

Introduction

What is F.I.I.V.E. Chicago?

F.I.I.V.E. Chicago stands for Fostering Intergenerational Inclusive Volunteer Engagement. F.I.I.V.E. Chicago consisted of a partnership with six several different human service agencies throughout the Chicagoland area providing opportunities for older adults to mentor and volunteer with young adults with disabilities. F.I.I.V.E. participants and volunteers work together to volunteer for numerous local organizations – creating blankets for homeless individuals, planting flowers to beautify city parks, and packaging snacks for local soup kitchens are just a few of the volunteer activities F.I.I.V.E. participants experience. Through participation in F.I.I.V.E., several learning outcomes were achieved:

1) Participants became more knowledgeable about social justice issues and the needs of their community.

2) Older adult volunteers acquired a deeper understanding about the functional level and abilities of individuals with disabilities. For example, several volunteers shared that the preconceived notions and/or stereotypes they held about individuals with disabilities were unfounded. To illustrate, one volunteer shared that he began the program fully expecting that he would serve as the educator for the young adults, but he quickly learned that there was much for him to learn from the young people with disabilities as well.

NOTE: Throughout this toolkit the youth are referred to as “participants,” the older adults as “volunteers,” and the F.I.I.V.E. leaders as “project coordinators.” Your organization may choose to use different terms to identify the various roles and responsibilities in your own F.I.I.V.E. program.

3) Finally, implementing the F.I.I.V.E program provided the partnering organizations with many lessons learned and promising practices regarding how to best execute a service-learning program that effectively meets the learning and mentoring objectives of older adults and

young people with disabilities. How to recruit volunteers, and determining what types of volunteer activities provide the most effective learning opportunities - while also making a sustainable and positive impact on local communities - were just a few of the lessons learned.

What to Expect from this Toolkit

This train-the-trainer toolkit was developed as a result of the program evaluation conducted for F.I.I.V.E. Chicago by Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging. In the pages that follow, you will find a wealth of information and materials for suggested trainings and activities that you can use to complete a 12-month F.I.I.V.E. program in your own community. With both concrete examples of volunteer activity sessions to implement, as well as scripts with corresponding presentational materials (e.g., powerpoint slides), this toolkit provides you with a comprehensive assortment of instructions, tips, and suggestions for you to get started directing an initiative like F.I.I.V.E. Chicago in your own community.

The structure of each volunteer activity session is flexible; however, we recommend starting with the activities as indicated in this toolkit and make adjustments as you determine what is best

for your participants and volunteers. With each volunteer activity session, we recommend beginning with what we call a “warm-up” or “get to know you” activity. Rather than assigning specific warm-up activities with each volunteer activity session, all warm-up activities are included in the appendix to encourage project coordinators’ autonomy in selecting which warm-ups are most appropriate for participants and volunteers. Individual preferences and group dynamics can vary tremendously so we encourage flexibility and creativity when using this toolkit to implement the F.I.I.V.E. program.

Following a warm-up, a short presentation or introduction is delivered on the chosen social issue (e.g., homelessness) that will be the focus of the day’s volunteer activity. This toolkit includes information and instructional materials on 10 different social issues, but keep in mind the issues that can be addressed are endless -

