

Charles County Public Schools

Volunteer Handbook 2023-24 school year



The Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) Volunteer Handbook includes guidelines, rules and expectations for all volunteers interested in supporting staff, students and the school system. As part of our safety efforts, CCPS has a new volunteer support system to ensure all volunteers receive proper training, information and easy access to a required background check. Please use the information in this handbook as a guide to support you as a member of the CCPS community. Information for volunteers is posted on the CCPS website at <https://www.ccboe.com/parents/volunteer-registration>.

Dear Charles County Public Schools Volunteers:

Welcome to our partnership of teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community members who help make Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) great.

Together we make a difference in the lives of students. Thank you for volunteering and helping CCPS provide high-quality instruction in a safe environment in every school, for each student. Your role as a volunteer provides tremendous support for children.

As part of our safety efforts, CCPS has a new volunteer support system to ensure you get proper training, information and easy access to a background check. Please use the information in this handbook to guide and support you as a member of the CCPS community. Thank you for making a difference by volunteering and partnering with Charles County Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



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Charles County Public Schools

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The Charles County public school system does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability in its programs, activities or employment practices. For inquiries, please contact Kathy Kiessling, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator (students) or Nikial Majors, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 coordinator (employees/ adults), at Charles County Public Schools, Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, P.O. Box 2770, La Plata, MD 20646; 301-932-6610/301-870-3814. For special accommodations call 301-934-7230 or TDD 1-800-735-2258 two weeks prior to the event. CCPS provides nondiscriminatory equal access to school facilities in accordance with its Use of Facilities rules to designated youth groups (including, but not limited to, the Boy Scouts).

Thank you for your interest in volunteering in Charles County Public Schools (CCPS). Volunteers are vital to the success of our schools, and we depend on volunteer contributions to enhance programs and services for students.

Volunteers assist CCPS employees and supplement student services and learning opportunities. Although volunteers are not paid staff members, they are expected to follow CCPS policies, rules and procedures at all times. On the following pages, you will learn how to sign up to volunteer in CCPS, what training you need, CCPS guidelines and responsibilities, safety procedures and other helpful resources for volunteers.

If you have questions, please contact your child’s school principal or the Office of School Safety and Security at 301-392-5551.

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Volunteer Screening Process

Charles County Public Schools pays for volunteer background checks. CCPS identifies volunteers as follows:

Volunteers

- Volunteers are required to complete a background check and sex offender registry check.
- Sample activities include mentor, tutor, non-paid coaches/sponsors, overnight and day trip chaperones, reading/math partners, parent group organization officers (PTO, boosters, team parents, etc.).

Visitors

- All visitors must sign in at the school/center office. Visitors must present photo identification and sign in on a designated office computer that not only allows us to track who is in CCPS schools and buildings, but also screens visitors through the National Sex Offender Registry.

Volunteer Program Goals

- Volunteers support teachers and staff with curriculum and school programs.
- Volunteers expand parent and community involvement with CCPS while meeting the unique needs of our students.
- Volunteers help school staff and students with extracurricular activities and afterschool programs.
- Volunteers provide supervision and direction for students while participating in off-site learning opportunities like field trips.
- Volunteers offer direct support to students needing assistance with assigned tasks.

CCPS Volunteer Guidelines

Volunteers should...

- Complete a volunteer application and background check.
- Sign in at the beginning of each school visit and sign out prior to leaving school grounds. CCPS uses ScholarChip, a system that tracks who is in our schools each day and also screens all visitors through a national sex offender registry.
- Wear a visible nametag at all times during service. A nametag is provided when you sign in at the office.
- Make every effort to perform volunteer duties in the presence of a CCPS employee and avoid unsupervised, one-on-one student contact.

- Report immediately to the school principal any expression or behavior that suggests an individual may intend to harm another person or commit an act of violence.
- Work under the direction of professional staff.
- Only be present in the area in which you are assigned.
- Observe all CCPS policies, regulations and school rules.
- Report behavior concerns to a teacher or school administrator.
- Maintain strict confidentiality concerning information you might see or hear about students or staff, including grades, records and abilities.
- Refrain from using electronic devices while volunteering except to call for assistance in an emergency. CCPS electronic devices, such as computers, may not be used for personal business.
- Set a good example for students by your manner, appearance and behavior. Dress appropriate to the work setting and assignment. The principal has the discretion to determine whether attire is disruptive to the educational process.
- Maintain communication with your volunteer supervisor.
- Conduct yourself to the standards of behavior, which secures maximum education benefits.
- Maintain good public relations and contribute to individual and group safety.
- Notify the school as soon as possible if you are unable to come at a scheduled volunteer time.

Volunteers should not...

