



COMPEER VOLUNTEER GUIDE

Mental wellness begins with friendship



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Welcome to Compeer Cleveland County!

Compeer is a program of the Mental Health Association in Cleveland County (MHA) and recognizes that mental wellness starts with friendship. Compeer is made up of compassionate volunteers who choose to contribute their time and energy to providing supportive friendship outside of the clinical setting to those experiencing isolation and mental health concerns. Thank you for choosing to volunteer with MHA's Compeer Program!

About MHA

Our Mission: To create and promote education, advocacy, and support for individuals and families affected by mental illness. We will work tirelessly to eliminate the stigma of mental illness and create an informed community of citizens who will defend and support the rights of those impacted by mental illness.

Other Core Services and Programs

- *Advocacy:* MHA is the advocacy voice for mental health issues in Cleveland County. MHA conducts ongoing monitoring of the mental health system through surveys, committee work, public forums, and meetings with clients, providers, elected officials, and policy makers.
- *Emergency Medication Fund:* MHA's emergency medication fund provides residents of Cleveland County assistance covering the cost of needed mental health medications. This service helps keep individuals out of crisis when limited resources prevent the purchase of critical mental health medications.
- *Community Outreach & Education:* MHA speaks on a variety of topics throughout the community including: QPR suicide prevention training, mental health first aid, and I.C. Hope. MHA also participates in health and agency fairs providing mental health literature.
- *SOAR:* MHA supports individuals who are experiencing homelessness, due to disabling mental and physical health conditions, apply for disability in an expedited fashion.
- *Operation Santa Claus:* Each year MHA sponsors Operation Santa Claus to provide Christmas gifts to adult residents of Cleveland County living with a severe and persistent mental illness or intellectual and developmental disability.
- *Information and Referral:* MHA provides information and referrals to individuals with questions about mental health treatment services and other mental health issues.
- *Healing With Nature:* MHA provides activities such as our Community Walking group to give individuals an opportunity experiencing the mental health support of being in nature.

Affiliations: MHA of Cleveland County is a United Way member agency. We are also an affiliate of Mental Health America and Compeer International.

About Compeer Cleveland County

MHA's Compeer program matches community volunteers with youth (6 - 18) adults (18 – 61) and seniors (age 62+) in mental health recovery programs. Volunteers provide one-to-one supportive friendship and group mentoring to offset the loneliness and social isolation that often accompanies mental health disorders.

Compeer is guided by a simple premise validated by research - that the support of friends is healing. The power of friendship is demonstrated as individuals matched with a Compeer volunteer often experience fewer hospitalizations, have increased self-esteem, and are more likely to adhere to their medication and treatment programs.

The word Compeer means “peer” or “equal,” not mental health professional, social worker, or caretaker. Compeer adds a new dimension to the timeless concept of friendship. Friendship is powerful medicine. It heals through the knowledge that someone cares about us, believes in us, and wants to promote our well being without expecting anything in return.

Compeer also benefits volunteers and the broader community by reducing the stigma that is so often associated with mental illness. Once a volunteer gets to know their friend, the stereotypes and stigma associated with mental health disorders tend to fade away. As the relationship grows, Compeer volunteers experience their Compeer friends as unique individuals, with strengths and weaknesses, just like anyone else.

Compeer transforms lives through relationships.

The History of Compeer

1973

The Adopt-A-Patient program, a project of the Rochester Mental Health Association, is established at the Rochester Psychiatric Center

1977

Founder, Bernice “Bunny” Skirboll, changes the program name to better reflect the mission: Companion + Peer= Compeer; Compeer becomes a de-institutionalized and is now a community based organization.

1980

New York State Office of Mental Health supports expansion of Compeer to other communities in New York State.

1982

Compeer secures a grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health to develop Compeer programs across the United States.

2005

The Compeer Model is recognized by the American Psychological Association (APA) as a Best Practice for Recovery.

2013

The Compeer Model is recognized as an evidence-based practice by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

2016

Compeer of Great Buffalo serves as the International Headquarters- becoming Compeer, Inc.- serving more than 50 chapters across the country and around the world: U.S, Canada, and Australia

Compeer Cleveland County Volunteer Opportunities

One-to-one Friendship

Community volunteers are matched with youth (6 - 17), adults (18 – 61) and seniors (age 62+) in mental health recovery programs. Volunteers and friends agree to meet weekly for an hour, or every other week for two hours. The relationship is expected to last at least one year. The choice of activities varies and depends upon mutual agreement. Both friends are expected to pay for their own expenses. Examples of activities might include: going for a walk, having a picnic, playing cards, gardening, or going to a movie together. Compeer also sponsors socials for matches to attend.

Youth Group Mentoring

Compeer's group mentoring program matches youth participants in groups consisting of 3 - 5 mentees per one mentor based on their unique interests. Groups meet at sites in the community. Our group mentoring program also acts as a waitlist for youth waiting to be matched in a one-to-one friendship.

Phone Friends

For those who are not able to commit to a one-to-one friendship, Phone Friends is a good alternative. Phone friend volunteers make weekly phone calls to individuals who are waiting to be matched in a one-to-one friendship or who prefer telephone communication.

Community Supported Friendship Project (CSF)

We deliver monthly "friendship bags" to our adult and senior participants' doorsteps. The bags are filled with handcrafted items and a newsletter featuring stories of connection. CSF would not be possible without the effort of many volunteers, including gift contributors, friendship bag packers, and delivery drivers.

Special Events

We organize a variety of activities for our Compeer community and the broader community to participate in. We are thankful for volunteer support at events such as our Self-Care Pop-up series, Community Walks, and monthly Art Activities.

Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC)

We value the input of volunteers and are working to enhance our volunteers' experience. The VAC meets monthly to generate energy, ideas, and troubleshoot.

One-to-One Volunteer Responsibilities Overview

1. To maintain regular contact with your friend either by phone or in person:
 - a. One year
 - b. Four hours a month (at minimum)
2. To maintain confidentiality and privacy related to your friend
 - a. The main exception is if you suspect your friend is at risk of harming themselves or others
3. To treat you friend with dignity and respect at all times
4. To maintain regular contact with Compeer staff, especially if:
 - a. problems arise
 - b. you have a concern
 - c. you want to tell us about your friendship (celebrate!)
5. To attend trainings and social activities when possible:
 - a. Trainings and social activities are FREE or very low cost
 - b. It's a great way to meet other volunteers and their friends
6. To submit monthly reports
 - a. We use these reports to evaluate our services
 - b. We use the data to report to our funding sources
 - c. We use your feedback to guide the growth and improvement of our program
7. To complete an annual survey to help gauge the success of Compeer
8. To notify the Compeer Coordinator in advance if you have to stop volunteering before the end of your commitment

One-to-One & Group Mentoring Volunteer Description & Guidelines

Volunteer Description:

Within the framework of the Compeer program's mission, Compeer volunteers provide friendship and mentorship to their Compeer friend for a minimum of four hours a month.

A compeer volunteer is matched in a one-to-one or group mentoring relationship with an individual who has been professionally referred and chooses to participate in the program. After careful screening by Compeer staff and the referring agency, the volunteer is matched with an appropriate individual of their choosing.

Compeer's goal is to compliment professional care as a social integration component in the mental health recovery model. Through the friendship/mentoring relationship, Compeer friends may attain a higher level of functioning by improving their communication and social skills and developing a deeper sense of belonging, self-esteem, and interpersonal trust.

Guiding Principles:

In order to maintain the effectiveness and integrity of the Compeer Program, volunteers must agree to abide by rules of conduct that protect and promote the interests of the agency, clients, and volunteers.

Compeer staff will work on a case by case basis with any volunteer who violates any rule of conduct or agency policy, and will attempt to resolve any issues with the mutual agreement of the agency, staff, volunteer, and Compeer friend. Compeer retains the right to terminate a volunteer's participation at any time with or without cause or notice.

