receive orientation training and supervision** for the job you accept and to know why you are asked to do a particular job.
5. **To expect that your time will not be wasted** by lack of planning, coordination or cooperation within your organization.
6. **To know whether your work is effective** and how it can be improved: to have a chance to increase understanding of yourself, others and your community.
7. **To indicate when you do not want to receive telephone calls** or when out-of-pocket costs are too great for you.
8. **To be reimbursed for out-of-pocket costs**, if it is the only way you can volunteer.
9. **To declare allowable non-reimbursed out-of-pocket costs** for federal (some state and local) income tax purposes if serving with a charitable organization.
10. **To expect valid recommendation and encouragement** from your supervisor so you can move to another job - paid or volunteer.
11. **To be given appropriate recognition** in the form of awards, certificate of achievement, etc., but even more important, recognition of your day-to-day contributions by other participants in the volunteering relationship.
12. **To ask for a new assignment** within your organization.

## As a Volunteer, It is Your Responsibility

1. **To accept an assignment of your choice** with only as much responsibility as you can handle.
2. **To respect confidences** of your sponsoring organization and those of the recipients of your services.
3. **To fulfill your commitment or notify** your supervisor early enough that a substitute can be found.
4. **To follow guidelines** established by organization, codes of dress, decorum, etc.
5. **To decline work not acceptable to you**; not let biases interfere with job performance; not proselytize or pressure recipient to accept your standards.
6. **To use time wisely** and not interfere with performance of others.
7. **To continue only as long as** you can be useful to recipient.
8. **To refuse gifts or tips**, except when recipient makes or offers something of nominal value as a way of saying "thank you."
9. **To stipulate limitations**: what out-of-pocket costs you can afford, when it is convenient to receive calls from organization or recipient.
10. **To use reasonable judgment in making decisions** when there appears to be no policy or policy not communicated to you; then, as soon as possible, consult with supervisor for future guidance.
11. **To provide feedback, suggestions and recommendations** to supervisor and staff if these might increase effectiveness of program.
12. **To be considerate**, respect competencies and work as a member of a team with all staff and other volunteers.



## Child Abuse/Neglect: Protecting the Children in Your Care



Most child care providers are natural advocates for children. But there are times when speaking up for kids can be hard or uncomfortable. Often those are times when children need your support most, like when you suspect child abuse or neglect in a family you know.

Your courage to act on a child's behalf could be the start of positive changes for both that child and their family.

### Knowledge is the first step...

**What is Child Abuse?** Indiana Law says:

- "The child's physical or mental health condition is seriously impaired or ...endangered as a result of the inability, refusal or neglect of the parent/guardian/custodian to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education or supervision; or
- The child's physical or mental health is seriously endangered due to injury, by the act or omission of the parent/guardian/custodian...; or
- The child is a victim of a sex offense...; allowed to participate in an obscene performance; or...to commit a sex offense..."

Indiana recognizes 4 types of child maltreatment:

1. **Neglect** is failure to provide basic physical, medical, educational or emotional needs.
2. **Physical Abuse** is any non-accidental injury caused or allowed, even if harm was not intended.
3. **Sexual Abuse** is any sexual activity, direct or indirect, by an adult or older child, or allowing another person to do so, with anyone under 18 years old.
4. **Emotional Abuse** is a pattern of interaction that harms emotional development or self-worth, usually along with other forms of maltreatment.

### Attention is the next...

**How can I tell that a child is in danger at home?**

There is no sure way, aside from seeing abuse happen. Child abuse/neglect can be part of any family, in any culture, career or income group, even when everyone seems happy.



Sometimes, "gut" feelings are our best guide, especially if they are shared by co-workers who also know the child and/or family well. Although any type of abuse or neglect may occur alone, often several types happen in one home. Possible warning signs, among others, can be:

**Children who...**

- have many injuries, or ones that aren't well explained;
- ...are very tired, very sad or just "not there";
- ...often fight with classmates/act out abuse, destroy things, or are violent to animals;
- ...talk in detail about sexual matters;
- ...seem afraid of a parent/guardian/custodian or other adult, like a teacher or baby-sitter;
- ...spend a lot of time anywhere but home/don't want to go home, as if avoiding something there.

