

St. Mary's County Public Schools

VOLUNTEER & VISITOR TRAINING MANUAL





Dear Parents, Guardians, and Volunteers:

Each day, we serve our students, preparing and guiding them to become the learners and leaders of the 21st Century. The Board of Education's goals are designed with the clear intention of providing support for student achievement and are supplemented through the contributions of school volunteers, parents, and community supporters who give valuable time and resources on behalf of the well-being of children.

We constantly strive and continue to make many opportunities available to our students that encourage them to learn and fully enhance their academic and social development. A wide range of learning experiences, both in and outside of the classroom, provides for many great opportunities and teachable moments.

We clearly recognize the importance and necessity of properly vetting all volunteers who have contact with our students. We want to ensure that all of our expanding learning horizons are, first and foremost, safe and secure for our students and your children. Volunteer service to our schools will continue to support the vast learning experiences we are able to offer. I am sure you recognize that our community and our school system continue to grow and change.

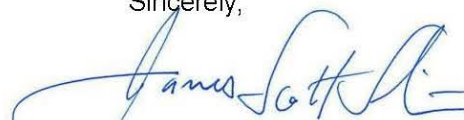
Procedures are in place to ensure an appropriate level of background screening for all of our school volunteers and visitors. Two classifications of volunteers have been established that require mandatory levels of background screening. We have established the classifications of "registered volunteer" and "temporary volunteer."

A registered volunteer serves on an occasional or routine basis and may have unsupervised contact with a student on campus or off campus. Examples of registered volunteers include chaperones for field trips and overnight school trips, coaches, tutors, mentors, school office aides, school library aides, student-teachers, and classroom aides. A temporary volunteer participates in a single event and will not have any unsupervised contact with students. Examples of temporary volunteers may include chaperones for field trips, school dances, and guest speakers.

We believe volunteer service to our schools is an essential component of student success. The support of parents, grandparents, other significant relatives, and community members creates an environment filled with opportunities for our students. On behalf of our students and staffs, I extend my gratitude and appreciation for your invaluable contributions. Ensuring the success of students is a partnership between the school and home.

Thank you in advance for helping to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the education our children and young adults deserve. I look forward to working closely with you all as we unite to serve our students and our community.

Sincerely,



J. Scott Smith
Superintendent of Schools

THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Volunteers donate time to help students, teachers, and staff enhance and extend the instructional programs of the schools. St. Mary's County Public Schools is fortunate to have registered and temporary volunteers in our schools and offices. These individuals, at the request of the school system and under the direct supervision of a principal/site administrator or designated staff, contribute to student success and reinforce the values of education.

The school volunteer program is incorporated as part of the SMCPs Master Plan, ensuring that the goals and objectives are periodically reviewed and carefully monitored. The volunteer program goals are:

To assist teachers in providing more individualization and enrichment of instruction to their classes

To provide reinforcement for learning what occurs in the classroom

To increase students' motivation for learning

To help students improve their self-concepts

To assist teachers with many of the non-teaching duties and tasks

To strengthen school-community relations through positive participation

School Volunteer Coordinators at each elementary, middle, and high school work with the site administrator/principal, teachers, staff, and the District Volunteer Service Coordinator to support school and student needs with volunteer help. They recruit, place volunteers, and provide training as needed.

Parent Groups, such as PTA, PTO and Boosters, operate independently from, but within the context of, the school volunteer program. Parent groups work with the principal and supervising staff to organize, support and raise funds for extracurricular and enrichment activities for students and their families.

Principals/site administrators have the final authority over what happens in their school, including volunteer programs and parent group activities. Principals are responsible for setting guidelines for volunteers working in the school, developing a positive working relationship with volunteers, and encouraging staff members to utilize the volunteer help. St. Mary's County Public Schools uphold the highest standards and safety precautions to provide for the safety and security of students, staff, and visitors. In an effort to maintain safety and security, all volunteers and visitors are screened through the building access management system.

