



**NEIGHBORHOOD  
CONNECTIONS**

**Getting Started**

# Getting Started: A Quick Guide

## Step 1: Refer to the Neighborhood Connections Toolkit

- ◆ **The Implementation Readiness Checklist** needs to be discussed with library administrators as a first step in the process.
- ◆ **Assess your library's staffing capabilities.** The program will require a Community Resource Specialist (CRS). The CRS need not be a full-time employee, however he/she must be trained and ready to meet with patrons with varying needs. You may need to add a new staff position or dedicate an existing position for this program. Sample job postings have been included in this toolkit. While interns or volunteers can be incorporated into this program, it is recommended for the sake of consistency to implement Neighborhood Connections with a paid CRS position.
- ◆ **Establish a patron appointment/intake system.** Include logistics found in the Implementation Readiness Checklist. Sample forms are provided in this toolkit.
- ◆ **View online videos and presentations** on Azusa City Library's Youtube channel for more information about Neighborhood Connections.

## Step 2: Figure out the basics

- ◆ **Where will you offer this program?** We urge every library to set aside an appropriate meeting place with wise judgment and discretion. For safety reasons, some appointments may need to be conducted in a public area in the library. It is also imperative that library staff and the CRS establish certain boundaries. If a client is behaving erratically, appears to be under the influence, or is potentially dangerous, the CRS and library management reserve the right to cancel an appointment.
- ◆ **How will you promote this program?** Will you begin by marketing this service primarily to your regular patrons? Often times staff already know of patrons who need intensive assistance with job searches, housing, or legal concerns, to name a few. Consider having your CRS attend parent and community meetings to publicize your new service.
- ◆ **Compile Materials** Create bilingual flyers, community resource guides (samples included), and evaluate your collection of legal guides, citizenship materials, and other helpful sources. Create a library atmosphere that is receptive to people seeking assistance by displaying relevant resources.

## Step 3: Train Staff

- ◆ **Library staff will need to be on board with this project.** While the CRS should be fully trained and ready to assist at this point, the library will need to provide training about Neighborhood Connections and the responsibilities of staff. Staff will perform the role of booking appointments, explaining the program to patrons, and helping refer patrons with complex questions to the CRS. While they will not conduct the actual appointments, library workers will be part of the process and will need to interact with program participants.

## Step 4: Evaluate

- ◆ **Review results and revise procedures.** Now that the program is underway, what issues have you encountered? Are the appointments effective? Are participants accepting the help you've been providing? The best way to gauge this is through a follow-up procedure established by the CRS and library administration.
- ◆ **Record stats.** Create spreadsheets about types of questions and demographics while preserving the privacy of participants.
- ◆ **Keep it simple.** Before you become overwhelmed with details ask yourself one basic question: "are we helping people?" There is a simplicity in this program. It's all about referring people to the help they need. You must also acknowledge that some participants may not accept help. This is all part of the process.
- ◆ **Establish future goalposts.** One outcome of the review process should be to plan the next phase of the program. Now that Neighborhood Connections is established at your library, will you expand the days/times the program is offered? Will you reach out to a wider range of potential partners? Your service will most likely generate a buzz around your community resulting in outside organizations contacting you for future partnerships.