



Volunteer Handbook

www.sitstayread.org

Phone: 773-545-6629

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Welcome Volunteer!

We are so excited that you are interested in volunteering with SIT STAY READ!

SIT STAY READ is an innovative literacy program making a real impact on kids. Our mission is to improve literacy skills and foster a love of learning in children from low-income families.

We have opportunities available to volunteer with or without a dog.

Our programs take place in school classrooms and community facilities in the Chicago area. Sessions are always one hour long, usually once a week for a four to eight week period. During a typical session, each child gets the opportunity to read aloud to a Therapy Dog/Volunteer Team. While the children wait for their time with the dog, they practice reading and writing with the assistance of a Book Buddy (a reading tutor volunteer without a dog).

We hope that you find the information in this handbook a useful and interesting introduction to SIT STAY READ. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,
The SIT STAY READ Team
www.sitstayread.org
Phone: 773-545-6629
Email: volunteer@sitstayread.com

What some of our “Alumni” say!

“They light up when the dogs come into the room...for the struggling readers...it builds confidence...a dog is not judgmental.”

Megan O’Donnell, Hendricks Academy 2nd grade teacher

“I just love reading to dogs. I love reading to dogs!”

Demetrius, 2nd grade reader

Our Story

SIT STAY READ literacy programs help children improve their reading skills by giving them the opportunity to read aloud to specially trained and certified dog/volunteer teams.

Reading aloud is a critical component of early childhood literacy. Children who have difficulty reading often have a hard time reading aloud to peers and adults. Children with reading difficulties stop and start frequently, mispronouncing some words and skipping others entirely. This affects their self-esteem as they struggle with a skill that their classmates seem to master easily. In the upper grades reading-impaired children are hindered when exploring science, history, literature, mathematics and the wealth of information that is presented in print.

Why Dogs?

Dogs provide a listening audience that is non-judgmental and encouraging for children to practice their reading. SIT STAY READ programs demonstrate that children:

- are less anxious reading to a dog than to another person
- forget their limitations when interacting with the dogs
- realize that reading is fun, instead of a chore

Learning while having fun is what makes SIT STAY READ successful.

Programs

SIT STAY READ programs serve children in Chicago's most underserved areas.

Volunteers are needed for school programs.

We have SIT STAY READ programs in schools and community facilities in the following neighborhoods:

- Cabrini Green area
- Fuller Park
- Humboldt Park
- North Lawndale
- Garfield Park
- Near South
- West Town

Prior to each visit, we will give you information about the structure of the visit, the number of children, and any other information you need. Programs generally run for four to eight weeks.

At each visit, a Program Leader will be present. If you have questions or concerns, please ask the Program Leader. There will always be staff from the facility present to supervise the children.

Volunteer Opportunities

You may apply to volunteer with or without a dog. When you volunteer with your dog, you and your dog will function as a team and work one-on-one with a child who is reading. If you volunteer without a dog, you may choose to be a Book Buddy (leading children in reading activities and assisting with writing projects). If you'd like to volunteer outside of a program, you can help with SIT STAY READ dog training and tests, promote SIT STAY READ at community events, serve on a committee, or offer administrative assistance. At the Volunteer Orientation you'll get more information on volunteer opportunities outside of our programs.

Volunteer Requirements

All volunteers must:

- Complete the volunteer application
- Attend a Volunteer Orientation
- Follow the guidelines and policies contained in the Volunteer Handbook

All volunteers working in a program must:

- Fulfill all the above requirements, PLUS:
- Attend a Literacy Training
- Undergo a criminal background check.
- Complete any additional paperwork necessary to be a volunteer in a particular school or community facility
- Observe one program before volunteering

All volunteers working with their dog must:

- Fulfill all the above requirements, PLUS:
- Complete the SIT STAY READ practice class with their dog (fee required)
- Pass the SIT STAY READ test with their dog (free for active volunteers)
- Volunteer as a Book Buddy for minimum of three sessions (without dog)
- Ensure that their dog has an annual physical examination by a veterinarian, including stool check. Dogs must be current on all vaccinations and be spayed or neutered. A copy of the vet record must be on file with SIT STAY READ.
- Ensure that their dog is clean and free of health problems at each visit. Dogs should be groomed or brushed, and their nails should be trimmed. Please trim your dog's nails at least 24 hours prior to a program visit so they are smooth.

