



To Excellence in the Monroe County Schools

Volunteer Handbook Monroe County School District

MARK T. PORTER
Superintendent of Schools



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Dear Monroe County School District (MCSD) Volunteer,

Please allow me this opportunity to personally thank you for your contribution of time and talent. As a volunteer, you provide our diverse student population greater opportunities to have individualized attention, a measure that can be critical to their academic success. With you, we do more.

My team of professionals and I believe volunteers are a vital part of the Monroe County School District. As volunteers join with us and become an active part of the MCSD team enhancing the quality of our student's education by:

- Reinforcing skills taught by teachers
- Giving students individualized attention
- Helping students develop confidence and competence
- Preparing students to be engaged citizens
- Serving as positive role models
- Being good listeners
- Demonstrating good character traits
- Facilitating the student transition from dependence to independence
- Conducting one's self responsibly whether during school hours or beyond
- Enhancing the district's college to career readiness efforts

Our School Board members are also proud of the community involvement in our schools. Last year, volunteers donated thousands of service hours, representing a generous investment into our District. Each school individualizes its volunteer program to meet the needs of the students, faculty and staff. Under the leadership of the Principal, the volunteer service designee provides training and direction that will enable you to support the academic needs of our students in a manner that complements our curricular programming while harnessing the uniqueness of the skill set you so thoughtfully share.

As an approved volunteer, you are a role model for students. You serve at the discretion of the local school and are expected to operate within the boundaries of the school board policy. Our goal is that you find your volunteer experience rewarding. We are counting on you to become an advocate for schools by sharing your positive experiences and encouraging others to become involved.

As we look ahead and towards the upcoming school year, our district family thanks you in advance for your valuable time and service. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns as they arise. The MCSD Human Resources office can be reached at 305.293.1400, ext. 53329/53330 or by email at Maria.Castro@KeysSchools.com or Heather.Linn@KeysSchools.com. All visits to our offices are by appointment only.

Sincerest Regards,
Mark Porter, Superintendent Monroe County School District

MCS D Volunteer Procedures

The contributions of the District volunteers are a vital and important part of the total instructional effort. District volunteers make important contributions which assist in achieving the District's mission. Volunteers play an essential role in the provision of a quality education for all of our students.

With your volunteer assistance, the District's goal to provide a safe environment for students and staff is strengthened. We encourage all parents, guardians, community members, student graduates and business partners to contribute to learner success as a school volunteer. However, there are prerequisites needed for your kind participation. The State of Florida and the Monroe County School District have developed policies and procedures to which we all must adhere to maintain a safe and secure learning environment.

To accomplish a safe and secure learning environment in MCS D, volunteers shall be screened based on (1) the level of direct contact they may have with students and (2) the types of duties that they may perform. Outside agencies that provide volunteers to work with District students are required to screen their volunteers at a level consistent with this policy and provide evidence of insurance pursuant to board policy and/or practices.

Definitions (all volunteers must be cleared at the appropriate volunteer level)

1. *Volunteer Resource Speaker*: Anyone who speaks during career days, etc., without compensation. Resource speakers will generate volunteer hours, but are not subject to this policy.
2. *Volunteer Visitor*: Anyone who comes onto school property, but who is not assigned duties as a school volunteer.
3. *General Volunteer*: Any non-paid person appointed by the School Board or its designee who performs assigned duties that support the District's students and staff. Volunteers may include, but are not limited to, parents, guardians, community members, students and others who assist teachers or other members of the school/District staff. This policy specifically excludes "outside tutors" to whom a student may be referred for remediation and other assistance. The District makes no recommendation, endorsement, or other representations regarding "outside tutors"; it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to screen outside tutors.

