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SECTION 3 - The Tutor

1. *The Right Person in the Right Job*

Read Write Now! is a successful community volunteer based organisation and it strives to provide excellence in its service delivery. The first step toward that is putting the “right person in the right job.” Interview and selection procedures work toward ensuring that this principle is adhered to.

Remember **all tutors must be interviewed but not all are accepted**. If, in the interview process, you truly believe that a volunteer is unsuitable, you may want to offer a reason so as to let them down gently, for example, their available days do not suit students’ availability. This can be a difficult thing to do face-to-face so it might be easier to write to them instead. Suggest they contact the Volunteer Centre of WA for other options.

2. *Interviewing the Tutor*

When interviewing prospective tutors use the ‘*Interview Questions for Prospective Tutors*’ form. It acts as a prompt for Coordinators to ensure all essential information is covered. It also provides a record of the interview with detailed information which may be needed to assist the Coordinator in the subsequent acceptance/rejection or matching of a tutor.

It is quite probable that some interviewees will be quite nervous about this process. You, as the Coordinator should try to make the interview as painless as possible while ensuring that you come away with the information you need to assess whether or not the person will be a good tutor. If you intend to make notes during the interview, inform the interviewee of this before you start so they do not feel uncomfortable when you put pen to paper following their responses.

In order to comply with Duty of Care regulations, and to ensure our Coordinators’ safety, the interview should not take place in the Coordinator’s home, but in a public place such as a library, or a coffee shop or office space supplied for *Read Write Now!*

NB: A copy of this form is at the end of this section.

3. Tutor Job Description

- To complete the training program as provided by Read Write Now!
- After being matched with a student, to meet weekly for approximately 1.5hrs to work on literacy and/or numeracy tasks that work towards meeting the student's goals
- To adequately prepare weekly tutoring lessons for the student
- To complete the Hot Pink form 3 times a year and return it to the local Coordinator
- To keep the local Coordinator informed of any changes concerning either the student or the tutor
- When possible to undergo further training provided at Tutor Conferences and Tutor Meetings

It is important that potential tutors understand what the job will entail before they undertake the training. They also need to understand that they are not covered by our Risk Cover insurance if they engage in duties outside the Tutor Job Description; for example, helping a student with moving house, shopping etc if it is not part of a tutoring lesson.

4. Selecting and Appointing New Tutors

- Potential tutors must complete the *Read Write Now!* **application form**.
- Potential tutors **must be interviewed** by their community Coordinator before taking part in the basic literacy training course offered by *Read Write Now!* in Perth or in country locations.
- At the time of interview, the Coordinator will work through and complete the '*Interview Questions for Prospective Tutors*' form with the potential tutor.
- Potential tutors must have good skills in reading, writing and spelling and have at least Year 10 education level to comply with AQTF standards. It is recommended that if the Coordinator has any doubts about the person's literacy level either from their tutor application form or on meeting in person, that during the interview the person is asked to write a paragraph (on any topic).
- Partial exemption from training may be available to tutors with the appropriate qualifications and experience. (see *Section 5 Training - Partial Exemption from the Course*).
- Police Checks must be carried out on all tutors before being matched with a student (see *Section 6 "Admin", Part 1(b) "Tutors - Police Checks"*)
- At the conclusion of the interview, if the Coordinator feels the tutor is suitable, they are given a '*Welcome to New Tutor Brochure*.'
- When the coordinator receives the tutor's white Tutor Index Card from Central Office, this indicates that the tutor has attended a sufficient number of training sessions, completed at least two pieces of homework successfully, and been cleared via a Police Check. They may then be matched with a student on a trial basis for a 12 week period.
- When the tutor has attended all four days of the Basic Training, submitted all pieces of homework satisfactorily, tutored a student successfully for 12 weeks, submitted a 12 week reflective journal, and attended a specialist workshop, they are eligible to receive their certificate for the Course in Tutoring an Individual Adult in Literacy and Numeracy.
- It is hoped that tutors will stay with the Program for a minimum of 12 months.