A registered volunteer serves on an occasional or routine basis and may have unsupervised contact with a student on campus or off campus. Examples of registered volunteers include chaperones for field trips and overnight school trips, coaches, tutors, mentors, school office aides, school library aides, student-teachers, and classroom aides. A registered volunteer is required to complete an application for a formal background screening and volunteer training. The cost for the screening and training are paid by St. Mary's County Public Schools. A registered volunteer applicant may be disqualified from participation as a volunteer for having a history of specific criminal offenses that include felonies, sex offenses, crimes against children, and specified misdemeanors. An approved registered volunteer can be issued an identification badge if deemed appropriate by the school site administrator.

A temporary volunteer participates in a single event and will not have any unsupervised contact with students. Examples of temporary volunteers may include chaperones for field trips, school dances, and guest speakers. A temporary volunteer is required to complete a volunteer application for the principal's approval. The application will be screened with the National Sex Offender Registry.

If you are interested in becoming a school volunteer, or if you have any questions about any of our new procedures, please do not hesitate to contact your school. You can apply to be an approved volunteer for our schools by visiting <https://www.smcps.org/safety-and-security/volunteer-information> This is a brief online process and you will be notified of your approval.

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERING AND VISITING OUR SCHOOLS

Volunteers should be familiar with and adhere to all policies and regulations pertaining to visiting our schools.

The Board of Education of St. Mary's County (Board) constantly strives and continues to make opportunities available to our students that encourage them to learn and fully enhance their academic and social development. The Board recognizes the value and importance of visitors who support students and schools. Parents, guardians, community members, and school volunteers are resources serving to support our goals and the learning experience of children.

The Board also recognizes the expectation of our community to protect our students and schools and ensure their safety and security each day. The importance of identifying everyone and understanding who visits a school and has access to our students is paramount in efforts to maintain a safe and orderly school environment.

The superintendent or designee is authorized by the Board to establish regulations and security procedures necessary to ensure the identification, vetting, and management of all school visitors and volunteers, as required, and in accordance with all local, state, and federal laws.

- **Volunteers and Visitors will** be under the supervision of the professional staff
- **Volunteers and Visitors shall not** have inappropriate contact with SMCPs students
- **Volunteers and Visitors must** regard all information concerning students, teachers, and schools as confidential to help maintain good public relations in the school and community.
- **Volunteers and Visitors must not** access confidential student records electronically or in print.
- **Volunteers and Visitors must** discuss plans, problems, and discipline procedures at appropriate times and with the appropriate professional staff.
- **Volunteers and Visitors should** review the school site handbook for procedures and routines that are unique to the site.
- **Volunteers and Visitors must** follow all rules and regulations set forth by the school system and/or school.

Site administrators are encouraged to follow best practice guidelines that address the specific needs of their students and staff that serve to create an efficient, safe, and secure learning environment. The following guidelines are provided to further assist site administrators:

WHILE AT SCHOOL AND ON CAMPUS BEST PRACTICE:

- Volunteers and Visitors must follow sign-in procedures for the safety of all children.
- Volunteers and Visitors must receive administrative approval to visit a classroom to minimize disruption.
- Volunteers and Visitors must schedule parent-teacher conferences in advance.
- Volunteers and Visitors are encouraged to make alternative arrangements for their non-enrolled students when visiting during the school day; as this may create a disruption to instructional delivery.

CAFETERIA BEST PRACTICE:

- Volunteers and Visitors while at schools are encouraged to limit celebrations that involve food during the school day. Although we are not banning homemade treats, we are encouraging that food celebrations should include store bought baked goods with ingredient lists to protect students with allergies and other health issues.

- For supervisory and capacity concerns, non-enrolled students in the company of volunteers and visitors must remain under the supervision of the volunteer or visitor and, with approval of the principal/site administrator, will be welcome in the cafeteria.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES BEST PRACTICE:

- **Volunteers and visitors** wishing to forward communication between families for personal arrangements or events may be coordinated through the local PTA/PTO's directories and contact information.

TRAINING:

- All volunteers and visitors are expected to follow best practice guidelines provided in this volunteer training manual when visiting in our schools and when working in our schools. **All volunteers and visitors are expected to adhere to the same guidelines and expectations of employees as defined in the St. Mary's County Public Schools Child Abuse and Sexual Harassment (CASH) training.** Mandatory training for volunteers will occur at the beginning of each school year.

VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION UPON ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

The school visitor registration systems are located in the main office of all St. Mary's County Public Schools' facilities. Please complete the entire entry for the day and times that you are volunteering. If you are unable to come during a previously agreed upon and scheduled date, please contact the school so that the teacher or staff member can make other arrangements.