Volunteer Levels:

The "Volunteer Level" provides the minimum guidelines for determining the documentation and background check required. Each volunteer will be assigned to one of the following levels:

Volunteer Level I

These volunteers may have direct contact with students and must have constant school district personnel supervision at all times. Under NO conditions may Level 1 volunteers be alone with students. They may also be assigned duties such as an office assistant, a duty that may not directly involve students. However, at no time should a Level I volunteer move about the school's campus singularly. They must be accompanied by an authorized district employee at all times. These opportunities may be awarded with

advisement of the site administrator. Under certain conditions, more strict screening may be required and at the discretion of district administration and this opportunity is subject to:

Additionally this level clearance requires:

- a. Applicant response to screening questions
- b. Monroe County Clerk of Courts' Office Check Florida Sexual Offenders and Predators website Check
- c. Other supplementary information may be required depending on screening outcomes.

Volunteer Level 2:

These volunteers may have direct contact with students and are allowed to move about the school campus singularly. They may serve outside of the presence of a District employee, however remain under the supervisory responsibility of authorized district employees. Except as noted above, these individuals are assigned duties including, but not limited to tutoring, working in the school health room/clinic, overnight duties (e.g., chaperoning an overnight field trip), coaching responsibilities, or a long-term mentoring assignment. All Level 2 volunteers must have the approval of the site administrator in order to gain this level of clearance. Appointments for this clearance level must be made in advance by the school office manager or by an authorized administrator. Under certain conditions, more strict screening may be required and at the discretion of district administration and this opportunity is subject to:

1. Applicant response to screening questions
2. Fingerprint Background Check (FBI & FDLE Check)
3. Fingerprinting fee (charges vary)
 - a. The fee is payable by money order or credit card only
4. The fingerprints must be submitted to and cleared by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the FBI, and the District before any volunteer will be permitted to serve at a school in a Level 2 capacity.
5. Other supplementary information may be required depending on screening outcomes.
6. An appointment is required with Human Resources to be fingerprinted. Fingerprints will need to be retaken every 5 years in order to maintain Level 2 status.

Application and Approval:

Volunteer applicants must complete an online District Volunteer Application, upload/submit a copy of their driver's license or other photo identification as acceptable to the District, to the Volunteer Contact at the school, through the VISA system, submit to a background check (see "volunteer levels" above), and receive approval by the Human Resources office, before being assigned as a volunteer. The District reserves the right to deny placement to an applicant volunteer based on the result of the background check in accordance with District standards or to revoke the volunteer's clearance based on subsequent information. In accordance with F.S. 943.043151, all school volunteers must be checked against the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Sexual Predator/Offender database.

Active applications must be updated annually. Applications that are inactive during the year will be deactivated at the end of the school year.

Confidentiality: The District shall maintain all volunteer application materials and records in a confidential manner consistent with F.S. Chapter 119 (Public Records). All files and other records maintained pursuant to this policy shall be stored in a central location.

AGE GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERING

These guidelines will be used when determining the eligibility of student volunteers within the Monroe County School District.

1. Students that have recently completed the eighth grade or their high school freshman year will not be eligible to volunteer at any MCSD elementary or middle school for one full school year after the date of completion. Eligibility to volunteer within the middle schools will be granted once they have become academically classified as sophomores.

2. Students that have recently completed high school, graduates, will not be eligible to volunteer at any MCSD high school for one full school year after the date of graduation. Eligibility to volunteer within the high schools will be granted once they have completed this waiting period.

FIELD TRIPS

Overnight Field Trips:

Chaperones for any MCSD field trip or event that will take place overnight are required to be a minimum of 21 years of age to attend, as well as meet all Level 2 volunteer requirements.

Field Trips

Field trip sites become an extension of the school site. All policies and procedures governing volunteers at the school site extend to field trips.

Chaperones are approved volunteers and are expected to have volunteered at the school site **before** serving on field trips.

The number of chaperones that are needed for a trip is the decision of the teacher and the school administrator. The school administrator may limit the number of adults accompanying students on any given field trip.

Chaperones are responsible for the students that the teacher has placed in their care. If chaperones must leave their group of students for some reason, they should make arrangements with the teacher. Chaperones do not neglect their obligation to students to visit with other adults.

