



Ability Benevolence Liberty Empowered



ABLE2 – MATCHING PROGRAM INFORMATION SESSION



CHANGE TWO LIVES



Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in the Matching Program at ABLE2!

The following slides will give you an overview of our program and your role as an Ally to help you know if this volunteer opportunity is right for you.



MATCHING PROGRAM

- Supports people of all ages across the disability spectrum (for example, physical, developmental, and/or mental health) throughout Ottawa
- Our volunteers, **Allies**, are matched on a one-to-one basis with a person who has a disability in the community, a **Friend**
- Our volunteers help to create an atmosphere of non-judgmental support, respect, and fun making sure that every person feels **seen and valued** through meaningful connection
- **Connect Friendly Callers Program** is a **virtual** matching option, offering flexibility for volunteers experiencing barriers to in person volunteering



WHAT DO WE DO TOGETHER?

- Anything you both feel comfortable doing!
- Many of our matches:
 - Go for walks or meet for coffee to talk
 - Go to community events like Ribfest or Tulip Festival
 - Engage in shared interests like arts, games, or sports
 - Work together to achieve goals and learn new skills
- You and your Friend decide **together**
- You and your Friend do not have to spend any money to have a meaningful match
 - We recommend that you both look for low-cost or free activities
 - Allies are not required to spend money on their Friend. It should be a 50/50 split.



WHEN DO WE MEET?

- We ask matches to meet 3-4 times a month – about once per week – for 1-2 hours
 - Especially at the beginning to help develop rapport
 - Meetings are usually 1 hour long, not including travel time
- You can meet when you both have the time – there is flexibility
 - You and your Friend can meet on a set day/time or change weekly. We will take your availabilities into consideration when matching but it's important to discuss a schedule that works for you both!
- You can go away for the weekend or go on vacation
 - Talk to your Friend to plan for your absence
- If you get really busy you don't necessarily have to stop the match
 - We understand life happens. If your circumstances change, talk to your Program Worker and your Friend to work out a solution. You could adjust how often you meet for some time or connect virtually between visits.



WHERE DO WE MEET?

- You meet with your Friend in the community or virtually
- Our matches meet:
 - In coffee shops, malls, or theatres
 - At parks, in neighbourhoods
 - You can meet at each other's homes if you feel comfortable
- Our virtual matches meet over:
 - Phone or text
 - Video calls
 - Other platforms (online gaming)



HOW ARE ALLIES MATCHED?

- We consider:
 - Location – We won't ask you to travel farther than you want
 - Interests – We will match you with someone who has similar interests to you
 - Personality – We look for Friends who match who you are
 - Schedule – We consider when you will be available
 - Support Preferences – We consider your experience and comfortability with disability support
- We want you to have a match that fits
 - We recognize our process is thorough and this is to ensure a match that fits both you and your Friend



Have an Impact: Change Two Lives

- People living with disabilities are more socially isolated than the average person. By participating in this program, you're positively impacting the well-being of you and your Friend through meaningful social connections
- Our Allies help develop relationships by being:
 - Social connections – go out and have fun with a supportive connection
 - Practical helpers – find information, assist with groceries, learning a new skill
 - Emotional supporters – be a nonjudgmental listener



WHAT ARE THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS?

- You must be at least 18 years old
- You are eligible to receive a Vulnerable Sector Check
- You are prepared to give at least 6 months to be a Volunteer Ally
 - Please consider your status in Canada as it may affect your ability to make this commitment. Ex. visitor visa, student visa, refugee claimant.
 - Your 6-month commitment **starts when you are matched**, not when you start the application.
- You are available to commit 1-2 hours a week to your Friend
 - Please consider your current and upcoming responsibilities. Do you have a loved one that you need to support? Are you in school or working full time? How will you balance your commitments?
- In person matches are in the Ottawa area. Volunteers with Connect may be anywhere in Ontario (EST)



WHAT IF I HAVE A DISABILITY?

- At ABLE2, we believe that every individual is able, important, and valued. We are committed to nurturing a sense of belonging for all members of our community and welcome applications from people with disabilities
- The only thing we need is for Allies to have a degree of independence
 - Example – We have Allies who have depression or anxiety, while they may have some difficulty at times, it doesn't stop them from meeting their match on a consistent basis
 - Example – We had an Ally who was visually impaired, but they were able to navigate the city and resources independently, enabling them to be an effective Ally
- Your Friend will not be expected to provide you with on-going support to make the match succeed
- If you're experiencing barriers to in person volunteering, consider exploring a virtual match through our Connect Friendly Callers Program



WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM ABLE2?

