



STRIDE
Learning Center

Volunteer Opportunities

STRIDE Volunteers:

Welcome to STRIDE Learning Center! We are excited to have you on board as a volunteer. STRIDE is an agency that has the privilege and the responsibility of serving Laramie County's infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Over the past 35 years STRIDE has served thousands of children, many of which made amazing progress as a result of the services offered by STRIDE's caring and committed professionals and volunteers.

As you familiarize yourself with STRIDE's programs and personnel, you will likely notice that the people at STRIDE share a common trait: an unwavering commitment to the children served by STRIDE Learning Center. The people make the program! We strive for excellence in our services to children, relationships with family members and partnerships in our community. Only by striving for excellence in these areas can we truly achieve our mission at STRIDE Learning Center:

Provide comprehensive, quality services for children with special needs and their families in a safe and compassionate environment so that they may achieve their fullest potential.

This Volunteer Orientation Manual is designed to acquaint you with STRIDE Learning Center's programs, personnel and building. We want you to know what to expect from us and what we expect from you when you volunteer. Should you have any questions concerning the contents of this manual or about items not addressed in this manual, please feel free to discuss them with me.

We hope you will enjoy your experience with us. Welcome to STRIDE!

Tricia Whynott
Executive Director

Table of Contents

Section	Page #
Letter from the Director	2
Mission and Philosophy	4
Confidentiality	4
STRIDE Learning Center Programs	5
Personnel	6
Program Schedule and Calendars	7
Center Building and Property	8
STRIDE Learning Center and Families	9
STRIDE Volunteer Experiences	10
Ways to Volunteer	10
Volunteers	10
STRIDE Volunteer Expectations	11
Professionalism	11
Dress Code	11
Technology	11
Health and Safety	11

Mission

Welcome to STRIDE Learning Center! The mission of STRIDE is to provide comprehensive, quality early intervention services for children with special needs and their families in a safe and compassionate environment so that they may strive to achieve their fullest potential.

Philosophy

The philosophy of the program is holistic; every child is viewed as a whole person. It is further believed that children learn most and best when they are actively involved in the learning process. The program is designed to provide children with a wide range of activities and experiences with a balance of structured and unstructured, quiet and active, individual and group, and child initiated and staff initiated. Because it is believed that children learn by doing, program staff members guide this process by:

- Providing a stimulating environment
 - Constructing developmentally appropriate goals and objectives
 - Modeling desired behaviors
 - Requesting parents to be involved and reinforce the learning process
- Collaborating with other community agencies to maximize child and family outcomes

Confidentiality

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality is very important. Please do not discuss children and incidents that you observe with anyone except a teacher or an administrator at STRIDE. Written records or documents are private and are to be viewed by only STRIDE personnel. Only STRIDE staff can discuss the children with parents/guardians. Please do not pass gossip. Concerns about abuse, neglect or other safety issues should be discussed with the teacher or an administrator. Photographs of classroom children are not permitted.

STRIDE Learning Center Programs

STRIDE Learning Center provides an array of programs to meet the needs of Laramie County's infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. All children in Laramie County from birth through age five are eligible for one or more of STRIDE's services. STRIDE Learning Center does not discriminate against any student or family based on race, creed, color, religion, national origin, military status, disability or any other characteristic protected by law.

Child Find Program:

Free screenings are provided to all children in Laramie County from birth through five years of age. Concerns identified during a screening are further evaluated by trained professionals with the help of a child's parents and other caregivers including child care providers, physician or other family members.

Infant and Toddler Program:

The Infant and Toddler Program serves children, with special needs, from birth through two years of age. Children receive full child developmental evaluations which include hearing and vision screenings. Some children may not have developmental delays but may **have a diagnosed condition that will likely result in delays in the future**. These children are also eligible for services from the Infant and Toddler team.

Infant and Toddler services are provided in the child's home, child care center, home child/day care, or other natural environment. All early intervention services are provided without cost to the family.