1. Volunteers are expected to promote an environment of mutual respect with all staff, clients, and other volunteers. All relationships between volunteers, staff, and Compeer friends shall be conducted in a professional manner within the boundaries of the volunteer job description and MHA's Code of Ethics.
2. Volunteers will uphold their Compeer friend's right to confidentiality and privacy.
 - Volunteers are expected to respect the privacy of their Compeer friend and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of service.
 - Volunteers should inform their Compeer friend fully about the limits of confidentiality in a given situation if confidentiality must be breached to protect the well-being of their Compeer friend.
 - Staff and volunteers are not permitted to use information from Compeer friends for any research purposes unless proper consent has been obtained from both the Compeer friend and MHA.

3. MHA is a non-profit organization and is neither legally nor institutionally connected to any particular religion, faith, political party, or ideology. Therefore, volunteers will not pressure persons to accept personal philosophies, ideas, or beliefs.
4. Volunteers are expected to adhere to a standard of conduct that is respectful of all persons. MHA promotes an environment free from **drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment, verbal, and physical violence**. Volunteers are required to report any suspected or observed physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to the Compeer Coordinator, who will follow up thoroughly on all complaints. Appropriate action will be taken against a volunteer for suspected, alleged, or actual violation of this policy, up to and possibly including termination from the Compeer Program.

Process:

1. All volunteers will submit the appropriate paperwork, including a “Volunteer Application” and “Volunteer/Confidentiality Agreement,” prior to volunteering.
 - A file is maintained for each volunteer, including application, reference check results, documentation of hours, etc. All personal information is kept confidential and is used with permission of the volunteer to ensure proper placement, supervision, and evaluation.
2. All volunteer applicants will be interviewed and carefully screened by the Compeer Coordinator. Due to the vulnerability of the clients we serve, we cannot guarantee that all volunteer applicants will be matched. If certain requirements are not met (including, but not limited to, passing a criminal background and receiving positive references), applicants will be referred to another agency.
 - MHA affirms and fully endorses a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, national origin, physical or mental disability, or status as a veteran for clients, employees, and members of the governing board.
3. All volunteers will participate in a Volunteer Orientation session.
4. All volunteers will meet with the Compeer Coordinator to discuss possible matches. During the match interview, the coordinator may suggest potential candidates based on such considerations as location, age, background, and mutual interests.
5. Once a potential match has been identified, the volunteer will have a phone or in-person conversation with the candidate’s referring agency. This gives the volunteer an opportunity to gather additional information about their potential Compeer friend and allows the referring agency to determine whether this will be an appropriate match.
6. Once a match is made, all Volunteers in a one-to-one friendship are expected to spend a minimum of four hours per month with their Compeer friend for at least one year in duration. Phone friends are expected to make weekly phone calls for a year’s duration.

7. Volunteers will contact the Compeer Coordinator when problems, concerns, or difficulty in the friendship arise. Volunteers will also be in contact with the referring agency as needed.
8. Volunteers will inform their friend as far in advance as possible if they are unable to make a scheduled meeting or if they will be running late. If the friend cannot be reached, the volunteer must call the Compeer Coordinator instead.
9. Volunteers will submit monthly reports, by email, electronic form, or mail, to the Compeer Coordinator. Volunteers are also expected to complete an annual survey.
10. Volunteers will inform the Compeer Coordinator as far in advance as possible if they plan to stop volunteering for the agency for any reason. An exit interview will be arranged with the Compeer Coordinator and a formal ending of the friendship will be arranged with the volunteer's Compeer friend.
11. If a volunteer does not perform as required, acts inappropriately in his/her job, or commits an action that is considered to be a violation of the agency's policies, the issue will be resolved using a documented procedure.
 - Initially the Compeer Coordinator will meet with the volunteer to discuss the problem and coach her/him on agency and program policy. This meeting will be documented in the volunteer's records.
 - If the problem persists, the volunteer may be required to attend additional training.
 - If the problem cannot be resolved, or the infraction is considered to be too grave, the volunteer will be terminated. A termination letter explaining the terms of termination will be mailed to the volunteer and placed in his/her records.

Monthly Reports

Monthly reports are mandatory for one-to-one and group mentor volunteers. It is your responsibility to complete them. Reports provide:

- documentation of your visits
- an important source of data which helps us evaluate our services
- information to provide to funders in order to maintain financial support for our programs
- a platform for you to raise questions, voice concerns, or to let us know how much fun you're having

ALL information is CONFIDENTIAL

How can monthly reports be completed?

- Reports are DUE by the 15th of each month (for the month prior).
- We include a reminder in our monthly e-newsletter, with a link to complete an electronic form via our website.
- You can also email your monthly report to the Program Coordinator at scostner@clevelandcountymha.org.
- You may also request a supply of paper reports to be mailed to our office at PO Box 623 Shelby, NC 28151

Compeer Volunteer Monthly Report

Report for the month of:

Volunteer's first and last name:

Compeer friend's first and last name:

Face to face meetings during the month:

Phone calls during the month:

Hours spent together during this month:

What activities did you and your friend do together this month?

Do you have any good news and/or positive stories to share from the month?

Do you have any concerns regarding your Compeer friendship?

_____ **Check here to have your Compeer Coordinator call you.**

_____ **Check here to have your Compeer friend's referring provider call you.**

Please indicate best phone number and time of day to reach you:

Please share any changes in you or your friend's life. (address, phone #, hospitalizations, employment status, life events such as marriage, pregnancy, promotion, etc.)

Support for Volunteers

Compeer Staff

Program staff will monitor your match, provide you with support, and guide you when difficulties arise. Please be sure to contact us when you have concerns. We can help troubleshoot, mediate, get your friend connected to needed services, etc.

Volunteer Exclusive E-mail

Each month we send out an e-newsletter with updates, self care tips, ways to get involved in the community, training opportunities, and more!

Social Events

Each year, Compeer hosts activities for volunteers and their friends to enjoy together. Our annual holiday party is a tradition that everyone looks forward to!

Volunteer Appreciation

Throughout the year we facilitate a quarterly drawing. Volunteers are encouraged to enter the drawing by participating in the Compeer community in a variety of ways including: completing your monthly update, contributing to the CSF project, submitting an annual survey, etc. We also host an annual Volunteer Appreciation dinner in the spring.

Opportunities to Expand your Toolkit

You will discover a variety of training opportunities and educational resources as a part of the Compeer - MHA Cleveland County community. Compeer staff work to identify these resources and share them via our e-newsletter and social media pages.

Insurance

Compeer has liability coverage for volunteers, that protects you above and beyond your own coverage, should an accident occur while donating your time to Compeer.

Learning about mental health disorders

What causes mental health disorders?

At present, the causes of mental health disorders are only partially understood. What is known is that some forms of mental health disorders are due to abnormalities in the brain including the loss of nerve cells, as well as excesses or deficiencies in chemical transmissions between neurons. The tendency to develop some mental health concerns may also be due to heredity. Mental health disorders may often be a combination of biological, chemical, psychological, and environmental factors.

Are there different kinds of mental health disorders?

There are over 100 different types of mental health disorders recognized by the American Psychiatric Association. The majority of people referred to Compeer have diagnoses that fall in the general categories of severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI). These include psychotic disorders, affective disorders, and anxiety disorders, among others. Each illness is characterized by a unique set of symptoms. While knowing a diagnosis can be helpful, it is important to remember that a person is not a diagnosis! Each individual will have a unique combination of symptoms. To learn more about specific diagnoses visit the National Alliance On Mental Illness - <https://nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions>

How many people are affected by mental health disorders?

Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. - 43.8 million, or 18.5% - experiences mental health disorders in a given year.¹ Approximately 1 in 25 adults in the U.S. - 9.8 million, or 4.0% - experiences a severe mental health disorder in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.²

Are people diagnosed with mental health disorders violent?

No! The media portrayal of people diagnosed with mental health disorders as exceptionally violent is simply **not true**. People diagnosed with mental health disorders are no more likely to be violent than the general public. In fact, people diagnosed with mental health disorders are much more likely to be victims of violence rather than the cause.