**Children's parents who...**

- ...are under lots of on-going stress and have very limited support or coping skills;
- ...stay away from other families or groups and don't take part in kids' activities;
- ...have drinking or drug abuse problems;
- ...don't want to talk about or treat their child's injuries, or are nervous or angry when they do;
- ...say they were abused as children, or are now in a violent relationship.

*One sign or incident does not always mean that child abuse or neglect is going on, but it can.* If you have doubts, call your county Child Protection Service with questions. Keep in mind that many troubled parents feel trapped in the cycle of abuse, and actually are relieved after a report is made, because they are no longer alone in dealing with a terrible secret.

### When action is needed...

**Who must report?** By state law, **ANY** person who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect, must make a report to child welfare or law enforcement services. *Remember, you do not need to prove child abuse/neglect, only have some good reasons to suspect abuse and/or neglect.* To report call: **IN State Child Abuse Hotline: 800-800-5556.**

**Can I get in trouble for a report, if I'm wrong?**

**NO!** Any person who reports, or is part of any investigation of a child abuse or neglect report, is immune from criminal or civil penalty, unless they acted in bad faith. However, such penalties are possible for *not* reporting suspected abuse/neglect.

### Resources:

Prevent Child Abuse Indiana: 800-244-5373 or [www.pcaain.org](http://www.pcaain.org)

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse & Neglect Info: 800-394-3388 or [www.calib.com/nccan/ch](http://www.calib.com/nccan/ch)  
Child Help USA: 800-422-4453 or [www.childhelpusa.org](http://www.childhelpusa.org)

Information consistent with Caring for Our Children, 2002:  
[www.nrc.uchsc.edu](http://www.nrc.uchsc.edu)



# SCCAP Thriving Connections Confidentiality Statement

We want you to know that confidentiality is extremely important in the Thriving Connections community. However, there are a few exceptions:

- In the case of potential or suspected abuse or neglect
- In the case of suicide or attempted suicide
- In the case of harm or attempted harm/plan to attempt harm to yourself or someone else

In Indiana everyone is mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect. For the safety of everyone in the Community, a Thriving Connections staff member may need to call child protective services or the police in the above cases. The purpose of mandated reporting is to ensure safety. Please take your concern directly to any of the staff.

I understand that the relationships within the Thriving Connections community are confidential. Volunteers will not share information unless a report is needed to ensure safety.

Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Print Name \_\_\_\_\_



# Developmental Theory

*adapted from the work of Jean Piaget*

Consider your audience...

## Stages of Cognitive Development

Stage	Characterized by
<b>Sensorimotor</b> (Birth-2 yrs)	-Differentiates self from objects -Recognizes self as agent of action and begins to act intentionally: e.g. pulls a string to set mobile in motion or shakes a rattle to make a noise -Achieves object permanence: realizes that things continue to exist even when no longer present to the senses
<b>Pre-operational</b> (2-7 years)	-Learns to use language and to represent objects by images and words -Thinking is still egocentric: has difficulty taking the viewpoint of others -Classifies objects by a single feature: e.g. groups together all the red blocks regardless of shape or all the square blocks regardless of color
<b>Concrete operational</b> (7-11 years)	-Can think logically about objects and events -Classifies objects according to several features and can order them in series along a single dimension such as size.
<b>Formal operational</b> (11 years and up)	-Can think logically about abstract propositions and test hypotheses systematically -Becomes concerned with the hypothetical, the future, and ideological problems

The accumulating evidence is that this scheme is too rigid: many children manage concrete operations earlier than this and some people never attain formal operations. Children with special needs may be delayed in reaching these stages.

