

SUPPORTING OLDER ADULTS

How Tech Mentors can make a difference

What is Project SOARR?

As a community-based project, SOARR (Supporting Older Adults through Relationships & Resources) has partnered with some of the state's most connected organizations to create a meaningful impact for older adults across the State of Colorado. Our focus is to empower older adults in their use of technology to support their values and lifestyle.

Whether they are using laptops, smartphones, desktop computers or tablets, older adults benefit from the opportunity to engage with technology to maintain social connections, make telehealth visits, bank, shop, or any of the other hundreds of important online activities.

Central to this effort are tech-savvy, community-oriented individuals, like you. Your choice to become a tech mentor for older adults has the potential to change lives.

Who are Tech Mentors?

A tech mentor is a tech savvy individual who teaches older adults to use technology.

A tech mentor:

- Uses technology for various activities
- Understands internet safety.
- Communicates with patience and empathy.
- May have connections to older adults who want to increase their knowledge and skills related to technology.
- Is open to learn from, and engage with, older adults for a mutual and rewarding learning experience.

Mentor Responsibilities

You will participate in tech mentor trainings through the Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering which will prepare you to:

- Teach 3-5 older adults in your community to leverage technology to reduce social isolation, access telehealth, or other online activities.
- Provide feedback on training resources to the Project SOARR team.
- Encourage others you think are tech savvy to become tech mentors like you.
- Participate in ongoing support of mentee(s) on a regular basis.

Feel free to share the flyer on page seven of this handbook with older adults in your community.

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS FOR TECH MENTORS

1 Move at a Comfortable Pace

As you introduce new skills, allow time for your mentee to practice. This requires allowing the pace of conversation to flow at a comfortable rate. Avoid multitasking and try to relate new information to existing knowledge.

2 Engage in Active Listening

Understanding the existing skills and needs of your mentee requires you to have conversations. Ask questions. Listen with the intent to understand. When you think it might be helpful, share stories from your own life. Connection and empathy often pave the way for learning.

3 Prioritize Mentee Values

As you decide the tech skills on which to focus, find out what is important to your mentee. What does he or she actually want to do? And how can technology support those goals?



4 Recognize, Validate, and Alleviate Concerns

As you work together, watch for signs of concern or frustration. Acknowledge those concerns with compassion and then find ways to help or address the issue.

5 Practice Troubleshooting

If you run into an unfamiliar technical issue, try to view it as an opportunity for learning and growth. Talk through your problem solving together and normalize “failing forward.”

6 Respect Boundaries and Internet Safety

Tech mentors should never know a mentee’s password. Turn your head whenever a mentee inputs private information such as a user name and password. Prioritize internet safety and draw attention to potentially risky situations.