Are mental health disorders treatable?

Yes! Mental health disorders are treatable with combinations of psychotherapy, medications, and community support. Some individuals recover completely while many others can lead active, productive, happy lives with ongoing treatment and support.

1 - Any Mental Illness (AMI) Among Adults. (n.d.). Retrieved April 12, 2017, from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mental-illness-ami-among-adults.shtml>

2-Serious Mental Illness (SMI) Among Adults. (n.d.). Retrieved April 12, 2017, from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/serious-mental-illness-smi-among-us-adults.shtml>

Mental Health Medications

Your friend may take some type of mental health medication. These medications are administered to provide relief from many of the symptoms of mental health disorders. While medications do not necessarily cure mental health disorders, frequently they allow people to be more aware and responsive, and overcome some of the more debilitating symptoms. Medication can also support other types of treatment, such as therapy, in being most effective.

In spite of their beneficial aspects, many mental health medications also produce side effects. It is important to be informed!

- Ask your Compeer friend and/or their referring provider about specific medications your friend is taking.
- Understanding common side effects will help you be less likely to attribute side effects of medications as willful acts on your friend's part.
- Knowing side effects is a way you can advocate for your friend. Observation of extreme side effects which last over time might be important and useful information for their mental health provider.

Things to Remember:

- Medication can cause people to be sensitive to the sun.
- Medications can cause fatigue.
- Medications can cause restlessness.
- Medication can cause weight gain.
- Mixing alcohol or any other drugs can be very dangerous while taking medication.
- Some medications are not safe during pregnancy.
- It can be dangerous to stop taking medication abruptly.
- It can be dangerous to overmedicate (overdose)

About Our Friends

1. Compeer friends come from incredibly diverse backgrounds (socioeconomic, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) and face different problems (family, biological, social). Each brings their own individual personality to their situation regardless of their diagnosis.
2. In general, people with a mental health diagnosis may have experienced significant problems in living and had difficulty coping.
3. Compeer referrals are not any more dangerous to themselves or to others than those without a diagnosis. They have been carefully screened by their referring provider at the time of referral and are at a stable point in their recovery.
4. Loneliness and isolation often accompany mental health disorders. Either because of or due to their illness, Compeer friends have often become isolated, lonely and have few social supports. They have been referred because they and their referring provider feel there is a special need for support and companionship.
5. Some of our friends have added difficulties because of physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, or substance abuse.
6. Due to their mental health disorder, your friend could exhibit some of the following characteristics: lack of emotion, inappropriate behavior, poor communication, loss of interest in activities, poor interpersonal skills, and/or inability to pay attention. These symptoms can be a challenge for family and friends alike.
7. Once you have met your friend, allow the generalities of mental health disorders to fade away. What you will find is a person like any other, with likeable and unlikable characteristics, strengths and weakness - in short, a unique person.
8. If a person with a mental health disorder has enough support, including friendship, they can often function quite well in the community.

First Meeting with your Friend (this will be orchestrated by the Compeer Coordinator)

Almost everyone feels some apprehension about the initial meeting, including your new friend. We suggest keeping the first meeting short since it is likely to be the most stressful for both the volunteer and the friend. The Compeer Coordinator will be present for the first part of this initial meeting to introduce you and your friend.

- Introductions will be made and your role as a volunteer will be explained to your new friend (and parent/guardian for youth participants).
- Talk over your expectations with your friend; you must be clear with your new friend. Listen to what your friend's expectations are for the relationship. Try to arrive at clear goals for the relationship together.
- Tell your friend about how much time you are willing to spend with them. Discuss times and days that are convenient and/or inconvenient for both of you.
- Ask your friend about their interests. Find mutual interests and decide together on some types of things to do together.
- Ask your friend what they can afford to do financially. Explain that since you are equals in this relationship, each of you will generally pay for your half of activities. If finances are an issue, brainstorm low cost/free events together. See the list of local activities (p.44).
- Set up a subsequent meeting time. The most important part of the first meeting is setting up the second meeting and then appearing on time. Consistency is crucial to building a relationship.
- If your friend is living in a supervised setting, be sure to introduce yourself to the staff and/or family.

Building a Successful Relationship

As a Compeer volunteer, your role is to be a friend, role model, and an advocate. You play a unique role in your friend's life, and you might be the only consistent person to follow your friend from setting to setting. You are **not** expected to take on the role of case manager, social worker, caretaker, chauffeur, Santa Claus, etc.

Your relationship with your friend may progress slowly. Be patient and learn to measure progress in small steps. Judge success by the degree of friendship achieved, not the changes (positive or negative) in your friend's mental health.

Your friend may have temporary setbacks or regressions. These are not necessarily the result of your relationship. Keep in mind that periods of regression or stagnation may occur.

Remember that trusting relationships may be a new experience for your friend. Do not expect your friend to warm up right away. Do not push, just be friendly and consistent. Your friendship may help your friend learn about dependability, respect, and trust.

Friendship is a powerful medicine. It heals through the knowledge that someone cares about us and about our well-being without expecting anything in return.

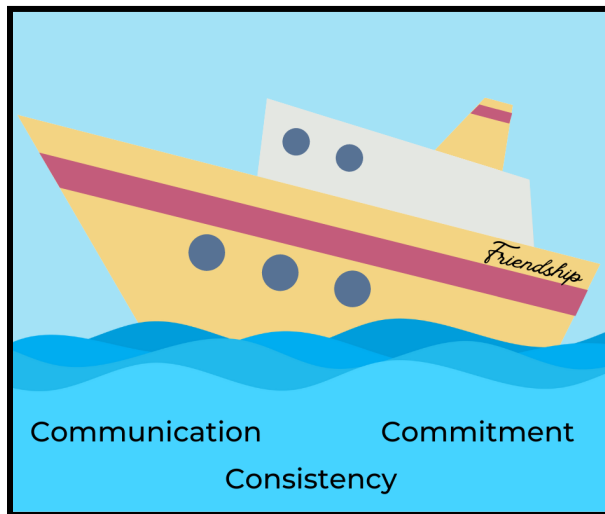


Expectations for your Relationship

It is important that you and your friend have clear and equal expectations of each other. If misunderstandings occur, talk them out as they happen. Be sure to fulfill the expectations that you and your friend have agreed upon in your initial meetings. In addition, make sure that you show your Compeer friend the same courtesy you would show any friend or expect from your other friends.

- It is your responsibility to maintain contact. Your friend may not be experienced in social skills such as this.
- Schedule your meetings in advance.
- Make every attempt to have regular contact.
- Be on time and be consistent. If you have to cancel plans, tell your friend as soon as possible.
- If you are upset on the day you are to meet, consider how it may affect your meeting plans. In some cases it may be very healthy to share how you are feeling with your friend. However, if you are too upset, please consider rescheduling.
- If you are going to be absent, tell your friend about it ahead of time, and tell them when you will return. You might even want to send a post card if you are on vacation.
- Avoid the temptation to spend too much time with your friend initially. It is easier to lengthen meeting times than to cut back.
- Setting unrealistic expectations in the beginning can lead to hurt and disappointment in the future.

Three C's/Seas



A major goal of friendship is developing a trusting relationship so your friend will feel safe and comfortable expressing their emotions and feelings. Effectively learning how to navigate the Three C's (communication, consistency, and commitment) will help build this trust and keep your friendship afloat

The first C, **Communication**, is important for setting boundaries, scheduling routines, and understanding your match. It isn't simply *hearing* your friend, but listening and understanding what is being said. As a mentor, it is important to display positive behavior and model effective communication styles because you may be one of the few adults in the youth participant's life who display these behaviors.

The second C, **Consistency**, is important because it reinforces trust developed from communication by following it up with action. Consistency is following up on the compromises and boundaries you've established through communication. At Compeer, when we ask volunteers to be consistent, we are asking them to show up at the scheduled time, avoid canceling plans, or even continue reaching out to their friend, even if their friend is less responsive.

