Neurodiversity in Volunteerism
Introduction

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She/Her
Today's Agenda

Terminology

Creating an inclusive environment: preparing your organization for neurodivergent volunteers

Position descriptions: creating position descriptions that are able to be molded to fit each volunteer

Best practices for training staff to work with neurodivergent volunteers
Neurodiversity

Neurodivergent

Neurotypical
Neurodiversity

Neurodivergent
Neurodiversity

Difference in "kinds of minds"
- Judy Singer
The image above is a yellow umbrella with a greenish handle.

umbrella term used to describe the natural diversity of human brains.

-Yellow Ladybugs
Neurodivergent
A person whose brain differs from the statistical norm and diverges from what society deems typical.

-Yellow Ladybugs

The image above is a yellow ladybug with 8 spots divided by a black line.
Autism
ADHD
PTSD
ADHD
OCD
Dyslexia
Synesthesia
The image above is a rainbow with the seven standard colors.

Neurodiversity Rainbow
The image above is a brain with the left side depicting formulas and the right side having different colors (pink, yellow, green, blue, red)

The World Needs All Sorts of Minds

-Temple Grandin
Working with neurodivergent volunteers

Communication
Make it standard practice to ask every volunteer "how do you work best?"

Accessibility
Focusing on the positives and what volunteers bring to the table.

Environment
Creating an inclusive, open, and psychologically safe space.
Communication

The act of giving, receiving, and sharing information.

the image above is two faces with arrows connecting them to form a circle.
The language you use matters!

- Communication is a two way street
- Be clear and direct
- Be able to meet them where they are at
- Check biases at the door
Ableism

Language that is derogatory or insulting when referring to a disability.
Differently-abled
Special Needs
The image above is of a man in a wheelchair at a desk with a computer talking up to a women holding a piece of paper.

“I’m not disabled or differently-abled or specially-abled or exceptionally-abled. I’m an accountant in a wheelchair.”
the image has a laptop in the middle with accessibility written in the middle and lines in different colors, drawing out with circles showing: lips, finger, ear, brain, 6 small ovals, and an eye to represent the ways to incorporate accessibility
Volunteer Experience

- Onboarding
- Learning styles
- Orientation
- Ongoing Supervision
Supervision

- "How can I help you be successful?"
- Regular check-ins
- Constructive feedback
The act of giving, receiving, and sharing information.

the image above is two faces with arrows connecting them to form a circle
Creating inclusive position descriptions

- Avoid generic and vague descriptions
- Watch out for ableist language
- Time Commitment
- Invite all to apply
Avoid generic and vague descriptions

Must have strong communication skills
Must have strong communication skills.

-How do we define communication skills: it is the ability to be responsive when prompted and able to establish open lines of communication. This means engaging in structured conversation with patients and staff at varying levels.

If this position requires handling a phone, using phone etiquette: “Hello, this is xxx(location/department) at United Hospital, this is xxx(name) speaking how can I help you?”
Creating inclusive position descriptions

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- Watch out for ableist language
- Time Commitment
- Invite all to apply
Accomodations
Communication

The act of giving, receiving, and sharing information.

The image above is two faces with arrows connecting them to form a circle.
Job Crafting
Psychological Safety

Being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status, or career.

-Mary-Francis Winters
Environment

- Welcoming and Supportive
- Sensory Sensitivity
- Work Productivity

Source: Tiffany Jameson, "Understanding and Supporting ADHD Colleagues in the Workplace", LinkedIn Learning, 2021
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Environment

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Source: Tiffany Jameson, "Understanding and Supporting ADHD Colleagues in the Workplace", LinkedIn Learning, 2021
Preparing staff

Things to consider:

- Get buy-in from top down
- Educate and create awareness
- Support, Support, Support
HELPFUL RESOURCES

WEBSITES

• The Arc- thearc.org/

• US Department of Labor-Hiring People with Disabilities

• JAN Network- www.askjan.org

• Datapeople- datapeople.io

• Uinclude- www.uinclude.com/

• Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion- askearn.org

• ChatGBT
HELPFUL RESOURCES

- "Inclusive Conversations" by Mary-Francis Winters
- "Thrive with Neurodivergent Colleagues" by Suzanne K. Whang
- Temple Grandin Ted talks
  *The World Needs All Types of Minds
  *Educating Different Types of Minds
- LinkedIn Learning
  *Mary Francis Winters
  *Tiffany Jameson
- Judy Singer
  *"Neurodiversity: The Birth of an Idea"
  *Reflections on Neurodiveristy blog
QUESTIONS
SOURCES

- Donna Patchett, Best Practices in Working with Neurodiverse Volunteers, April 21 2022, NVAVA, Power Point
- Katie Koullas, Post | Feed | LinkedIn, March 15th 2023
- Suzanne K. Whang, Thrive with Neurodiverse Colleagues, 2022
Shayla Love, "What Does It Mean to Have a 'Weird Brain in the Age of Neurodiversity?'", Vice, March 29, 2022

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"The World Needs All Types of Minds", TED, February 24th, 2010,
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"Educating Different Types of Minds", TEDxCSU, July 21, 2020,

Tiffany Jameson,
"Hiring and Supporting Neurodiversity in the Workplace", LinkedIn Learning, 2021
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