Frequently Asked Questions about Volunteering with RPS

Q: Why do I need a background check?

A: Volunteers are screened for many of the same reasons employers conduct background checks. The ultimate goal is to verify identity and identify potential problems, especially problems that could arise from an undisclosed criminal history. Safety for our students is our priority. Background checks for volunteers help RPS ensure safety for our students, staff, community, and other volunteers.

Q. What is Raptor and why do I need to provide a government issued ID to sign-in?

A: Raptor is the Visitor Management System (VMS) for RPS and is produced by Raptor Technologies. The Raptor system functions by reading a visitor's driver's license and quickly screening the identification against a national database of registered sex offenders. Raptor is designed to immediately alert school administration if a match to the national database of registered sex offenders is made.
Raptor will print out a visitor badge, sometimes with a picture, and this badge should be worn at all times while in the school.

Q. Where can I volunteer, if I am unable to volunteer with RPS because of the background check requirements?

A: The Richmond Metro area has a number of nonprofit organizations that need volunteer assistance. Please feel free to checkout HandsOn Greater Richmond's website, www.handsonrva.org, for other volunteer opportunities in the Richmond area as well as directly contacting an organization that meets your interests to learn more about their volunteer needs and requirements.

Q: What general volunteer roles are available through RPS?

A: Each school has a person working in the capacity as a volunteer liaison and each school offers different volunteer opportunities depending on the school's identified needs. Often, schools are looking for volunteers who have skills that make them a good fit for their specific school community. Here is a short list of the general types of volunteers that our schools look for:

- Enrichment volunteers—providing enrichment activities such as arts, drama, etc.;
- Clerical/administrative volunteers—providing office or library support, supporting classroom teachers;
- Done-In-A-Day Volunteers—supporting family events, helping with building maintenance projects, guest presenters;
- Academic support—tutoring during the school day, as well as in before and after school programs.

Once a volunteer has completed the orientation, application, and background check, the school's Volunteer Liaison will assist you in your placement. Your volunteer assignment is determined by your skills, interests, and preferences, as well as by the needs of individual schools and teachers.

Q: May I choose the teacher with whom I want to work?

A: No. volunteers are placed only in classrooms where teachers have specifically requested assistance.

Q. I'd like to volunteer, but I have a preschool child. Can I bring my child with me?

A: No. There are legal reasons why this is not allowed. In addition, another child who is not part of the class may be a disruption to the students and teachers.

Q: What is the process for getting started as a volunteer with RPS?

A: In order to get started as a volunteer with RPS, you will need to:

- ▪ Choose a school—you can find a list of schools
- ▪ Contact the school's main office and ask for their Volunteer Liaison or application;
- ▪ Complete the required paperwork;
- ▪ Ask school staff about orientation and training materials and attending an orientation.
- ▪ Participate in a volunteer screening (interview);
- ▪ Discuss and confirm your role, schedule and expectations.

Q: What paperwork is required to get started as a volunteer with RPS?

A: RPS welcomes community members to volunteer at schools across the district. In order for a community member to start volunteering, they must:

- ▪ Complete a volunteer application form;
- ▪ Be cleared by Raptor and/or Verified Volunteers, depending on the opportunity;
- ▪ Read and sign the Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgement.

To complete a background check through Verified Volunteers, you must:

- ▪ Complete a Screening Form;
- ▪ Add your personal information into the Verified Volunteer platform.*

*The Verified Volunteer platform will ask for your social security number. Please note that RPS does not receive any of the information entered into the platform with the exception of your name and address and the results of the background check. Therefore, RPS does not have access to your social security number.

Q: Can I still volunteer if I do not have social security number?

Yes. If you do not have a social security number, the platform will prompt you to enter your birthdate. You may not opt out if you do have a social security number.

Q: Is this a requirement for all volunteers?

A: This paperwork is mandatory for all volunteers unless they are a guest/visitor at a school. See Visitor/Guest category located on the Office of Community Partnerships website for additional information.

