



## Volunteer Handbook

4915 Radford Avenue, Ste. 204  
Richmond, VA 23230  
804-288-9930

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[frontdesk@readcenter.org](mailto:frontdesk@readcenter.org)

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### **Office Hours:**

Monday – Friday

8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

# Welcome to The READ Center

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to The READ Center! We are delighted you have chosen to volunteer your time with us. We understand your time is valuable and are honored you're willing to spend some of it with us. Each and every day, our agency depends on volunteers like you to ensure we operate efficiently and successfully serve our students. Volunteers at The READ Center do everything from tutoring students and substitute teaching classes, to attending community and outreach events. In short, The READ Center could not operate without dedicated volunteers like you.

The Volunteer Handbook provides answers to many of the questions you may have about The READ Center's volunteer program. It covers policies and procedures, and mutual responsibilities. You are responsible for reading and understanding the Volunteer Handbook, and for adhering to The READ Center's policies and procedures. If anything is unclear, please discuss the matter with the Program Assistant.

On behalf of our staff, students, and everyone here at The READ Center, we welcome you to our volunteer program. Thank you for dedicating your time to help adults with low-literacy levels develop the skills they need to fulfil their roles as citizens, workers, and family members.

Sincerely,

Karen La Forge  
Executive Director

Nausha Brown-Chavez  
Program Manager



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## Mission and History

### **MISSION:**

Changing lives through adult literacy.

### **VISION:**

A community in which all adults have a literate life.

### **WHO WE ARE:**

The READ Center is a community-based nonprofit organization providing educational opportunities to adults with low-level reading and communication skills for more than 36 years. READ was founded as the Literacy Council of Metropolitan Richmond in 1982 by Altrusa International Richmond, Inc., a professional women's business service club and became a 501(c)(3) organization in 1984. READ is funded by individuals, community organizations, foundations, businesses and Chesterfield and Henrico Counties.

### **WHAT WE DO:**

Learning to read as an adult is complex and the students are often those who have had very limited success in school. READ Center's mission is accomplished by providing classroom instruction, one-to-one tutoring, an adult literary curriculum and educational resources to support students.

### **WHY WE DO IT:**



The ability to read is something most of us take for granted. It is something we assume every adult can do, but that is not true. In the United States an estimated 36 million people cannot read, write or do basic math above a third grade level. In Richmond City, Henrico and Chesterfield Counties, 1 in 10 adults lack these skills or more than 72,000 adults.

Every important issue is impacted by literacy – health, employment, housing, parenting, education and civic engagement. The inability to read creates huge barriers for adults trying to function in our society. Low literacy traps families in cycles of low-educational attainment and poverty that is hard to break.

### **WHO WE SERVE:**

We serve adults ages 18 years and older who have limited literacy skills. Learning to read is complex, especially as an adult. Many adult learners spend years struggling with reading and hiding their inability to read from family members, friends, coworkers, and employers. About 75% of READ students read at or below the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level.

# Expectations

## What The READ Center Expects from You

The READ Center expects the following of its volunteers:

- To be respectful of students, teachers, staff, and other volunteers
- To know their duties and how to execute them correctly
- To communicate with READ staff and cooperate with your fellow volunteers
- To take advantage of professional development, including trainings and social/networking events that are offered to you
- To support the safe and pleasant learning environment READ strives to build
- To help READ improve programs and volunteer experiences by providing regular feedback

## What You Can Expect from The READ Center

As a volunteer for The READ Center, you can expect:

- To receive a clear and specific job description
- To be given appropriate assignments according to your skills, interests, availability, and training
- To be given appropriate formal and informal expressions of recognition
- To receive orientation, training, support, and supervision for the jobs you accept and know why you are being asked to do a task
- To receive prompt attention from The READ Center staff for any concern that may arise
- To be recognized for your hard work and time you give to READ through volunteer celebrations, special events, and more



## Classroom Tutor Job Description

<b>Position Title:</b>	Classroom Literacy Tutor
<b>Job Description:</b>	Provide small-group tutoring in reading and writing for English-speaking adults. Tutoring takes place in various classrooms in Richmond and surrounding counties.
<b>General Duties:</b>	Communicate frequently with appropriate staff Meet with class regularly Collaborate with teachers to create lesson plans for student goal work
<b>Time Commitment:</b>	Two hours of tutoring per week with a one year commitment
<b>Qualifications:</b>	Dependable, patient, and flexible. Able to encourage and support adult learners by helping them develop confidence about learning. Be aware of cultural differences and respectful of learners as adult peers.
<b>Eligibility Requirements:</b>	18 years of age or older High school diploma or GED Able to speak and understand English with ease Participate in additional professional development
<b>Support Provided:</b>	Orientation Classroom Observations Initial 4 1/2 -hour training Access to ProLiteracy's web-based resources Staff consultation and support
<b>Contact:</b>	<b>The READ Center</b> 4915 Radford Avenue Richmond, VA 23230 804-288-9930 frontdesk@readcenter.org