Getting Started

The first step in getting involved is to register for a Volunteer Orientation. Once you've registered, please complete a volunteer application (see page 9) and submit it to SIT STAY READ before the orientation.

After attending an Orientation you will be able register for the Dog Team Test.

Volunteer Orientation

Training is an integral part of the volunteer process. You'll find that training will make your volunteer experience more rewarding and you'll be more effective at helping children succeed at reading.

Attending a Volunteer Orientation is mandatory and advance registration is required. Dates are listed on our web site and available by calling the SIT STAY READ office.

The Orientation will provide an in-depth overview of our programs and our volunteer opportunities. This is a people training session only—do not bring your dog.

Literacy Training

After attending a SIT STAY READ Orientation, you may attend a Literacy Training. All volunteers wishing to work in a SIT STAY READ program must attend a Literacy Training.

This informative session is designed and led by a reading specialist and is essential preparation for volunteering in a SIT STAY READ program. You'll learn about the SIT STAY READ curriculum, watch demonstrations, and learn more about how you can make reading fun and engaging for our kids.

Additional training for Program Leaders and school program volunteers is also required as needed.

Dog Team Tests

If you wish to volunteer with a dog, you and your dog partner must pass the SIT STAY READ Dog Team Test. Check our web site or call our office for test dates and times. You must attend an orientation before registering for the Dog Team Test. For more information on the Dog Team Test, please see pages 10-11 of this handbook.

Volunteer Policies and Guidelines

As a SIT STAY READ volunteer I agree to:

- Review and adhere to the policies and guidelines listed below.
- Be on time for each session and always notify Program Leader promptly if I must cancel due to illness or emergency.
- Review directions to the site and program information before the visit.
- Dress appropriately. Volunteers should be comfortable, neat, and well groomed.
- Introduce myself to and be considerate of all facility staff members.
- Respect privacy and conduct myself professionally.
- Refrain from using drugs or alcohol within 12 hours of any visit.
- Never be alone with a child or leave the premises with a child.
- Abide by all rules and procedures required by the facility.
- Not participate in a visit without appropriate staff supervision.
- Not take photos without permission from Sit Stay Read Inc. and the facility. You will also need a signed photo releases from parents and all participants. All photos remain the property of Sit Stay Read Inc.

If I volunteer with my dog, I also agree to:

- Keep safety as my #1 priority.
- Be responsible for my dog and watch him/her at all times.
- Keep my dog current on vaccinations.
- Handle only one dog per session.
- Not allow SSR dogs to interact prior to or during a session.
- Make sure my dog has been exercised and pottied before each session.
- Never potty my dog on facility grounds.
- Keep my dog under control on a leash no more than 6-feet long, with a flat cloth or leather collar.
- Always keep my dog's leash in my hand, under my foot, or otherwise under my control as soon as we exit our vehicle.
- Bring a "visit bag" containing:
 1. plastic clean-up bags and clean-up supplies
 2. my SSR nametag and dog's bandanna
 3. small blanket for my dog's space
 4. treats for my dog (optional, but highly recommended)
 5. small towel (optional—unless dog drools a lot, then it's mandatory)
- Never bring a sick dog to a session.
- Never use a training collar or retractable leash during a session.
- Assess my dog's overall health and attitude prior to each visit.
- Be sure my dog is clean and brushed with nails that are regularly clipped.
- Remove my dog and let him have a break if he shows any sign of stress.
- Intervene immediately if a child is not treating my dog properly. I will calmly coach the child on the best way to pet and handle my dog.
- Not allow anyone else to pick-up my dog.
- Not allow my dog to kiss or lick a child without permission.
- Stop a session that feels unsafe for my dog, the child or any participant.

FOR OFFICE USE <input type="checkbox"/> Vaccinations <input type="checkbox"/> Fecal test <input type="checkbox"/> Vet Form <input type="checkbox"/> Sit Stay Read Test Date approved: _____

SIT STAY READ!