When working with at-risk and vulnerable populations that struggle with their mental and potentially physical health, you may encounter someone who struggles to respond to texts and phone calls or may even seem to regress in their healing process. These are common behaviors and is why we have a crisis plan in place developed and known by the five-tier support system. Volunteers should communicate concerns to the Compeer coordinator if they suspect something is wrong, however if

you know your match is struggling with depression, a consistent text or email saying “Hey! Hope you’re doing well!” or a picture of something that reminded you of them can make a huge difference - even if they aren’t replying.

The third C, **Commitment**, is another form of action that follows communication. Commitment is following through with plans or attending events with your match, it is offering a listening ear when your friend needs support, and it is not giving up on your friend when they are showing signs of struggle. It is part of the volunteer requirements that volunteers commit to 4 hours a month for a year of contact with your match.

Setting Limits/Negotiating Boundaries

- Testing limits is a natural part of forming a relationship. Your friend may initially test limits and see how consistent you are.
- Do not feel compelled to fulfill unreasonable requests. It is okay to say NO.
- The goal of setting limits is to create the most effective relationship possible. Setting limits with your friend is healthy.
- It is important to be aware of your feelings and expectations regarding a situation and how much you are willing to compromise.

Steps to Effective Limit Setting

1. Know and state your own limits.
2. Explain the reason for each limit.
3. Acknowledge that your own limit may conflict with your friend's request.
4. Propose a mutually satisfying compromise.
5. Ask for feedback regarding the compromise.

If your friend makes unreasonable requests, respond calmly and firmly, showing that you recognize their needs. If you have unresolved problems with your friendship, call the Compeer coordinator or your friend's referring agency to talk it over.

Examples of when setting limits is necessary:

- Your friend calls you several times in a day.
- Your friend asks to borrow money.
- Your friend asks to bring their children (or siblings in the case of a youth participant) along on an outing.
- Your friend brings you an expensive gift.

Common Boundary Myths

One of the definitions of a myth is a fiction that looks like a truth, and many myths have grown up around boundaries.

Myth #1: If I set boundaries, I am being selfish.

- No, appropriate boundaries actually increase our ability to care for others.

Myth #2: If I begin setting boundaries, I will be hurt by others.

Many people genuinely believe in the necessity of boundaries but are terrified of their consequences. It is possible that others will become angry at our boundaries and attack or withdraw from us. However, those people in our lives who can respect boundaries will appreciate our commitment to self care and value our unique character.

- Whose boundaries do you have trouble respecting?
- Who has a difficult time respecting your boundaries when you have tried to establish and live by them?
- What does their difficulty suggest about that relationship?
- Setting boundaries is a way to tell the truth about who you are. When has setting boundaries led to increased intimacy in a relationship?
- Identify a relationship that you currently need to establish boundaries with.
- What do you feel are the risks of setting vs. not setting boundaries in this relationship?

Myth #3: If I set boundaries, I will hurt others.

If you fear that setting boundaries will injure someone you care about, the problem may be that you are seeing boundaries as an offensive weapon. Boundaries are a defensive tool. Appropriate boundaries do not control, attack, or hurt anyone.

- When have you seen others use boundaries as an offensive weapon?
- When have you used boundaries as an offensive weapon?
- How have you responded when someone has maintained his or her boundaries despite your legitimate needs?

Myth #4: Boundaries mean that I am angry.

Healthy boundaries do not cause anger in us. Instead, anger - which we may finally notice when we attempt to establish boundaries – is a signal, like all other emotions. Anger signals danger. Anger is a sign that we need to move forward to confront the threat. Anger can tell us that our boundaries have been violated. It can tell us we are in danger of being injured or controlled. Anger also provides us with a sense of power to solve a problem. It energizes us to protect ourselves.

- How did the family you grew up with deal with anger? What models did you have to deal with anger?
- Do you let yourself experience anger? Why or why not? How do you deal with it?
- Explain how anger can be an ally.
- When has anger energized you to confront someone or set a limit? Be specific about what you were protecting or the problem you were solving.

Anger does not understand time. Anger does not dissipate automatically. It has to be worked through appropriately. Otherwise, anger lives inside the heart. “Old anger” can be difficult to live with.

- Are you aware of old anger? What are you doing to get rid of it?

Individuals with mature boundaries are the least angry people in the world. Because they prevent boundary violation in the first place, they are more in control of their lives and values, and do not need anger to protect themselves.

Myth #5: When others set boundaries, it injures me

Since being on the receiving end of boundaries may have been hurtful, we may vow never to hurt someone else by maintaining our boundaries. Let us consider why accepting other’s boundaries is such a problem.

- Having inappropriate boundaries set on us can injure us, especially in childhood. What inappropriate boundaries, if any, have injured you?
- Sometimes we project our emotional wounds onto others. In what relationships may you be reading your pain into other people?
- An inability to accept others’ boundaries can indicate a problem in taking responsibility. Are you failing to take responsibility for aspects of your own life?

Myth #6: Boundaries cause feelings of guilt.

One of the major obstacles to setting boundaries is our feeling of obligation. What do we owe our parents, friends, and anyone else who has been loving toward us? What is appropriate and what is not?

Many people solve this dilemma by avoiding setting boundaries with those whom they feel an obligation to. Sometimes moving on from a job or relationship would be a mature move, but feelings of obligation keep us from doing so.

- What feelings of obligation have prevented you from setting boundaries?
- Are you currently stuck in a situation because of your failure to set boundaries?

Myth #7: Boundaries are permanent, and I am afraid of burning my bridges.

It is important to understand that your “no” is always subject to you. You own your boundaries, they do not own you. If you set limits with someone and he or she responds maturely and lovingly, you can renegotiate the boundary. In addition, you can change the boundary when you are in a safer place.

- What boundary or boundaries have you failed to set out of fear that it would be permanent?
- Have you ever been aware of someone changing boundaries with you?
- What boundaries are you more willing to set now that you know they need not be permanent?

*Adapted from *Boundaries*, Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend (1992)

EXERCISES

Consider how you would negotiate boundaries in the following scenarios.

Scenario 1: You have been matched with your friend for several months. Normally he/she calls you once a week. Lately he/she has been calling you every day, both at work and at home.

Possible Response: “I appreciate your friendship and the contact we have. However, I cannot speak with you everyday on the phone because I don’t have the time. How about we agree to have phone contact twice between visits? Also, please call me at home. I feel more comfortable talking on the phone when I’m not at work. Does this sound alright to you?”

Scenario 2: For the first three months of your match, you and your friend went on movie and dinner outings. Lately your friend has been asking that you take him/her on trips to run errands and visit his/her mother in the hospital. Your friend doesn’t have a car and really depends on you for transportation. Your friend’s therapist warned you that your friend could become overly dependent if allowed.

Possible Response: “When we first became friends we did lots of fun things together like going to the movies and eating out. I have noticed that lately most of our time together is spent visiting your mom in the hospital or running errands. I miss our fun times together, but I understand that you don’t have a car to get around and you depend on me for your transportation needs. Maybe I could help you learn to access other means of transportation so that our time together could be spent doing the fun things we used to do together. How do you feel about this?”

Scenario 3: One of Compeer’s expectations is that both the volunteer and the client plan and mutually agree upon the activities they want to participate in. Both the volunteer and the client are expected to pay their portion of the expenses involved. That is why it is so important that both volunteer and client participate in activities that are affordable to each of them. Recently, every time you and your friend get together, they suggest doing something that costs money, however, they do not contribute to the cost leaving you paying for the whole activity.

Possible Response: “ Spending time with you is important to me, regardless of what we choose to do together. I think we should make a list of low cost and no

cost activities to do together and save activities that cost for special occasions when we can both afford it. How does that sound to you?"

Scenario 4: You get a call from the police at 2:00 AM. They tell you that they found your friend roaming the streets. He/she refuses to go home, but tells you that he/she would be willing to stay at your place.