**As a volunteer, don't try to force the children in your care into tasks they are not ready for:**

- **Be aware that children in earlier stages of development or with special needs simply may not be capable of considering or predicting the emotions of others in the same way that you can. If they are unkind to their peers, don't get angry – but do suggest an apology and a more appropriate behavior.**
- **Be concerned with the process rather than the end product. For example, watch how a child handles and manipulates play dough instead of concentrating on a finished shape.**
- **Children should be encouraged to learn from each other. Hearing other's views can help to breakdown egocentrism. It is therefore important to provide lots of opportunities for paired work and sharing when conducting activities.**
- **Act as a guide in children's discovery learning. Be adaptable to individual needs and intellectual levels.**

# Emotional and Behavior Disorders

*(adapted from the United States Department of Health and Human Services and About.com)*

The number of young people and their families who are affected by mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders is significant. It is estimated that as many as one in five children and adolescents may have a mental health disorder that can be identified and require treatment. **While volunteering at Thriving Connections, you may interact with youth who have Emotional or Behavior Disorders.** Some common Emotional or Behavior Disorders that you might encounter are:

**Bipolar Disorder** - Children and adolescents who demonstrate exaggerated mood swings that range from extreme highs (excitedness or manic phases) to extreme lows (depression) may have bipolar disorder (sometimes called manic depression). Periods of moderate mood occur in between the extreme highs and lows. During manic phases, children or adolescents may talk nonstop, need very little sleep, and show unusually poor judgment. At the low end of the mood swing, children experience severe depression. Bipolar mood swings can recur throughout life. Adults with bipolar disorder (about one in 100) often experienced their first symptoms during their teenage years (National Institutes of Health, 2001).

**Attention-deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder** - Young people with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder are unable to focus their attention and are often impulsive and easily distracted. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder occurs in up to five of every 100 children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Most children with this disorder have great difficulty remaining still, taking turns, and keeping quiet. Symptoms must be evident in at least two settings, such as home and school, in order for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder to be diagnosed.

**Learning Disorders** - Difficulties that make it harder for children and adolescents to receive or express information could be a sign of learning disorders. Learning disorders can show up as problems with spoken and written language, coordination, attention, or self-control.

**Autism** - Children with autism, also called autistic disorder, have problems interacting and communicating with others. Autism appears before the third birthday, causing children to act inappropriately, often repeating behaviors over long periods of time. For example, some children bang their heads, rock, or spin objects. Symptoms of autism range from mild to severe. Children with autism may have a very limited awareness of others and are at increased risk for other mental disorders. Studies suggest that autism affects 10 to 12 of every 10,000 children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).

Possible Implications t TC	Best Practices and Accommodations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disruptive to classroom activity.</li> <li>- Impulsive.</li> <li>- Inattentive, distractible.</li> <li>- Appears pre-occupied.</li> <li>- Disregards rules.</li> <li>- Poor concentration.</li> <li>- Extreme resistance to change and transitions.</li> <li>- Speaks out, repeatedly.</li> <li>- Is aggressive.</li> <li>- Low self esteem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate with parents.</li> <li>- Clearly express rules and expectations.</li> <li>- Provide time for relaxation techniques, chances to relieve stress and anxiety.</li> <li>- Set limits and boundaries.</li> <li>- Apply established consequences immediately, fairly, and consistently.</li> <li>- Acknowledge and reinforce acceptable behavior.</li> <li>- Avoid confrontation and power struggles.</li> <li>- Establish a quiet cool off area.</li> <li>- Redirect to avoid situations that may increase anxiety levels.</li> <li>- Remain calm and aware of your body language when addressing the youth.</li> <li>- Give feedback frequent feedback.</li> </ul>



# Respecting the Children in Our Care

(adapted from the Canadian Child Care Federation [http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/docs/cccf/rs030\\_en.htm](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/docs/cccf/rs030_en.htm))

Enforcing the rules is only one part of encouraging good behavior – how you do it is just as important. Consider the following as a useful guide to respectful, productive interaction with all of the children in your care.

## I show respect when:

- I listen to what a child has to say.
- I play with the children.
- I recognize the children's accomplishments.
- I show interest in a child's project.
- I make eye contact with each child.
- I encourage the children to express different viewpoints.
- I allow the children to make choices.
- I let the children have privacy.
- I consider each child a unique individual.
- I call the children by their names.
- I encourage independence.
- I respond to the children's questions.
- I do not interrupt a child who is talking.
- I allow the children to make mistakes.
- I am flexible and adaptable to the situation at hand.
- I keep my temper while being firm on the rules of conduct.
- I allow transition time.
- I listen to a child's problem and realize how upsetting the situation can be for him/her.
- I talk to the children as people.
- I give each child a chance to communicate.
- I ask a child for his/her solution to a problem.
- I value the children's opinions.
- I remember that play is of great importance in each child's life.
- I 'catch them being good.' Giving them attention and praise when they are behaving like we would like them to act more often is amazingly rewarding to children. "I like the way you are sharing, John." "You're doing a great job of being quiet in the hallway, Jill." are both very effective at stopping undesirable behavior before it starts.
- I silence my cell phone.