- Once you are matched, you and your Friend work together
 - You are expected to manage your match together
- You have access to a program worker who can help you when you (or your Friend) need it. Your program worker will also have regular check ins with you and your Friend
- Program workers have helped matches with:
 - Finding resources
 - Resolving arguments
 - Providing support



TIMELINES

- If everything goes smoothly, you could be matched in 6-8 weeks
 - Timelines can depend on response times, availabilities, and reference checks
- We know our process is thorough and takes a little longer than some other agencies – our goal is to create the best opportunities for you to succeed by:
 - Finding a match that fits you
 - Preparing you for what it means to be an Ally



I AM INTERESTED, WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

- Complete a Volunteer Application ([LINK](#))
 - We will email all the documents you need to get started, including information on providing accessible service, an Ally Questionnaire, your Vulnerable Sector Check Letter, and an invitation to our upcoming Onboarding Sessions.
- Submit your documents and register for Onboarding
- You will need to provide us with three references
 - Your references must have known you personally for at least two years while not being a family member or romantic/intimate partner. References do not have to be local.
- Attend your Learning Conversation
 - This is your assessment, but more importantly it's an opportunity to get to know you on a deeper level to find a match that best fits



I AM INTERESTED, WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

- Request a Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC)
 - For ABLE2, your VSC must be completed within one year of your application and submitted before you begin volunteering
 - You will need to renew your VSC every three years
 - We will provide a volunteer letter to subsidize the fee
- To complete your request:
 - Ottawa residents can complete applications through the **Ottawa Police Service** ([Link](#))
 - Gatineau residents can complete applications through the **Gatineau City Police** ([Link](#))
 - If you live outside the Ottawa area, you can complete your application through your **local Ontario Provincial Police detachment**



WHAT IF THIS ISN'T A GOOD FIT?

- There is **no commitment** at this stage – The information we provide here is to help you decide if you want to start the application process
- If you are interested but have more questions, we recommend that you start the application process and reach out to us at volunteer@able2.org
- If you do not feel this role is a good fit for your needs and goals after you review our program information, please let us know so we can close your file
- You can always come back – If you want to be an Ally but now isn't the right time, we welcome you to revisit the program when you're ready



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

- I have a lot of experience working with people who have disabilities. Do I have to attend an Onboarding Session?
 - Yes. Onboarding is where we provide more detailed information about your role and our expectations about being an Ally with the Matching Program.
- I have no experience working with people who have disabilities. Is that going to be a problem?
 - Not at all! ABLE2 and your Friend do not expect you to be an expert of any kind. Most of our Friends want someone who can treat them with respect, dignity, and kindness.
- I may not be available in 6-8 months. Could I have a match that runs for less time?
 - No. Our Friends expect at least 6 months of commitment from their Ally.



FAQS

- My references live in a different country. Is that okay?
 - Yes, we can call long-distance within North America, or we can email a reference form to people outside of North America. We ask that your references or a support person can communicate in English or French.
- My reference is my boss, but they know me well personally. Is that a problem?
 - Your business skills are important, but we really want to know if you have the interpersonal skills/emotional intelligence needed to be an effective Ally. If your boss knows you personally, feel free to use them as a personal reference with your application!



FAQS

- I made some mistakes and now have a criminal record. Should I still apply?
 - Yes, you should still apply. Everyone makes mistakes and we will have an open-minded conversation about what happened and whether it will be a problem now.
 - The only time a Vulnerable Sector Check will automatically prevent you from being an Ally is if there is a charge/conviction related to vulnerable people (minors, people with disabilities, seniors).
- Do I need to be able to speak English or French perfectly?
 - No, you don't need perfect English or French. However, you or a person supporting you will need to be able to communicate in English or French well enough to have conversations with people.



FAQS

- The match just isn't working. Do I have to do this for 6 months?
 - If your match isn't working, you and your worker can discuss your concerns and engage in problem solving. If it still isn't working out, then the match may end. This may or may not prevent you from being matched to someone else.
- I'm really enjoying my match. Can I keep going with this match once my 6 months are finished?
 - That's wonderful! If you and your Friend are happy with each other, the match may continue indefinitely. We have matches that have been together 20+ years.



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THANK YOU

If you have more questions or concerns, please feel free to email us at

volunteer@able2.org