



Virtual Volunteering Project Archive (direct contact online volunteers)

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direct contact online volunteers:
online mentors, tutors, advisors and others

working with clients (including students)

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Direct contact online volunteers work directly with a client / recipient of your service. For example, a volunteer, via e-mail or a chat room, could:

- electronically "visit" with someone who is homebound, in a hospital or a rest home
- provide [online mentoring](#) and instruction via e-mail (helping students with homework questions, helping an adult learn a skill or find a job, or help prison inmates with studies or programs)
- help with language instruction (help people learning English)
- e-mail or chat room answer/support line, like a phone answer/support line, where people write their questions and volunteers answer them
- advance "welcoming" of people about to enter the hospital, go to summer camp, etc. from volunteers, and post-service follow up of the same group

- volunteers and/or clients working together online to create a project, such as writing about the news of their neighborhood, school, special interest group, etc. to post on a web site or use in printed material
- distance learning: training volunteers in a subject via the Internet
- support group members providing advice to each other via a chat room or private e-mail discussion group or newsgroup
- volunteers who supervise any of the above activities via the Internet and provide guidance, or ask for staff guidance, as appropriate

Setting up this kind of "direct contact" component of a virtual volunteering program presents many special challenges. What are appropriate assignments for such volunteers? How will you screen these online volunteers? How will you evaluate these volunteers and supervise their interactions with clients? How will you protect confidentiality and prevent inappropriate interactions between online volunteers and clients?

To answer these questions, the Virtual Volunteering Project offers

- [initial first steps](#) for those considering setting up a direct contact service component involving online volunteers, including **online mentoring**.
- information on monitoring/supervising online interactions between volunteers and clients, screening and evaluating volunteers that will work with clients virtually, guidelines for bringing together youth and adult online volunteers, and other [safety guidelines for direct contact volunteering](#).
- an index of [Resources for Volunteer Moderators and Facilitators of Online Discussion Groups](#) . These resources -- some by the VV Project, many by other organizations -- can help both volunteers (including online mentors) and staff moderate (approve all posts) or facilitate (keeping the discussion flowing) online discussion groups, either via e-mail or via a chat/real-time platform.

Online Mentoring / Teletutoring The Virtual Volunteering Project will focus primarily on online mentoring in Y2K. We already provide, via our web site, these resources for those planning or already managing online mentoring programs:

- [initial first steps](#) for those considering setting up a direct contact service component involving online volunteers, including **online mentoring** .

- [selected resources for online mentoring/teletutoring programs](#) , including example materials from other organizations, general mentoring resources and detailed program suggestions that can help other agencies engage in similar activities.
- the most comprehensive online listing available of [online mentoring and teletutoring programs involving volunteers](#) , with profiles of more than 25 organizations.
- [suggested activities](#) for online mentors and mentees. These activities range from topics to discuss via e-mail, to web-based projects mentors and mentees can do together.
- [Telementoring: a View From the Facilitator's Screen](#) , by Laura Amill, a telementoring facilitator/researcher in the Electronic Emissary Project at the University of Texas at Austin. How does an online tutoring program **really**work? What characterizes successful online tutoring program? What role do classroom teachers play in the success of such programs? This is a must-read essay for anyone involved with an online mentoring or tutoring program, or anyone interested in starting such a program.

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