



LITERACY  
SERVICES

# Volunteer Handbook

Dear Valued Literacy Services Volunteer:

Thank you for becoming a volunteer with Literacy Services. We deeply appreciate you dedicating your time and talents to our students, especially since we realize that your life is busy. With your help, we provide motivated adults access to quality education so they can improve their lives and reach their education goals. As a volunteer-driven organization, we recognize that volunteers' impact is tremendous. Simply put, we could not do what we do without your tireless and compassionate commitment.

We believe our volunteers are our greatest resource. While volunteering at LSW, you may choose to be involved in a variety of opportunities, including one-on-one tutoring, developing curriculum, or assisting with the day-to-day operations through administrative tasks. We love to hear where your interests lie and what possible contributions you may have to offer. At LSW, staff and students alike are committed to lifelong-learning and we welcome any feedback on your experience as a volunteer or on areas we can improve.

If you have any questions or know someone you think would be a wonderful LSW volunteer, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at 414-344-5878 or [volunteer@literacyservices.org](mailto:volunteer@literacyservices.org).

We hope you find Literacy Services to be an inviting atmosphere and rewarding experience where you can see your impact transform lives. Thank you for taking the time to review this handbook and signing the form acknowledging you received it.

With deepest gratitude,



Holly McCoy  
Executive Director

## **Purpose of Handbook**

The Volunteer Handbook provides overall guidance and direction to volunteers and the staff overseeing them. This book will share with you our history, mission, practices, and policies.

We hope this handbook serves as an introduction to Literacy Services, allowing you to feel comfortable with us. No volunteer handbook can cover all questions you might have about our program. If you have any questions about your volunteer experience, you are encouraged to discuss them with your Program Director, and/or the Volunteer Coordinator.

We are a volunteer-driven organization and depend on people like you; your success is our success. Without our generous and compassionate volunteers, we wouldn't be able to do the work we do. We believe you will find Literacy Services an enjoyable and rewarding place to volunteer, full of like-minded people invested in education and the success of our community as a whole.

We ask that you read this handbook carefully and refer to it whenever questions arise. Thank you for sharing your time and talents with us!

## **Our Mission**

Literacy Services of Wisconsin partners with motivated adults to provide access to quality basic education and skills training so they can improve their lives, enrich their families, and strengthen our community.

## **Our Vision**

We envision a future in which all adult learners have the tools to create success for themselves, a better future for their children, and a thriving community for everyone.

## **Our Values**

- **Education:** We believe that everyone can learn and has the right to a quality education.
- **Equality/respect:** We treat every person with dignity and respect.
- **Engagement:** We believe that by engaging community members through volunteerism we can efficiently and effectively meet the basic education and training needs of adult learners.
- **Quality:** Working as a team, we provide volunteers and staff with the training, support, and resources necessary to ensure adult learners attain their goals.
- **Continuous Improvement:** We are committed to providing effective programs for all types of learners. We evaluate and measure our outcomes to identify ways to improve on past successes and communicate to others.
- **Stewardship:** We are committed to being trustworthy stewards of our human, financial, and community resources.
- **Partnership and Leadership:** We are committed to meeting community needs. Guided by our mission, we work as partners and leaders in service to our community.

## History

In 1965, a thoughtful and compassionate group of community leaders came together to respond to the problem of adult illiteracy in Milwaukee—and LSW was born. These volunteers based their effort on the model set forth by the literacy movement's champion, Dr. Frank Laubach. Dr. Laubach spent time in numerous other countries teaching reading and writing, and his model—"Each One, Teach One"—has been used by LSW since our inception.

On July 1, 2017, Literacy Services joined forces with Milwaukee Achiever Literacy Services through a strategic merger. These two well-respected organizations are now one and continue to deliver quality adult education and training programs in eight neighborhood locations around Milwaukee. Our team of 21 staff members and more than 500 volunteers serve 1000-1400 adults each year.