# I am disrespectful when:

- I do not take a child's opinion seriously.
- I avoid dealing with an issue that a child feels needs immediate attention.
- I walk away from a child while he/she is crying.
- I use a "baby-talk" tone of voice with younger children.
- I use angry words when I am under stress.
- I cut a child's conversation short.
- I finish tasks for the children in order to hasten time.
- I forget to follow through on something that I promised.
- I answer questions for the children.
- I behave impatiently.
- I respond to a child sarcastically. Young children generally do not understand sarcasm.
- I shout.
- I force a child into a situation in which he/she is uncomfortable.
- I set my expectations too high.
- I rush the children.
- I call the children names (e.g. stupid).
- I focus on children's bad behaviors.
- I belittle the children's feelings.
- I ignore the children.
- I have side conversations with fellow volunteers.
- I stop a child who is really interested in completing a project.
- I don't allow a child to explain why or how a friend got hurt, or how an accident occurred.

**Find Thriving Connections staff if at any time you feel uncomfortable, frustrated, or unable to deal with a situation.** All of this is good advice, but occasionally things will happen that are beyond your control. You won't be interrupting, we will be happy that you found us – this is why we are here!

# Youth Role-Playing Scenarios

**As the responsible volunteer in the room, what do you do next?**

Jorge and Leon are playing catch inside. You ask them to stop, and they do... for a few minutes. When you turn your back, they are back at it, this time more wildly than before. They are jumping and bumping into furniture and other youth. You ask them to stop, but they give no indication that they even hear you. What do you do?

You are leading a discussion among the youths. They are generally restless, as you might expect at 8 PM on a Thursday, but not outright uncooperative or disruptive. Ralph, is particularly attentive, though, sitting quietly, raising his hand, waiting his turn to speak, and listening to others as they take their turns. What do you do?

One youth punches another. Garfield is down for the count, and Heathcliff is standing over him, still visibly angry, his shoulders rising and falling, his fists clenched, and his mouth tight. What do you do?

One youth asks another youth to share a toy. The second youth doesn't want to share. What do you do?

You're getting ready to play a great game with the youth. It's Uno, and everybody loves Uno - except this one girl. Eunice refuses to play. She would rather sit and sneer quietly. What do you do?

Everyone walks quietly and at an appropriate pace from the youth room to the playground. Calm and orderly, it's a sight to see, mostly because they aren't making a sound you can hear. What do you do?

A youth wants to be in a different classroom than what you would prefer. A younger youth wants to be with the older youth or vice versa. What do you do?

A parent tells you that Veronica has homework she needs to do, but you've planned an activity for the group that you'd like her to be a part of. What do you do?

# Thriving Connections Youth Program – Curricular Suggestions

Feel free to be creative and engaging, however you choose to discuss these topics!

## Age Groups

The division of age groups is flexible and depends upon youth and volunteer attendance. The Youth Community Supervisor may ask for your input on group division, but ultimately the decision will be made by him/her. Typically, there will be a **preschool/kindergarten, elementary, and middle/high school class**. If attendance is very low, groups can be combined. There will be occasions when middle/high school will join the adult group for programming or family nights when everyone is together.

## Volunteer to Youth Ratios

*At least 2 adults must be with each group at all times*

**Infants: 1:1**

**Preschool/Elementary 2:6**

**Middle/High School: 2:10**

Ideally, you would want 4 volunteers per room so that if bathroom breaks are necessary, two volunteers can accompany children to the bathroom, while the other 2 volunteers remain in the classroom. If there are less than that, the whole class must go together for bathroom breaks.

