

Exploring[®]

Adult Leader Guide

Welcome to Exploring

You have been selected to be an Advisor or a committee participant for an Explorer post. Your role is significant. You have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young people, not just today but in the future as well.

Exploring is Learning for Life's career-education program for young men and women age 14 (and have completed the eighth grade) to 20 years old. Adults are selected by the participating organization for involvement in the program. Color, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, economic status, and citizenship are not criteria for participation.

Local community organizations such as businesses, professional organizations, and civic groups initiate specific Explorer posts. They do this by matching the interests of young adults with the people and program resources within their own organizations. The result is a program of activities that helps youth pursue their special interests, grow, and develop.

Purpose

Exploring's purpose is to provide experiences to help young people mature and prepare

them to become responsible and caring adults. Explorers are ready to investigate the meaning of interdependence in their personal relationships and communities.

Program Goals

Exploring has four specific goals for Explorers:

1. Gain practical experience in the career interest of the post
2. Engage in program activities centered on the five emphasis areas (career opportunities, life skills, citizenship, character education, and leadership experience) to encourage the development of the whole person
3. Experience positive leadership from adult and youth leaders and have the opportunity to take on leadership roles
4. Have a chance to learn and grow in a supportive, caring, and fun environment

This guide will help you understand how to develop the kinds of experiences in your Explorer post so that these four goals can be achieved.

Program Methods

To achieve the mission of Learning for Life, the following six Exploring program methods have been carefully designed to meet the developmental needs of young adults:

1. **Voluntary association.** In a voluntary association between youth and adults, youth are receptive to new ideas and experiences, a connection to new ways of thinking and acting, and a new identity.
2. **Ethical decision making.** By taking responsibility for their programs, activities, and experiences, Explorers learn how to make decisions and ethical choices.
3. **Group activity.** Exploring activities are interdependent group experiences in which success is dependent on the cooperation of all.
4. **Recognition of achievement.** Recognition comes through formal awards and acknowledgement of a youth's competence and ability by peers and adults.
5. **Democratic process.** The election of post officers is important to the success of the post.
6. **Experiential learning.** Exploring is about curiosity, exploration, and adventure. Learning by doing provides opportunities for developing new skills and participating meaningfully in action-oriented activities.

Role of Adult Leadership

One of your key responsibilities as an adult leader is to work in partnership with the youth leaders of your post. To do this, it is important that you understand the role and responsibilities of each adult position and how each role relates to the youth.

The different adult roles include

- Participating organization
- Post committee
- Advisor
- Associate Advisor (administration)
- Associate Advisor (program)
- Other associate Advisors
- Consultants

Position Descriptions

Participating Organization

- Initiates and commits to an Explorer post
- Recruits adult leaders
- Provides program resources
- Secures meeting facilities

The participating organization is a business, industry, school, labor group, professional society, government agency, civic club, or other community organization that operates an Explorer post. The program, leadership, and participation of the post are determined by the participating organization. Using the Exploring five-step plan, the participating organization agrees that it will recruit competent adult leaders, help those leaders secure program resources, and provide meeting facilities.

Post Committee

- Provides adequate adult leadership
- Completes and maintains the post's adult resource survey
- Secures equipment, facilities, and program resources
- Reviews, supports, and approves the post's program plans

The head of the participating organization recruits a post committee composed of four or more adults who serve during the post's participation year. Members meet frequently to

ensure that the post has a quality program, under capable leadership, that achieves the purposes of the participating organization and Learning for Life.

The following adult positions (21 years of age or older) are mandatory for an Explorer post to be accepted:

- Post committee chair (one)
- Post committee member (minimum two)
- Explorer Advisor (one)

The following position is optional but strongly encouraged:

- Associate Advisor

One person is appointed by the head of the organization or is selected by the committee to serve as its chair. The committee chair schedules and conducts all committee meetings and serves as a liaison between the Advisor and post's participating organization. The chair assigns projects to committee members and guides their efforts.

The post committee ensures that the post has an Advisor and at least one associate Advisor at all times. If a vacancy occurs, a post committee participant becomes the temporary Advisor. The committee takes immediate steps to recruit the right person to fill the vacancy. It guides and supports the post's efforts to earn money for trips, projects, or equipment and helps the post plan, budget, and properly account for all post funds. Some post committees assign a specific job to each committee member on an annual basis. Other post committees operate on a task-force basis, with committee members agreeing to specific tasks on a month-to-month basis.

