

Tips for Working with Students

Selecting students

- Choose students who are studying the topic at hand. They should be able to engage more easily with participants on the topic and answer their content-related questions.
- Choose students passionate about the topic. They may be willing to work as volunteers or for student-wages.
- Graduate students may be particularly interested in a topic or advancing their skills.
- Students with experiential learning requirements may be able to fulfill them working on the project.
- Consider requesting a cover letter and resume, and interviewing students.
- Bilingual students can potentially assist with interpreting sessions and materials.
- With multi-year grants, create a system where advanced students can support/mentor newer students.
- If possible, choose students who are able to participate consistently over time.
 - fosters relationships with participants and each other;
 - may help understanding of the full scope of the project and feel authentically included to improve their overall experience;
 - allows for planning and can improve student participation rates.

Engaging students

Orienting

- Provide background for the entire project before student participation begins.
- Have students sign forms of privacy and non-disclosure to ensure clients' information stays private.
- Schedule a practice "run-through" to help prepare for time required for activities.
- Go over any scripts or project protocol that students will be involved with.
- Provide a tour of the facility.

Training

- Create a student hours schedule with everyone's contracted hours.
- Discuss strategies for welcoming and engaging participants (name tags, friendly small talk, etc.).
- Provide strategies/tips for working with older participants (such as sensitivity to accessibility issues including mobility, hearing, technology-related issues, etc.).
- Allow students to shadow different staff to understand all aspects of the project.
- Provide training certificates if possible, such as for CITI training.
- Familiarize students with common data collection protocols and tools (e.g., ASA-24 dietary recall).
- Train in and utilize technology that facilitates collaboration, such as GroupMe, Google Share, Dropbox. Adapt to technology that students prefer to use as appropriate.

Checking in/Quality control

- Invite and welcome student feedback on a regular basis to improve the project and their experiences.
- Schedule weekly check-ins with one staff member to ensure questions are answered, expectations are met, encouragement is offered, and guidance is provided. Take action based on their suggestions.
- Create a positive culture by brainstorming shared values for the research team.

Rewarding students for their participation

- Rewards can take many forms, depending on what's possible or appropriate:
 - stipends
 - tuition cost share/matching funds
 - meals/snacks
 - certificates
 - volunteer liability insurance
 - letters of recommendation
 - funding for attendance/travel to relevant local conferences

Debriefing at the end of the intervention

- Create a rubric for students' evaluation or ask their school for an evaluation form and review it during the final check-in.

Acknowledgment

This project was supported, in part, by grant number 90INNU0032, from the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.

This tip sheet was created by the Center Excellence in Public Health and the Center for Excellence in Aging Health at the University of New England. We thank ACL grantees Bina Goykadosh, MS, RDN, CDN,, Janet Buls, Laura Shannonhouse, Ph.D., NCC, Lisa LaBonte, and Laura Samnadda MS, RDN, LD for their contributions to this document.