## Class Time Structure and Activities

Evening Schedule	Examples (see also, Detailed Suggestions):
<b>New and Goods</b> (5-10 minutes)	Preschool/Elementary: New and Good Song Middle/High School: New and Goods (no song, unless they really want to) (See details below)
<b>Meditation</b> (5 minutes)	Volunteers will lead youth in a group meditation (See details below)
Story Time (10 minutes)	We have some books of our own, and nonreligious books may be borrowed from the St. Mark's library.
Restroom Break (5-10 minutes)	Practice quiet hallway skills, hands to self, etc!
Craft Time/Movement Games (15-20 minutes)	Color in the lines, practice drawing/tracing shapes/names/identifying colors in English and Spanish. Kinesthetic group activities like Simon Says, Follow the Leader, Red Light/Green Light. Weather permitting, head to the playground.
<b>Appreciations</b>	Appreciate something about someone in class. (See details below.)
<b>Clean Up</b> (5-10 minutes)	Sing a song, make it a game.
End Games (5-10 minutes)	While waiting for parents to pick their kids up, engage kids in games like Simon Says, "If you like ... stand up!"

**Activities on this page were in BOLD on the previous page. They are fixed and not flexible. They are activities that are consistent every Thursday. The following are explanations of how and why we do them.**

### **New and Goods**

**How:** In a circle, everyone will say One thing that is both New and Good that is happening in their life. Youth are encouraged to practice good listening with their eyes and ears. If they have a comment about another youth's new and good, they can make a special sign – like two fingers linked together – to express that they have a connection without interrupting the speaker. Youth volunteers should also participate.

**Why:** Adults do New and Goods as well. We do it because it's an intentional way to get things started on a good note. Maybe you've had a hard day, maybe things haven't been going well lately, but we encourage everyone to shift their thinking and focus on something/anything that is new and good in their life. It's a mental tool that we use to train our brains to notice things that are going well, even when it feels like a lot of negative is going on. It's also a really great way to get to know each other and build relationship. Adults do this in their programming every week and are encouraged to share something that does not have to do with work, but is personable and relatable. Youth volunteers are encouraged to do the same, to be thoughtful with their new and good that it will be something that the children will relate to. i.e. Children aren't really going to be able to empathize with your final exam experience; they do understand going to see a movie, seeing friends, birthdays, family get togethers, etc.

### **Meditation/Mindfulness**

**How:** Another tool that we build with our kids and adults is meditation/mindfulness. We have a curriculum called "MindUP" , it is a great resource for teaching mindfulness through developmentally appropriate activities. You can either use our MindUP books to craft a meditation or mindfulness exercise to do after New and Goods OR you can create your own. If you google "meditation for kids" you'll find ample resources. The MindUP books are great though, in that you could also very easily find an activity/craft/game that would tie into your meditation. Younger children will find "being still" difficult, and that's ok.

**Why:** This is another tool that we are concurrently developing with the adult group. They've enjoyed it and found it useful in their daily lives, and so the earlier we can teach children to use this tool to help them regulate emotions, the easier it will be for them in their lives. They are meant to be fun, imaginative, relaxing, and to feel very safe.

### **Appreciations**

**How:** In a circle or around a table, one person will start by turning to the person on his/her left and saying "I appreciate you for\_\_\_\_\_". The appreciation can be something as general as "I appreciate your beautiful orange top." Or "I appreciate you being here." or if they know each other well enough, they can appreciate the person for something they shared that night, or something personal. Then, and here's the tricky part, the person who gave the appreciate will then turn to their RIGHT to receive an appreciation. The person who receives the appreciation is only allowed to say THANK YOU. 😊

**Why:** We all need to feel appreciated, and we all need to practice remembering to appreciate the people in our lives. So we are intentional about learning to both give and receive thoughtful appreciations. The reason that we have each person first give an appreciation and then receive an appreciation is that we want them to be able to be fully present when they receive their appreciation. We don't want them worrying about what they're going to say next. And the reason they are only allowed to say THANK YOU is because we want them to practice receiving appreciation. Many people are tempted to reply to an appreciation by saying "oh it was nothing" or "it was really no trouble", but we want our friends to accept the appreciation, take it in, feel deserving of it, and not minimize it by trying to be humble. And so the rule sticks for everyone, "You can only say THANK YOU!"