FIELD TRIP TRANSPORTATION

Transportation by private vehicle is discouraged, however when school bus or commercial charter bus transportation is unavailable or impractical due to the size of the group this may become the most viable option. Schools requesting these clearances for this purpose should do so by first securing the approval of the school Principal with the knowledge of the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning. Once all approvals are received, the applicants must complete an online District Volunteer Application, upload/submit a copy of their driver's license to the Volunteer Contact at the school, through the VISA

system, submit to a background check and receive approval from the Human Resources office before being assigned to volunteer. Volunteers who wish to drive their vehicles must be approved Level 2 volunteers. Private transportation must be approved prior to any trip by school Principal with advisement of district administration and appropriate clearances through the Department of Human Resources.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS

We realize that you are serving voluntarily and we consider your commitment to the program a valuable one. The volunteer along with the staff member should maintain a professional attitude and mutual respect. As a member of the educational team, the volunteer should remember the importance of:

- **Dependability**

The teacher has planned and scheduled student activities for you. Please notify the volunteer contact at the school if you must be absent.

- **Confidentiality**

Never discuss or repeat any information about a child with anyone other than the appropriate staff member.

- **Communication**

Discuss any ideas or questions with your assigned staff member; do not let a misunderstanding become a problem.

- **School procedures and policy**

Familiarize yourself with the school's rules, plans and procedures.

- **Honesty**

Be honest in your approach and attitude, it will aid in developing trust with staff and students.

- **Patience**

Be patient and positive when working with students. Encourage and expect them to succeed.

- **Flexibility**

Try to be flexible when responding to the needs of the staff and students. Everyone has on/off days.

- **Consistent**

Be consistent while dealing with students. They come to rely on those who are steady and true.

- **Friendly**

With a warm smile and kind words you can accomplish miracles.

****Remember....**

Volunteers should never be put in the position of having to enforce discipline. That is the responsibility of the teacher or administrator. Immediately notify a staff member if you are encountering a discipline problem.

Volunteer Appearance, Health and Safety

Appearance:

All school volunteers should abide by the MCS D dress code policy established for students. Clothing which advertises alcoholic beverages, contains obscenities or suggestive logos shall not be worn to any school or school sponsored event/field trip. Clothing that exposes the midriff such as tube tops, crop tops and halter tops are not to be worn. Undergarments must be worn at all times and no ill-fitting clothing which exposes those undergarments is permitted. (Please refer to the district dress code policy for more details)

Health and Safety:

Please do not come to school and volunteer if you are ill (cold, sore throat, cough or fever). It is important that we try our best to prevent the spreading of germs to our students and staff. You may feel that you are leaving the teacher or staff member short-handed, but, with notice and consideration everyone will understand. They will be happy to see you when you return rested and healthy.

Please be sure to follow all safety rules set in place at the school or event for which you are a volunteer. Know the emergency procedures and exits at the school or event location. Learn proper use of school equipment and supplies. If an accident occurs, do not move or remove the student(s) from the area and immediately notify a staff member. They will initiate the proper emergency protocol.

School Volunteer Opportunities

Classroom Volunteer:

The classroom volunteer provides teacher reinforcement by assisting with tasks in many different categories, clerical work, arts and crafts, reading groups, room clean up and organization. As a classroom volunteer you allow the teacher more professional time to spend with their class and/or individual students. (Level 1 and Level 2)

Media Center Volunteer:

The media center volunteer provides assistance with tasks such as, shelving books, cataloging materials, and checking out/in books from students. As a media center volunteer you might also help with audio and visual equipment under the supervision of the media specialist. (Level 1 and Level 2)

School Activities and Events Volunteer:

The school activities and events volunteer provides support as needed for any special project, field trip or school sponsored event. This could include serving on the PTA/PTO or School Advisory Committee. (Level 1 and Level 2 with exceptions; please refer to District Policy for guidelines)

Special Enrichment Volunteer:

The special enrichment volunteer is someone who speaks to classes or groups on topics related to occupations or community interest. Based on their background they can share their experiences and knowledge with students and staff. These volunteers may be businessmen, medical professionals, lawyers and public safety workers. (Level 1 and Level 2)

General School Volunteer:

The general school volunteer provides a wide variety of assistance to the school staff. They can assist in the lunchroom, front office, production, student store and much more. (Level 1 and Level 2)

LEARN THE FAQ'S...

