



Our Voice, Our Rights, Our Future



BEST BUDDIES GUIDELINE



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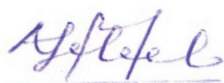
FOREWORD

Friendship is important to the development of all people and is a fun way to become more involved in your community. Inclusion Ghana's Best Buddies programme gives people with intellectual and developmental disabilities the chance to have experiences which most people take for granted – such as going for coffee, going out to a movie or simply enjoying the company of a good friend. The one-to-one friendship between people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities, offers social interactions while improving the quality of life and level of inclusion for a population that is often isolated and excluded. Through their participation in the Best buddies programme, persons with intellectual and developmental form meaningful connections with their peers, gain self-confidence and self-esteem, and share interests, experiences and activities that many other individuals enjoy.

If you are reading this manual, you are likely interested to participate or you are part of Inclusion Ghana's Best Buddies programme. Thank you for agreeing to make inclusion a priority. In turn, you will see your entire school/ community atmosphere become more empathetic and compassionate as you will set an example for all pupils/students/community to follow. Once again Thank you for volunteering for the programme!

This guideline is a resource to help you find the answers to most of your questions you have on the Best Buddies programme and also it will serve as guidance in starting a Programme in your community. Please reach out to us if you need ideas, suggestions, advice or if you would like to share 'cool' activities and ideas from your local chapter! Remember, you can ALWAYS call or email Inclusion Ghana (0302243291/0208151523 or bestbuddies@inclusion-ghana.org) if you would rather speak with someone directly. We welcome phone calls and emails from our members and potential participants of the Best Buddies Programme!

Thank you for stepping-up and for being a leader with our programme. Inclusion Ghana provides excellent letters of reference for our members / participants of the programme!



AUBERON JELEEL ODOOM

National Co-ordinator

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1. WHAT IS INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES?

Intellectual Disabilities:

An intellectual disability is a particular state of functioning that begins in childhood before age 18 and is characterized by significant limitations in both intelligence and adaptive skills as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. A complete and accurate understanding of this definition must involve the realization that an intellectual disability has many dimensions and is affected positively by individualized supports. A person with an intellectual disability will generally have an IQ below 75 and significant limitations in adaptive behavior that impact the person's daily life and ability to respond to a particular situation or environment (AAIDD, 2010).

Developmental Disabilities:

Developmental disabilities are categorized as life-long disabilities attributable to mental and/or physical impairments which manifest themselves before the age of 22 years and are likely to continue indefinitely. They result in substantial limitations in three or more of the following areas:

- Self-care
- Comprehension and language
- Ability to function independently without coordinated services
- Learning
- Economic self-sufficiency
- Skills (receptive and expressive language)
- Capacity for independent living
- Self-direction
- Mobility

Persons with developmental disabilities require individually planned and coordinated services and supports (e.g., housing, employment, education, civil and human rights protection, health care, etc.) from many providers in order to live in the community (ADD, 2010).

Is “Intellectual disability” the same as “Developmental disability?”

Developmental disability is an “umbrella term” in which intellectual disability is included; however, it also include physical disabilities which may have nothing to do with intellectual disabilities. The boundaries often blur since many individuals fall into both categories for different reasons. Some developmental disabilities are purely physical, such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or other disabling conditions. Still other developmental disabilities can result from chromosomal disorders, such as Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, and Fragile X syndrome. These instances could well include intellectual disabilities- but not always.

2. WHO IS INCLUSION GHANA?

Inclusion Ghana (IG) is a reputed national NGO and the peak network organisation working for the inclusion of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (PWIDDs) and their families in Ghana by advocating for their rights and needs. It was founded in 2009 and is a member of Inclusion Africa, Inclusion International and Down Syndrome International.

In achieving IG’s mission of inclusion, it is to establish a volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one buddy relationships and leadership development for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Ultimately Inclusion Ghana hopes to create the buddy relationship in all schools and communities across Ghana.

3. WHY JOIN INCLUSION GHANA'S BEST BUDDIES PROGRAMME?

By joining Inclusion Ghana’s Best Buddies programme, you will become part of a growing movement of people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities, dedicated to ensuring everyone has the opportunity to have a buddy. You will be invited to group activities planned by Inclusion Ghana and its local members.

4. WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE BEST BUDDIES PROGRAMME?

- To make new friends and breakdown societal stereotypes.
- To develop leadership skills.
- To create environments of inclusion at school and in the community.
- To increase the self-esteem of a child/adult with IDD.
- To increase the interest, attitude and attendance at school of children with IDD.
- To increase the ability of children/adults with IDD to make healthy decisions.
- To increase the capacity of children/adults with IDD for healthy relationships with peers and adults.

5. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A BUDDY?

A Buddy: is a student or individual with intellectual or developmental disability.

Peer Buddy: a member of a class/school/community paired in a one-to-one friendship with a person with an intellectual or developmental disability. Peer Buddies are responsible, caring individuals who are committed to making a difference in the life of a person with intellectual or developmental disability. They understand the role of a Peer Buddy and act as a friend, positive role model, nurturer of possibilities and advocate for their Buddy. They uphold good boundaries and do not act as a substitute parent, babysitter, financier, or disciplinarian. Peer Buddies provide guidance and opportunities for their Buddies to learn and grow.

Buddy Pair: a buddy and a peer buddy matched in a one-to-one friendship based on similar interests. Must be willing and able to form a socially appropriate and mutually enriching friendship.

As a Buddy, you are committing to create and maintain a buddy relationship. When joining the program, you are matched with a peer in school or outside school / in the community. One of the pairs must be a child/adult with IDD.

All buddy relationship pairs are expected to talk once a week and see each other twice a month. This can mean talking on the phone, sending texts, or catching up online. When you plan to see each other, plan to do something you both enjoy. This can mean hanging out, going to an event together, like going to the movies or out to dinner.

6. WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN PEER BUDDIES?

A Peer Buddy is someone a person with intellectual or developmental disability trust and with whom he/she can share a deep level of understanding and communication. A good peer buddy will:

- Show a genuine interest in what is going on in your life, what you have to say, and how you think and feel.
- Have a positive attitude. Accept you for who you are.
- Listen to you attentively without judging you, telling you how to think or feel, or trying to change the subject.
- Feel comfortable sharing things about themselves with you.

Other Characteristics of Peer Buddies include:

- Able to uphold commitment/be consistent.
- Flexible
- Open-minded
- Personal desire to mentor
- An ability to cope with challenging issues.
- An ability to set & uphold good boundaries
- A sense of humour
- Confident/mature
- A desire to MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

As buddy relationship works both ways, a buddy is also someone a peer buddy feels comfortable supporting and accepting, and someone with whom you share a bond of trust and loyalty.

7. THE BENEFITS OF DEVELOPING A BUDDY RELATIONSHIP

Our society tends to place so much emphasis on relationships. While developing and maintaining buddy relationships takes time and effort, healthy buddy relationships can:

Improve your mood: Spending time with happy and positive buddy relationship can elevate your mood and boost your outlook.

Help you to reach your goals: Whether you're trying to get fit, give up something, or otherwise improve your life, encouragement from a buddy can really boost your willpower and increase your chances of success.

Reduce your stress and depression: Having an active social life can bolster your immune system and help reduce isolation, a major contributing factor to depression.

Support you through tough times: Even if it's just having someone to share your problems with, buddies can help you cope with serious illness, the loss of a job or loved one, the breakup of a relationship, or any other challenges in life.

Support you as you age: As you age, illness, and the death of loved ones can often leave you isolated. Knowing there are people you can turn to for company and support can provide purpose as you age and serve as a buffer against depression, disability, hardship and loss.

Boost your self-worth: Buddy relationship is a two-way street, and the "give" side of the give-and-take contributes to your own sense of self-worth. Being there for your buddy makes you feel needed and adds purpose to your life.

But close buddy relationships don't just happen. Many of us struggle to meet people and develop quality connections. Whatever your age or circumstances, though, it's never too late to make new buddies, and greatly improve your social life, emotional health, and overall well-being.

8. HOW TO MAKE NEW BUDDIES: WHERE TO START

We tend to make buddies with people we cross paths with regularly: people we go to school with, work with, or live close to. The more we see someone, the more likely a buddy relationship is to develop. So, look at the places you frequent as you start your search for potential buddy.

Another big factor in buddy relationship is common interests. We tend to be drawn to people who are similar, with a shared hobby, cultural background, or similar ages. Think about activities you enjoy or the causes you care about. Where can you meet people who share the same interests?.

8.1 Matching Tips:

- Same sex matches are preferable.
- Individuals with similar interests should be matched together.
- Age is important. If possible, create age appropriate matches.
- Communication is key; when matching people who are non-verbal, make sure the Peer Buddy and Buddy are comfortable and understand how to communicate with each other.
- Try to match pairs who live close to each other. It is not the responsibility of the Peer Buddy to provide transportation for their Buddy or vice versa.
- Buddy Pairs must share in the responsibility for getting together.
- Commitment - Both the Peer Buddy and the Buddy must ensure they have time to commit to the friendship
- Quality not quantity - The Best Buddies program strives to create true friendships. Remember, don't force a match. If you decide that some people will not make good matches then invite them to be Associate Members / Supporters.