### ● Free Play Time Activities

Free play is great when there are enough youth volunteers to play along next to the children and make sure children are playing nicely – sharing, using toys safely and properly, etc.

- Play Uno or War (Hi/Low with Uno cards), Go Fish
- Make matching cards – the numeral 2 on one card, two dots on another, etc
- Sort objects into categories, based on size, color, the sound of the letter they start with.
- Use pages from illustrated storybooks to play *Memory* – “What kind of animals were in the picture I just showed you?” “What color was the car?” etc.

### ● Story Time

Choose a storybook from the collection of Thriving Connections books, use the First Books selection for that month, borrow a nonreligious one from the St. Mark’s library down the hall, or bring one from home/the public library. Children should listen quietly. If a child doesn’t want to listen to a story, don’t make them – but do insist that they play quietly so that other children can enjoy the story.

\*Preschool/Elementary - An appropriate book will take about 10 minutes to read and have short paragraphs on the page with words big enough that you can run your finger underneath the words to help them follow along. Stop periodically to talk about what is happening, the character’s feelings, what they think will happen next, what they wish would happen next, etc.

### ● Restroom Break (5-10 minutes)

After volunteers finish reading the story, it is restroom time. All children need to walk to the restroom, whether they need to use it or not! This helps set up a predictable routine from week to week, which is important for children this age. While walking to the restroom, emphasize skills like walking quietly at an appropriate indoor pace, walking in a line, etc. That doesn’t mean the children can’t have fun, though. You may:

- Have a quiet scavenger hunt on the way to the restroom – children can raise their hands silently when they see a picture of a man or a picture of a woman, or the color red, etc.
- Pretend to be mice, turtles, spies, ninjas or something else known for being quiet, and the children have to walk quietly while imitating whatever they are pretending to be.

### ● Craft Time (15-20 minutes)

Try to get the children gathered around the central tables. Encourage them to color and draw, paying special attention to staying in the lines, reproducing simple shapes by drawing or tracing, and color identification in English – and Spanish, if you know it. Some ideas:

- Trace hands and feet.
- Roll die, and have the children draw that number of circles, squares, etc.
- Write the child’s name (or other words) and have them trace or copy it.
- Practice folding scrap paper – this develops fine motor skills and spatial reasoning.
- Color inside the lines.
- Draw what I draw!
- Use a measuring tape or ruler to measure shapes, objects, or the children themselves.

● **Movement** (15-25 minutes)

Focus on some sort of kinesthetic activity during this time – get the kids up and moving around. Weather permitting, take them to the playground, but if the weather doesn't allow, lead the children in activities:

- Play **Simon Says, Follow the Leader, or Red Light/Green Light.**
- Play **What Time Is It, Mr. Fox?**
- Have a child balance a stuffed animal on his or her head, and have them navigate around the room without dropping it.
- Use the CD player in the room to play children's music then invent dances with the children. You can pause the music and have them freeze in a pose.
- Have children face each other, walk forward, touch (not hit!) their open palms, and walk back. Invent variations on this – it's like simple line dancing.
- Have the kids hold hands and walk in a circle. Every once in a while, have them reverse direction or stop.
- Hide toys or shapes around the room, and have children find them.

**What other games do you remember from your childhood? Write them here and you can refer back to it whenever you get stuck for an idea!**

● **Clean Up** (5-10 minutes)

Return all toys to the Thriving Connections bins and return those bins to the place you found them. Make sure all craft supplies are cleaned up as well. Engage the children in cleaning up as well. Make it a game:

-Sing a song:



**The Clean Up Song**

Clean-up, Clean-up, Everybody, Everywhere.  
Clean-up, Clean-up, Everybody do your share.

- Cleaning Race – make it a contest. Have the children race to see how many items they can put away. Make sure to praise the winner to his or her face to his or her guardian!
- Earn play time – get full participation from every child in cleaning up, and offer to play a favorite game in exchange, or offer extended outdoor time.
- Be specific with your instructions -- Everyone pick up 10 toys! Everyone pick up 8 pieces of trash!

