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## **WELCOME TO OUR TEAM!!!**

Dear Volunteer:

Thank you for your interest in supporting Ability Connection! We value your time and energy, as you are a vital member of our team. This manual should help you become familiar with Ability Connection and how to be successful volunteers. Please know that we are always open to your suggestions, concerns, and/or comments.

Here at Ability Connection, we are committed to working with each person on an individual basis. We want to build a mutually beneficial relationship in which you, our valued volunteer, use your strengths, passions, and dedication to not only benefit Ability Connection, but to positively enhance your own life. Volunteering at Ability Connection shows that you acknowledge the value of our mission.

Thank you for your support and we look forward to working with you!



# Ability Connection

## Background Information



- Ability Connection is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that was founded and incorporated in Dallas County in 1953 as United Cerebral Palsy. The organization changed its name in February 2011 to better reflect the people we serve (children and adults with *all types* of disabilities) and to better reflect its emphasis on *ability*. The organization has been providing high quality services to individuals with disabilities for over 60 years.
- The mission of Ability Connection is to provide a full array of services to people with physical and intellectual disabilities as they strive to achieve their highest level of independence.

The organization provides services and support for all ages; Ability Connection is dedicated to helping individuals throughout their lifetime.

- Ability Connection has provided comprehensive care and support for over 4,697 children and adults with disabilities.
- Current programs and services include: early childhood development and education, adult day habilitation, specialized therapies, assistive technology, transportation, housing/residential services, case management, nursing and attendant care, information and referral services, as well as many other in-home and community-based support services.
- Ability Connection's service area has expanded over the years. The organization initially only served Dallas County. Now, Ability Connection provides services throughout the state of Texas and New Mexico.
- During 2013, Ability Connection caregivers, therapists and nurses provided over **2 million hours** of direct care assisting our clients.
- Ability Connection is an efficient and financially responsible charity; 90% of income raised goes directly to the programs and services we provide to our clients.

Ability Connection and its team of professionals provide comprehensive housing and residential support services to adults with disabilities. These individuals, because of their limitations, are unable to live on their own. Ability Connection helps by providing the care and support individuals with significant disabilities need, along with the privacy and autonomy they deserve.

# **Ability Connection Office Locations**

## **Ability Connection Texas Headquarters**

**8802 Harry Hines Blvd.**

**Dallas, Texas 75235**

**Phone: (214) 351-2500**

**Fax: (214) 351-2610**

## **Regional Offices**

### **Albuquerque**

5801 Osuna Rd NE, Suite A-108

Albuquerque, NM 87109

(505) 268-5076 / fax (505) 266-2068

### **Austin**

1033 La Posada Dr. Suite 135

Austin, TX 78752

(515) 394-6479 / fax (512) 394-6482

### **El Paso**

4141 Pinnacle, Suite 101

El Paso, TX 79902

(915) 532-7795 / fax (915) 532-7706

### **Fort Worth**

4500 Mercantile Plaza

Suite 300

Fort Worth, TX 76137

(817) 692-4430 / fax (817) 796-2745

### **Garland**

337 Oak Trail

Suite 109

Garland, TX 75043

(877) 318-2496 / fax (214) 593-2751

### **Longview**

1125 Judson Road, Suite 114

Longview, TX 75601

(903) 234-8822 / fax (903) 234-8826

### **Lufkin**

712 Fair Park Drive #103

Henderson, TX 75654

(903) 657-4123 / fax (903) 657-4389

### **Houston**

2855 Magnum Road, Suite 350

Houston, TX 77092

(713) 826-5851 / fax (877) 258-4984

### **San Antonio**

6800 Park Ten Blvd, Suite 213N

San Antonio, TX 78213

(210) 305-1537 / fax (877) 258-4984

### **Waco/Temple**

3000 S. 31st Street, Suite 208

Temple, TX 76502

(877) 827-2527 / fax (877) 258-4984

### **Wichita Falls**

901 Indiana Ave., Suite 360

Wichita Falls, TX 76301

(940) 613-2906 / fax (877) 796-2745

# Programs and Services

## **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY:**

Ability Connection is making assistive technology more accessible to individuals with disabilities by providing different types of technology to individuals who can benefit from its use. Our Technology Initiative gives individuals with disabilities the opportunity to receive assistive or therapeutic equipment at no cost. There are two programs within Ability Connection's Technology Initiative: Enabling Communication and Tech 4 Tots.

