

Volunteer Preparation Improvement – Field Evidence (Competency 7.1)

This document outlines volunteer preparation improvements I implemented during my time coordinating Chatter Camp at Signal Centers. These efforts were grounded in feedback from volunteers, staff, and families and aimed to build a more inclusive, trauma-informed, and developmentally appropriate volunteer experience.

1. Revised Volunteer Orientation

- Based on themes from past surveys and informal staff debriefs, I restructured our orientation content to include:
 - A visual walkthrough of a typical camp day.
 - Overview of common communication styles used by campers, including AAC devices and sensory tools.
 - Practical do's and don'ts for supporting children with developmental disabilities.
- Orientation materials were adapted into a print-ready folder and PDF guide for remote access.

2. One-Page Expectations Guide

- I created a one-page, plain-language guide highlighting:
 - Volunteer roles and boundaries.
 - Appropriate language for redirection.
 - How to request help from staff.
- This sheet was translated into Spanish and distributed on the first day of camp.

3. Staff-Volunteer Pairing & Accommodations

- Volunteers with limited experience were intentionally paired with staff who had backgrounds in AAC or sensory support.
- We provided shaded rest stations for volunteers and campers, incorporated universal design principles in how instructions were delivered, and ensured that every activity had visual supports.

4. Pre- and Post-Surveys & Follow-Up Phone Calls

- I designed and distributed a pre-survey to assess volunteers' baseline confidence, training needs, and familiarity with developmental disabilities.
- At the end of the session, a post-survey was conducted to evaluate perceived growth, satisfaction, and preparedness.
- Additionally, I conducted follow-up phone calls with several volunteers to gather more in-depth, qualitative feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- These tools provided valuable data that directly informed future training content and adjustments to volunteer assignments.

These improvements were developed in response to observable program needs and directly align with social work values of accessibility, person-centered service, and empowerment. They reflect my ongoing efforts to evaluate and enhance program strategies using field data and inclusive practices.