VOLUNTEER BADGES

Printed volunteer or visitor access passes are issued during each school visit. Volunteers must log in at the main office using the computerized building access management (BAM) system/network. A volunteer will be assigned a personal pin number to log in and out of the system. An access pass will be printed and must be worn the entire time the volunteer is in the school building. The access pass will display the volunteers name, date, and area they will be visiting.

DRESS AND BEHAVIOR

Take your lead from the professional staff and dress appropriately for the job you are doing. Casual clothing is fine, but attire is to be neat and conservative. Your appearance should reflect your environment. Keep in mind volunteers are in a position to set an example for students. Your speech and behavior should serve as good models for them to follow.

TRANSPORTATION

Volunteers must provide their own transportation. Volunteers are not permitted to ride school buses to and from school. Volunteers shall not transport students at any time for any school-sponsored activities.

CHILDREN OF VOLUNTEERS

Children of volunteers are not allowed to accompany volunteers during the regular school day. Volunteer activities during the regular school day are geared toward the volunteer devoting undivided attention to their task and responsibilities.

DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS

The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited in all St. Mary's County Public Schools' buildings at all times. The possession, use, distribution, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages or a controlled or dangerous substance on school grounds is not allowed.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The use of cell phones, iPads, personal laptop computers, and/or other electronic devices can cause a breach in school safety and security. Volunteers are encouraged to leave personal items in their vehicle while visiting schools. Volunteers may not use school computers for personal use. Volunteers may not take photographs, videos, or audio recording of any St. Mary's County Public Schools' students or staff without the direct written permission of the school principal/site administrator.

RESTROOMS

Please do not use student restrooms. Staff restrooms are available to volunteers.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS

- Volunteers must participate in an orientation and training scheduled by the school volunteer coordinator as needed. Certificate of completions are presented to volunteers at the end of the orientation/training.
- Volunteers must sign in and out at the school's main office. St. Mary's County Public Schools will maintain a record showing the date and time of volunteer service. For security reasons, and in case of an emergency, it is important for administrators to know who is in their school and why.
- Volunteers always work under the direct supervision of the professional staff at each site and only with those teachers who have requested the service.
- Volunteers should attend when expected. All unexpected absences should be reported to the main office as soon as possible.
- Volunteers shall not have inappropriate contact with SMCPSS students and they are not permitted to date SMCPSS students.
- Volunteers must regard all information concerning students, teachers, and schools as confidential to help maintain good public relations in the school and community.
- Volunteers must not access confidential student records electronically or in print.
- Volunteers must discuss plans, problems, and discipline procedures at appropriate times and with the appropriate professional staff.
- Volunteers should review the school site handbook for procedures and routines that are unique to the site.
- Volunteers must follow all rules and regulations set forth by the school system and/or schools.

ACTIVITIES APPROVED FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers may work directly with individual students or with groups of students within the instructional program. Motivating students and enhancing their self-concepts are of primary importance. Volunteers may:

- Assist individuals or small groups of students under the direction of a teacher;
- Help students with special projects/programs;
- Assist students making book selections in the media center;
- Assist students in the computer lab;
- Assist students using graphing calculators;
- Assist the teacher with supervision of students in the cafeteria or on the playground;
- Chaperone school field trips;
- Read to students or listen to students read; tutor students;
- Assist with school clubs and student council activities;
- Work with Student Service Learning Projects;
- Work with peer tutors;
- Assist students who have been absent;
- Be a guest speaker on a specific career or other area of expertise.

Some volunteers may prefer to help students indirectly. Volunteers may:

- Prepare games, packets, and instructional resources;
- Assist with displays of student work to include laminating, matting, and hanging;
- Assist with office filing, copying, and laminating;
- Type forms, letters, and notices, etc.;
- Sort, stamp, and distribute mail/metro;
- Run errands within the building;
- Help to check in, distribute, and inventory materials;
- Assist with making telephone calls;
- Assist in the media center by filing, shelving, and minor book repairs;
- Assist with bulletin boards and other displays;
- Assist with social events, such as parties, dances, county fair, and athletic events.

