



Expectations, Policies, and Procedures



To promote a successful experience, it is essential volunteers adhere to guidelines and policies. You will also want to learn the school and classroom rules and procedures. Volunteers need to comply with the following:

Authorization to Become a VIP Volunteer/Returning Volunteers

- Successful completion of the application, interview/orientation, and background check_(for volunteers age 18 and over) are required **PRIOR** to volunteering.
- The VIP administrative staff is authorized to determine whether a candidate is suitable for placement based on objective measures and judgement.
- Authorization is renewed annually without the need to repeat the steps to volunteer unless there has been a break in service of a year or more.

Accidents, Reporting

If you are injured while volunteering, seek immediate assistance. Report the incident to supervising staff and the VIP coordinator as soon as possible.

Appearance/Attire/Fragrances

- Volunteers' appearance should reflect a position of authority, with attire neat and appropriate for the conditions and performance of their duties, allowing for comfort. Ask supervising staff for guidance if you have questions.
- Avoid wearing fragrances during your visits due to sensitivities of students and staff.

Behavior Expectations/Substance Use, Weapons

Volunteers should set a good example by maintaining professional conduct and language. ***While on school property, volunteers must refrain from using profanity, possession of illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco/tobacco paraphernalia, carrying weapons, discussion of inappropriate topics, selling merchandise to promote a business, or proselytizing***

Check-In and Out Procedure/Recordkeeping

Most district sites are ***secured facilities***. For the safety of those within the building, these procedures are followed:

Check-in and out Procedure:

- Upon entering the buildings, volunteers identify themselves as "VIP volunteers" when prompted after pressing the security button.
- Volunteer must go directly to the school's office and provide identification, preferably a driver's license. Volunteers receive a name badge in the school office each visit to wear during their time at the school.

Recordkeeping: Accurate records allow VIP to monitor volunteer activity, document hours for annual state and district reports, observe trends, and recognize years of service.

- Volunteers with **ongoing placements** return to the school office when leaving to log their service hours each time they volunteer. **Special event volunteer** hours are tracked separately. Volunteers **working offsite** are asked to maintain their records and will be contacted by VIP staff during the regular collection of service hour data.
- Volunteer must provide emergency contact information on their service hour form.

Confidentiality/Date Privacy

Not only is confidentiality vital to the integrity of the VIP program, it is required by federal law (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974) regarding student records and information. Out of respect for the privacy of students, staff, and other volunteers in the building, volunteers must maintain strict and professional boundaries around confidentiality. Annually, volunteers will be required to sign a **Pledge of Confidentiality** (see *Forms* section) that acknowledges:

- Academic, behavior, medical, performance, and personal details are **private** and **confidential**.
- Volunteers may not reveal read, heard, or observed information about individual students and staff, nor share questions and/or concerns about students and staff beyond the teacher, principal/program director, and VIP coordinator. This includes not sharing information with the students' family members.
- Volunteers may not use social media to discuss/post photos or information pertaining to individual student, staff, or situations.

Contact with Students: Physical, Outside of School

- Physical Contact with Students: Many preschool and elementary age students are likely to show affection to volunteers. **If the child initiates the contact**, volunteers may respond briefly with a hug (preferably side-to-side), arm around a student, high-5, fist bump or thumbs-up if the volunteer is comfortable doing so. Some students are not comfortable with touch and may want more personal space.

Students are not permitted on volunteer's laps except if directed otherwise in certain preschool programs only. Volunteers are not permitted to kiss or tickle students. Volunteers should avoid physical contact with middle, high school, and adult learners. Any unusual or inappropriate contact demonstrated by students needs to be reported to the teacher.

- Contact Outside of School: For the safety of community volunteers and the students with whom they work, **all communication (including all social media platforms) and meetings between them and/or their families are to take place only at and during the location, date, and time of the volunteer's placement**. Volunteers are not permitted to disclose their phone, address, emails, etc. to students. (Also see *Transportation of Students* section.)

Dependability/Maintaining your schedule

Staff and students are counting on volunteers to honor their commitment, to be prompt, and dependable. **Volunteers are asked to notify the supervising staff person at the site if they will be late or absent, giving as much notice as possible**. This allows the staff to plan accordingly.