Advisor

- Fosters an environment within the Explorer post that has a true sense of community and encourages everyone's growth and responsibility to one another
- Develops post officers to lead, plan, make decisions, and carry out a program of activities over an extended period
- Encourages participation and support for the Explorer post from the participating organization, associate Advisors, post committee, parents, and other adults in the community
- Upholds the standards and policies of the participating organization and Learning for Life
- Provides the necessary framework for protecting post participants from abuse
- Ensures that activities are conducted within safety guidelines and requirements
- Seeks to cultivate within the participants of a post a capacity to enjoy life and to have fun through the Exploring experience

The Advisor is the key adult leader and is responsible for training post officers, helping them plan a program of activities, coaching them in their leadership responsibilities, and obtaining adult help and resources as needed through the post committee. The Advisor is supported by two or more associate Advisors who serve as backup leaders and provide assistance for the program and administration of the post.

The ultimate responsibility for the post rests with the Advisor. This person is recruited

by the head of the participating organization and is enrolled with Learning for Life as the primary adult leader. All information about Exploring from Learning for Life goes to the

Advisor. The Advisor participates in all post meetings and activities, post officers' meetings, and post committee meetings, and conducts the annual post officers' seminar.

As the primary adult leader, the Advisor sets the tone for the post, models the desired form of leadership, and helps officers and participants become leaders of the post. The Advisor coaches and guides, demonstrating through actions what the youth officers need to learn and demonstrate with one another and with post participants.

Associate Advisor (Administration)

- Provides backup leadership for the Advisor and assumes adult leadership of the post in the Advisor's absence
- Supports the youth administrative vice president and assists this person specifically with post recruitment and recognition efforts
- Knows the Advisor's responsibilities and supports those responsibilities in whatever way possible

The primary role of the associate Advisor for administration is to work in partnership with the youth administrative vice president. Together they coordinate the recruitment of new youth participants, sustain the interest of current youth participants, and provide recognition for the individual achievements of post youth participants.

Associate Advisor (Program)

- Supports the youth program vice president to help determine the interests of all youth participants, plan the year's program, and ensure that the post program calendar is maintained
- Supports and coaches the activity chairs to help them plan and carry out their particular activities

- Helps the program vice president and other officers evaluate completed activities and fine-tune the year's program of activities based on insights gained from the evaluations

The primary role of the associate Advisor for program is to work closely with the youth program vice president. They discover and survey the interests of the youth participants on an ongoing basis, plan and schedule activities for the post, and evaluate completed activities.

In addition, the associate Advisor for program should work closely with the activity chair of each activity to ensure that he or she experiences success in leading that activity.

Other Associate Advisors

Some posts, particularly those with large youth participation or a unique program, may have a number of adults serving as associate Advisors. Their responsibilities may include providing equipment and transportation, making parental contact, planning special activities and service projects, or helping with the superactivity. A post may recruit as many associate Advisors as it needs to carry out program plans.

Consultants

- Provide expertise to the post's program
- Assist the post's activity committees in planning activities

A consultant is a person whose special skills or talents are needed for a post activity or project. Usually, consultants are adults who are recruited on a one-time basis to provide expert help for a post activity or project.

Consultants may be employees of the

participating organization, parents, or other adults in the community who are identified through the adult resource survey or recruited by the post committee.

For example, if the post's Explorer activity interest survey indicates that a number of youth would like to learn to snow ski, the post committee reviews the adult resource survey or contacts others with snow-skiing expertise. It recruits someone to serve as a consultant for the snow-skiing activity.

This consultant works with the post activity chair to plan the details of the activity. Consultants are recruited for their expert skills and might not know much about the post. The activity chair is responsible for explaining the interests and abilities of the youth participants and for planning an activity participants will like.

Many adults can serve as consultants to a post. Some are unable to serve as post leaders, but most are willing and flattered to serve as an expert consultant for an Explorer activity.

Key Factors for Success

- A. Use post resources. Conduct the adult resource survey. This is an inventory of information about adults related to the participating organization and parents who are willing to provide program help to the post. This program help may involve their career knowledge, special skills, contacts, facilities, or ideas.
- B. Get parents involved. Encourage parents to become involved in Exploring activities whenever possible. You may suggest that they serve on the post committee or provide transportation, equipment, chaperoning, counseling, or planning to support activities.

- C. Seek youth input. Have each post participant complete the Explorer activity interest survey. Conduct the survey on a regular basis to check the interests of new participants.
- D. Guide youth leadership. Youth officers are elected and trained to lead, plan, and make decisions regarding the implementation of post programs and activities. They should serve long enough to have successful experiences.
- E. Hold regular post meetings. A minimum of two Explorer post meetings should be held each month. Discuss important business first. Reserve the remaining time for a planned hands-on activity. The post president conducts post meetings. A detailed written agenda should be developed for each meeting. The program vice president and activity chair make reminder phone calls to program presenters or consultants. The president should ensure that all post meetings start on time. Guests should be introduced and made to feel welcome.
- F. Train and develop youth officers. The post officers' seminar is a training and planning session for newly elected officers. It is led by the Advisor, youth president, and associate Advisors. A successful seminar provides a clear road map for the coming months and enables the officers to begin assuming leadership in their post.
- G. Give recognition for achievement. Young adults expect to be rewarded for their accomplishments. There are several recognition programs and scholarship opportunities available for Explorers.
- H. Maintain a well-rounded program. Use the five program of emphasis areas as a guide to plan programs that will help maintain interest and meet the goals and objectives of the Exploring program. A variety of program helps are available to assist you in developing and carrying out an effective program.