### **ENABLING COMMUNICATION (*ages 4 and up*) -**

Enabling Communication is a branch of the Technology Initiative of Ability Connection that gives individuals a voice by providing equipment and a suite of augmentative communication software to individuals with communication-related disabilities.

### **TECH 4 TOTS (*ages 9 months to 4 years*) -**

Tech 4 Tots is a branch of the Technology Initiative that gives infants and toddlers (ages 9 months to 4 years) the opportunity to enhance early learning and overcome functional limitations by providing a wide range of equipment and/or software.

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION:**

The Public Education program at Ability Connection provides valuable educational services to families, caregivers and disability professionals who are responsible for taking care of (or overseeing the care of) a person with a disability. We also offer training and educational programs to the community in order to create a greater awareness of disabilities, to promote better care for people with disabilities, to teach about recognizing abuse, neglect or exploitation, and to foster more positive attitudes toward those with disabilities.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION CENTER:**

A licensed preschool program for children ages of 18 months to 6-years-old with any type of physical or developmental disability. Educational activities are provided in conjunction with occupational, physical and speech therapies. An adaptive toy/equipment loan program is also available through this program.

# **Programs and Services**

## **GROUP HOMES:**

Three Intermediate Care Facilities and four HCS group homes in Texas provide 24-hour care in a family style residential setting. Services include individualized assistance and training in personal care, money management, and community inclusion.

## **INDIVIDUALS MAKING PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT COME TRUE (IMPACT) ADULT DAY PROGRAM:**

A day program that provides daily opportunities for adults with disabilities, ages 18 and up, to attain personal goals through life skills education, personal growth training, recreation and leisure activities, community outings, and socialization skills.

## **HOME & COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT (HCS):**

A Medicaid waiver program that provides a variety of services such as case management, nursing, supported home living, foster care, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and dietary services.

## **COMMUNITY LIVING ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES (CLASS):**

A Medicaid waiver program that provides case management services to persons with a condition such as cerebral palsy, autism, spina bifida, or a closed head injury.

## Volunteer Orientation

Orientation is required for volunteers who will be providing service in any area with direct contact with our clients or volunteering at any of our fundraising events. The purpose of the orientation is to provide information and training regarding working with our clients and being a part of our events. The orientation will cover the following topics in detail: safety, transport, interaction with clients or event attendees, volunteer job descriptions and sign-up and volunteer policies and procedures.

There are many different and exciting volunteer opportunities to consider and those opportunities will be explained in detail at orientation. Every effort will be made to place a new volunteer in an area of his/her choice. Placement is based on personal interests and availability, as well as the organization's needs. Please be sure to share any special interest or skill set you have with us at orientation and on your Volunteer Application!

An Ability Connection Team member will be in contact with you to arrange a convenient time for your volunteer orientation.



# **Volunteering Policies & Procedures**

## **Equal Volunteering Opportunity:**

Ability Connection provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon one's ability to perform the job, as well as one's dedication to Ability Connection's mission and needs.

## **Attendance:**

We ask that you respect our time, as we will respect yours, by being punctual. If you are running late or need to cancel please just give our office a call. Volunteers play an important role at Ability Connection. The facility staff and event staff depend and rely highly on their volunteers!

## **Drugs & Alcohol:**

Ability Connection is a substance-free environment; please respect this policy at all times. We ask that you please refrain from consuming alcohol or using other substances while volunteering at any Ability Connection facility or event, including fundraisers and outreach programs. You may be asked to leave the facility/event should this policy be broken.

## **Gifts, Tips, Soliciting:**

Please do not accept any tips or gifts from clients, their families or friends. We do not want to create an atmosphere where our clients feel obligated to reward Ability Connection staff and volunteers for doing a job. Also, you may not promote or solicit your own business enterprise, political agenda or religious beliefs while volunteering with us. Solicitation for a private charity is also prohibited.