Volunteer Application

FOR OFFICE USE <input type="checkbox"/> Orientation <input type="checkbox"/> Training Completed & approved: Initials _____ Date _____
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Please fill-in form completely and send it to us by fax (773-545-6671) or mail (Sit Stay Read, 3425 N Milwaukee Ave, Chgo IL 60641). Check our web site, www.sitstayread.org, for date of next orientation. Thank you for your interest!

Your Name		Home Phone	
Address		City	State Zip
Cell phone	Work phone	Email address	
Best time & phone to reach you		How did you hear about SIT STAY READ?	
Occupation		Employer Name	

If volunteering with a dog, you'll also need to take the SSR test and supply a copy of the following: dog's vaccination records; proof of negative fecal test; completed SSR vet form.

Dog's Name	Breed	Date of Birth
Veterinary Clinic	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Spayed/Neutered? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Where did you train your dog?	Other dog groups you belong to	

Availability

To help us find a program that suits your schedule, please let us know your availability. Check all that apply and then circle day and time that would be your first choice.

Monday	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	Friday	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	Sunday	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/> Morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Evening				

Areas of Interest

Please check all that apply.

Reading programs with dog Read to children(w/o dog) Assist with SSR events and tests

Join a Committee Is there a particular program you would like to work? _____

Skills (marketing, fundraising, pr, writing, teaching, etc.) _____

I affirm that the information supplied above is true to the best of my knowledge and agree to adhere to the Volunteer Policies and Guidelines on reverse side of application. I understand that, as a volunteer, I am responsible for my dog and myself and agree that Sit Stay Read Inc. is not liable in the event of accident, injury or death.

Signed _____

Date _____

The SIT STAY READ Dog Team Test

Our test focuses on the specific skills that you and your dog need to be successful in the SIT STAY READ program. We evaluate not only your dog but also how the two of you work together as a team.

You and your dog will be tested in a group with two to five other dog teams. This is to simulate an actual program setting. Keep in mind:

- Dogs are tested on a flat nylon or leather collar and leash (no retractable leashes.)
- The test starts when you walk in the door. Evaluators can include comments on behaviors outside actual test.
- You are encouraged to talk to your dog throughout the test and use treats whenever appropriate.
- At evaluator’s discretion, a team may pass the test even if they “Need Work”.
Safety is the overriding factor.

Automatic failures include (but are not limited to):

- Any aggression by a dog towards a human or another dog (lunging, barking, growling, baring teeth, snapping, biting).
- Dog urinating or defecating in test facility—you are expected to know your dog and anticipate his pottying needs.
- Harsh commands, yelling, or rough handling of a dog by the handler.

# 1 Greeting Behavior and Appearance	<i>HANDLER: Give sit cue; evaluator will approach and shake hands with handler. DOG: Must be calm, take sit cue and stay while evaluator shakes hands and leaves.</i>
Is the dog clean and well groomed?	
Did the dog sit on cue?	
Did the dog hold the sit?	
Was the handler in control?	
Did the handler praise and/or reward the dog appropriately?	
# 2 Accepting Handling	<i>HANDLER: Give sit cue; evaluator will pet the dog; hold paws, tail, ears; hug the dog. DOG: Must be under control; take sit command and allow gentle petting & holding. Dog does NOT have to hold the sit after initial petting.</i>
Did the dog hold the sit for initial petting on head and back?	
Did the dog accept holding each paw?	
Tail?	
Ears?	
Please note: Though we test this skill, children are not allowed to hug dogs.	
Did the dog accept a light hug?	
Did the dog enjoy the handling?	
Did the handler praise and/or reward the dog appropriately?	
On a scale of 1-10, how much did the dog enjoy the interaction? 0=Not at all, 5=Neutral, 10=Loved it	
NOTE: Dogs with 5 or less on interaction scale will need additional assessment.	
# 3 Recall	<i>HANDLER: Have your dog in a sit or down, give “stay” cue. Walk to the end of the leash. Return to dog. Repeat and, on cue from evaluator, recall your dog.</i>
<i>DOG: Must stay in position until called.</i>	
Did the dog stay in position until handler returned?	
Did the dog stay in position until called?	
Was the handler proactive in keeping the dog in the stay?	
Did the handler praise and/or reward the dog appropriately?	

