

Placement

When placing a volunteer, consider their interests and skills along with your learner and program needs. For one-to-one tutoring situations, select pairs by corresponding schedules, proximity, travel considerations, and common interests. When talking with the prospective tutor, describe the learner accurately and provide a profile of the student and his/her learning goals. Review student and tutor responsibilities. Contact the volunteer several times at the beginning of his or her placement to check-in and troubleshoot any unforeseen issues.

When placing a learner in an ESL class, let the volunteer teacher know when the learner will be starting. Again, provide the volunteer with information about the learner and his/her learning goals. The *Introducing Your Learner* form may be a useful tool. Ask the volunteer to touch base with you after the first class. Be prepared to move the learner to a different class if the level is too high or low.

Literacy programs almost always have adult learners with special needs. These learners may be especially difficult to place because of diagnosed learning disabilities, physical disabilities, or mild retardation. Offer as much support as you can to volunteers working with special needs learners. Be available to answer questions and suggest lesson materials. Try to help the volunteers be realistic. In most cases, adult learners will be very motivated and responsive to the program. In other cases, progress may be slow or the learners may attend sporadically.

If problems arise with the placement, the program coordinator may choose to assign a new volunteer/classroom or conduct a follow-up meeting with a volunteer or learner. If the problem stems from inappropriate behavior, poor attendance, or a poor match between the instructional program and the volunteer's or learner's expectations, the program coordinator may try to re-assign him/her to a different position, discontinue his/her involvement in the program, or ask him/her to consider a volunteer contract that clearly outlines expectations and consequences over a specific period of time. Whatever the response, programs need to have clear policies on how to handle inappropriate behavior on the part of the learner or volunteer.