Preschool Special Education Program, tuition based program, and TANF program:

STRIDE's preschool special education program addresses the needs of children three through five years of age who have developmental delays. Based on federal and state law, STRIDE must provide **free and appropriate public education** to preschoolers with special needs, which may be in one or more of the following areas:

- Speech language and/or articulation;
- Cognitive development;
- Fine motor skills;
- Gross motor skills;
- Social/emotional development; and
- Adaptive skills

Although STRIDE is known for serving children with special needs, the preschool program serves children who do not have special needs. Preschool services are focused on individual children's interests to foster lifelong motivation for exploration and learning. STRIDE

also provides preschool services free of charge to a limited number of preschool students who qualify as low income students.

Personnel

STRIDE's personnel are committed to every child's development. Staff members continually look for opportunities to further their education and/or skills in working with young children and their families. All STRIDE personnel carry appropriate certifications and, when appropriate, licensing in their respective field of practice.

Early Childhood Special Education Teachers

Early Childhood Special Education teachers are trained to evaluate and educate preschool children with developmental delays in cognitive, personal-social and adaptive domains.

Speech and Language Therapists

Speech and Language Therapists serve children with communication delays, swallowing disorders, or with difficulties in using the muscles in or around the mouth.

Occupational Therapists

Occupational Therapists assist children in everyday activities, such as self-help skills (feeding, dressing), grasping and manipulating toys and utensils and taking in sensory information to make appropriate use of it, among other skills.

Physical Therapists

Physical Therapists provide services aimed at preventing or improving movement difficulties including problems with rolling, sitting, crawling, walking, running, jumping, lifting and throwing among other movements.

Teachers

Each STRIDE classroom has two teachers. STRIDE Learning Center uses this teaching model as a means of providing greater communication with and case management for families of the children served in our classrooms. The teaching model also allows teachers to commit sufficient time to the administrative tasks associated with the provision of early intervention and special education services.

Family Service Coordinators

Family Services Coordinators support families in reaching their desired goals. In some cases families may need housing, employment or further education to ensure the family's stability. A Family Service Coordinator is responsible for helping a family navigate the appropriate systems of support. STRIDE Learning Center seeks to empower parents as providers, advocates and educators for their children.

Transportation Assistants

STRIDE's transportation assistants ride the bus along with STRIDE children as they are transported to and from the facility. These assistants help children on to and off of the bus while also making sure the bus ride is safe and enjoyable for children.

Health Services Coordinator

All STRIDE students have access to a registered nurse in the event of illness or injury. In addition to treating hurt or ill children, the Health Services Coordinator tracks immunizations and medical information on children served in the preschool program. The Health Services Coordinator facilitates the intake process for children with special needs who are receiving special education or related services.

Mental Health Coordinator

STRIDE has a licensed mental health therapist on staff to help identify and treat children with behavioral problems. The Mental Health Coordinator is available to provide consultation, assessment, training and direct intervention services. Additionally, the Mental Health Coordinator is part of a larger group of community mental health providers to whom STRIDE children and families may be referred for assessment and/or treatment.

STRIDE Learning Center is an equal opportunity employer and thus does not discriminate against any person in the hiring, training, promotion, retention, discipline or any other aspect of personnel administration because of age, race, creed, color, religion, national origin, gender, military status, disability or any other characteristic protected by law.

Program Schedule and Calendars

STRIDE Learning Center operates from 8 AM to 4 PM and is consistent with the school district's calendar for days in and out of session.

STRIDE Learning Center's Infant and Toddler Program provides services year around.

Center Building and Property

Parking at Main Site:

Volunteers are expected to know where to park when working on site at the building on Parsley Boulevard. Additionally, please keep in mind the following priorities for parking around the Parsley Boulevard building:

- Spaces on the north side of the building are for use by parents with the exception of the four "Reserved" spots near the door which are for use by the Foster Grandparents who volunteer at STRIDE Learning Center.
- The East side of the building is for school bus drop-off and pick-up only on Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, staff members and volunteers may park on the east side of the building

Entering and Exiting the Main Site Building:

The main entryway near the blue crayons and the breezeway entry are the only doors that are unlocked during business hours. These entries are to be monitored at all times during business hours to ensure the safety of STRIDE's children and staff members. Please pay close attention when entering and exiting the building to support STRIDE's safety precautions. Volunteers are only to be in the building during business hours or when accompanied by a STRIDE staff member.

STRIDE's Yellowstone Building:

STRIDE's Infant/Toddler Team works out of a building at 5801 Yellowstone, across from Albertson's. One toddler and two preschool classrooms are also located at this site.