● **End Games** (5-10 minutes)

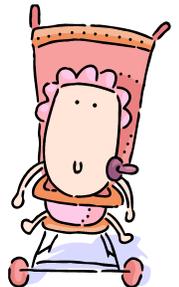
After all the toys are put away, while waiting for parents to pick their kids up, engage kids in simple games like:

- Play **Simon Says, Follow the Leader, or Red Light/Green Light.**
- Have all of the kids sit down. Play **"If you like pizza stand up!"** **"If you are wearing brown, stand up!"**

**Infants**

Just because the youngest of the children in our care can't play most of the games listed above doesn't mean we can't enrich their experience here at Thriving Connections. Make sure you do a few of these things with the babies in our care:

- Make lots of eye contact.
- Hide things under a cup or a box or behind your back, then reveal them.
- "I can touch my nose. Touch your nose!"
- Filling and emptying containers.
- Mouth sounds – long vowels – ooooo, eeeee.
- Peek-a-boo.
- Copy cat what the baby says and does.



# Middle/High School Topics

The following are topics that might help you generate some ideas for class discussions or activities.

## Friendship Skills

1. Meeting new people
2. Why friends are important
3. Qualities of a good friend
4. Evaluating relationships
5. Degrees of relationship
6. Social Support Networks
7. Resolving conflicts with friends
8. Appreciating your friend

## Social Skills

1. Active listening overview
2. Verbal listening skills
3. Non-verbal listening skills
4. Active listening practice
5. Know your audience
6. Know your context
7. Staying on topic
8. Being Healthy
9. Being Healthy

## Conflict Resolution/Bullying

1. Identifying type of conflict
2. Barriers to resolving conflict
3. Using "I" messages
4. Resolving own conflicts
5. Overview on bullying
6. "Verbal" bullying
7. What to do (action steps)

## Appreciating Diversity

1. Recognizing differences
2. Appreciating diversity
3. Prejudice
4. Stereotypes
5. Cliques
6. Discrimination

## Expression of Feelings

1. Identifying feelings
2. Expressing happiness
3. Expressing sadness
4. Expressing fear
5. Expressing anger
6. Empathizing with others

## Career Exploration

1. Overview- what do you know
2. Guest speakers
3. Dream Boards
4. What do you want to do

## Social Values

1. Fairness
2. Responsibility (self)
3. Responsibility (world)
4. Trust
5. Perseverance
6. Honesty
7. Generosity
8. Humility
9. Forgiveness
10. Citizenship

## Identity/Self-Esteem

1. Identity collage
2. Family
3. How others see us
4. Self-Esteem Inventory
5. Influences

# Other Thriving Connections Rules/Regulations:

These Rules should be followed on a consistent basis.

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## A. Universal Health Precautions

Procedures for handling spilled blood and body fluids: Volunteers have **NO** responsibilities in this area. **All** body spills must be handled by a trained staff person.

## B. Bad Weather

In the event of bad weather, (snow, ice, excessive temperatures...) it is possible that our weekly meeting would be canceled. When in doubt contact staff for assistance. (Contact Info in the back of handbook)

## C. Tornado/Fire

In the event of a tornado or fire please consult staff on safety instruction for you and the children. In the event you are unable to reach a staff person safely during a fire, please evacuate yourselves and the children in an orderly manner and wait for assistance.

## D. Dress Code

Casual dress is best! Remember you will be playing with children. That means paint, goop, and play-dough. However, our agency does have a specific dress code which states that: flip flops, shorts, spaghetti strap tank tops, or any athletic wear (sweat pants, yoga pants) should not be worn. We ask that our volunteers adhere to our dress code policy to the best of their abilities. Typically jeans and a t-shirt are the most comfortable attire when working in a classroom with children.

## E. Discipline Policy

No adult or youth care giver (including paid staff, volunteers, parents, acquaintances or visitors) may strike any child or youth during an event for any reason, including corporal punishment. Volunteers are never to discipline a child, other than redirection. Our policy is aimed at increasing a child's problem solving skills, increasing the knowledge of his/her feelings and promoting self-discipline. If a child is having a bad night and is unable to calm themselves or be redirected, volunteers should take the child to their parent.