## **Sign-in:**

Please sign-in immediately upon arriving on-site to volunteer. If volunteering off-site at an event, please locate the volunteer sign-in table and use the log sheet to sign in and out of an event. It is essential the Ability Connection Team know when volunteers are on the premises or in attendance at an event.

## **Proper Attire When Volunteering:**

It is important for volunteers to maintain a professional and friendly look when at an Ability Connection facility or event. We ask that you dress comfortable, but appropriate for the volunteer position you will be doing.

## **Documentation of Hours:**

We are happy to provide you with written documentation AFTER you have met your volunteer commitment. Please remember to complete a Volunteer Time Sheet if you are requiring written documentation of the hours spent volunteering.

## **Volunteering Policies & Procedures (continued)**

### **Confidentiality/Privacy:**

Ability Connection clients and event attendees have a legal right to expect that confidentiality of information will be preserved. Unlawful use or disclosure of information may expose the organization to civil and criminal liability. Any breach of confidentiality will result in the automatic dismissal of a volunteer. Privacy involves privacy of body, belongings, information and space.

### **Feedback:**

Volunteers bring fresh perspectives and ideas with them, and we want to hear from you! Please provide us with feedback during and after your volunteer experience so that we may improve and grow and advance our services for our clients and expand our events for the community.

### **Cultural Diversity and Sensitivity:**

We all differ from one another. As volunteers in this industry, our differences can become more important due to the extremely personal nature of the services we provide. As we work with clients, families, and the public, we need to be aware of different beliefs and practices and be willing to create and maintain an environment that is respectful of all people.



# Volunteer Recognition

The Volunteer Recognition Plan, developed by Ability Connection, strives to provide a coordinated approach toward appreciation and acknowledgement of the volunteer and their efforts.

**~ Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer ~**

Valuable is the work you do  
Outstanding in how you always come through  
Loyal, sincere, and full of good cheer  
Untiring in your efforts throughout the year  
Notable are the contributions you make  
Trustworthy in every project you take  
Eager to reach your every goal  
Effective in the way you fulfill your role  
Ready with a smile like a shining star  
Special and wonderful -- that's what you are!!



## Tips for Being a Successful Volunteer!

1. Research the Causes or Issues Important to You: Look for a group that works with issues about which you feel strongly. You might already be giving money to one of these organizations, and that might be a good place to begin your volunteer experience.
2. Ask For/Offer Referrals: Let people know that you are looking to volunteer, and what your interests are. Your own community is an ideal place to reach out when looking to be connected to a group that means something to you. Once you find something you love—spreading the word is a great way to further the cause.
3. Don't Over Commit: As eager as you are to make a difference, you don't want volunteer projects to rule your schedule. Make sure you balance your time carefully so that your professional life or family time doesn't take a critical hit.
4. Have Fun: Helping others is its own reward, but it shouldn't feel like a chore. Even the most mundane task can be fun if you manage it with a sense of humor and excitement for making a difference.
5. Consider Your Skills: Ask yourself what you have to offer: What skills do you have and how can they translate to helping Ability Connection? If you're a good photographer, maybe you can take pictures at an event. Are you a good teacher? Maybe you can supervise a group of volunteers.
6. Learn Something New: Yes, you've got something to offer, but what else can you get out of this experience besides the joy of giving back? Trying things that may be out of your comfort zone forces you to learn and adjust—a skill all of us can benefit from. Plus, you might find that you enjoy something you didn't know about before.
7. Combine Your Goals: Look for volunteer opportunities that will help you achieve personal goals in addition to the goal to do good. Research shows this will help you stay committed to the cause.
8. Pull in The Same Direction: While you may have your own ideas on how things should be done, remember why you are volunteering—everyone is there with the same good intentions.
9. Involve Your Friends and Family: When a family volunteers together, it's a win-win for everyone. The experience can bring everyone closer together, teach young children the value of giving, introduce skills and experiences never before encountered, and create special memories (plus, wherever you're volunteering benefits from more hands on deck!).
10. Be Yourself: Bring your heart, your sense of humor, and your enthusiastic spirit to your volunteer service. Never be afraid to ask about things you don't know or understand yet.