Our compassionate and effective team of professionals is leading change in our community by engaging volunteers to share their skills in partnership with adults from all walks of life who are driven to succeed. Whether they are learning to read, studying to earn a GED or HSED, or are learning to communicate in English, Literacy Services empowers adult learners to unlock their full potential.

## Program Descriptions

Our academic programs focus on assisting adults with literacy, basic education, English communication skills, and employment readiness training. Our multi-faceted initiatives combine academic programs with computer and workforce development skills to help students prepare for employment and improve their lives. We individualize programming and instruction around each learner so the content is relevant. Our programs include:

- **Adult Basic Education (ABE)** – These classes are designed for adults who want to improve their basic education skills (reading, language, and/or math) or prepare for beginning GED/HSED instruction.
- **Adult Secondary Education (ASE): GED and High School Equivalent Diploma (HSED) Program** – Students study extensively in four subjects: language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in preparation for the GED tests. A fifth test, Wisconsin's Civics test, was added as a requirement in 2016. Our competency-based HSED program provides an alternative path to earn a high school diploma in the State of Wisconsin, whereby students create a portfolio of work that demonstrates the required competencies to earn a HSED.
- **English Language Learning (ELL)** – This program addresses the barriers and lack of access to services that non-native English speaking adults and their families face daily. LSW offers various modes of English language instruction, including one-on-one tutoring, small group, and classroom instruction.

- **Workforce Development Training** – Our Warehouse Worker/Forklift Training and Certification program prepares learners for employment. Successful participants earn a fork lift operator license.
- **Job Training HSED program** – This program is the product of a dynamic partnership between LSW and WRTP/BIG STEP, a nonprofit that provides training programs for the manufacturing and construction trades sectors. WRTP/BIG STEP applicants who do not meet the test score standards are personally introduced to LSW for one-on-one tutoring focused on remediating reading and mathematical deficits.

## **Record Keeping**

Literacy Services makes every attempt to keep accurate records of volunteer time, as well as student progress. Please follow your program staff's directions to ensure our records are as accurate as possible:

- Tutors are asked and expected to comply with all student progress record keeping procedures set forth by the Program Director; if you are ever unsure, please ask program staff.
- Tutors' service hours are tracked by program staff; a report of service hours is available upon request made to a program staff person.
- Non-tutor volunteer hours are tracked by the Volunteer Coordinator, but we also ask that volunteers keep track of their own hours of service to compare against our tracking.

## **Representing Literacy Services of WI**

When you're serving as a volunteer for Literacy Services of Wisconsin, what you say and do reflects on LSW as a whole. We know volunteers may have a variety of beliefs and values when it comes to political and social issues, and we appreciate this diversity of thought. However, we request that you remain neutral on these matters while representing LSW.

You are encouraged and welcome to use your own social media platforms to help promote Literacy Services' programming, special events, volunteer opportunities, outreach, and more. However, LSW volunteers are prohibited from starting any new social media properties that claim to represent the organization. If you have any questions about this, please contact LSW's Director of Marketing, Dustin Slane, at [dustin@literacyservices.org](mailto:dustin@literacyservices.org).

## **Media Contact**

Media relations can be complex. For that reason, we ask that, as a Literacy Services volunteer, you don't speak with the media for LSW without prior permission from a program staff person.

Please send all media inquiries directly to a program staff person. Please note that media inquiries are usually time-sensitive and should be forwarded as soon as they are received.

### **Code of Conduct/Boundaries**

By accepting a volunteer position with LSW, you have a responsibility to LSW and to your fellow volunteers to adhere to certain rules of behavior and conduct. The purpose of these rules is not to restrict your rights, but rather to maintain a high standard of quality. We also want you to know what conduct is expected and necessary to provide quality services.

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules, policies, and procedures of LSW or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be dismissed until the volunteer has had the opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with supervisory staff, unless there is just cause. LSW has the right to request a volunteer to leave immediately. Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Gross misconduct or insubordination.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing volunteer assignment.
- Theft or property misuse of LSW funds, equipment, or materials.
- Lies or falsification of records.
- Illegal, violent, or unsafe acts.
- Abuse or mistreatment of members of the public, staff, volunteers, or students.