Volunteer Questions and Answers

1. How do I become a volunteer for MCSD?

Any person who is interested in volunteering may contact the school to gain permission. Then, complete an application on Volunteers in School Activities (VISA) system. You will then be asked to complete your personal information, submit a criminal history (if applicable), identify your preferred location(s), availability and submit a photo ID.

2. What are the qualifications to become a volunteer?

The qualifications needed to become a volunteer are first and foremost the desire to help your community and the sincere interest in our MCSD students. You must have the ability to follow all district school policies and procedures, as well as, the willingness to make a definite time commitment. **Level 1** volunteers are screened at a local and state level. As a Level 1 you must be with a staff member at all times during your volunteer service with the school. **Level 2** volunteers are fingerprinted and cleared through an additional federal screening process. As a Level 2 you may supervise small groups of children and or assist on field trips overnight.

3. Where do I check in once I have become a Level 1 or Level 2 volunteer?

When you have completed the application and background screening to become an active volunteer and have been properly cleared, you will be invited and are welcomed to visit the school(s) you selected on your application. You should always check in and out of the school's front office when you are performing a volunteer service. It is important that your time is documented and that the school is constantly aware of your whereabouts while on our campuses. Remember schools are secured environments.

4. Why is it important that my time is recorded at the schools?

It is important that you check in with our VISA system every time you are volunteering because that is the way we track our volunteers' involvement with the schools and community. It enables us to give recognition to you, the volunteer, and the schools as well. Recognition comes from the National, State and local levels and it is one of the many important aspects used when looking at MCSD as a successful Florida school district.

5. May I bring my pre-school child with me when I volunteer?

No, bringing pre-school children with you to school presents a liability issue for the school. It is also a disruption to the students and does not allow for the volunteer to give their full attention to the teacher or staff member they have committed to helping that day.

6. Can I talk about my volunteer experiences with family and friends?

Yes, we want you to talk about the school and your involvement as a volunteer but it must remain specific to you and your personal experiences. Confidentiality is a vital part of your commitment to MCSD. You are not to repeat any information as it pertains to staff and students personal records, grades, test scores and or behavior plans. When you completed your application and signed the acknowledgement you agreed to such confidentiality under state and federal laws.

7. What do I do about a discipline issue with a student(s)?

Discipline is the legal responsibility of the school administrators and teachers. Volunteers should never be put in a position of having to enforce discipline. If you are having a problem, inform a staff member immediately.

8. What should I do if I am unable to be at the school or event at my assigned time?

As soon as you are aware that you are not going to make your assigned day or time whether due to illness or scheduling conflicts, please get in touch with the school's volunteer contact. They will let the teacher or staff member know right away. Keep in mind that you should start out small when you begin to volunteer so that you do not over commit. Teachers depend on your reliability and so do the students.

9. I am a high school freshman; can I volunteer at a middle school?

No, you cannot volunteer at your old middle school or any other MCSD middle school at this time. You must wait a full school year before going back into the middle schools (sophomore year).

10. I am a recent high school graduate; can I volunteer at my high school?

No, you cannot volunteer at your old high school or any other MCSD high school at this time. You must wait a full school year from the date of your graduation before you are able to go back into the school and volunteer.

11. How old do you have to be to volunteer on an overnight field trip?

The minimum age for a volunteer/chaperone to attend an overnight field trip is 21 years old.

12. Where do I check in if the front office is closed?

All volunteer activity coordinators can access a pre-printed roster of all volunteers cleared for service. Please feel free to see your local coordinator for your clearance status should questions arise or should you be present to serve after office hours.

A Note of Appreciation...

The Monroe School District appreciates your kind sharing. We value your time and service to our district. The age old adage is true, "It does take an entire village to raise a child". With you at our side, we are confident we can make dreams come true and career to college readiness a reality for all those we serve.

The students Superintendent, School Board, Executive Team, Faculty, and Support Staff Members (Instructional and Non-instructional) thank you!