Some volunteers may decide to join and participate in the work of the:

- Athletic, band, and/or choral boosters;
- Citizens' Advisory Committee for Special Education;
- St. Mary's County Council of PTAs;
- School Improvement Team;
- School PTA, PTO, and other committees as appropriate.

Often people wish to volunteer but are unable to work in the school. In these cases, the volunteers may work at home to:

- Catalog materials;
- Color and cut materials for bulletin boards;
- Make phone calls;
- Prepare resources for class rewards.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Volunteers should obtain the following information regarding the school's policies and procedures:

VOLUNTEER'S ASSIGNMENT- Schedules, duties, and procedures

LOCATION OF FACILITIES:

- Staff/Visitor Parking
- Main Office
- Cafeteria
- Teacher's Lounge
- Playground
- Staff Restrooms
- Beverage and Snack Machines

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION:

- School Administration
- Discipline Policies
- Media Center
- Computer Lab
- School Nurse
- Etiquette (use of titles and surnames)

EMERGENCY RESPONSE/EVACUATION PROCEDURES

SMCPS is committed to maintaining proactive and progressive measures that address prevention efforts and mitigating factors for all crisis and emergency events. The Department of Safety and Security is responsible for the development and implementation of system wide safety and security programs and initiatives that enhance the overall safety and security of all SMCPS school campuses and supporting office sites.

Emergency Response Quick Reference Charts are available at all school and office sites. If you are working in a classroom with students, please follow all established emergency procedures. Make yourself aware of these procedures as you enter the classroom each day you volunteer.

DEFINITIONS FOR EMERGENCY/CRISIS RESPONSE ACTIONS:

Evacuation - Move all students and staff from the building in an orderly fashion via the closest and safest way out of the building (if possible to a predetermined evacuation site) and roll call is taken. Determine how students and staff will be reunited with their families.

- **Silent Evacuation** - Silently (non-verbal), communicate to staff to move students and staff from identified areas of the building or all areas of the building as directed in an orderly fashion via the closest and safest way out of the building (if possible to a predetermined evacuation site) and roll call is taken. Determine how students and staff will be reunited with their families.
- If you are working in an office, the teachers' lounges, or other areas, please follow procedures that are posted or exit the building through the closest safe exit. Once safely out of the building, please report to the classroom teacher that you are working with or to one of the school secretaries.

Reverse Evacuation - Students and staff are moved as quickly as possible back into secure buildings and roll call is taken.

- **Shelter** - Students and staff report to assigned classrooms or predetermined locations. Students and staff should move away from doors and windows. Contain staff and students indoors due to external dangers such as natural disasters or chemical spills. Depending on the type of occurrence, specific actions may be required to protect individuals from harm to include:
 - Drop, cover and hold (next page);
 - Close and tape all doors and seal the gap between the bottom of the door and the floor;
 - Avoid areas with windows, glass, and doors until the danger has passed
- **Severe Weather** - Students and staff report to assigned predetermined locations in the building. Students and staff should be kept away from doors and windows. Contain students and staff, implementing drop, cover, and hold actions (see below) until weather event has passed.

Lockdown – Lock all exterior doors. Staff and students are instructed to report to the nearest classroom or securable location and close and lock all doors and windows. Students and staff should move away from doors and windows, drop to the floor, and remain quiet. Staff will continually assess the secured location and the environment for changes in potential threat. If the level of threat changes, placing themselves or others in imminent danger, staff members are authorized and should take additional actions necessary to protect themselves and others from harm to include:

- Removing themselves and others from the area of the threat-**RUN**
- Relocate to another secured area where no threat exists-**HIDE**
- Survive by doing whatever is necessary to stop the threat-**FIGHT**

(Source: Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans, June 2013, page 63-United States Department of Education, et.al.)

Lock-Out - Immediately discontinue all outside activities involving students and staff as a direct result of an external threat or hazard. Staff and students outside the school should return to the interior of the main school building. Continue normal classroom activities. Classroom instruction will continue in all relocatable classrooms. Ensure controlled class changes inside the main building and between the relocatable classrooms, providing staff supervision of students at all times. Lunch should continue with appropriate staff supervision in hallways. Classroom lockdowns are NOT required.