- Discipline students.
- Bring visitors, children, siblings or others in their care to the volunteer site.
- Take photographs or videos of students unless requested by a teacher or administrator for a school project.
- Post any student photographs, videos or information on any social media network.
- Give medication to students; only school nurses may dispense medicine.
- Touch students in any way that is aggressive, disciplinary or sexual in nature.
- Touch a student's personal belongings.
- Share contact information with students, including phone numbers, addresses, email or social media sites.
- Bring any food or drinks intended for student consumption due to potential student allergies.

Safety and Security

All volunteers are screened through a national sex offender registry. CCPS requires an additional background check for volunteers who have regular contact with students.

Volunteers who are cleared through a confidential background check are placed on a school or center list. School administrators will contact volunteers when there is a school/student need that matches a volunteer's interest or skills.

All volunteers and visitors must sign in at the school office on arrival. CCPS uses a system called ScholarChip for check in and out. When volunteers visit any school for the first time, they will be asked to present a government-issued photo identification or a driver's license to a staff member in the school office. The identification/license will be scanned. CCPS collects the following information: your photo, name and date of birth. The system compares your information against sex offender data nationwide. If your name appears on any of the lists or you refuse to scan your identification/license, you will not be allowed to access the school. On subsequent visits, you only need to scan your identification and your name will be selected from an existing list of previous visitors. Your information is not shared outside the school and is kept on a secure server.

Please sign out when you leave so administrators know you are no longer in the building. Thank you for helping CCPS keep our students, staff and schools safe.

Confidentiality

Volunteers may not share any confidential information that they learn from their time spent volunteering at a school.

CCPS students have the right to confidentiality of their information. Additionally, Congress has addressed the privacy-related concerns of educators, parents and students by enacting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Your volunteer service with CCPS assumes an obligation to maintain student confidentiality. Volunteers who violate confidentiality laws by disclosing confidential information will be dismissed.

Confidentiality is the protection of all personally identifiable data, information and records collected, used or maintained by CCPS. Volunteers will not have unauthorized access to student records or any confidential records at the schools. Confidentiality requirements also apply to discussions about a student.

Parents, friends or community members may ask you questions about a student's problems or progress. You must refer all questions to an authorized school employee. You may not share information about a student, even with members of your own family or the student's family.

Remember, violating a student's confidentiality is against the law.

Protecting Our Volunteers

Please stay in sight of school staff when working with students. Make sure you are working in an open, visible area and do not allow yourself to be in a situation where your actions might be misconstrued. Avoid physical contact beyond handshakes and high fives.

Child Abuse Reporting

All CCPS employees and volunteers are required by state law and the Board of Education to report suspected child abuse or neglect cases to the Department of Social Services or the appropriate law enforcement agency. Any parent or student who would like to report child abuse or neglect is encouraged to call the Charles County Department of Social Services at 301-392-6400, or the Charles County Sheriff's Office at 301-932-2222, or the National Child Abuse Hotline at 800-422-4453.

Resignation and Dismissal

If you decide not to continue volunteering with CCPS, please inform your school principal and those you work with directly. CCPS reserves the right to discontinue the volunteer relationship with any individual at any time.

Questions and Answers

Q. I signed up to volunteer last school year. Do I need to sign up again?

A. Yes, all volunteers must sign up this year and each subsequent year. Volunteers complete online training and agree to a background check, which is valid for one school year. You will receive an email when the background check is complete and you are approved.

Q. I have children at multiple schools. Do I need to fill out multiple registration forms?

A. No. You have the option of selecting three schools when you fill out the volunteer forms. You will only be contacted to volunteer at the schools you have expressed an interest in helping.

Q. My child's teacher knows my schedule and me. Do I really have to check in and out in the office every time I volunteer?

A. Yes. The sign-in process helps school administrators track volunteer involvement, who is in the building, and keep students safe.

Q. How soon after completing training and turning in my application can I start volunteering?

A. You may begin volunteering once you have received notice that you have been approved to volunteer

and the school invites you. If you know you will be volunteering at some time during the year, completing your registration forms at the beginning of the year can cut out any lag time between registration and approval. It can take up to a week for the background check to clear. Principals place volunteer's according to the needs of the school and based on the qualifications required for effective job performance.

Q. Who can I contact with more questions about volunteer policies and procedures?

A. Please contact the Office of School Safety and Security at 301-392-5551.

Steps to Becoming a CCPS Volunteer

- Review the Child Abuse and Sexual Harassment presentation and the Volunteer Handbook before proceeding. You may download a copy of the handbook to keep for your records.
- Pass a short quiz to ensure your understanding of the Child Abuse and Sexual Harassment presentation.
- Answer a short series of prescreening questions.
- Complete all the steps required for the submission of the background check.

Thank You for Volunteering

Thank you again for your interest in volunteering in Charles County Public Schools. Please note that applying for a volunteer position does not guarantee that your services will be required during the school year. Visit the CCPS website at www.ccboe.com/index.php/volunteer-information for more information.