8.2 Meet and Greet Tips:

The Meet and Greet is the Programmes first event. This is where Buddy Pairs meet for the first time. Before the Meet and Greet is held, it may be helpful for some matches if Peer Buddies are provided with more information about their Buddy's disability.

- Peer Buddies can prepare a letter introducing themselves to a new Buddy and his/her parents. Another option is to do a physical meeting and introduce themselves. This would include a bit about themselves, their interests, what they are studying or whether they are working and their contact information. This will help Buddies and their parents feel more comfortable with the match.
- The Buddies and Peer Buddies may be nervous at first, so it is a good idea to plan some games and activities to help break the ice.
- Invite everyone to the Meet and Greet including the Peer Buddies, Associate Members/Supporters, Buddies and their parents/guardians, Headteacher, other teachers etc., to drop by and observe the Meet and Greet. Ensure all Buddy Pairs exchange contact information.
- If a Peer Buddy/Buddy is absent from the Meet & Greet, it is important that he/she calls the new Buddy/Peer Buddy to introduce themselves and to their parents or guardians, or set up a private Meet and Greet.

8.3 Weekly Contact Tips:

After the Meet & Greet, Peer Buddies and Buddies should start contacting each other at least once a week. It's Easy!

- Stop by your Best Buddies' home and check on him.
- Walk your Best Buddy to class or school.
- Eat lunch or supper together.
- Call your Best Buddy.
- Facebook/Tweet/Whatsapp or text your Best Buddy (if applicable).
- Wait for the bus/trotro together.

8.4 One-to-One Outing Tips:

It is important to ensure matches are meeting on a regular basis.

- Keep track of which Buddy Pairs have met and how often they continue to meet.
- Out of school outings are encouraged.

- An outing does not have to be complicated or expensive; it just has to be something that both people agree would be fun.
- An outing cannot include alcohol or illegal drugs.

Some suggested activities for the One-to-One Outings:

- Attend Inclusion Ghana or member organisation events organized.
- Sports!!! watch a game, play a game together or kick a ball around.
- Go to the movies, or watch a movie at home.
- Visit some attractions in your community: the zoo, a park, the mall, etc.
- Meet for tea/coffee, lunch or dinner.
- Make something together- a craft or food.

8.5 Monitoring the matches by Member Organisation/ PSHGs/ District Councils:

- Have the IG local member organisation/parents self help group/district council leadership meet the matches in the first meet and greet meeting
- Have Buddy Pairs keep a journal of their activities
- Check in with each Buddy Pair at least once a month to ensure they are making contact
- If your Parents Self Help Group/ District Councils has a Facebook / Twitter page, have members post what activities they have done together
- Keep an ongoing record of how often Buddy Pairs are getting together
- Appoint an Executive Member to get feedback from Buddy Pairs monthly
- If you would like suggestions on methods to effectively monitor matches, or require support, please.
- Contact your Inclusion Ghana Best Buddies Program Coordinator;
- If you feel that a match is not working out, or that the Peer Buddy or Buddy is not committed to meeting regularly, and efforts have already been made to fix the problem, the Parents Self Help Group/District Council Leadership Team should inform the local member organisation of Inclusion Ghana or IG's Programme Manager who will determine if the match should be dissolved.

9. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO MAKING BUDDIES

Is something stopping you from building the buddy relationship you would like to have? Here are some common obstacles- and how you can overcome them.

What if a peer buddy is too busy...

Developing and maintaining buddy relationships takes time and effort, but even with a packed schedule, a peer buddy can find ways to make the time for a buddy relationship.

Put it on your calendar: Schedule time for your buddy relationship just as you would for errands. Make it automatic with a weekly or monthly standing appointment. Or simply make sure that you never leave a get-together without setting the next date.

Mix business and pleasure: Figure out a way to combine your socializing with activities that you have to do anyway. These could include going to the gym, getting a pedicure, or shopping. Errands create an opportunity to spend time together while still being productive.

Group it: If you truly don't have time for multiple one-on-one sessions with you buddy, set up a group get-together. It's a a good way to introduce your buddy to each other. Of course, you'll need to consider if everyone's compatible first.

What if a buddy is afraid of rejection...