## One-to-One Tutor Job Description

<b>Position Title:</b>	One-to-One Tutor
<b>Job Description:</b>	Provide one-to-one tutoring in reading and writing for English-speaking adults. Tutoring takes place in various sites in Richmond and surrounding counties.
<b>General Duties:</b>	Meet with your student in a public space Create student-centered lesson plans Collaborate with students to achieve student goals. Submit monthly student progress reports
<b>Time Commitment:</b>	Two hours of tutoring per week with a one year commitment
<b>Qualifications:</b>	Dependable, patient, and flexible. Able to encourage and support adult learners by helping them develop confidence about learning. Be aware of cultural differences and respectful of learners as adult peers.
<b>Eligibility Requirements:</b>	18 years of age or older High school diploma or GED Able to speak and understand English with ease Participate in additional professional development
<b>Support Provided:</b>	Orientation Classroom Observations Initial 4 1/2-hour training Access to ProLiteracy's web-based resources Staff consultation and support
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## Substitute Teacher Job Description

<b>Position Title:</b>	Substitute Teacher
<b>Job Description:</b>	Substitute teachers are needed in the absence of our regular teachers to instruct adults with low-level literacy skills and to run the classroom environment.
<b>General Duties:</b>	Use materials provided to attain lesson goals Create student-centered lesson plans Collaborate with students to achieve student goals. Communicate frequently with tutors and appropriate staff
<b>Time Commitment:</b>	Depending on need
<b>Qualifications:</b>	Some classroom teaching experience. Dependable, patient, and flexible. Able to encourage and support adult learners by helping them develop confidence about learning. Aware of cultural differences and respecting learners as adult peers.
<b>Eligibility Requirements:</b>	18 years of age or older High school diploma or GED Able to speak and understand English with ease Certificate in teaching a plus
<b>Support Provided:</b>	Orientation Classroom Observations Initial 4 1/2-hour training Access to ProLiteracy's web-based resources Staff consultation and support
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## Tutor Mentor Job Description

<b>Position Title:</b>	Tutor Mentor
<b>Job Description:</b>	Experienced tutor mentors meet with new one-to-one tutors looking for advice on getting started and making tutoring effective.
<b>General Duties:</b>	Make site visits to pairs to observe tutoring Support new tutors to make student-centered lesson plans Communicate frequently with tutors and appropriate staff
<b>Time Commitment:</b>	Depending on need
<b>Qualifications:</b>	Dependable, patient, and flexible. Able to encourage and support tutors and adult learners by helping them develop confidence. Aware of cultural differences and respecting learners as adult peers.
<b>Eligibility Requirements:</b>	18 years of age or older High school diploma or GED Able to speak and understand English with ease Certificate in teaching a plus
<b>Support Provided:</b>	Initial 4 1/2-hour training Access to ProLiteracy's web-based resources Staff consultation and support
<b>Contact:</b>	<b>The READ Center</b> 4915 Radford Avenue Richmond, VA 23230 804-288-9930 frontdesk@readcenter.org



## Assessment Administrator Job Description

<b>Position Title:</b>	Assessment Administrator
<b>Job Description:</b>	Administer the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to all new students enrolling in The READ Center.
<b>General Duties:</b>	Administer assessments at the main office or local libraries Prepare testing materials and score assessments Ensure student intake forms have been filled out correctly Communicate frequently with appropriate staff
<b>Time Commitment:</b>	Three registrations occur per month: two daytime and one evening registration. Registrations are 2-hours.
<b>Qualifications:</b>	Dependable, patient, and flexible. Able to encourage and support adult learners by helping them develop confidence about learning. Aware of cultural differences and respecting learners as adult peers.
<b>Eligibility Requirements:</b>	18 years of age or older High school diploma or GED Able to speak and understand English with ease Participate in additional professional development
<b>Support Provided:</b>	TABE Administrator Training Observations Staff consultation and support
<b>Contact:</b>	<b>The READ Center</b> 4915 Radford Avenue Richmond, VA 23230 804-288-9930 frontdesk@readcenter.org

# Policies and Procedures

## **Commitment**

The volunteer commitment is one year. At the end of each academic year, volunteers are contacted to discuss continuing involvement. Assignments to a classroom or location are based on student enrollment and are not guaranteed from year-to-year. After two-years of service in an assignment, volunteers are encouraged to continue challenging themselves by transitioning to a new opportunity such as: one-to-one tutoring, entering a new classroom, or substitute teaching.

## **Communication and Information Sharing**

The READ Center uses technology to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our programs. The READ Center's primary method of communication is email, and all volunteers must be willing and able to use email for communication. READ staff is always accessible to volunteers via email and telephone.

Open communication is mandatory. It is essential that you notify READ staff of breaks from tutoring, relocation of one-to-one meeting space, time or day changes, as well as program feedback and any concerns.

## **Feedback**

In addition to yearly volunteer satisfaction surveys, The READ Center welcomes and encourages regular feedback from volunteers. Our volunteers spend many hours in classrooms and with students, and we value their perspectives. Questions, comments, and concerns from volunteers help us think of new ways to innovate programming for our students. Should you have an idea or something to discuss, please contact the Program Manager or Program Assistant by calling (804) 288-9930.

