



**Reach  
Out and  
Read®**



# **Volunteering for Reach Out and Read**



[www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)

# WELCOME

Thank you for becoming a Reach Out and Read volunteer! Your support in creating a literacy-rich waiting room environment is a key component of the Reach Out and Read model.

The following are some things to keep in mind while volunteering for Reach Out and Read.

**Identify yourself.** When you arrive at the clinic, check in with your Reach Out and Read or Volunteer Coordinator. There may be a sign-in sheet and a name tag or smock for you to wear so parents and children can easily identify you as a volunteer.

Introduce yourself to the staff, find a secure place for your belongings, and be sure to sign out or let someone know when you are leaving. If you are unable to volunteer at your designated time, call to let the staff know, so they will not worry about you.

**Waiting rooms can be unpredictable.** It may be different every time you volunteer, and different times of day are busier than others. Just be yourself and work at your own comfort level. If there are no children to read to, you can always unpack books, tidy up the reading area, and ask the Coordinator if there are any other ways you can help!

## Choose the books you wish to read.

You may bring in appropriate favorites from home or choose from books available in the waiting room or in the Reach Out and Read supply area. Your local librarian or the Reach Out and Read Coordinator can suggest appropriate titles. Encourage children to choose a book, too. If a child wants one book read again and again, remember: repetition is how they learn!

**Involve the parent(s) too.** Introduce yourself to children and parents and invite them both to listen to the story. Parents LIKE to be involved in what their children are doing!

**Start with one child.** Often, reading to one child will attract other interested children. If you feel comfortable approaching a child and asking if s/he would like to hear a story, great. Kneel down next to the child or have him/her sit next to you, or even read to a child who is sitting on the parent's lap. You can read anywhere!

**Read interactively.** Be sure to ask children questions about what is on the page. Invite the child to identify colors, shapes, and objects. Have him/her help you turn the pages or even read a little bit to you. Perhaps s/he would like to guess what happens next? Our goal is to use books to stimulate a conversation.

**Be mindful of cultural diversity.** Don't be intimidated if a parent or child speaks a language other than yours. Often a gesture or smile will convey universal interest in books! Lots of times, children are bilingual even if the parents are not. If you know a bit

For additional information on volunteering please visit: [www.reachoutandread.org/volunteer](http://www.reachoutandread.org/volunteer)



of the other language, try it out, even if just to say, "Hello, my name is...", and invite the child to name pictures in her/his language. If communication ultimately isn't working, that's okay. Just give the child the book to read with the parent.



staff member about it. Don't attempt to intervene in any precarious situation. Also, be cautious about offering food, drink, or candy to children, as you never know what dietary restrictions or rules the parents may have.



**Remind children to take home a gently-used book if your ROR Program has them available.** One of Reach Out and Read's goals is to get books into the hands of children and build home libraries.

If your Reach Out and Read Program has gently-used books on hand for older siblings, encourage each child to take home one gently-used book each. (Avoid giving away new ROR books, to ensure that a good variety of books is always available, especially when used book supplies may be low.)

**Some children and parents may be stressed.** Some children may be sick or shy or a little cranky. Don't take it personally if someone does not wish to share a book with you. Just smile and hand him/her a book if s/he wants one. Parents are sometimes overwhelmed with life crises, so some families may take a minute to warm up, but most are open to a book or story.



**Don't take responsibility for the waiting room.** You are here to provide a positive reading experience. Do what is most comfortable to you. Feel free to take short breaks between stories. And remember, you are NOT a babysitter; when the appointment time comes, the child goes with the parent, even if you are mid-story. Smile and say goodbye, and if appropriate, invite them to return after the appointment.

**Ask questions.** If you are concerned about anything you observe during your reading time, please talk to a

**Defer children's difficult questions.** Don't feel obligated to answer children's questions about sensitive topics. It's always okay to respond by saying, "I think that would be best answered by your parents."

**Share your experiences and suggestions.** New ideas and perspectives are always welcome and are helpful to Reach Out and Read's growth and success. Please keep the Reach Out and Read Program Coordinator up to date on your volunteer experience — and share your ideas!

## The mission of Reach Out and Read® is to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care, so that children grow up with books and a love of reading.

The Reach Out and Read model, a research-proven approach to early literacy development, is now applied in more than 4,500 Programs in the U.S. and includes:

- Doctors and nurses trained in the developmental strategies of early literacy talking to parents about the importance of reading aloud to their children and offering age-appropriate tips and encouragement.
- Children ages 6 months through 5 years receiving a new, developmentally-appropriate book from their primary care provider.
- Whenever possible, volunteers in the waiting room reading aloud to children, showing parents and children the pleasures and techniques of looking at books together.

Each medical facility has its own application and screening process for volunteers. For more information about becoming a Reach Out and Read volunteer, visit the ROR website: [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org).



## Other Volunteer Opportunities

Prefer not to read to children in the waiting room? There are lots of other ways you can support your local Reach Out and Read Program, among them:

**Conduct a book drive.** Reach Out and Read Programs can always use beautiful, new, age-appropriate books for children ages 6 months to 5 years old. Many children have collected books from guests as part of their birthday or bar/bat mitzvah celebrations.

**Collect 'gently-used' books for siblings or for reading by families and volunteers in the waiting room.** Libraries, bookstores, other families, and even the local post office may be able to provide books!

**Contribute your skills.** Reach Out and Read Coordinators can always use a hand with unpacking, inventorying, and ordering books for the Program. Or you can help build a bookcase or paint a mural for children. Ask the Coordinator for suggestions about how your unique skills can contribute to Reach Out and Read's success.

**Raise funds to support your local Reach Out and Read Program.** Beautiful new books cost money, and each Reach Out and Read program is responsible for raising 75% or more of its annual book budget. There are lots of creative and fun ways to raise money for books — or to arrange donation of appropriate new books directly — for your local Reach Out and Read Program, and donations are always appreciated.

**Make a tax-deductible contribution.** Reach Out and Read is an IRS-qualified charitable organization, so your cash or in-kind donations may be tax-deductible. Contact your

local Reach Out and Read Program or visit [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org) to learn more.