Burn's Classroom:

STRIDE Learning Center has one preschool classroom in Burns at 321 S. Main, Ste D. This classroom services children from 30 months to six years of age.

Visitors:

All visitors must enter through the main entrance whether at the main site or the Yellowstone site, unless accompanied by STRIDE personnel into and throughout the building. Visitors must stop by the receptionist's desk where they will receive a "*STRIDE Loves Me*" sticker to wear while volunteering or visiting.

Kitchen:

A kitchen is available to staff members for personal use as well as for teaching activities. When you use dishes or utensils you are asked to rinse and load them in the dishwasher or wash them as appropriate. Also, please keep in mind that any food left in the refrigerator should be removed at the end of the week or risk being thrown in the garbage.

STRIDE Learning Center and Families

STRIDE engages family members in various activities to support child and family development. Parents have many opportunities for training, involvement in the classroom and use of equipment and/or materials from STRIDE.

Family Involvement and Parent Training

STRIDE Learning Center understands that early intervention programs which actively involve families are more effective than programs focusing exclusively on children

Parents are welcome at all times and are invited to participate in program activities.

STRIDE Learning Center endorses all efforts to assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children. STRIDE recognizes that some families have specific concerns, such as effective parenting or sign language, and assists families in attending classes and/or conferences specific to their needs whenever possible.

Parent input is valued and parents are included as members on the Best Beginnings for Families in Laramie County coalition and the STRIDE Learning Center Board of Directors. STRIDE values parent input as part of the hiring process.

STRIDE Learning Center Volunteer Experiences

Volunteer Opportunities at STRIDE:

Classroom: Assist with classroom activities that have been developed for the children by the teaching staff. Help prepare materials. Assist with *special occasion* activities or celebrations.

Office Help: Assist office staff with copying, mailings, and other assignments as needed. Participate in the hiring process as part of the interview team.

Paul Smith Family Resource Room: Assist in upkeep of the room and materials.

Facility/Grounds: Help maintain the facility and grounds through various activities, such as weeding, sweeping the parking lot, landscaping, playground maintenance, painting, etc.

Fundraising: Help with our major fundraising events: STRIDE Ride, and the STRIDE's Culinary Cook-Off.

Volunteer Procedures: THE FOLLOWING APPLIES TO ALL VOLUNTEERS GIVING MORE THAN 4 HOURS A MONTH:

- Prior to assignment, ALL volunteers must apply to be authorized by completing the Volunteer Application form
- Volunteers can be excluded from working with children for health concerns or physical limitations
- Volunteers must pass a background check.
- Volunteers are assigned a "Volunteer Supervisor"

Requirements:

- Complete Volunteer Application, including Confidentiality Statement
- Complete Volunteer Orientation
- Check in with assigned "Volunteer Supervisor"
- Complete training for specific volunteer activity
- Participate in CPR/First Aid training (Optional)
- Complete a Background Check
- Regular volunteer files kept at Center

STRIDE Learning Center Volunteer Expectations

Professionalism:

STRIDE ensures high quality services by providing those services with committed professionals. STRIDE recognizes the value of both experience and education as each relates to quality services. STRIDE's services are only fully successful when parents are able to trust and have confidence in the professionals serving their children. As such, STRIDE personnel must ensure the availability, consistency and responsiveness necessary to help parents develop confidence and trust in STRIDE's program and services.

Dress Code:

Please understand that you are expected to dress and groom yourself in accordance with accepted social and professional standards, particularly if your job involves dealing with the community or visitors in person. Each supervisor or the Executive Director is responsible for establishing a reasonable dress code appropriate to the job you perform and the occasion. However, sun dresses with bare backs, men's undershirts, and sweat suits, for men and women, are not appropriate. You are expected to be suitably attired and groomed during working hours or when representing STRIDE.

Technology:

Volunteers should not use STRIDE computers, internet, E-mail, copiers or printers unless required to perform their volunteer duties.

Health and Safety:

STRIDE Learning Center's first consideration is the physical and psychological health and safety of the children. Please do not pick up children or physically direct them without consent from the classroom team.

There are policies and procedures in place for Fire Safety and Building Lockdown Situations. Please follow your lead teacher or admin staff in regards to these policies.

Thank you for caring enough to volunteer!