## **Absences and Lateness**

Volunteers are critical to serving READ students. If you are regularly absent or arrive late, you are unable to fulfill our obligations to our students. In classes, please report any absences or late arrivals to the teacher at least one day in advance. As a one-to-one tutor, please contact your student directly at least one day in advance. In the event you are unable to reach the teacher or your student, please contact READ staff at 804-288-9930 or email [frontdesk@readcenter.org](mailto:frontdesk@readcenter.org). Excessive absences or tardiness that have not been pre-arranged or reported may be cause for dismissal.

## **Dress Code and Personal Appearance**

Appropriate grooming and personal cleanliness are expected of all staff, students, and volunteers. The dress code is casual and comfortable, but we ask your attire to be neat and conservative. If staff feels your attire is out of place, you may be asked to change into proper attire. If you are tutoring at a partner location like the Richmond City Justice, please refer to their dress code requirements.

### **Professional Development**

The READ Center recognizes that our volunteers are one of our greatest resources. Participation in at least two (2) professional development opportunities per academic year is strongly encouraged. These opportunities can be through READ sponsored in-person or online workshops and trainings, as well as opportunities you may come across through your own research. Completion of professional development opportunities can be reported to the Program Assistant or Program Manager.

### **Office Equipment and Facilities Use**

If something is necessary for the efficient undertaking of your responsibilities as a tutor, and it has not been provided by The READ Center, please contact your teacher or the Program Assistant. Office supplies like the copier, staplers, paper, paper clips, folders, pencils, and markers are for use with discretion.

### **Tutoring Locations**

One-to-One tutoring must take place in a public space that is both observable and interruptible by others. Home tutoring is not permitted under any circumstances.

### **Inclement Weather Procedures**

READ Center classes will be closed when Richmond Public Schools (RPS) are closed for inclement weather. READ does not follow the RPS academic calendar, always check The READ Center academic calendar for holidays and other planned class closures.

### **Transportation**

Volunteers and students are expected to provide their own transportation. Transportation of a student by a tutor in a vehicle or transportation of a tutor by a student in a vehicle for any activity directly or indirectly related to The READ Center is prohibited for reasons of liability.

### **Reporting Pair Hours for One-to-Ones**

Monthly Progress Reports for one-to-one tutors are due no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month for the previous month. Submission of reports is required for all one-to-one pairs. The process may be completed through the form on The READ Center website.

### **Text Book Policy**

Once being paired one-to-one with a student, each tutor will receive a copy of the text book **LITSTART: Strategies for Adult Literacy and ESL Tutors**. Volunteers who are not paired one-to-one but would like a copy may purchase a book for \$25.

Tutors will be lent teacher's manuals for their student's core texts. Please do not write in the teacher's manuals. When students complete texts or leave the program, tutors must return their teacher's manuals unless they wish to purchase them. Tutors will receive the next manuals in exchange for the manual returned.

### **Confidential Information**

Your volunteer service with The READ Center assumes an obligation to maintain confidentiality and respect privacy. As a volunteer, you may be privy to information that is

confidential in nature; such as names and personal information about students and volunteers. In addition, you may have access to proprietary or privileged information involving staff, volunteers, students, or partner sites. Such information cannot be shared with family, friends, acquaintances, or the general public. Disclosure of confidential information will lead to dismissal.

### **Harassment**

As a READ Center volunteer, you are responsible for keeping our learning environment free of harassment. Harassment may include intimidation, hostility, unwelcome sexual advances, or other offenses which may interfere with volunteer performance. Any volunteer who becomes aware of an incident of harassment against a student, a teacher, or another volunteer, whether by witnessing the incident or being told of it, **must** report it to the Program Manager or any READ staff member with whom they feel comfortable.

### **No Soliciting**

The READ Center is obligated to respect and encourage the learners' rights to make their own decisions, identify their own needs, and choose the most appropriate option when faced with possible courses of action. READ staff and volunteers are prohibited from soliciting; political campaigning; and/or efforts to convert, persuade, or force a READ adult learner to another religion or a religious doctrine.

### **Volunteer Background Screening**

The READ Center values the safety of its volunteers, students, and staff. To reduce risks, prospective and current volunteers will have their names checked in the Virginia Sex Offender Registry, with rescreens occurring annually.

### **Diversity and Equal Opportunity**

We are an equal opportunity employer and we value, champion, and embrace diversity as an integral part of our business. We will strive to ensure that volunteers and staff broadly reflect the diversity of the community.

### **Zero Tolerance Policy**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules, policies, and procedures of The READ Center or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be dismissed until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the dismissal with the Program Manager—unless there is just cause. The READ Center reserves the right to dismiss a volunteer without appeal in order to protect students, staff, and volunteers. Reasons for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Solicitation
- Breach of confidentiality
- Harassment or failure to report harassment
- Gross misconduct or insubordination
- Abuse or mistreatment of students, staff, or fellow volunteers