Possible Response: "I appreciate the fact that you think well enough of me as a friend to turn to me when you need help. However, I cannot offer you a place to stay. I don't have the time nor the space. I care about you, but its ultimately your decision whether you go home, to a shelter, to the hospital, or stay on the streets. Please let me know that you are safe once you make your decision."

Scenario 5: You receive a call from your youth mentee. They are upset because they got into a big fight with their parent or guardian, who has grounded them. They ask you to talk to their parent to try and change their mind.

Possible Response: "I appreciate you calling me to talk to me about how you're feeling but I can't intervene between you and your parent/guardian. I'm here for you if you'd like someone to vent to, though!"

Navigating Challenging Behavior

Keep in mind that your friend may need help with social skills from time to time. This may be due, in part, to their mental health disorder. However, it is important to remember that many individuals with mental health disorders do not experience any challenging or inappropriate behavior. The Compeer Coordinator will help orient you to your specific friend's needs and challenges.

- If challenging behaviors occur in public, do not panic...
 1. Separate yourself psychologically from your friend. Realize that if your friend always behaved themselves in appropriate ways they would not be human.
 2. Recognize that you may feel uncomfortable and that this is a natural reaction. Respond calmly and firmly.
 3. Do not make moralistic or punitive judgments. It is not fair to impose beliefs and values on your friend.
 4. Practice the steps of good limit setting as previously discussed.

- Respond directly and firmly to your friend. There are three essential steps to good limit setting:
 1. Reflect or acknowledge the feeling or wish behind your friend's behavior in a supportive manner.
 2. Clearly state the limits as you see them.
 3. Offer some alternatives when possible.

- Recognize that you are a role model for your friend.
 1. Your friend can pick up new skills from your example.
 2. It is important to monitor your own behavior, especially when you are with your friend.

- When working with at-risk or vulnerable youth, **taking away privileges does not work**. There are many negatives that may already exist your youth mentee's life, so it is important that every interaction with your mentee be based in understanding and positive intentions.

EXERCISES

Consider how you might respond to challenging behaviors in the following scenarios.

Scenario 1: Your friend is a graduate of the XYZ School of Music. You both enjoy going to classical concerts together. Lately your friend has started singing out loud during the concert. This is disturbing to you and people around you.

Possible response: “I love to hear you sing – you have a beautiful voice. However, when you sing at concerts, it makes it difficult for me and others to hear the performers. Why don’t we plan a time after the concert when I can listen to just you sing.”

Scenario 2: When on an outing to an amusement park, your friend requests that you buy them a particular souvenir and you refuse. For the remainder of your get-together your friend shows anger by being uncommunicative and uncooperative, muttering nasty comments about you, and slamming things.

Possible response: “I can understand that you feel angry for not getting what you wanted. I feel that way, too, sometimes. Feeling angry is perfectly fine. However, being uncooperative, muttering nasty comments about me, and slamming things is not all right with me. If you choose to continue your behavior, then I will choose to shorten our visit together. What do you want to do?”

Scenario 3: You and your friend go out to dinner. During the course of the meal your friend becomes convinced that people at the next table are talking about him/her. Your friend starts covering his/her face with a napkin and making rather obvious sidelong glances at the table in question.

Possible response: I know that you believe that the people at the next table are talking about you, and I can understand that it would feel really uncomfortable. I haven’t seen anything that would indicate they are talking about you. However, if you would like, we could ask to switch tables, or we could end our dinner and do something else together.

Scenario 4: You and your co-mentor are leading a group of 8 youth mentees. One of the youth participants keep going up to the other participants and poking them, pulling their hair, or otherwise antagonizing them.

Possible response: Hey, I noticed that you were bothering some of the other friends in our group. Is there something going on during our group conversations that make you feel unheard? Is there anything on your mind or that you would like to share?

Scenario 5: You and your youth match are out to lunch and they have been on their phone the whole time. When you try to talk to them, they offer one word responses and seem really distant.

Possible response: Hey friend, are you feeling okay? I noticed you seem really distant. You don't have to share, but let me know if there's anything we can do that will help you feel better.

Communication

- In general, be yourself. Do not worry about acting in a special way. Being authentic will enable a true friendship to grow.
 1. However, it is not fair to put your friend in the position of being the recipient of your strong emotions. If you are too upset on a day that you are supposed to meet, it might be wise to cancel your meeting and reschedule so that you can get the support you need.
- Be aware of non-verbal as well as verbal communication.
 1. Be sensitive to your friend's non-verbal communication. You may want to respond to your friend in a tentative manner: "Are you feeling a little down today?" This lets your friend know that you are concerned and opens up the lines for communication.
 2. It is important not to push your friend to express their feelings. If they deny anything, it is wise not to probe. Continuing to question may only lead to frustration and anger for both of you.
 3. Monitor your own feelings. If you experience discomfort with your friend, try to ascertain the reason. Notice if you are arriving later or putting off meetings with your friend. Talk to the Compeer Coordinator about such feelings.
- Do not assume. If something is not clear, ask your friend a question rather than making an assumption about what they are experiencing. Listen to your friend's response and paraphrase out loud what you heard them say to make sure you fully comprehend what they are trying to express.
- Suggest alternatives but do not make decisions for your friend.
 1. When planning your meetings, you may want to offer several choices of things to do, and let your friend decide.
 2. If your friend is upset about a problem, tell them you are willing to listen, but try not to give advice or take responsibility for solving the problem.
- When misunderstandings occur, deal with them immediately, openly, and honestly. The Compeer Coordinator is available to assist you and your friend when additional support is needed.

Communication (continued)

Do:

- Practice active listening skills
- Talk about subjects of common interest
- Allow the conversation to largely focus on your friend
- Ask open-ended questions, those that cannot be answered by “yes” or “no”
- Talk about your friend’s family, friends, hobbies, interests, etc.
- It is okay to talk about who *you* are and how *your* week has been. Friendship is never one sided. However, avoid burdening your friend with your personal problems.
- Try to make conversations fun, either on the phone or in person. Share a joke or humorous story. Adding humor can reduce stress.
- Introduce a new topic or idea. This will help encourage your friend to explore new issues and expand their focus
- Be supportive. Express your concern and understanding.
- Try to limit the amount of conversation you may have around your friend’s mental health issues. You are not their mental health provider.
- If your friend discloses information that could be considered a danger to themselves or others, you **MUST** share this information with the Compeer Coordinator and referring agency. Explain to your friend in advance why you will have to breach confidentiality.

Do not:

- Make promises you cannot keep, e.g. “everything will be okay, I promise.”
- Try to solve your friend’s problems at length. It is important to listen. Encourage your friend to consider options, and the consequences of those options. This will allow your friend to feel in control of the situation and feel better about themselves.
- Talk about your personal problems at length. However, friendship is a two-way street, and occasionally sharing your problems can facilitate your friend developing care and support for you.
- Take the reactions of your friend personally. Your friend’s mood or medications will likely change and can affect conversations from week to week. It may also take a while for your friend to feel comfortable in the friendship.

Conversation Starters

The following questions and statements can be used to stimulate conversation between you and your friend if you are having trouble. Remember to keep questions open-ended so that your friend will not just give a “yes” or “no” response.

Where did you grow up?

Do you have any pets?

Do you have any siblings?

What did you do this past weekend? What are your plans for this weekend?

What do you like to do in your spare time?

What is your favorite holiday?

What is your favorite day of the week?

If you could meet anyone in history, who would it be?

What do you like to do to relax?

Do you play any instruments?

What was/is your favorite children’s book?

What is your first childhood memory?

What type of kid were you (e.g. rebellious, well-behaved, quiet, obnoxious...)?

What is one thing you miss about being a kid?

What did you want to grow up to be when you were younger?

What do you want to be when you grow up? (youth specific)

What is your favorite drink?

What is your favorite food?

What is your favorite restaurant?

Who is your favorite actor?

What is your favorite movie of all time?

What was the worst movie you've ever seen?

What is your favorite TV show?

What type of music do you like to listen to?

What was the last book you read?