Q: I've heard that overnight chaperones sometimes need additional background checks. Is fingerprinting required for overnight field trip chaperones/volunteers?

A: Any overnight field trip chaperones living continuously in the Commonwealth of Virginia for more than two years shall not be required to be fingerprinted; Verified Volunteers clearance shall suffice;

- o Verification of continuous residence will be required for overnight field trip chaperones requesting waiver of the fingerprinting requirements. The school volunteer coordinator will verify residence (issue date on driver license, mortgage, insurance, property tax statement and/or employment statement are examples); and
- o For those who have lived in WA State for less than 2 years fingerprinting is required.

Q: I've heard that my employer, organization or agency can vouch that I've taken a background screening/fingerprints.

A: Organizations/employers may have an opportunity to prequalify their employees to volunteer for Richmond Public Schools without going through the required background check. Employers must notify the Office of Community Partnerships in writing regarding their Employees' fingerprinting/background check information. The Volunteer Management Department will make a determination of acceptability. Please contact Sandra Wheeler, Office of Community Partnerships, at 804-819-4382 or swheeler@richmond.k12.us.

Q: Where can I find more information about volunteer roles in my neighborhood school?

A: You can often find out more about volunteer opportunities at local schools by looking at the school's website or HandsOn Greater Richmond website, www.handsonrva.org. When looking at school websites, look both for highlighted volunteer opportunities and for a list of community partners. Often community-based organizations provide before and after-school programming and coordinate volunteers during the school day.

If you do not find information on the website, you can also call the school directly. The administrative assistant should be able to direct you to the Volunteer Liaison who works directly with volunteers in the schools.

Q: Do Richmond Public Schools ever need groups of volunteers on evenings or weekends?

A: While most of our volunteer opportunities happen during school hours, schools occasionally need volunteers for one-time events and for maintenance projects. Our Office of Community Partnerships coordinates building maintenance projects. Please contact Sandra Wheeler at 804-819-4382 or swheeler@richmond.k12.us.

Q: What are the expectations or responsibilities for RPS volunteers?

A: As a volunteer in our schools, you play a critical role in supporting students. Here are some expectations that we have of our volunteers in order to ensure their effectiveness in supporting students and schools:

- ▪ Be prompt, dependable, and regular in attendance.
- ▪ Support and supplement the instruction of the classroom teacher—you are expected to assist what is going on in the classroom.
- ▪ Clearly communicate any problems that arise with the teacher, librarian or volunteer coordinator.
- ▪ Notify the teacher, librarian or school volunteer liaison if a student confides in you about an abusive situation. Staff will do the reporting and follow-up.
- ▪ Respect confidentiality of students and school staff—ensure that a child's work and behavior in school are held in confidence.
- ▪ Remember that you are acting as a role model for children.

Q: What training is available for RPS volunteers?

A: Richmond Public Schools offers an online volunteer orientation. Each school and specific organization for which you volunteer (e.g. Communities In Schools and MICAH) is also expected to provide an orientation that orients new volunteers to the school community and expectations for volunteers.

Q. Where can I find the volunteer training schedule?

A: The Richmond Public School centralized volunteer training will be listed on the Office of Community Partnership website, http://web.richmond.k12.va.us/Departments/CommunityPartnerships/Contact.aspx, and HandsOn Greater Richmond, www.handsonrva.org, which is also where RPS volunteer opportunities can be found. School partners may also conduct volunteer trainings for specific programs they facilitate and should be contacted directly. If you are volunteering for a specific program and need technical training, the point-of-contact for that program will contact you directly.

Q. What do I do about discipline?

A: Disciplinary action is the responsibility of the teachers and school staff. Volunteers do not enforce discipline. Think instruction instead of discipline. Request that students to work according to the rules of the classroom. Immediately notify the teacher if there is a discipline problem.

Q. Who do I contact with additional questions?

A: Please contact your school's Volunteer Liaison with questions. If you need additional assistance, please contact Sandra Wheeler at 804-819-4382.