Drop, cover and hold - Students and staff take cover under a desk (DROP), away from windows, cover eyes (COVER), make efforts to protect vital organs, and hold onto the desk legs (HOLD).

WORK EXPERIENCE AND DOCUMENTATION

Many employment applications now have space to record volunteer experience as part of an applicant's work record. You may wish to keep a record of your hours of service as documentation for a future employment application. School staff, with whom you have worked, may be willing to provide letters of reference, if requested by you.

INSURANCE COVERAGE

Under Section 6-106 of the Education Article, volunteers are considered agents of the local board of education for the purpose of comprehensive liability insurance and workers compensation coverage while on school property and acting within the scope of duties assigned.

REMEMBER . . .

It is essential that volunteers remember that as the teacher plans activities and tasks, there are guidelines that must be followed. Volunteer assistance is valued; however, only the teacher may:

- Grade students' assignments and/or tests
- Contact parents regarding student progress
- Evaluate student progress
- Give food or beverage to a student
- Initiate instruction
- Diagnose student needs
- Counsel students
- Write comments on student papers
- Discipline students
- Give advertisements or fund solicitations

CHILD ABUSE

Child Abuse may present itself as physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental injury, and neglect

Physical Abuse

Indicators of Physical Abuse may include bruises, burns, welts, cuts, abrasions, and fractures or certain behaviors like overly compliant/aggressive, avoidance of care takers/physical contact, distrustful, easily frustrated, and crying

Sexual Child Abuse

Involves children under the age of 18 and can include sexual molestation or exploitation of the child. Behavioral Indicators of Sexual Abuse may include unusual sexual behavior or knowledge, poor peer relationships/isolation, few social skills, depression, repeated runaways, nightmares. Physical Indicators of Sexual Abuse may include difficulty walking or sitting, repeated medical problems with stomach or digestive system, diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease or pregnancy

Mental Abuse/Injury

Mental abuse is the impairment of a child's mental or psychological ability to function. The Impairment must be observable, identifiable, and substantial

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

If you suspect abuse you do not need to investigate but **must report it**. This is the **LAW** and includes **ALL** school employees, volunteers, and bus drivers. Students are under our care and supervision.

As the reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect, you have legal protections.

Protections of a reporter include immunity from civil or criminal penalty, and confidentiality. If you do not report, you are subject to professional and legal sanctions/actions that may include criminal (prosecuted as common law conspiracy and obstruction of justice).

Possible offenders of child abuse or neglect may be any person with temporary or permanent care, custody, or supervision of a child.

When an employee is suspected of child abuse the reporter must:

- Notify your Site Administrator immediately.
- Notify the Department of Social Services or Sheriff's Office (by phone) as soon as possible.
- Prepare a written report within 48 hours to Department of Social Services with appropriate copies.

The principal/site administrator will notify the Director of Safety and Security, who will notify the police.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships between volunteers/visitors and students should be professional at all times, and one of cooperation, understanding, and mutual respect.

FRATERNIZATION

Volunteers and visitors should NOT engage in interactions with students that rise to the level of fraternization, engage in non-school related communications with students, including electronic communications unless under the supervision of the parents/legal guardians. **Communicating with students on social networking sites such as Facebook, and Twitter is prohibited under SMCPs' policy.**

REMEMBER:

- No dating or fraternization with students under any circumstance!
- Students are under our care and protection.

WARNING:

- You can lose your approval status as a volunteer
- Inappropriate interactions with students will be reported to authorities for investigation

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Governed by the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- All student records are sensitive in nature.
- Some records are more sensitive than others such as discipline records, treatment for alcohol/drugs and child abuse and neglect. Reporting forms are not kept in the students' record
- All student records are protected by FERPA.
- **Protect Students' Privacy**
- Student information may only be released with expressed written permission by parents/legal guardians.
- Educators must have the "need to know" to access identified student information.
- All conversations about students must be for professional reasons only and in appropriate locations.

AN SMCPs VOLUNTEER'S LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect,
- Reporting Sexual Harassment or a Hostile Work Environment
- Maintaining Student Confidentiality-Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA),
- Admitting Homeless Students, and
- Reporting Delinquent and Gang Related Acts.



*The safety and security of our students, staff, and visitors
is one of the highest priorities of the
St. Mary's County Public School System*