### **Volunteer Background Check Policy**

Literacy Services is committed to the protection of all persons associated with LSW, including staff, volunteers, students, and other guests. Literacy Services shall conduct criminal and national sex offender background checks on all employees and volunteers to screen for any arrests and/or convictions for violent crimes. A conviction for a non-violent crime, depending on severity, does not necessarily prevent someone from becoming a volunteer. The Executive Director may choose to interview a volunteer regarding a conviction and decide each case on its relevant details. The Executive Director's decision on these matters is final.

### **Technology Policy**

LSW computers are available for students and volunteers at any time. Students and volunteers must seek approval and instruction from staff in order to use the computers. Inappropriate material has been blocked on all LSW technology.

### **Confidentiality Code**

Your volunteer service with LSW assumes an obligation to maintain confidentiality. As a volunteer, you may be privy to information that is confidential in nature, such as the names and personal information of students and other volunteers, as well as proprietary or privileged

information involving an LSW employee, volunteer, student, or site partner. Such information cannot be shared with family, friends, acquaintances, or the general public.

The tutor/student relationship is a unique one. The adult students who have found the courage to confront their literacy needs require a safe learning environment to succeed. Therefore, confidentiality is of the utmost importance.

If you are questioned by someone outside of LSW and you are concerned about the propriety of giving them certain information, remember that you are not required to answer. Instead, refer the request to a program staff person.

Because of its seriousness, disclosure of confidential information will lead to dismissal.

### **Volunteer Dismissals and Grievances**

Literacy Services values our volunteers and the work they do to build our capacity and support our student's education. However, we maintain the right to dismiss a volunteer for any reason, at any time. If we determine that a volunteer is not a good fit for our organization and is not furthering our mission, we reserve the right to dismiss the volunteer.

Grievances regarding day-to-day operations at Literacy Services, including but not limited to issues with staff, students, or building facilities, should be taken up directly with program staff. Program staff will determine how to move forward with the issue. If the volunteer still thinks the issue has not been resolved, he/she should contact the Volunteer Coordinator via email to describe the original problem, the attempted solution, and the resulting circumstances.

**Tutor Eligibility Requirements** are set by each academic program. Here are the basic guidelines for tutoring:

- 18 years of age
- HS diploma/GED and some college experience
- Able to commit to tutoring for at least one 90-minute session per week
- Able to explain things using simplified language
- Patient, compassionate, supportive, enthusiastic, and reliable
- Able to follow directions to ensure consistency of instruction

### **Non-Tutor Volunteer Eligibility Requirements**

We use a matching process to determine what volunteer opportunities might be a good fit for each individual's unique skill set, experience, and interests. Here are our general volunteer eligibility guidelines:

- Have a valid email address and regular email access
- Have a desire to serve our mission
- Minimum educational attainment: Enrolled in high school; some roles require a college degree

### **What the Organization Expects from the Volunteer**

As a Volunteer you have the responsibility:

- To be reliable.
- To respect student's confidentiality.
- To be realistic and candid in accepting your position, taking into consideration your interests, skills, and availability.
- To know your duties and how to do them in accordance with the training you receive.
- To ask questions if you are ever unsure or need guidance.
- To cooperate with LSW staff and your fellow volunteers.
- To follow LSW's policies and procedures.
- To develop your skills as a volunteer by participating in training and development opportunities.

### **What Volunteers Should Expect From the Organization**

As a volunteer for LSW you can expect:

- To work in a healthy and safe environment.
- To be given accurate and truthful information about LSW.
- To receive a clear, specific job description and agreed upon hours of contribution.
- To receive orientation, training, support, and supervision for the role(s) you accept.
- To discuss any problems and receive prompt attention to any concerns which may arise.
- That personnel records will be kept documenting your volunteer experience including positions held, training, evaluations, and recommendations.

### **RECEIPT OF VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

[Click here to confirm receipt.](#)