Learning Through Experience

Exploring is experiential learning with lots of fun-filled, hands-on activities. It promotes the conditions necessary for the growth and development of adolescents. Young people need experiences that allow them to

1. interact with peers and acquire a sense of belonging,
2. gain decision-making experiences,
3. discuss conflicting values and formulate their own value systems,
4. reflect on self in relation to others and discover more about themselves by interaction,
5. experiment with their identities,
6. participate as a responsible member of a group,
7. cultivate a capacity to enjoy life.

Exploring can provide these experiences in wholesome, well-planned programs run by youth participants.

Problem-solving Model

The way young people learn to reason, solve problems, and make choices will stay with them for the rest of their lives. Explorer Advisors can do a great deal to help youth in posts learn a simple decision-making process that can help them make choices and resolve problems.

Explorers can use this practical three-step process to solve problems:

1. **Empathy.** Put yourself in the other person's place.
2. **Invention.** Invent as many solutions to the problem as you can, without trying to decide which is best.
3. **Selection.** List the advantages and disadvantages of each option, and then select the one that comes closest to meeting the needs of everyone involved.

Quality Control

How do you know when your post is successful? Exploring has a built-in quality control system. It is the youth participants themselves. If they don't like the program, they simply don't participate in the activities or attend the meetings. Stable and growing participation is a sign of success.

Reflection

Reflection is looking back at experiences once they are over in order to understand what happened and using this understanding in looking forward to the next action and new experiences.

We facilitate reflection by asking questions that cause people to think, *questions such as*

1. Listening skills. *What listening skills did we use?*
2. Participation. *Was participation in the activity equally shared among post participants?*
3. Building commitment. *How did the post get everyone's commitment to the solution?*
4. Trust. *In what ways did group participants demonstrate trust or distrust of each other?*
5. Use of influence and power. *Did post participants use their influence in ways that contributed to group success? Why or why not? What kinds of influence were used in this activity?*
6. Conflict. *In what ways were the disagreements and conflicts helpful or unhelpful?*
7. Concern for others. *In what ways did we make sure everyone was cared for?*
8. Leadership. *Who was a leader and why?*
9. Evaluating. *What evaluation skills did we use?*
10. Decision making. *How did decisions get made? Was it an effective decision-making process?*

11. Planning. *Did we plan adequately? Why or why not?*

Post Bylaws

The post president may appoint a committee chaired by the administrative vice president to draft the post bylaws. The draft is to be reviewed and approved by the officers, then approved by the post youth participants. Subsequent additions and revisions can be made at a regular officers' meeting and presented for approval at the next post meeting.

The elected post officers are expected to live by and enforce the post bylaws. New youth should be given a copy and asked to sign or otherwise indicate that they understand and agree to them.

The Explorer motto should be the preamble to the post bylaws. (See Guide, Suggested Post Bylaws at www.learning-for-life.org/exploring)

The Explorer Motto

Our best today for a better tomorrow!

Post bylaws often include

- Participating organization policies
- Post meeting and operation plan
- Youth leadership standards
- Participation standards
- Behavior standards, expectations/resolution
- Meeting pattern
- Dress code
- Financial or money-earning expectations
- Purpose and mission of post
- Adult leader organization

Helpful Exploring Tools at www.learning-for-life.org/exploring

Book, Secretary's Records
Book, Treasurer's Records
Clip Art, Exploring
Form, Approval of Parents or Guardians
Form, Brainstorming Five Program Areas
Form, Money-Earning Application
Games, Challenge Initiative
Games, Cooperative
Games, Problem-Solving Initiative
Guide, Becoming a Leader (post officers)
Guide, Developing Youth Leaders
Guide, Exploring for People With Disabilities
Guide, Leadership Checkup (post Advisor)
Guide, Leadership Checkup (post officers)
Guide, Post Advisor's Reflection
Guide, Post Officers' Reflection
Guide, Problem-solving Skills
Guide, Suggested Post Bylaws
How to Brainstorm
How to Conduct a Post Parents' Night
How to Develop Service Projects
How to Earn Money
How to Generate Publicity
How to Introduce a Speaker
How to Lead a Discussion
How to Make a Speech
How to Plan Your Superactivity
How to Recruit New Participants
How to Teach a Skill
How to Use Charts and Posters
How to Use Parliamentary Procedure

Typical Post Organization Chart

