



Reach Out & Read Illinois Teen Ambassador Toolkit

The Reach Out and Read Illinois Teen Ambassador Program empowers select high school students to become leaders in early literacy by increasing access to children's books, supporting community engagement efforts, and deepening their understanding of social impact work.

About Reach Out and Read Illinois:

What we do:

Reach Out and Read Illinois partners with pediatric healthcare providers to support families with young children by adding books into their regular checkups! At each doctor's visit from birth to age 5, children receive a free book, and their families receive guidance on the importance of reading together. By making books a regular part of healthcare, we help children build the skills they need to succeed in school and in life, while building their at-home libraries.

Why this matters:

- 95% of a child's brain develops in the first six years of their life
- Yet, in Illinois, only 38% of families read to their babies daily
- Reading aloud together nurtures connection, language development, and early brain growth
- Studies show that children exposed to more books at home show greater brain activation in areas linked to imagination, understanding, and learning

Reach Out and Read is more than a literacy program; it's a movement to empower families, close opportunity gaps, and strengthen futures through the simplest and most powerful act: reading aloud together.

What are Teen Ambassadors required to do?

- Commit to one semester (four months) of involvement in the Teen Ambassador Program.
- Complete at least five service hours for the Reach Out and Read Illinois program.
- Maintain regular and timely communication with the ROR IL staff.
- Complete a service project, which can either be one suggested in the Ambassador Toolkit or of your own design in collaboration with ROR IL staff. You are required to communicate your intended project with ROR IL staff.
- Collaborate with a club or at least one other person.
 - Examples of a club include: sports club, youth group, high school service club, etc.
 - Examples of people to collaborate with include friends, family members, classmates, etc.

What are the benefits of becoming a Teen Ambassador?

- **Earn service hours** through volunteer projects and community engagement opportunities.
- **Develop leadership skills** by planning and leading book drives and fundraisers.
- **Strengthen your resume or college applications** with meaningful volunteer experience.
- **Support Illinois children and families** by increasing access to books and awareness of ROR.
- **Make an impact locally** by supporting the Reach Out and Read clinics serving your area.
- **Receive recognition** for your contributions through certificates and service hour verification.
- **Receive Reach Out and Read Illinois merchandise** to help share our mission in your community.

What does a Teen Ambassador service project look like?

Fundraise at your school or in your community:

- Create an online fundraising page and teach your community about Reach Out and Read while encouraging them to donate!
 - You will coordinate with an ROR IL staff member for this
- Host an in-person fundraising event or drive!
 - Some in-person fundraising ideas:
 - Spirit week (e.g., a dress-down day that requires a small donation)
 - Penny wars (students compete by homeroom or grade level for the most money raised)
 - Bake sales
 - Restaurant Give-Back Night (partner with a local restaurant that donates a percentage of sales for an evening)
 - Any other fundraising project that works best for your community or school!

Host a book drive:

- Host a book drive for new children's books for children aged 0-5; this opportunity can even be paired with collecting monetary donations!
 - There are some guidelines for books that can be accepted. Please coordinate with ROR IL staff if you are interested in hosting a book drive.
 - Once you have collected your books, ROR IL staff will work with you to accept donations or will help you find a local clinic that is able to accept them

Get creative:

- Collaborate with a group of peers to design bookmarks for a local ROR clinic
 - Bookmarks can be paired with a donation of books, or by themselves!
- We welcome any other creative ideas that fit the ROR mission, if you think of something not listed please work with ROR IL staff to bring your idea to life!

How do I become a Teen Ambassador?

If you are able to meet all of the requirements, please [fill out an application](#)!

Applications are accepted and considered on a rolling basis; however, your application may not be accepted if we are at capacity.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to ROR IL staff via email (rorintern@illinoisap.com)!