# 4 Walking on a loose leash	<i>HANDLER: Walk dog on a loose leash past other dogs in pattern indicated by evaluator. Stop & sit dog at the end. DOG: Walks at same pace as handler without pulling. Ignores other dogs. Stops & sits.</i>
Did the dog walk without pulling on the leash?	
Did the dog ignore the other dogs?	
Was the handler in control?	
Did the handler praise and/or reward the dog appropriately?	
# 5 Relinquish toys and food	<i>HANDLER: Dog Team walks within 3 feet of toys and food on floor. DOG: Must see the toys and food and walk away on cue from handler.</i>
Did the dog walk without pulling on leash?	
Did the dog try to lunge for the toys or food?	
Was the handler proactive in keeping dog from toys & food?	
Did the handler praise and/or reward the dog appropriately?	
# 6 "Drop It" with toy and food	<i>HANDLER: Allow dog to pick-up a toy. Give command to "drop it". Repeat with food. DOG: Must release the object willingly and not try to grab it again.</i>
Did the dog drop the toy on cue?	
Did the dog drop the food on cue?	
Did the dog show ANY sign of aggression?	
Did the handler praise and/or reward the dog appropriately?	
# 7 Program Set-Up	<i>HANDLER: Walk dog to your space; put blanket on floor; give command for dog to lay down on blanket; sit on blanket with dog. DOG: Must be under control at all times and go into a down on cue.</i>
Did handler bring blanket?	
Was the handler ALWAYS in control of the leash?	
Did the dog down on cue and stay while handler sat down?	
Did the handler monitor dog's behavior at all times?	
# 8 Reaction to distractions	<i>HANDLER: Stay seated with dog while a loud noise is made by dropping box of toys and a ball is bounced nearby. DOG: Dog may react to the distractions but should not panic, try to run away, show aggressiveness or bark. Must regain composure quickly.</i>
Did the dog react calmly to the noise?	
Did the dog lunge for the toys or ball?	
Was the handler proactive in keeping dog from toys & ball?	
Did the handler praise and/or reward the dog appropriately?	
# 9 Treats	<i>HANDLER: Show "child" how to give treat using "hand as bowl" and by putting on floor. DOG: Sits and waits for cue to take treat gently from both the floor and the hand. To be repeated two more times.</i>
Did the dog wait for cue to take treat?	
Did the dog take the treat gently?	
Did the dog show ANY sign of aggression?	
# 10 Sit and Down Stay with Hand Signals	<i>HANDLER: Demonstrate sit hand signal to "child" and have them give the command. Repeat with cue for "down". DOG: Sits and downs on cue from child (handler may also give hand signal but no verbal). Must stay in down position with "child" and handler for 3 minutes.</i>
Did the dog sit on cue?	
Down on cue?	
Did the dog hold the stay?	
Did the dog seem to enjoy interaction with the "child"?	
Was the handler in control?	
On a scale of 1-10, how much did the dog enjoy the interaction? 0=Not at all, 5=Neutral, 10=Loved it NOTE: Dogs with 5 or less on interaction scale will need additional assessment.	

Tips for a Successful Visit with Your Dog

- Safety is your #1 priority. Always watch your dog.
- Be sure your dog is healthy and well groomed. If your dog is under the weather or has an injury, call in sick to the Program Leader as soon as you can. If it's too late to get a sub and you are able to come, it is preferred that you attend the session without your dog so the kids can read to you and ask about your dog.
- Your dog must always be on leash, with the leash under your control from the minute you exit your vehicle.
- Under no circumstances may you hand the leash to another person—not another volunteer, not the Program Leader, NO ONE. If you need to go to the restroom, find a private restroom and bring your dog with you or take him to the car first.
- Dogs are not to interact prior to or during a program.
- Children are never to pick-up a dog.
- Introduce yourself and your dog to the child when they come to read.
- Some of the children you will be working with may not have had much exposure to dogs or may have had negative experiences. Respect this and allow the child to have as much or as little interaction as he or she wants.
- Don't get upset with a child's clumsy touching—instead, coach and guide the child's behavior.
- Teach each child how to give your dog a treat using the “hand as cup” method. Some children may say a dog is biting them when the dog's teeth touch their hand. Reassure them that they are only feeling the dog's teeth.
- Never leave a child and your dog unsupervised for ANY reason.
- You will be working with children from various backgrounds and experience levels. Do not ask personal or inappropriate questions.
- Respect the concerns and wishes of parents and guardians.
- Be positive and encouraging.
- Children may want to open up about their lives. Always steer the conversation back to reading. Please remember that the child is confiding in you and keep everything he or she says confidential. Of course, if the child tells you something you feel merits adult attention, talk to the Program Leader.
- After a visit, give your dog several hours to relax and rest.

