



# Volunteer Guidelines



**P R O G R A M S**

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# **PASCO COUNTY SCHOOLS VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of Volunteer Programs is to build relationships between schools, parents, community members, and business partners, while adding value to the experience of Pasco County students. Volunteer Programs strives to recruit, train, and recognize outstanding volunteers in Pasco County Schools who bring valuable experience, skills, and assistance to students and teachers. It also promotes parent and community involvement, focusing on creating opportunities to increase engagement within our schools. Pasco County Schools measures volunteer hours as part of the Connecting to the Community pillar of our Success Plan, because we know that there is a correlation between parent/community involvement and increased student achievement.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

The Volunteer Programs office operates with the approval of Pasco County Schools and is guided by the principles and policies of the district. Volunteers are non-paid members of the community functioning under the guidance of Pasco County Schools. Volunteers are to serve only in an auxiliary capacity under the direction and supervision of professional school personnel. Volunteers should provide supplemental and supportive services and are not a substitute for a member of the school staff.

Pasco County Schools encourages volunteer participation by individuals and groups in local schools and district offices. Volunteers can be utilized for classroom help, school events, field trips, and other school-sponsored off-campus activities. Volunteering can be before, during, and after school hours.

The Communications & Government Relations administrator is responsible for the volunteer program and its compliance with all laws pertaining to volunteers, which includes the recruitment of volunteers and the evaluation of the volunteer program.

Each school should have a designated staff member as the volunteer coordinator. The volunteer coordinator should be someone who is accessible to parents and the front office, and be able to facilitate volunteer activities such as coordinating events, training volunteers, and tracking volunteer hours.

Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Volunteers who act unprofessionally, fail to abide by Florida law and/or Board policies, or otherwise act in a manner contrary to the expectations of an employee of this district may be removed as an approved volunteer by the principal. Volunteers who fail to fulfill their duties may also be removed by the principal.

## **APPLICATION/APPROVAL PROCESS**

Anyone wishing to volunteer with Pasco County Schools must complete an online volunteer application. **A new application is required each school year and is good from July 1 through June 30.** Volunteer applicants need only complete one application for each school year; it is not necessary to complete an application for each student/school.

To comply with section 943.04351, Florida Statutes, a sexual predators/sexual offender background check must be conducted on all potential volunteers. Pasco County Schools performs the required check along with a criminal background check on all volunteer applicants. Once the applicant has passed the background checks, they will be approved to volunteer at any Pasco County school.

Volunteer applicants are asked to provide basic demographic information, including name, address, phone number, and email address. Disclosure of a birth date also is required in order to volunteer at a Pasco County school. Applicants can select schools of preference where they prefer to volunteer as well as preferred volunteer activities. Applicants are also required to disclose if they have ever been charged, convicted, had adjudication withheld, or entered a pretrial intervention program for a criminal charge, either misdemeanor or felony.

If an applicant discloses information regarding a charge, or if during the criminal background check an incident is discovered, the application will be referred to Human Resources and Educator Quality. The applicant will be asked to provide documentation regarding the charge(s) and their application status will be changed to pending. Once the required documentation has been submitted, it will be reviewed by Human Resources and Educator Quality and may be presented to the district's Professional Review Committee for approval. This committee evaluates the information submitted and makes the final determination regarding the applicant's volunteer status. The committee's recommendation may include approving a volunteer with a stipulation of no driving or no handling of money.

An applicant who is found through background screening to be included in the FDLE sexual offender/predator registry, or who has been convicted of any crime involving moral turpitude, as defined by rule of the State Board of Education or otherwise found ineligible for employment under section 1012.315, Florida Statutes, will not be approved as a volunteer.

Persons 18 years of age or younger (and attending a Pasco County school) are considered peer volunteers and do not apply online. Peer volunteers should complete the MIS Form #661, Rev 1/11. The volunteer coordinator and student's parent must sign the form. A background check is not required for peer volunteers.

Pasco County Schools reserves the right to refuse volunteer assignments to individuals convicted of offenses pursuant to section 112.011, Florida Statutes.

**Applicants may not volunteer until they have received an email confirming they have been approved.**

## **VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS**

As an important part of Pasco County Schools, volunteers are expected to be a positive role model and supportive of district initiatives. Along with professional, appropriate behavior, volunteers should also adhere to the following expectations:

### **Supervision**

Volunteers must work under the direction and supervision of the principal, teacher(s), or other members of the school staff. Volunteers provide supplemental and supportive services and are not a substitute for a member of the school staff. Volunteers may not supervise a class in the teacher's absence.

When a volunteer is assigned to work directly with pupils, the instructional staff member that he or she is assisting must ascertain that the volunteer can state clearly the type of performance or behavior that the pupils are expected to demonstrate during the time when the volunteer is working with pupils.