Youth Considerations

Interacting with Parents and Guardians

As a mentor, you are one tier of a five-tier support system. The support system includes the Compeer Youth program coordinator, the youth participant, the volunteer mentor, the provider, and the participant's guardian. Compeer Youth is unique from the Adult & Senior program because of the inclusion of the parent or guardian. This is because we want to build a foundation of trust with both the parent/guardian and the youth participant.

Every part of the support system must be invested in the recovery process of the participant. However, higher levels of investment come with time. When working with parents and guardians, it is important for the volunteer mentors to be communicative, consistent, and committed to supporting their match.

With communication comes boundaries. It is important to establish boundaries early. You are not a babysitter or caretaker. Your role is to provide mentorship and social support to your Compeer match.

We will also communicate to the parents what your role is. We ask parents not to withhold visits as this relationship is a supplement to the youth's mental health recovery.

Do not judge the parents or family. Your only responsibility is to be a good mentor to your match through supportive friendship. Your friend may tell you about their parents. If you have reason to believe your match is experiencing abuse or neglect in their home, please let the Compeer coordinator know so that appropriate measures can be taken.

Avoid getting caught in the middle. While being a Compeer friend involves listening and being supportive, avoid being caught in the middle of conflict between your match and their family members. Avoid advice that may build resentment between your match and their family.

Your relationship is with your match, not their parents or siblings. Your responsibility is to offer supportive mentorship and friendship to your mentee. You are not a mentor or a friend to the other members of their household. If you find that you are being asked to offer support or attention to other members of the household, please defer to the Compeer coordinator/Compeer rules. You are not supposed to be a mentor or friend outside of your relationship with your match and if the parent or guardian can reach out to the coordinator for questions.

Maintain consistent, positive, and transparent contact with the parents. This will help build trust and keep dialogue open. It supports a relationship with the parents that is non-judgemental with shared concern over the best interest of your match.

The most important gift to your friend is your time and engagement. Please limit gift giving to traditional times such as birthdays or holidays. We advise keeping gifts small.

Youth Mental Health

Youth mental health looks different from that of adults. In fact, mental health symptoms may even vary across age groups (younger youth versus teenaged youth). Please remember that what a crisis looks like in an adult will be different than it is for youth. However, if you suspect something is wrong, it is okay to call the Compeer coordinator.

Trust will take time! Be patient with your match and show commitment and consistency by listening to them, asking them questions, and learning about what they're interested in. Your match may not be forthcoming at first, but just continue to show interest.

Discipline

When working with at-risk or vulnerable youth, **taking away privileges does not work**. There are many negatives that may already exist your youth mentee's life, so it is important that every interaction with your match be a positive one. Further, it is important not to condescend or disrespect your youth mentee. Their feelings and thoughts matter, even if the way they are expressing them seem mean, standoffish, or otherwise inappropriate.

Covid - 19 Delays

Many youth have been negatively impacted by the pandemic, causing social and emotional regulation skills to be delayed by about two years. Please keep this in mind when interacting as a group or one-to-one mentor.

Social System

Your youth match may be having difficulty at school and with their peers. While you are not a counselor, you are a mentor and offering a listening and non judgemental ear can be very helpful.

Your youth match may be in and out of their home placement. Some youth in our program may be in foster care or in community residences. We do not expect volunteers to be caretakers, but please just keep this in mind when interacting with your match(es).

The youth participant's parents may or may not be in your match's everyday life. Some may have incarcerated parents, parents in the military, or parents who are unavailable physically or emotionally. It is not your job to judge, only to offer a system of support. The best thing you can do for your match is listen, show kindness, and offer advice when asked for.

Senior Considerations

Significantly Reduced social network

Social networks often shrink as we age. Friends and family are also aging and dying. Seniors may no longer be able to drive which creates barriers to participating in communities they have been a part of in the past (religious communities, volunteer opportunities, etc.). The support of a friend is incredibly powerful to seniors experiencing isolation.

Mobility limitations

Dealing with mobility limitations is very common with seniors. They may experience difficulty walking, using their hands for fine motor tasks, or getting out of bed. As a volunteer, you can be creative with engaging seniors within their mobility limitations.

Major medical concerns

Many seniors are dealing with physical health concerns such as heart disease, diabetes, etc. Additionally, Covid-19 has placed most seniors in the high risk category leading to even greater isolation. It is important to take into account your friend's medical concerns including side effects of medications.

Dementia

Dementia is a broad term that is used to indicate that an individual has developed difficulty with reasoning, judgment, or memory. Dementia can impact emotions and personality and can look a lot like mental health symptoms. Symptoms of dementia can include: memory loss, difficulty speaking or writing coherently, inability to recognize familiar settings, carrying out multi-step tasks, inability to control emotions, personality changes, delusions, and hallucinations. Let Compeer staff know about any obvious shifts you observe in your friend.

End of life considerations

Seniors are aware of their limited time on earth. It is important to be open to listening to their concerns and even fears. It is also important to prepare yourself for the reality that your match may be moving towards the end of their life while you are matched.

Confidentiality

We hope that you will be happy with your Compeer match and that you will be willing to share this experience with others. However, it is extremely important to be sensitive to your friend's needs regarding confidentiality.

- Please feel free to share stories which illustrate the friendship you share with your friend vs. stories which give details of your friend's past.
- Include general statements of why your friend needs a volunteer rather than specific information regarding her/his mental health history.
- When referring to your Compeer relationship, avoid using your friend's last name. You might also consider changing your friend's first name if it is so unique that your friend may be identified.
- When introducing your friend in public, introduce him as "John" instead of "my Compeer friend, John."
- Common sense and good judgment should be used in all situations.



When Breaking Confidentiality is Essential

As friendships grow and we feel more comfortable with a person, we share more of ourselves. We expect that friends will not share with others that which we have told them in confidence.

However, there are times when a breach of confidentiality is acceptable for the well-being of your Compeer friend.

Examples of times you must immediately break confidentiality:

- Your friend is having thoughts of harming themselves or others.
- Your friend is being sexually molested, physically abused, or otherwise harmed or neglected by someone.

Examples of times you believe you should break confidentiality:

- Your friend's wellbeing is at stake. For example, your friend who is on medication becomes pregnant, but is not planning to alert their provider.
- Your friend has stopped taking their medication without talking with their provider.

Steps to Take

1. Let your friend know why it is important that their provider be aware of the situation.
2. Encourage your friend to share this information with their mental health provider.
3. If the above steps fail, let your friend know that you will have to take responsibility for sharing this information with the Compeer Coordinator and their provider. Let your friend know you are doing this because you care and because it is a strict guideline of the Compeer program.

Dealing with Crisis

Crisis Defined: a situation in which your friend feels incapable of coping. ***A crisis is whatever your friend considers a crisis. Even if it does not seem important or critical to you, please take your friend seriously and seek the appropriate level of support.***

A crisis is improbable, but may occur during your relationship. Be prepared by:

- a) Having access to important phone numbers
 1. Compeer coordinator
 2. Your friend's referring provider
 3. After hours crisis line associated with your friend's referring provider
 4. Your friend's personal emergency contact
- b) Having access to community crisis and emergency lines
 1. Partner's Behavioral Health Crisis Line: 1-800-235-4673
 2. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- c) Knowing your role in a crisis situation.

If a crisis occurs, you should assess the situation:

Four major types of potential crisis:

1. **Personal** (i.e.- You friend is not getting along with his/her family members, loss of a pet, romantic relationship comes to an end, loss of stable housing, etc.)
2. **Medical** (i.e.- Your friend has a serious rash that continues to worsen, sustains an injury, heart attack, etc.)
3. **Abuse and Neglect** (i.e.- Your friend is being touched by someone in a wrong way or is not being cared for appropriately)
4. **Mental Health** (i.e.- Your friend is experiencing frequent panic attacks, hallucinations, expressing thoughts of harming themselves or others)

First, determine if it is an **emergency**:

1. If you determine that it is a **medical** emergency:
 - a. Call 911 immediately.
 - b. Then contact the Compeer Coordinator.
2. If you determine that it is a **suicidal** emergency:
 - a. Immediately contact your friend's referring provider (use the after hours crisis line when needed). They will work to deescalate the situation on the phone. If

- they are not successful they will call Mobile Crisis to come to your friend in person.
- b. Contact the Compeer Coordinator.
3. If you determine it is an **abuse and neglect** emergency:
 - a. Contact your friend's referring provider. They will be able to alert the Department of Social Services.
 - b. Contact the Compeer Coordinator.
 4. If you are unsure if it is an emergency, but would like support with an **emerging situation** (potential emergency):
 - a. Do not hesitate to contact the Compeer Coordinator. They will help you assess the situation and decide if additional steps should be taken.