Making new buddy means putting yourself out there, and that can be scary. It's especially intimidating if you're someone who's been betrayed, traumatized, or abused in the past, or someone with an insecure attachment bond. But by working with the right therapist, you can explore ways to build trust in existing and future buddy relationships. For more general insecurities or a fear of rejection, it helps to evaluate your attitude. Do you feel as if any rejection will haunt you forever or prove that you're unlikeable or destined to be buddyless? These fears get in the way of

making satisfying connections and become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Nobody likes to be rejected, but there are healthy ways to handle it:

- **Just because someone isn't interested in talking or hanging out doesn't automatically mean they're rejecting you as a person.** They may be busy, distracted, or have other things going on.
- **If someone does reject you, that doesn't mean that you're worthless or unlovable.** Maybe they're having a bad day. Maybe they misread you or misinterpreted what you said. Or maybe they're just not a nice person!
- **You're not going to like everyone you meet, and vice versa.** Like dating, building a solid network of buddies can be a numbers game. If you're in the habit of regularly exchanging a few words with strangers you meet, rejections are less likely to hurt. There's always the next Focus on the long-term goal of making quality connections, rather than getting hung up on the ones that didn't pan out.
- **Keep rejection in perspective.** It never feels good, but it's rarely as bad as you imagine. It's unlikely that others are sitting around talking about it. Instead of beating yourself up, give yourself credit for trying and see what you can learn from the experience.

10. KEEPING UP / MAINTAINING A BUDDY RELATIONSHIP

Making a new buddy is just the beginning of the journey. Just like any other relationship, best buddy relationship takes time to form and even more time to deepen, so you need to nurture that new connection. It is very easy to take your buddy for granted but when it comes to maintain a buddy relationship forever, you definitely have a big battle to fight. If you are struggling with your buddy relationship, or wish to foster your relationship with your buddy relationship, here are awesome rules of buddy relationship that make you best buddies forever:

Give your Buddy Space: Don't be too clingy or needy. Everyone needs space to be alone or spend time with other people as well. A buddy in need is a buddy indeed and this isn't just a saying. You should be a buddy that others can rely on. Meeting each other every day or getting glued to each other isn't what you should seek, but you must be there with your buddy when they need you the most.

Betraying your buddy is a big no, learn how to keep secrets: Trust is the foundation of every healthy relationship and the rule implies on buddy relationship too. For a buddyship to flourish, you must have 100% trust on each other. One should be sure that anything shared out of confidence will never find any other ear ever.

Confessions make your bond healthier: There are a lot of things that we keep to ourselves. But at times, finding someone to share your feelings and unloading the load on the chest becomes important. This is where buddies play a crucial role. You must be that one point for your buddy where he can come and vent out everything he/she has to say.

Be the buddy that you would like to have: Treat your buddy just as you want them to treat you. Be reliable, thoughtful, trustworthy, and willing to share yourself and your time.

Be a good listener: Be prepared to listen to and support buddy just as you want them to listen to and support you.

Don't set too many rules and expectations: Instead, allow your buddy relationship to evolve naturally. You're both unique individuals so your buddy relationship probably won't develop exactly as you expect.

Be forgiving: No one is perfect and every buddy will make mistakes. No buddy relationship develops smoothly so when there's a bump in the road, try to find a way to overcome the problem and move on. It will often deepen the bond between you.

Give & take: maintaining the balance: For a healthy buddy relationship, you should take as much you give and vice versa. Of there will be only one sole provider for every buddy relationship asset (care, help, advice, and support).

Don't be a poky buddy: While it is important to stand by the side of your buddy, you should not interfere in all the matters. Learn how to judge the situation and decide your role accordingly. There will be times when your buddy will need to fight their own battle to learn as well as maintain their self-respect.

Motivate and encourage your buddy: There is no better motivator than a true peer buddy. You must become a pillar for your buddy that provide them with strength and motivation to fight any battle. Encourage them to overcome their fears and achieve what is the best for them.

Be honest: Honesty is a vital element of true buddy relationship. You need to be loyal and honest with your buddy, keeping no secrets that you shouldn't.

Make them happy: Last but not the least, making your buddy happy is a responsibility that you take when you sign in for a buddy relationship. Send birthday wishes for buddy, present them gifts, and do other things that make your buddy happy.

These are some of the unsaid rules of buddy relationship that you should follow to foster a healthy buddy relationship with your buddy. You will surely have your best buddy by your side for the lifetime if you know what the best for the relationship is.