After 6 weeks

The Coordinator matches the volunteer tutor with a student as close to completing the initial tutor training as possible. The coordinator will contact both the student and the tutor individually after the first 6 weeks of tutoring to ensure the match is agreeable to both parties. The tutor is encouraged to contact the Coordinator earlier if they have any concerns at all.

The information that is given about a student's literacy skills is of a confidential nature, as is the content of each tutor and student meeting. Therefore, it is important that all volunteers maintain confidentiality.

5. What to Look For When Selecting Volunteer Tutors

Often, through talking to potential tutors, you get a feel for how they will be able to relate to students. This initial “gut reaction” is an important one, so remember to write yourself some notes that you can refer back to if necessary.

Teaching qualifications are not essential to being a tutor but having strong literacy skills and being a good communicator are. Look for personal characteristics such as showing genuine interest, staying on the relevant topic, being flexible when discussing strategies, timeframes, meeting points etc. Good organisational skills are a plus; you may be able to identify these skills when you find out more about what the person does for work or recreation (or combining both).

The old saying “if you want something done, give it to a busy person” can be a relevant truism, but also look out for the person who is over-committed. A good sense of humour certainly does not go astray either.

Criteria for Volunteer Tutors

Volunteer tutors should be able to:

- Listen for students needs
- Apply learning activities to needs
- Step away from the authoritative role towards an active facilitation role
- Demonstrate good literacy/numeracy skills (Year 10 minimum – an AQTF requirement)
- Value and respect difference eg culture, lifestyle, expectations
- Acknowledge processes used by students
- Make learning/teaching processes explicit
- Reflect on and address own biases/values/inappropriate perspective/attitudes
- Demonstrate strategies to overcome the limitations of their own world views/values
- Exercise discretion about confidential information

6. Tutor Meetings

These are held approximately every 3 months. Some meetings can be formal in the form of a workshop whilst others can be an informal get together for sharing information and ideas. If you are planning a formal workshop, this checklist might be helpful:

- Decide on a guest speaker/topic for discussion/workshop and book the date with the speaker.
- Check if whiteboard /overhead projection/TV video/data projector is needed.
- Book a suitable venue
 - Access to toilets male and female
 - Contact phone no. of key holder in case of problems
 - Water for tea/coffee making
- Provide light refreshments ie. Tea, coffee biscuits.
- Send out notice to tutors with RSVP.
- Allow time for tutors to share their experiences and seek suggestions to better assist their student.

It is also a good idea to think about putting some variety into Tutor Meetings. For example, it would be a good idea to hold one of your meetings at the local library. If this is arranged in conjunction with library staff, they are only too happy to show you the latest adult literacy resources and also how to use the computer-catalogue for finding books. Tutors can then share this information with their student on a library visit. A book café is also another interesting venue for a meeting and here tutors can indulge themselves with a little browsing through the stock. Many book cafes have enough space for groups to meet.

Try meetings at different times of day – perhaps a breakfast meeting to get a new year underway, or even a picnic lunch, with the possibility of tutors bringing their students along.

Tutor meetings might also be on-line in the near future. Many Coordinators are currently keeping in touch with tutors via email as this is often preferred by busy tutors.

7. Tutor Dismissal or Finalisation of Involvement

There may be times where a tutor has to be asked to leave the Program due to unsatisfactory performance or inappropriate behaviour – fortunately, these are very rare occasions. Reaching this decision is not easy and needs to be handled professionally to protect the people involved. The *Read Write Now!* Program has developed Grievance Procedure guidelines to be followed in such circumstances. These can be found in Section 4 of this manual. If you are unsure of what constitutes grounds for dismissal please contact Central Office to discuss the particular circumstances.

The other more likely situation where a tutor's involvement in *Read Write Now!* may need to be formally finalised is where a tutor no longer maintains contact with the local Coordinator. We cannot always assume that the tutor is no longer working with a student. In this situation, the tutor's involvement needs to be drawn to an official close so that he/she cannot operate under our Program's name and jeopardise our good reputation. See section 4 of this manual for full details and a sample of an appropriate letter to send.