In all of the above scenarios, let your friend know that you reported the situation because you care. You cannot keep information about potentially dangerous behavior confidential.

Special considerations for a suicidal crisis

1. Treat **all** suicide threats seriously.
2. If your friend tells you that they have a specific plan to take their own life, this is a serious sign. Immediately contact their referring provider's crisis line and get your friend talking with someone who is trained in suicide de-escalation. Mobile Crisis will be dispatched by the provider if needed.
3. Even if your friend does not have a plan, be prepared to pay attention, ask questions, and offer support that may help them get the help they need. Tips are offered below.

Indirect Verbal Clues of Suicide

"I'm tired of life, I just can't go on."

"My family would be better off without me."

"Who cares if I'm dead anyway."

"I just want out."

"I won't be around much longer."

"Pretty soon you won't have to worry about me."

Do not be afraid to ask someone about suicide.

Myth: Confronting a person about suicide will only make them more likely to consider suicide.

Fact: Asking someone directly about suicidal intent lowers anxiety, opens up communication, and lowers the risk of an impulsive act.

Indirect Approach

“Do you wish you could go to sleep and never wake up?”

“Have you been unhappy lately? Have you been so unhappy that you have thought about ending your life?”

Direct Approach

“When people are as upset as you seem to be, they sometimes wish they could die.

Have you been feeling that way?”

Have you been thinking about hurting yourself?”

“Are you thinking about suicide?”

If you suspect your friend is having suicidal thoughts, let the Compeer Coordinator and your friend’s provider know immediately. If they have a plan for hurting themselves they are at imminent risk of danger and a crisis line should be contacted immediately.

Choosing Activities

The emphasis of your Compeer relationship should be on building a trusting friendship, not on the number and types of activities. **The most important thing you have to give your friend is your time.**

Keep in mind the following guidelines when choosing things to do:

- Offer your friend the opportunity to help you select an activity. You might select two or three ahead of time and let your friend choose the one they would most enjoy doing. Your friend's participation in this process will encourage follow through with the activity. It may also provide a lesson in decision making for your friend.
- Keep activities in mind that you both can afford. At no time is the Compeer relationship expected to be a financial hardship on anyone. Try free activities, occasionally splurging on a special activity.
- **Under no circumstances should any activity involve sex, drugs, alcohol, weapons, gambling, or anything that is physically dangerous.** If you are in doubt about an activity, call and check with the Compeer Coordinator.
- During the early stages of your relationship, it is best not to include others in your activities. Later, when the friendship is established, it is okay to occasionally include another person in activities with your friend. However, your relationship with your friend receives priority. It is wise to protect your friendship and nurture it with time spent together. Your friend may feel neglected if someone else is always included.

Some activities Compeer volunteers and their friends have enjoyed include:

Movies
Picnics
Bowling
Cards
Tennis
Golf

Walks
Festivals
Zoos
Singing
Fairs
Quilting

Board Games
Craft Shows
Gardening
Shopping
Museums
Parades

In addition, Compeer hosts social events for volunteers and their friends to attend together.

Creative Tips for Activity Planning

1. With your friend's help, brainstorm about the following and make a list for each:
 - Your interests and hobbies
 - Your friend's interests and hobbies
 - Things you have never done, but might like to try
 - Things your friend has never done, but might like to try

2. Use the following list to help generate ideas that match with those above:
 - Go to a movie
 - Do a volunteer project together
 - Use the library services
 - Visit a botanical garden
 - Join a planting day at a local community garden
 - Run errands together
 - Play sports
 - Have a garage sale together
 - Do a craft together
 - Cook or bake something
 - Ride bikes
 - Put together a puzzle
 - Walk/shop in a mall
 - Play games (cards, board games, etc)
 - Visit an antique shop/flea market
 - Go to a museum or art gallery
 - See a play
 - Go thrift shopping
 - Go to a bookstore with a coffee shop
 - Go to a community festival/craft show
 - Take a walk in a park
 - Take a day trip/car ride
 - Check the web for other fun, yet inexpensive, activities you can both enjoy

3. See if Compeer has any coupons on hand.

Low-Cost Activities in Cleveland County

Broad River Greenway (126 Broad River Dr, Shelby, NC 28152); FREE (must have decal for parking, free to Cleveland County residents), 1500 acres of nature to enjoy alongside the Broad River.

Foothills Farmer's Market (126 W Marion Street): FREE, browse a wide variety of fresh vegetables, prepared foods, and crafts, as well as music and activities. Open Wednesday and Saturday 8am – noon.

First Broad River Trail (940 West Grover St Shelby, NC 28151). FREE, 2.2 mile trail which runs under a historic wooden railroad trestle and over the First Broad River via a 120-foot-long suspension bridge.

Second Saturdays in Uptown Shelby (Uptown Shelby court square and adjacent blocks). FREE, browse shops, join in a drum circle, or do yoga on the square.

Holly Oak Park (809 Holly Oak Rd, Shelby, NC 28152). FREE, enjoy the pond, walking trails, and community garden.

Cleveland County Arts Council (111 S Washington St). FREE, view ongoing exhibits or join an opening reception. Open Mon – Fri 9 am – 5:30 pm, Sat 10 am – 2 pm.

Cleveland County Memorial Library (104 Howie Drive Shelby, NC 28150). FREE, calendar of events frequently includes free movie nights and lectures. Open Mon – Thurs 10 am – 8pm, Fri & Sat 10 am – 2 pm.

Shelby City Park (901 West Sumter Street Shelby, NC 28150). FREE, ride the carousel, take a class, or have a picnic.

Mauney Memorial Library (100 South Piedmont Ave Kings Mtn, NC 28086). FREE, register for an array of free classes (yoga, writing, crafts, stargazing, etc) or check out books. Open Mon & Tues 9 am – 8pm, Wed 9 am – 6pm, Fri 9am – 5pm, Sat 9 am – 1pm.

Earl Scruggs Center (103 S Lafayette St Shelby NC 28150): \$12 general admission & FREE to Cleveland County residents on Wednesdays. Learn about the history of bluegrass in our region. Open Tues 10 am – 4pm, Wed 10 am – 6 pm, Thurs-Saturday 10 am – 4pm.

Kings Mountain Gateway Trail (807 S Battleground Ave, Kings Mountain, NC 28086): FREE, walk an array of easy to moderate trails. Open daily. Trail head closes at dark.

Southern Arts Society (301 N Piedmont Ave, Kings Mountain, NC 28086): FREE, view ongoing art exhibits and browse their gift shop. Open Tues, Wed, Thurs, Sat 10 am – 2pm.

Questions to Ask the Referring Provider

Before meeting the person you have selected to be matched with, you must speak with their provider who referred them to the Compeer program. This provides you with an opportunity to gather additional information about your friend and allows the referring provider to determine if this will be an appropriate match for their client.

1. How much does their client know about Compeer?
2. What kind of symptomatic behaviors does their client show?
3. What are they generally like?
4. What is their current living situation?
5. What are their relationships like with family members?
6. Do they have a support network?
7. Do they have transportation or access to public transportation?
8. Do they work?
9. What limitations are there on their client's activities?
10. Are there any side effects from the medications their client is currently taking?
11. Are there any physical or dietary limitations? Medical conditions?
12. What is the best way to contact the provider if questions/concerns arise in the future?
13. Who should be called if there is an emergency?