## F. Criminal History

All volunteers are required to complete a limited criminal history check, for the safety of our children. This limited check is free for our agency to conduct, and of no cost to the volunteer.

## G. Sign-In/Sign Out Procedure

When you arrive to Thriving Connections for the weekly meetings please ensure that you sign –in and put your number of hours worked for the night down. Also for the safety of the children we require that the children be signed out by the parent/guardian when it is time to leave for the evening. Please use the sign-in sheet next to the adult sign-in sheet on the table; it should be kept with you until the conclusion of the evening's programming.

# Youth Program Journal

Please keep a log of the activities you did, the stories you read, what worked, and what didn't – it'll help future volunteers do an even better job of taking care of our children! Thanks for everything you do!

**Date: (Example)** Nov. 5 - tried to play Uno, little kids kept grabbing cards, next time set up separate game for little kids to do with some of the cards while the bigger kids use some of the cards to play Uno. Or pair a bigger kid with a small one to help them with the cards. Did follow the leader in hallway - lots of different arm movements/placements - worked well. Kids loved "Old McDonald" song - took turns naming animal. Read *Arthur* book and talked about the pictures of animals in it. - Tara

**Date:**

**Date:**

**Date:**

**Date:**

**Date:**



## Youth Program Lesson Plan

Date:  
Subject:

Grade Level:  
Specific Content Focus:

Check-in (~20 minutes)

- New & Good (Go around the room and ask the kids to share one thing that is both new & good)
- Mediation/Mindfulness activity (brief calming activity to help children practice self-regulation)

Homework/Reading time (20 to 30 minutes)

- See if kids bring in homework. If not give them a book to read. For younger kids, you can either read to them or even have them read to you.

### Transition Activity Outline (~15 minutes)

**Materials and Preparation:**

**Leaders:** (Who is the main leader? Who are the co-leaders)

**Explicit Instruction:** (How will I introduce and model this skill? What examples will I use?)

**Comment:** (*Did the kids enjoy doing the activities? Do they comment on anything?*)



**Focus Lesson Outline (~30 minutes)**

**Materials and Preparation:**

**Leaders:** *(Who is the main leader? Who are the co-leaders) :*

**Explicit Instruction:** *(How will I introduce and explain this benchmark?)*

**Modeled Example:** *(How will I model this skill? What examples will I use?)*

**Journal:** *(What did you observe? Things that you may do differently next time.)*

**Comment:** *(Did the kids enjoy doing the activities? Do they comment on anything?)*

**Appreciations:** each person says one thing they appreciate about the person next to them and receives one from the person on the other side-younger kids may need help, the person giving chooses what they want to say and the person receiving can only say thank you, no one else comments, no discussion.



# Thriving Connections Youth Community Volunteer Handbook

Thank you for volunteering!

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## Thriving Connections Youth Program At a Glance

(We'll contact you to let you know if this changes)

**When:** Thursday nights, 6:00 – 8:15PM.  
Dinner is served at 6:00  
Youth Community begins at 6:30.

**Where:** St. Mark's United Methodist Church (Right behind Best Buy)  
100 N State Road 46  
Bloomington, IN 47408

**If you are scheduled to volunteer, but for some reason cannot fulfill your commitment** – please contact the Volunteer Coordinator or the Thriving Connections Coach as soon as possible (contact info below). No one is going to get mad, but we need to know as soon as you know so that we can find someone else to cover your spot!

If your friends would like to volunteer, please have them contact us.

### Thriving Connections Staff Role Call:

**Linda Patton**

Thriving Connections Coordinator - helps to manage Thriving Connections as a whole  
lindap@insccap.org  
(812) 339-3447 ext. 520

**Katie Rodriguez**

Thriving Connections AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator- contact person for volunteer related activities  
[mamadegracezilla@gmail.com](mailto:mamadegracezilla@gmail.com)  
(812) 339-3447 ext. 522

**Emmanuel Scaife**

Thriving Connections ACE - contact person for IU Service Learning Coordination  
escaife@uemail.iu.edu  
(812) 339-3447 ext. 522

