



## Vocational Services Day Habilitation Internship Program

Come join us at **Abilities First!** Gain real-world, hands-on experience with special needs adults in a fun friendly, supportive environment. Work with dedicated staff and wonderful individuals in a rewarding internship, where you can develop your professional skills and enhance your resume, while meeting your academic requirements.



The Abilities First, Inc. Vocational Services Department serves adults with special needs in vocational, recreational and community-based settings. We offer multi-faceted, person-centered services, including our Day Habilitation program, through which we are able to provide opportunities for individuals to pursue recreational interests, access their community, volunteer, socialize with their friends, and accomplish a wide range of personal outcomes.

The individuals we serve are primarily diagnosed with a developmental disability, such as Autism, Down's syndrome and cerebral palsy, as well other psychiatric disabilities, such as schizophrenia and mood disorders. We strive to help these individuals achieve whatever goals they're pursuing, encouraging a sense of pride in their accomplishments, and promoting integration with their local community.

Interns are typically pursuing degrees in Psychology and related Human Services fields, and we make an effort to cater the internship experience to best suit their specific interests and academic requirements.

Students typically intern with us anywhere from 4 - 20 hours a week, Monday through Friday, and are able to contribute in a variety of ways, including:

- Leading small groups in activities to help foster various therapeutic objectives, such as social skills training, communication, decision-making, frustration-tolerance, and confidence-building. Activities include arts & crafts, games, music, reading, trivia/current events, board/card games, cooking & baking in our kitchen, gardening in our vegetable garden (*we harvest our produce for use in our kitchen*), exercise and yoga groups, caring for our pets (*Bird and Fish*). Any additional skills/hobbies/ideas that interns have are also incorporated into the program - we welcome your unique skills!
- Working one-on-one with participants (under the supervision of staff) needing additional help and attention in activities such as internet searches, reading, math problems, and letter writing, as well as providing informal counseling/emotional support to individuals.
- Co-leading small community trips, including local walks, coffee trips, lunch outings, visits to the library, shopping, bowling, and seasonal events.
- Co-leading community volunteer programs at the ASPCA, Salvation Army, The Astor Home for Children, Mail rooms at the two local hospitals, the Family Partnership Lunchbox, Housing centers and churches.
- Attending Group Therapy sessions led by a licensed social worker (*Requires consent of participants.*)
- Assist in the running of our burgeoning Thrift Store, which is operated in part by our participants, and helps raise funds for our programs.
- Co-leading our small BOCES 'classroom' for academic skills development.
- Transcribing participant treatment plans into digital database for use in daily service provision.
- Assisting in file audits to ensure adherence to corporate compliance standards.



This is very much a 'hands-on' internship experience, providing students with direct exposure working with individuals with special needs. Interns receive close supervision and mentoring from a Masters level psychology graduate, as well as additional mentoring from experienced staff members. Many of our interns have experienced tremendous professional and personal growth through their experiences here. Please feel free to read a few of their testimonials:

*"Interning at Abilities First was the experience I was hoping for and then some. Working first hand with the participants provided me with the exposure I needed to help prepare me for my future in this field. The staff is extremely accommodating and allows you to build your own experience while providing you with tools and skills to work with the variety of populations they assist. Not only am I thankful got the program, but I am grateful for the help and memories made during my time here."*

Stephen Neer, Marist College class of 2015

*"The clients here provided me with a challenging work environment, and the professional staff both helped me navigate these challenges while at the same time allowing me the autonomy to figure things out on my own. Every time that I attended my placement the staff encouraged me to work with a new client and I'm so glad they did. It was incredibly rewarding to work with such a diverse population of people, I'm not sure where else I could have gotten a similar experience. I would recommend, and have recommended, interning with Abilities First. From the participants to the staff, everyone was welcoming and always happy to have me there. "*

Colin Estrellado, SUNY New Paltz, Spring 2012

*"Everyone at Abilities First welcomed me with open arms! While interning at the day hab I learned new things that shaped my knowledge in the psychology and human service field. I have been working at abilities first since interning and absolutely love it. I was trained, taught, guided and given experience that led me to the start of my career. I found the people at Abilities First to be like family and will always be thankful for the opportunity of working with them."*

Melinda Corso, Mount Saint Mary's class of 2014

Interested applicants to should contact Robin Ackers, Day Habilitation Manager at:

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Applicants should also complete the Abilities First [Volunteer/Intern Application](#). Please note, qualified candidates will be expected to participate in an interview and submit to pre-employment screenings conducted by the Human Resources Department.