Diseases/Illness/Health

- Illness: Volunteers will be permitted to volunteer provided they are physically, mentally, and emotionally able to safely perform tasks assigned to them, and their volunteering does not present a health threat to others in the building.
- Handwashing: Volunteers are encouraged to practice effective handwashing to minimize the risk of infection to students and themselves.

Duties and Responsibilities

Volunteers are encouraged to clarify their duties and responsibilities with the supervising staff person. Volunteers must be mindful they assist under the direction of district staff who have the final authority.

Ending Volunteer Assignment

- Voluntary (trying new opportunities, leaving program) Volunteers are encouraged to tell the VIP administrative staff and/or the AVC know if they would like to pursue another assignment in the district. They are also asked to inform the VIP administrative staff and/or the AVC if they are ending their commitment as a volunteer.
- Involuntary (redirecting to another placement, dismissal from program) Volunteering is a privilege, not a right. If at any time a volunteer does not follow the expectations, policies and procedures, the volunteer is subject to dismissal or may be reassigned to a more suitable placement. If a volunteer is dismissed, the school district reserves the right not to reassign the volunteer.

Evaluations

Annually, VIP surveys volunteers in ongoing placements and their supervisors to gather valuable information about their experience, evaluate performance, and improve the VIP program. Volunteers' and supervisors' surveys are kept confidential unless VIP receives permission to share the specific information with either party.

Harassment/School Environment

- It is the school district's policy to maintain a learning environment free from harassment, violence, or discrimination based on actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, gender, marital status, disability status, sexual orientation, or age. A copy of the district policy prohibiting offensive behavior and sexual harassment is available by request.
- Volunteers are protected by these policies as well as expected to abide by them.

Incentives, Motivating Students, Giving Gifts, Money, Food

Students respond well to volunteers' *verbal* encouragement and positive acknowledgement of their performance. Volunteers are asked to refrain from using gifts, food, or money as rewards.

Reporting Abuse, Bullying, Neglect

As you build trust, your students, they may begin to confide in you. You may also become aware of disturbing information about their life experiences. Take time to listen patiently, calmly, and in a non-reactive manner to show you care without displaying judgement. Please keep in mind the following:

- Some comforting responses may be: "I'm sorry this happened to you." "I imagine this was difficult. Thank you for telling me".

- Do not promise secrecy to the student. Share you will need to let the supervising staff know what has been disclosed to you.
- Volunteers are required by state law to notify the supervising staff if you have reason to believe through observation, suspicion, or disclosure by a student that the child/adult is being abused, bullied, or neglected. The staff person will follow proper procedures determined by the State of Minnesota.

Restroom Use

For safety considerations, volunteers use staff restrooms. Volunteers do not accompany students in the restrooms.

Safety/Crisis Plans

Crisis plans are in place in the event of an emergency. While in the building, you may experience a safety drill or an actual event. It's important to follow instructions from the P.A. system and/or staff at all times. An all-clear message will signal the end of the drill and staff will know when it is permitted to return to the classroom, open the door, etc.

Please remember to:

- Stay calm. Students will follow your example.
- Know and follow regulations and procedures; familiarize yourself with appropriate routes.
- Assist staff with following safety procedures.

School Closings, Schedules

- Closings- Schools may be closed for a variety of reasons including holidays/vacation, equipment malfunction at facilities, staff development, and weather. For updates, check the district's website for scheduled closings and emergency updates.
- Schedules- Please know classroom schedules may change. Volunteers will want to check with supervising staff to learn if there are upcoming conflicts with their volunteer schedule.

School Property for Personal Use

Personal use of school property is not permitted by law.

Space, Where to Volunteer in the Building

Locations will vary, depending on the assignment and the teacher's preferences for how best to work with a student. Volunteers often assist students in a classroom, hallway, or media center-- always in a public area with the expectation of being visible to staff for the well-being of the volunteers and students.

Technology/Cell phone Use

- Volunteers are expected to comply with school rules regarding personal electronic devices.
- Use of the district's network/internet resources is intended only for educational and informational purposes such as research, instruction, collaborative projects, and distribution of district information.
- Cell phones should not be used in the classroom as they disrupt the learning environment and are a distraction to building rapport with students and staff.



Transportation of Students

Volunteers are prohibited from transporting students.