



Sulam's Guide: How to Help An Organization From Your Home Or Create Your Own Service Project

If there are any reasons that it is difficult to work on site with a given organization, don't worry. You still have lots of options for helping that organization on your own. We suggest you try the following:

Step #1) One obstacle teens sometimes face when volunteering is an age requirement. (If this is not the case for you skip to Step #2). A possible way to resolve this is to ask your parent(s) if they will accompany you. Be sure to ask your parent to volunteer with you- rather than just supervise you on site. An organization would very likely be delighted to have you and a parent volunteer with them. If your parent agrees to go with you, offer this is a possible solution if you're facing a age requirement when you:

Step #2) Call the organization and politely explain your situation and why it will be difficult for you to volunteer for them at their site.

Step #3) After you have explained your situation, ask them what you can do on your own. Simply explain that you understand why they cannot accommodate your needs and that you would still like to help them out any way that you can.

Ideally, you will have chosen this organization because you care about the work they do. Be sure to explain this to them.

Step #4) The organization's first response will most likely ask you to raise money for them. While this is very valuable, try to think about and ask if there are additional ways to help that might be more personally meaningful to you.

Step #5) It helps if you can give them suggestions as to how you could "volunteer" for them on your own off site. Hopefully the organization will already have ideas as to what you could do. If not, here are some things to consider:

- Make flyers to give to all your family and friends spreading awareness for the organization/social cause.
- Conduct interviews and write an article to for your local/school newspaper (or the Sulam web-site)
- Circulate petitions and/or hand-outs that support the organization/social cause.
- Write letters to local and/or national government officials and media outlets supporting and raising awareness for the organization/social cause.
- Give a presentation to a class, group, team, etc. for the organization/cause.
- Start a club at your school (make sure that, at each meeting you are doing "service")
- Collect goods and items for donation that the organization needs.
- Take photos for their materials or web-site.

Sulam: The Center for Jewish Service Learning

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***** It is important to remember that, if you are going to work for an organization from your home or create your own project for a particular cause, you ask to visit and take a tour of their facility. By doing so you will be able to connect the work you are doing with the people and truly feel part of something special. Also, throughout your work you should keep regular contact with the volunteer coordinator to show your dedication to their organization and enhance your connection to them.**

Step #5) If you cannot find a specific organization to volunteer for, but you feel connected to a certain cause you may want to set up your own small project. Be creative. You may contact Sulam's Director Daniel Gold, dgold@bjela.org or 323-761-8607, for assistance.

Step #6) Think about the cause you wish to work for and how you can best help. Some examples are,

- You want to help children in hospitals and set up a Get Well card making program.
- To fight hunger you put together food baskets to distribute to the homeless with your synagogue.
- You can set up a group of your friends who knit/crochet scarves, hats, etc for donation to either a homeless shelter or hospital.
- If you are interested in politics you can set up a letter writing/petition group to support social issues that connect the most to you.
- If you love a specific sport you can teach or coach locally to younger children.
- If you are an environmentalist, get together a group of people to pick up trash in the city streets and parks at a certain time every day/week.

***** When creating your own project, it is helpful to have another adult in addition to your parents- such as a teacher, Rabbi, youth advisor, or friend, provide support and answer specific questions. Sulam is also here to support you and work with you, but will provide the type of personal attention you may get from an adult who you can consult with regularly.**

For any other questions that may come up when volunteering from home or creating your own service program contact Sulam's Director, Raquel Hirth at rhirth@bjela.org or 323-761-8607.

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