Each time a volunteer is assigned a duty that he or she has not satisfactorily performed previously, the volunteer should complete a period of supervised practice. During the period of supervised practice, the staff member that he or she is assisting must be available continuously to provide immediate assistance to the volunteer while working directly with pupils. The length of supervised practice may vary depending on the capability and prior experience of the volunteer.

Any volunteer assigned the responsibility of supervising the safety and welfare of pupils, such as during the loading and unloading of buses or during lunch periods, must be 18 years of age or older.

### **Accountability**

Volunteers must always sign in and out and wear their Pasco County Schools volunteer identification badge on school property. Volunteers should report to and remain in their assigned volunteer area and should not wander around campus. Volunteers should not visit their child's classroom, unless it is part of their volunteer assignment. Unannounced visitors create distractions to the classroom and learning environment.

School volunteers should have a regular work schedule so that neither the volunteer nor the teacher has to spend much time keeping track of the volunteer schedule. If volunteers are working with specific student(s), systems should exist for parties involved to be notified of absences.

Volunteers should learn where fire exits are located and be familiar with the school's emergency procedures. Volunteers should receive a copy of the school/classroom rules and procedures so that the volunteer's message to the children is consistent with the teacher's.

### **Confidential Information**

Volunteers may come in contact with student information in the course of their duties. In accordance with Board Policy 9200, volunteers must keep information learned about students confidential.

Volunteers shall maintain strict confidentiality of all school or classroom information to which they have access while performing their volunteer activities. Volunteers shall be allowed access to personally identifiable student information only with approval of the principal and to the extent necessary to fulfill an assigned activity that would otherwise be performed by a district

employee. Volunteers must have a legitimate educational interest in order to access student information. A misplaced comment can be devastating to a student, a family and the volunteer program. Volunteers who have questions or concerns are directed to talk with their principal or the district Volunteer Programs staff.

### **Professionalism**

The relationship between volunteers and the school staff must be one of mutual respect, confidence, and consideration. Volunteers should maintain a professional attitude and adhere to school policies and procedures.

### **Dress Code**

Dress codes are established at each school. School administrators have the authority to enforce the dress code as needed. Volunteers should dress neatly and professionally, yet clothing and shoes should be comfortable and safe. As with students, attire that advertises drugs or alcoholic beverages, or that is vulgar or obscene in nature, is not permitted. Some volunteer assignments require the use of special safety equipment such as back supports. Volunteers who fail to use safety devices or disregard the dress code may be removed from the list of approved volunteers.

## **VOLUNTEER RESTRICTIONS**

While volunteers can offer many valuable skills, there are some limitations on volunteer duties. The following list describes activities that volunteers are not authorized to perform. Volunteers may not:

- establish instructional objectives;
- make judgments regarding the attainment of instructional objectives unless these judgments are based on clear and objective criteria (such as specific achievement standards on a true-false test);
- make decisions regarding the relevancy of activities to the attainment of instructional objectives;
- make decisions regarding the appropriateness of teaching materials;
- grade subjective assignments that result in a grade for the student or are considered a formal assessment of the student's achievement or ability;
- work with students before or after the school day unless part of an authorized Pasco County Schools program;
- take students off campus during the day, by any means, including walking or driving, unless special permission has been granted by the principal. The volunteer must be accompanied by a faculty/staff member. If the volunteer is driving students, the volunteer must complete the Private Vehicle/Insurance Information form (MIS Form #167, Rev. 2/07).

## **BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

It is the policy of the Board to maintain an educational and work environment that is free from all forms of unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment. This commitment applies to all district operations, programs, and activities. All students, administrators, teachers, staff, and all other school personnel share responsibility for avoiding, discouraging, and reporting any form of unlawful harassment. This policy applies to unlawful conduct occurring on school property or at another location if such conduct occurs during an activity sponsored by the Board. Board Policy 4362 applies to students, administrators, teachers, staff, Board members, agents, volunteers, contractors, and other persons subject to the control and supervision of the Board. For more information on bullying or how to report an incident, please visit the district website.

## **COURT-ORDERED COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Pasco County Schools does not allow court-ordered community service hours to be served as volunteer time. Individuals who are required to complete court-ordered community service should be directed to contact other non-school agencies.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

Any form of discrimination or harassment can be devastating to an individual's academic progress, social relationship, and/or personal sense of self-worth. As such, the School Board will not discriminate nor tolerate harassment in its educational programs or activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex/gender, disability (including HIV, AIDS, or sickle cell trait), pregnancy, marital status, age (except as authorized by law), religion, military status, or genetic information, which are classes protected by state and/or federal law (collectively, "protected classes"). Students and all other members of the school district community and third parties are encouraged to promptly report incidents of unlawful discrimination and/or retaliation to a teacher, administrator, supervisor, or other district official so that the Board may address the conduct.

