



Activation Guide

Promoters and Associate Member Resource

Making an Impact

The Best Buddies mission focuses on three pillars: friendship, integrated employment, and leadership development. Leadership development offers opportunities beyond serving as an ambassador or a chapter officer; Best Buddies envisions each of our members, whether they are an officer, an associate member, a promoter member, or matched in a friendship, to be leaders in their schools and community. Each participant of Best Buddies is an advocate for social inclusion and a leader in the disability rights movement. Each individual participant can make a significant impact by fostering a more inclusive school and community, educating their peers, and raising awareness.

Best Buddies strives to become a recognizable leader in the disability rights movement and to broaden the impact and reach of our programs. Promoters and associate members are essential to this goal! These members not only empower themselves and others to become advocates for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), but their involvement also allows them the opportunity to interact and develop friendships with someone who they may not have otherwise met without the Best Buddies program. Involvement as an associate or promoter member in Best Buddies offers students a chance to develop leadership skills as they host, volunteer, organize, and participate in events that exemplify the spirit and mission of our organization.

Program Goals

The promoters program was created with certain goals in mind – which are outlined below – to continue to drive our mission of inclusion forward. These goals are also applicable to the associate members of school friendship chapters and should be kept in mind by every participant of Best Buddies. Members should consider how each activity, committee, or event they are involved in relates to these goals.

- **Engagement:** Program participants learn social skills and develop skills to engage with different people in part to the events and opportunities provided by promoter chapter leaders. Promoters foster a safe place of understanding, acceptance, and support through the events they host and in collaborations with community school chapters.
- **Empowerment:** Empowerment is the key to maximizing the full potential of all participants. By providing empowering opportunities to students with and without disabilities to help each other achieve goals, spread awareness, and be self-motivated to make an impact, promoters and associate members can have a significant influence on their community. From fundraisers, regional events like Galas and Walks, to national initiatives like Spread the Word, students empowering themselves and others to learn the skills to be involved has the ability to make great change.
- **Interaction:** For many students, they attend schools or participate in programs that do not allow them the opportunity to meet and interact with people who have disabilities. Best Buddies provides this valuable experience to meet new friends in an equal, accepting and inclusive environment. Interactions between people of different abilities draws everyone closer to the mission. This creates an open door for organic friendships and a broadened social circle.
- **Awareness:** Awareness is key to the success and impact of our mission. Promoter chapters have the opportunity to educate and introduce their student body, possibly for the first time ever, to the impact of the language choices heard in the halls (e.g. the r-word). These same students will have an opportunity to teach other people in their lives by leading by example. This would create a world where our commonality makes our differences seem the same.

The vision of Best Buddies cannot be achieved without the collaborative efforts of promoter chapter members and associate members. By keeping these goals in mind, and utilizing the ideas and activities in this resource, every member will be able to make a lasting impact in our movement.



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Expectations of Associate and Promoter Chapter Members

In an effort to fully engage every member, chapter leaders are encouraged to set minimum expectations for individual associate and promoter member involvement. Each member joining the chapter is making a commitment and should be held to a high standard. Placing expectations on promoter and associate members demonstrates their value, will make them more engaged in the chapter, and will ensure their experience with Best Buddies more fulfilling.

While there is no minimum requirement, the following best practices will lead to maximum results. These guidelines will ensure greater involvement and the opportunity for members to connect with the mission. Each associate or promoter chapter member will:

- Attend chapter meetings and activities throughout the year.
- Select at least one idea for individual activation each semester.
- Select at least one idea for group activation each semester.

The Best Buddies chapter leaders, along with Best Buddies staff, should work with individuals to develop their own standard for associate and promoter members. Once the chapter has established the ideal expectation, these goals should be communicated clearly with all chapter members and support should be provided.

What You Can Do

In order for each associate and promoter chapter member to have the most enriching experience possible and to magnify the impact of Best Buddies programs, each individual is encouraged to choose their own unique way to commit to the mission addition to attending chapter meetings and activities. Below are a list of ideas that members can do, either as an individual or as part of a group, to raise greater awareness about the mission of Best Buddies, promote inclusion within their school and community, and make an impact. These activities provide the opportunity for leadership development, will develop connections with members of the chapter and community with and without IDD, and will lead to a meaningful experience with Best Buddies.

Individual Activation

Each individual chapter member can make a difference in the disability rights movement! Below are a list of things that a member can do on their own to move the mission of Best Buddies forward and get the most out of their chapter membership.

Chapter/In School Involvement

- Spend time with the special education department, supporting the classroom as needed and hanging out with your new friends when their schedule allows
- Develop a chapter birthday calendar with every members' birthday; assign associate members to each person to decorate their lockers on special occasions. Promoter chapters can partner with another school or host site and assign individuals in their chapter to send birthday cards to and to celebrate on their birthday.
- Offer to support the students in your school and community to sign up for [e-Buddies](#) and provide support and reminders for members to regularly email their match.
- Ask a teacher if you can make a presentation to your class about IDD and inclusion to educate peers who aren't involved in Best Buddies.

Support your Local Best Buddies Office

- Volunteer with your local Best Buddies office to be a speech coach at their next ambassador training.



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- Volunteer for your local Friendship Walk by helping to monitor the walk route, hand out water, etc.
- Ask your program manager about getting involved on a state event planning committee (such as preparing for the buddy ball, talent show, awards, etc.) and support the preparations for the event and volunteer on-site.
- If your state office has a Citizens program, volunteer to help out during one of their events.
- Ask your state office if another local Best Buddies chapter needs support, and volunteer to help out during one of their upcoming events.
- Speak with your program manager about opportunities to support new chapters or volunteer to foster activities and events in a promoters elementary school program.

