



# Best Buddies International Citizens Chapter Interest Guide

## ***Best Buddies International: A Global Movement***

### ***Our Mission***

Our mission is to establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships. To establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

### ***Our Vision***

To put Best Buddies® out of business.

### ***The Big Picture***

Best Buddies, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in 1989 by Anthony Kennedy Shriver. We are a vibrant organization that has grown from one original college chapter to more than 1,500 college, high school and middle school campuses worldwide. Best Buddies programs engage participants in each of the 50 United States, and we have accredited international programs on six continents. Best Buddies' eight formal programs — *Middle Schools, High Schools, Colleges, Citizens, e-Buddies®, Jobs, Ambassadors, and Promoters* — positively impact more than 900,000 individuals with and without disabilities worldwide. Best Buddies volunteers annually contribute, at no cost to their communities, support services that equate to more than \$155.2 million USD. As a result of their involvement with Best Buddies, people with IDD secure rewarding jobs, live on their own, become inspirational leaders, and make lifelong friendships.

Additional resources and information can be found on our participant resource site, The Best Buddies Library. To learn more about the history of Best Buddies, our founder, the mission and our programs [click here](#). The Library also contains comprehensive information and resources regarding [IDD](#).

### ***The Need for Best Buddies Programs***

The need for Best Buddies has been well-recognized. According to the World Health Organization, nearly three out of 100 people in the world have IDD, making this the largest disability group in the world. It is also one of the world's most marginalized groups. People with IDD are nearly three times more likely to live in poverty than people without IDD.

In America, one out of ten families is directly affected by IDD. Of the 7.5 million individuals in the U.S. with IDD, over 80% are unemployed and 53% never visit friends or have no friends at all. Most people with IDD live their lives in the company of family members or paid caregivers lacking the necessary skills to self-advocate. When people with IDD are unable to keep a job it is most often due to a lack of social skills rather than a lack of ability to perform the work required.

Best Buddies tackles these problems through our friendship programs, our jobs program, and our leadership development programs. By introducing a person with IDD to a peer without IDD in a supported, positive setting, we combat loneliness and isolation, while increasing society's acceptance and understanding of people with IDD. Our programs provided people with IDD the resources they need to support themselves and learn valuable social skills that give them confidence. Well-developed social skills can help people with IDD develop positive relationships and successfully explore adult roles such as employee, co-worker, and community member.



# Best Buddies International Citizens Chapter Interest Guide

## ***The Citizens Program***

### ***Program Overview***

The Best Buddies Citizens program matches adults with IDD in one-to-one friendships with adults without IDD from the community. By spending time with one another, the lives of both individuals are enhanced through a mutually-enriching friendship. The citizens program is essential in providing social opportunities for adults with IDD, who are often isolated and have little opportunity to interact with their adult peers. The citizens program started as a community model where matches are made between individuals based on age, personality and interests, as well as proximity. The program has since grown to include opportunities for companies to get involved in a group setting.

Citizens chapters are formed in a company selected and approved by Best Buddies staff. Each company is partnered with a host site: a community organization or service agency for adults with IDD. Volunteers from both the company and the host site will be matched in one-to-one friendships and participate in events together. The friendships will create more inclusive communities and raise greater awareness about the need for social opportunities for adults with IDD. Citizens chapters strengthen the company's ties to the community and create an environment for members to form meaningful one to one friendships while in a group setting.

One to one friendships are created between a buddy (an adult volunteer with IDD) and a peer buddy (an adult volunteer from a company without IDD). In addition to the one-to-one friendships, citizens chapters hold regular group activities and volunteers play a larger role in creating and supporting matches.

### ***Participant Expectations***

#### **Chapter Leadership**

Chapter leadership includes a chapter advisor, host site coordinator, and Best Buddies staff.

##### *Chapter advisor*

The chapter advisor organizes, leads, and maintains the citizens chapter and ensures that members fulfill the commitment. The advisor must be a member of the company and should be matched in a one to one friendship. This person will serve as a liaison between the chapter, the host site, and Best Buddies staff.