## **INSURANCE AND LIABILITY**

Volunteers will be covered by the district's workers' compensation insurance policy. All volunteers must sign in using an integrated school safety technology product when arriving on school grounds and sign out using an integrated school safety technology product when leaving school grounds. Failure to do so may result in a denial of workers' compensation insurance coverage. If the volunteer hours are earned outside of the normal school day, when signing in and out using the integrated school safety technology product is not possible, volunteer hours must be entered into the integrated school safety technology product system manually.

Pursuant to Florida law, a school volunteer who has been duly approved by the superintendent shall incur no civil liability for any act or omission by the volunteer that results in personal injury or property damage if the volunteer was acting in good faith within the scope of the official duties performed under such volunteer service; the volunteer was acting as an ordinary, reasonably prudent person would have acted under the same or similar circumstances; and the injury or damage was not caused by any wanton or willful misconduct on the part of the volunteer in the performance of their volunteer duties.

## **PARENTAL NOTIFICATION OF VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH STUDENTS**

When a student will be working with a volunteer mentor, the school notifies the parents of the potential match of their child with a mentor and reminds them of the necessity of a joint commitment from the student, teacher, school, family, and volunteer mentor.

## **REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

All volunteers are included as mandatory reporters in Board Policy 8462 – Student Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect – and are required to review it during the application process. Volunteers should report concerns to the principal, assistant principal, or school counselor. The school official will call the necessary authorities in the volunteer’s presence. Volunteers may call the child abuse hotline directly; however, the school administration must be informed.

Any person, including a teacher, administrator, support employee, or other district or school employee who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child or a student has been abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, adult, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, or that a child is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision and care must report such knowledge or suspicion to the Department of Children and Families in a manner prescribed by law.

Further, any person, including a teacher, administrator, support employee, or other district or school employee who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child or a student is the victim of childhood sexual abuse or the victim of a known or suspected juvenile sexual offender, shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the Department of Children and Families in a manner prescribed by law.

A person who is required to report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect and who knowingly and willfully fails to do so, or who knowingly and willfully prevents another person from doing so, commits a felony of the third degree.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome, sexually-oriented behavior, demand, comment, or physical contact, initiated by any individual that interferes with either a volunteer’s or employee’s responsibilities.

## **VOLUNTEERS AND PERSONAL CHILDREN**

Volunteers should never bring preschoolers or children not registered in school when volunteering at the school. An option may be to seek out opportunities to volunteer from home if the volunteer is unable to find alternative childcare for their own children not enrolled in our schools.

## **Early Childhood Programs Head Start/Early Head Start Volunteer and Visitor Agreement 2017 – 2020**

Head Start Performance Standards, 1302.34(b)(5) addressing Head Start/Early Head Start settings require that the classroom must be open to parents/guardians during all program hours. Parents/guardians must be welcomed as visitors or volunteers and encouraged to observe children as often as possible and to participate with children in group activities. This is a mutual agreement for the period commencing August 1, 2017 through July 31, 2020.

In order to meet the intent of the Head Start Performance Standards, and at the same time protect our students, schools should follow these guidelines regarding parents/guardians participating in their child's classroom:

- All parents/guardians who have children participating in the Head Start/Early Head Start program are encouraged to complete a volunteer application. Parents/guardians wishing to volunteer with the program must complete an online application. Upon completion, a background check will be conducted through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Sexual Offender and Predators database and Florida CCIS criminal database.
- A parent/guardian who has applied to be a volunteer and whose background check reveals a previous or current criminal charge will be asked to provide information regarding the charge(s). Providing this information gives the parent access to the district's "due process" procedure. Due process means the information provided by the parent is submitted to Human Resources and Educator Quality and may be presented to the district's Professional Review Committee for approval. This committee evaluates the information submitted and makes the final determination regarding the applicant's volunteer status.
- A parent/guardian whose volunteer application has been denied by the Professional Review Committee will be assigned a visitor status. A parent/guardian who is identified as a "sexual predator", "sexual offender" and/or had "sexual charges" will not be granted visitor status.
- A parent/guardian who does not complete a volunteer application will be assigned a visitor status.
- Persons assigned a visitor status may continue to participate in the classroom but will not be allowed to work with any child other than their own. If an application has not been completed, a staff member will meet with the parent and encourage them to submit a volunteer application.
- All visitors and approved volunteers must check in and out through the school's front office using the district's approved visitor/volunteer system. They should also sign in on the Weekly Class Volunteer Time Sheet maintained by Head Start/Early Head Start staff.
- Parents/guardians who are approved volunteers will wear a school volunteer badge, which clearly communicates that they have been approved as a volunteer and are allowed to volunteer, as needed. Those with visitor status will wear a visitor identification badge; their participation is restricted to activities with their own child. All visitors/volunteers operate under the direct supervision of Head Start/Early Head Start staff, the school administration, or their designee(s).