Internet and Social Media

- Sign up for [e-Buddies](#) and participate in an email friendship.
- Share photos, videos, and articles related to Best Buddies and the disability rights movement.
- Highlight the difference your Best Buddies chapter is making in the community.
- Promote Best Buddies initiatives (e.g. I'm In to Hire, Spread the Word) on social media, take pledges online, and encourage others to pledge.

Educate & Advocate

- Educate yourself about disability rights movement history and current events and share what you learn with your peers.
- Sign up for a disability field related newsletter (e.g. [Disability Scoop](#)), and share interesting articles with your chapter.
- Research current legislation related to people with IDD and share the information with your chapter.
- Contact your local Congressperson or Senator and advocate for the disability rights issues that are important to you.
- Host a book club with your peers in school or community and share resources, stories, and different media about the disability rights movement; include people with and without disabilities.

Community Involvement: When volunteering in the community, be sure to wear a Best Buddies T-shirt to raise awareness about our programs.

- Get involved with community programs that serve people with IDD
- Get involved with local Special Olympics either volunteering day of or offering to assist with practices.
- Research if local churches or civic groups offer a monthly group activity for people with IDD and see if they need volunteers to plan and assist with activities.

Group Activation

Collaborating with peers builds a sense of community and can allow a group of associate/promoter members to tackle a larger project or plan a larger scale activity. There are numerous opportunities members can participate in as a small group, committee, or chapter as a whole. Below are a few ideas for group participation.

Volunteering

Volunteering as a group is a great way to give back to the school or community while also increasing the exposure of Best Buddies.

- Research opportunities to volunteer at a local soup kitchen, and organize the event for either a small group or for the entire chapter. Promoter chapters can partner with a nearby friendship chapter to make the event inclusive of people with IDD.



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- Host a Community Improvement Day. Organize a group to clean up a park, improve markings on a hiking trail, etc.
- Contact local churches and community groups to see if they have volunteer opportunities for buddy pairs and associate members and/or promoter members.
- Visit an assisted living center; invite chapter members and buddy pairs from local schools to join. Look for opportunities to make an impact in the center, like performing songs or scheduling weekly visits.
- Organize a food drive for a local food bank and invite the entire chapter to deliver the food.
- Reach out to your local library to see if they offer opportunities to volunteer or read to children's groups.
- Reach out to local preschools and volunteer to read/sing with the group; be sure to visit with preschool with buddy pairs to showcase people with and without disabilities volunteering and making an impact together.
- Research local YMCA's or other facilities that offer all-inclusive classes or sports. These programs are usually in need of volunteers to assist. As a chapter you could reach out to the facility and ask if there is a time slot you can fill with volunteers from your chapter. See if they are in need of peers to attend the classes/activities to partner with the participants.

Chapter Partnerships

Reach out to local friendship chapters or Best Buddies citizen chapters to partner during events either by hosting the event or helping to prepare their activities. During partnerships with school friendship chapters, promoters members can:

- Host activity stations like the karaoke booth, games, crafts/arts.
- Serve as emcee for major gatherings.
- Develop pen-pal opportunities with the closest friendship chapter in the community and trade letters with buddies in the program; this provides further awareness opportunities.
- Partner with a local Best Buddies middle school or elementary school chapter. Plan their monthly activity for them and then help them execute the event.
- Host a book club or discussion group. Set up a regular meeting time to invite interested chapter members and your peers to discuss books, legislation, or news related to the IDD community.

Committee Work

Utilizing committees is a great way to delegate responsibility while empowering and engaging members in leadership development and chapter management. Below are some examples of different committees that can be made up of promoter/associate members. Consider what is most needed for your chapter and be creative when developing committees.

Event Committee: this committee is responsible for planning, organizing, and executing chapter events and activities. Members of this committee will work with the officer team to carry out events and oversee all logistics and communication prior to and during the event.

Awareness Committee: this committee is responsible for creating greater awareness about Best Buddies programs, inclusion, and the disability rights movement in the school and great community. This committee can organize and host awareness assemblies, secure guest speakers/ambassadors to come to meetings, and plan campaigns to educate others throughout the year, and ensure full participation in all Best Buddies initiatives.

Fundraising Committee: This committee will work with the officer team to strategize and carry out fundraisers throughout the school year. The committee will work on the chapter budget, determine the best options for raising funds, and also think of ways to put the "fun" in fundraising.



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Spread the Word Committee: This committee will be responsible for planning the chapter's involvement in the Spread the Word campaign in March. The committee will plan any announcements, banner signing, assemblies, etc. that will take place at the school and track all community pledges to report to the national database. The committee can also develop ideas to engage the community in the campaign.

Best Buddies Month Committee: This committee will plan the festivities for the chapter to celebrate Best Buddies and the mission of inclusion. The committee will oversee the preparation, communication, and execution of the event.

Philanthropy/Volunteer Committee: This committee will ensure that the chapter is a visible force in giving back to the school and community and will organize opportunities to volunteer. This could include organizing a food or a holiday gift drive, or planning a park clean-up for the chapter. This committee can help educate the school on the ability of people with and without IDD to give back to their community.

Communications Committee: This committee will assist with the public relations and information sharing for the chapter. This can include, but is not limited to, updating bulletins, creating and making announcements, posting on social media, setting up information tables at your school and in the community, creating a newsletter and more. This committee will ensure all chapter members and families have all of the information they need about chapter activities, statewide events, and anything related to Best Buddies.

Friendship Walk Committee: This committee will support the chapter's participation in the Friendship Walk. Committee members will support chapter members, their families, and peers at their school to sign up and fundraise for the event. The committee will organize any banners or signs the chapter will bring to the Walk and any other team related swag. The committee can connect with the local office about hosting a station or game stop on the walk route or at the after party.