The chapter advisor must agree to:

- Serve for at least one year
- Maintain regular contact with Best Buddies staff
- Select appropriate members and work with the host site coordinator to make matches
- Assist the chapter in accessing facilities for meetings, necessary supplies, financial support and in kind support
- Assist in planning chapter activities
- Monitor friendships

##### *Host Site Coordinator*

Host Site Coordinator (HSC) works as a liaison between the participants with IDD, the chapter advisor, and Best Buddies staff. The HSC must work for the service or community group from which the participants with IDD matched in the chapter belong.



# Best Buddies International Citizens Chapter Interest Guide

The HSC must agree to:

- Supervise the submission of membership applications on Best Buddies Online
- Work with the chapter advisor to support/guide the matching process
- Attend chapter meetings and events
- Be a resource to chapter membership
- Assist chapter advisor and Best Buddies staff in monitoring friendships

Other members of the chapter can get involved in the management of the chapter by forming a planning or leadership committee.

### *Best Buddies Staff*

Best Buddies staff will be heavily involved in the development of a new citizens chapter. Staff will provide training and resources to the chapter leadership, maintain regular communication, and provide ongoing support. Best Buddies staff will assist in recruitment of members and securing a host site to partner with the company.

## **Member Commitment and Expectations**

### *Member Roles*

- **Buddy:** The buddy is an adult volunteer with IDD who is paired in a one-to-one friendship with a volunteer from the company
- **Peer Buddy:** The peer buddy is an employee of the company who is paired in a one-to-one friendship with a person with IDD

Chapter members will be matched in a one-to-one friendship. Each participant must agree to the following:

- Consent to and complete a background check (check with your Best Buddies staff contact regarding the cost)
- Complete a Best Buddies membership application on Best Buddies Online
- Matched in a friendship for a minimum of a year
- Able and interested in forming a mutually enriching friendship
- Communicate with their buddy on a regular basis (Best Buddies recommends at least once a week)
- Meet with your buddy twice a month or once a month for four hours or more (this can include chapter activities)
- Attend chapter activities
- Complete friendship updates each month on Best Buddies Online

### *Volunteer Training*

The overall goal of the training is to establish a foundation for well supported and successful friendships. The training will be facilitated by Best Buddies staff prior to matches being made between company members and community volunteers with IDD. Some topics that may be covered in the training include: an introduction to IDD and interacting with people with IDD, what to expect from the friendship, review of the commitment and ideas on how to meet the commitment.



# Best Buddies International Citizens Chapter Interest Guide

## ***Steps to Starting a Citizens Chapter***

- Confirm Best Buddies approval
  - Best Buddies staff should work with company to confirm available time commitment and supports for new program
- Identify chapter advisor
  - Staff should work with company to confirm at least one point of contact to maintain commitment, communication, and support matches
- Determine Host Site
  - Ensure interested and available buddies to participate in program
  - Secure host site coordinator to support communication amongst chapter
- Host an Interest Meeting
  - Organized and hosted by Best Buddies staff
  - Provides an overview of the program and reviews commitment and expectations
- Application Process
  - All interested members must complete and application on Best Buddies Online
- Background Checks
  - A background check must be run on all participants prior to matching
- Matching Process
  - Chapter advisor, host site coordinator, and Best Buddies staff will create matches
- Participant Training
  - All participants must attend a training, led by Best Buddies staff, prior to being matched
  - Training will provide an overview of IDD and disability rights movement and best practices to forming a friendship
- Match Party
  - Matches will be introduced
  - New pairs begin getting to know one another and exchange contact information
- One to One Outings
  - Newly matched pairs begin spending time together
  - Pairs are encouraged to get together on their own in addition to chapter events
- Group Activities
  - Chapter should hold group activities throughout the year
  - Minimum of four activities per year, but more activities are encouraged
- Support and Monitor Matches
  - Each month, matches must complete a friendship update on Best Buddies Online
- Annual Celebration
  - Chapters are encouraged to host an end of year celebration
  - Chapters can use this time to secure continued interest for the following year
- Annual Evaluation
  - Chapter leaders should meet with Best Buddies staff to evaluate the success and challenges of the previous year
  - Best Buddies staff will work with chapter leaders to determine goals for the following year