Volunteer Decertification Policy

Humans

Automatic Decertification

- Any volunteer who physically reprimands a child.
- Any volunteer who treats a child disrespectfully.
- Any handler who displays unsportsmanlike conduct or handles a dog roughly at any Sit Stay Read program or event of any kind.

Potential Decertification

- Failure to maintain dog's health records (provide annual updates)
- Failure to follow program rules and regulations (both Sit Stay Read's and the facility). This includes but is not limited to:
 - Failure to follow directions from the Program Leader; teacher; staff person.
 - Lateness; unannounced absences.
 - Giving negative, nonproductive feedback to children.
 - Failure to keep dog on leash and leash in hand.
 - Inappropriate attire.
 - Failure to take dog off school grounds for pottying.
 - Failure to keep dog properly groomed for sessions.

Dogs

Automatic Decertification

- Any aggression towards humans (growls, bites, snaps, shows teeth).
- Biting another dog at any Sit Stay Read program or event of any kind.

Potential Decertification

- **Aggression towards another dog (without injury)**
 - First Incident: The Program Leader will issue a warning. Cause for Concern Form to be completed by all parties involved and submitted to Sit Stay Read office for recommendation. If recommendation not followed, dog will be decertified.
 - Second Report: If found to be a pattern of behavior, dog is decertified.
- **Unacceptable behavior patterns** (i.e. submissive urination; defecation; hyperactivity)
 - First Incident: Program Leader will discuss problem with handler and submit Cause for Concern Form to SSR office.
 - Second Report: Dog is decertified.

If you witness or are a party to any of these unacceptable behaviors at a Sit Stay Read program or event of any kind, it is your duty to file a Cause for Concern Form (see page 14).

Cause For Concern Form

Please complete this form for any incident of concern at a SSR program, event or other venue.

MANDATORY FOR: any potential safety issue (for children; volunteers; dogs; or anyone else).
If in doubt, file a Cause For Concern Form. We want to know about your concerns.
Each person involved in the incident may complete a separate form.

Your Name		Today's Date
Phone	Email	

About the Incident

Date and time of incident	SSR Program Leader or person in charge (if applicable)
Where did the incident occur (program or event name; name of facility; & exact location, i.e. classroom, outside of building, etc.)	
Names of people and/or dogs involved	
Describe what happened (include as much detail as possible)	
Describe what happened after the incident (if anything)	
Other pertinent information (including suggestions for how situation may be better handled in the future)	

Return completed form to the Sit Stay Read office.

Fax: 773 545 6671

Email: info@sitstayread.org

Mail: 3425 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 60641

Questions? Call 773 545 6629

Every form will be carefully reviewed to ensure the safest, most professional conditions for all participants in SSR programs and events. Thank you for your concern.

YES, I want to help children learn to read!

Please accept my tax deductible donation of \$ _____

For all donations, please complete this section.

Your name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email address (confidential) _____

Does your employer offer a matching funds program? Simply request the form from your Human Resource Dept and your SIT STAY READ donation goes even further!



If your donation is a gift or memorial, please complete the form below and we will send a lovely gift card to your honoree or the honoree's loved ones.

Send gift card to _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

This gift to Sit Stay Read is

in honor of : _____

OR

in memory of : _____

How would you like your card signed?

Please mail this form with your check (payable to Sit Stay Read Inc.) to:

Sit Stay Read!
3425 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago IL 60641

Questions? Call us at 773-545-6629. Thank you!