The most important quality in a buddy relationship for a buddy is the way the relationship makes you feel- how alike you seem on the surface, or what others think. Ask yourself:

- Do I feel better after spending time with this person?
- Am I myself around this person?
- Do I feel secure, or do I feel like I have to watch what I say and do?
- Is the person supportive and am I treated with respect?
- Is this a person I can trust?
- The bottom line: if the buddy relationship feels good, it is good. But if a person tries to control you, criticizes you, abuses you, or brings unwanted drama or negative influences into your life, it's time to re-evaluate the buddy relationship. A good peer buddy does not require you to compromise your values, always agree with them, or disregard your own needs.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY AND DISMISSING PARTICIPANTS

Confidentiality

Inclusion Ghana is committed to keeping personal information confidential. All participants in the Best Buddies Programme must agree to keep all information concerning the participants involved in confidential. At Inclusion Ghana, we define the legal obligation of confidentiality as the obligation not to disclose willingly information that is obtained in confidence from a person without that person's consent. In certain limited situations (i.e., search warrants, subpoenas and mandatory reporting obligations), individuals may be required by law to release any information that would otherwise be confidential.

Privacy Policy

Inclusion Ghana respects your right to privacy. We protect your personal information and follow the rules outlined in the Data Protection Act, 2012 by Ghana Government. We do not rent, sell or trade our participants' information. The information you give us is only used to keep you and your parent/guardian up to date on Best Buddies programme activities, special events and volunteering opportunities.

Dismissing Participants

Buddy Pairs are the most important part of Inclusion Ghana's Best Buddies Programme, therefore matches must be supported as much as possible, and if difficulties are faced, the match must be worked on and dissolved, if necessary. If it is obvious that a Buddy Pair is having difficulty meeting the required commitment, the District Council/ PSHG / Member Organisation Leadership Team should sit down with the Buddy Pair to discuss ways to resolve the problem. This may include setting a monthly schedule with times to call and meet. If a Peer Buddy or Buddy is involved in any inappropriate behaviour, discuss the situation with your Inclusion Ghana's member organisation at the local level. In some situations, the match may

be dissolved immediately and the offending member dismissed from the Programme. If a Peer Buddy/Buddy is neglecting to meet with his/her Buddy twice a month and is not making weekly contact, then dismissing him/her is appropriate after attempts to resolve the issue have been made.

ANNEX 1: CONSENT FORM

BEST BUDDIES PROGRAMME MEMBER AGREEMENT

To join Inclusion Ghana's Best Buddies programmes, all members must agree to the terms set forth in the Code of Conduct and Acknowledgement as laid out below:

Code of Conduct

As a member of Inclusion Ghana's Best Buddies programme:

- I will be respectful, truthful, and inclusive in my interactions with others.
- I will recognize and celebrate the diversity of character and abilities of all people.
- I will conduct myself ethically, obey all laws, and act in good faith at all times.
- I will abide by the rules, directives, and guidelines set forth by Inclusion Ghana.
- I will NOT harass, threaten, embarrass, or insult others.
- I will NOT say or do anything that is harmful, abusive, racially or ethnically offensive, vulgar, sexually explicit, or objectionable.
- I will NOT make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances.

Acknowledgement

As a member of Inclusion Ghana's Best Buddies programme:

- I understand that if I am matched in a one-to-one buddy relationship, the commitment includes meeting together twice a month and making weekly contact.
- I understand that I will attend Inclusion Ghana member organisation events as may be required from time to time and that my conduct should always follow the Code of Conduct.

- I understand that a member of the Best Buddies programme acts as a buddy and a peer and NOT as a caregiver or dependent.
- I give permission to be photographed and/or filmed at any Inclusion Ghana activity, and I understand that any photograph or videotape may be used at the discretion of Inclusion Ghana for publicity purposes (members may also opt out).
- I understand that Inclusion Ghana is in no way obligated to assign, or match, or actively seek to assign or match me in a one-to-one buddy relationship, and that Best Buddies makes no guarantees, assurances, or other commitments, either express or implied, as to the impact or results of a match upon any of the parties involved.
- I understand that Inclusion Ghana reserves the right to deny entrance into the Best Buddies programme to anyone, for any reason, at any time. Inclusion Ghana also reserves the right to revoke membership from our programs for any reason, at any time.
- I understand that, in cases where appropriate and necessary, Inclusion Ghana may require a background check prior to participation in our programmes.

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, hereby will like to join Inclusion Ghana's Best Buddies Programme. I have read and agree to the terms above.

(Peer Buddy's Name)

Signature and Date

(Buddy's Name)

Signature and Date

Consent from a parent/guardian is required if the participant is under the age of 18.

(Parent/Guardian's Name)

Signature and Date





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