Try to establish a good rapport with their referring provider. Strong lines of communication will be very supportive to your friendship with your Compeer friend. You may want to arrange for further meetings or regular telephone contact with the referring provider as the relationship with your friend progresses.

Ask the referring provider to inform you of changes in your friend's status (new living situations, change of medication, change of mental health providers, etc.) Let the Compeer Coordinator know about any changes.



Terminating the Relationship

Compeer friendships do not have to end after one year. The majority of matches do go beyond the initial one-year commitment. However, should you decide to end the relationship, it is crucial to end in a healthy and intentional way. Please notify the Compeer Coordinator once you make this decision. The Coordinator can assist you in transitioning out of the relationship in a way that is least disturbing to your friend.

Reasons for termination

- You, your friend, or their referring provider may be unhappy with the match.
- Life circumstances may dramatically change, i.e. marriage, job, baby, etc.
- Your friend's mental health might improve or decline significantly.
- You might feel that you have successfully fulfilled your commitment.
- Your friend no longer feels they need to be matched.

Steps to follow before deciding to terminate based on incompatibility

- Talk to the Compeer Coordinator. Sometimes what appears to be incompatibility can be mediated with early intervention.
- Talk with your friend about any concerns you have.
- Relationships do not just happen, they require energy and effort. Try to give your relationship time to develop. If after a few months you are still unhappy, you should consider termination.
- When you know that you are going to terminate, discuss this with the Compeer Coordinator before telling your friend. Together you can decide the best way to handle the situation.
- We value our Compeer volunteers and friends. A bad relationship does not do anyone any good. We will make all attempts to rematch your friend with someone who might be more suitable. We would also like to retain you as a volunteer, and hope that you would consider trying another match.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is my role as a volunteer?

Your role is to be a friend. Do not try to be a social worker, parent, taxi service, probation officer, or rehabilitator. It is more than enough to be a friend, role model, and advocate.

How can I be most effective as a volunteer?

Be consistent and dependable. Your friend must learn to trust you. Try not to break dates or make promises you cannot keep. Make every effort to be on time for scheduled meetings, or call well in advance if unable to make an appointment.

Keep in mind that your behavior is a model for your friend to follow. Exercise common courtesy with your friend, especially if they use inappropriate behaviors. Remember, you preserve your friend's dignity through your politeness.

Is it wise to set goals for my Compeer relationship?

Yes, it is. We suggest you discuss reasonable, achievable goals with your friend's referring provider, your friend, and the Compeer Coordinator at the start of the relationship. Try to make the achievement of these goals fun rather than work. It is also a good idea to reevaluate these goals over the course of the match by discussing them periodically.

Should I make plans or expect my friend to do so?

Offer your friend the opportunity to help you select activities. You might select two or three activities ahead of time and then let your friend select the one they would most enjoy doing. Your friend will be more invested in the success of activities if they are involved in choosing them. This choice is an excellent exercise in decision-making.

If your friend finds it hard to decide, you might choose the activity for the first few times while still discussing options. Eventually, as trust develops, your friend will likely take the risk of indicating what they want to do.

Whose responsibility is it to arrange meeting times and to maintain telephone contact?

It is your responsibility to initiate meetings and telephone calls. Some individuals are inexperienced with initiating contact with friends and will learn from your example. However, your friend may never be comfortable enough to call you. Be patient and realize this part of your responsibility.

How do I make plans with my friend?

At your first meeting, it is a good idea to discuss activities that you both enjoy or things you might like to try. Discuss details about how much time you are willing to spend, any restrictions on you or your friend's time, what both of you can afford to do, transportation, etc. It is much easier if you clarify these areas early in your relationship to avoid problems and miscommunications later on.

Keep in mind that Compeer asks for a commitment of at least four hours per month (one hour/week) for one year. We recommend you make every effort to see your friend each week, especially in the first few months, so that your friend can build trust in you and so that you both can build a friendship. On the other hand, we recommend that you avoid the temptation to overdo the time with your friend.

Keeping to a realistic amount of time allows you to establish a bond of friendship as well as to have fun. Your friend's life may have been filled with disappointment, so if you have to cut back in the amount of visiting time, your friend may feel rejected.

How might I handle the cost of activities?

At no time is the Compeer relationship expected to be a financial hardship on anyone. We suggest that you discuss with your friend the types of activities that you both can or cannot afford. If money is a hardship for either person, we suggest you try free activities with an occasional splurge. See the attached list of local activities. Sometimes Compeer will be able to provide free tickets and/or coupons for movies, sporting events, concerts, and plays. Compeer also sponsors activities for volunteers and their friends to do together.

Is it acceptable to give my friend gifts?

Loans, monetary gifts, etc. to or from friends is forbidden. If your friend or their parent/guardian are having financial troubles, call the Compeer staff and/or their referring provider.

Small gifts exchanged at appropriate times (such as holidays) between you and your friend are great, but large gifts in either direction are not a good idea.

How do I handle difficult requests by my friend or her/his family?

Feel free to say no to any and all unreasonable requests. Please contact the Compeer Coordinator and/or your friend's referring provider if problems that are difficult to resolve arise.

Do I need anyone's approval for outings with my friend?

If your friend lives on their own, no prior approval is needed for outings within the Compeer guidelines. If your friend lives in a supervised setting, such as a group home, it is recommended that you introduce yourself to the staff and familiarize yourself with the policies of the residence. Because Compeer is part of your friend's treatment plan, your visits should never be used as a reward or withheld as punishment.

Are there any activities we should avoid?

We suggest you use good common sense before selecting activities. Some activities might put your friend at unnecessary risk. Take every precaution for your friend's safety. If in doubt, call the Compeer Coordinator to determine if an activity is okay. **Avoid any activities that involve sex, drugs, alcohol, or weapons of any kind.**

May I discuss my Compeer friend with my other friends and family?

We hope you will want to share with your friends the satisfaction you experience in your Compeer relationship. However, keep in mind it is a violation of confidentiality to discuss your friend's personal problems or family situation with others who have no need to know this information. Share the experience, but please don't mention names or details.

Is it okay to include my other friends or my family in visits with my Compeer friend?

Give it time. We suggest that you do not include any outside persons in your activities with your friend during the initial stages of your relationship. It takes time for the two of you to build a relationship and your personal dynamic. Later on, it is okay to include others with two precautions: do not introduce your friend as "my Compeer friend," and do not include others to the extent that your Compeer friend feels neglected or that it is not quality time together.

Is it okay for me to hug my friend?

Use your judgment regarding casual physical contact with your friend. For some, a hug or a warm pat is just what is needed. Sometimes, however, a simple touch may be upsetting, frightening, or confusing.

Dating or sexual contact with your friend or a member of their family is forbidden and cause for immediate termination.

What should I do if I have a concern about my friend?

Contact the Compeer Coordinator and/or your friend's referring provider about any matter that concerns you. Problems ignored tend to grow. Never assume your friend's mental health provider is aware of the problem. It is always best to check it out. Your perception of a situation may be the impetus that creates positive results for your friend.

If you have serious concerns about how a referring agency is treating your friend, try to bring these concerns to the Compeer Coordinator before you share them with your friend. We will help clarify the situation. There may be two sides to the situation. It is also mandatory to report any cases of abuse or neglect to Compeer.

What are my responsibilities as a Compeer Volunteer?

1. To meet with your friend regularly and consistently for a minimum of four hours per month for one year.
2. To send in monthly reports and an annual survey.
3. To keep in touch with your friend's referring provider as needed.
4. To contact Compeer staff immediately regarding problems or difficulty with the relationship.
5. To attend volunteer information programs and enrichment activities whenever possible.

Crisis Plan Contact Information

Compeer Coordinators: Stacey Costner: 980-429-4037; Lizz Grimsley - 704-286-6018

Mental Health Provider: _____

Mental Health Provider's 24/7 Crisis Line: _____

Compeer friend's emergency contact: _____