

Launch Your High School IT Community Help Desk

Goal: Create an IT High School Community Help Desk to assist residents of senior living facilities with challenges like attaching a photo to an email or installing solitaire without ads while giving students opportunities to develop technical and customer service skills.



Background:

NewAldaya Lifescapes in Cedar Falls and the Waterloo Career Center (WCC) in October 2023 launched an intergenerational work partnership at the request of WCC's computer science club. Teacher Kyle Kuhlers worked with NewAldaya's Recreational Therapy Department to establish ground rules and a schedule for students to offer services at no cost to residents several times a semester under supervision. Additional facilities became partners, and these arrangements have continued to benefit everyone involved.

Why do this?

"This is a great opportunity because most entry-level IT positions start at the help desk, so students not only build problem-solving skills, but also their confidence in finding solutions to unknown situations," said Kuhlers. "Another benefit is the positive PR with residents who have connections to Waterloo Career Center. Residents experience a positive connection with young people and see that the future is going to be OK."



What type of student should participate?

Students from any program area are invited to participate in this program.

How can senior living facilities and schools get started?

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) are collaborating to scale the High School IT Community Help Desk statewide with support from WCC. To schedule a meeting or to ask questions, please feel free to contact Linda Fandel, work-based learning liaison, at linda.fandel@iwd.iowa.gov or 515-802-0989, or Jodie Smith, consultant for work-based learning and industry recognized credentials, at jodie.smith@iowa.gov or 515-419-5190.



What are the next steps for senior living facilities and high schools? Once a senior living facility and high school decide to move forward:



Together, identify dates/times during the school year that work for community help desk visits. Scheduling about six students for an hour works well.



The high school invites students to participate, co-hosts a tour/orientation (including coaching on how to interact with residents and your local version of the guidelines below), and arranges transportation.



The high school considers whether to give credit if this is part of a class. If credit is given as part of a concurrent enrollment course, contact the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) at the local community college for next steps.



The senior living facility promotes the help desk to their residents, and makes sure residents know they can bring any technology issue to the students to try to solve, understanding that the students may not be able to solve it.



The help desk is an introductory opportunity. Explore possibilities with senior living facilities' managed service providers (MSPs) to offer additional related work-based learning, such as internships.



How does a school award credit and code/report this opportunity?

Students who participate in this type of work-based learning experience should be enrolled in a course at the high school. Depending on the nature of the experience, this opportunity could potentially be classified as one of several types of work-based learning (e.g., project-based learning, simulated work experience aligned with an industry-recognized credential (IRC), etc.). It is up to the school district to decide how to award credit for the course. School districts also should work with their local community college about how much credit is awarded if the course is a concurrent enrollment course. For more information on how to code and report this course, please see the [Work-Based Learning Coding and Reporting document](#) on the IDOE's [Career-Connected Learning website](#).

- **Waterloo Career Center High School IT Community Help Desk Guidelines*. Please note that it is up to each employer/high school partnership to determine the guidelines they want to put in place. The guidelines below are intended only to provide an example.**

1. Please do not take pictures of residents' devices, passwords, or other information on your phone. Paper and pens can be provided for this and must remain at the facility.
2. Students will make sure residents have their passwords with them before logging them out or into anything that requires this. A staff member will test passwords before you continue.
3. If a resident cannot remember their phone password and you have tried twice, they will have to come back another day once they remember their password. This is to avoid residents getting locked out of their phones.
4. Students should not assist with any financial or medical applications. Facility and family members will help with these kinds of tech difficulties/questions, if they occur.
5. Please keep all names and any information you may learn about a resident while visiting with them confidential.
6. Students will not go into the nursing wing of any facility or into assisted or independent living residents' apartments or rooms. All residents should come to the common space at the senior living facility designated for community help desk assistance.
7. Students will not assist with hearing aids.

*Guidelines are to protect the information and devices of residents. Failure to comply may result in losing opportunity to participate in tech day at facility.