

MCPS

Volunteer

Handbook



Forward Thinking, High Achieving.

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www.mcpsmt.org

Missoula County Public Schools (MCPS) is eager to welcome you as a volunteer in our District.

Mission

To ensure every student achieves his or her full potential, regardless of circumstance and ability.

Vision

We communicate; we collaborate; we think critically; and we create. We are Missoula County Public Schools - educational leaders in a global society - fostering uncompromising excellence and empowering all learners.

District Goals

1. Achievement and graduation for all students, regardless of their circumstances and abilities.
2. Define and implement a quality professional development program that encompasses best practices and supports the needs of all staff. Refine and implement a quality evaluation and supervision program for all staff.
3. Cultivate and enhance staff, student, parent, business and community involvement.
4. Restructure the facilities and organization to become more efficient and effective in support of 21st Century Learning.



Policies & Procedures

MCPS Volunteers Are Expected To:

- Adhere to District sign-in/sign-out procedures
- Wear appropriate attire for service and working with students
- Wear visible identification at all times during service
- Maintain communication with their teacher/supervisor
- Adhere to all District policies
- Assist teachers/school staff in non-instructional activities
- Enhance educational experiences and enjoy building relationships with MCPS students

Check-in Procedures

All MCPS volunteers are required to sign in and out at the front desk of their school **every time they volunteer**. This procedure helps the District keep track of volunteer numbers and hours and also covers volunteers under the District's Workers' Compensation while volunteering at school.

School secretaries should fully explain the check-in/check-out procedures to the volunteer, prior to or on their first day as a volunteer in the school.

Attire

MCPS volunteers should wear attire appropriate for working with minors. T-shirts with logos depicting tobacco, alcohol or firearms are prohibited for volunteers and students. A shirt revealing a bare stomach when hands are raised is too short. Dresses, shirts or shorts should extend below fingers when arms are held at the side.

Volunteers are encouraged to bring sufficient shoes and outerwear if they anticipate doing a lot of walking or outdoor work during their shift, because there are no extras at the schools.

Identification

MCPS volunteers are required to wear a nametag or identification when in the schools, just like MCPS employees. Each school has different forms of volunteer nametags, and the school secretary can help determine how to identify the volunteer. When filling out the nametag, volunteers should use the name students are familiar with (i.e. "Grandma Beth" or "Mr. Jones").

Some classes may find it fun to create a special nametag for the volunteer at the beginning of their service.

Policies & Procedures Cont.

Communication with Supervisor

Keeping the lines of communication open between volunteers and teachers can help both feel more comfortable with the volunteer's time in the classroom. The responsibility for this communication falls on both parties. Little misunderstandings can become conflicts if left unaddressed, the same way a small "thank you" or nice word can go a long way toward a happy volunteering experience.

Special Volunteer Positions

Chaperones

For volunteers serving as overnight chaperones for student trips, additional requirements and restrictions apply:

- **Age:** Overnight chaperones must be at least 21 years old.
- **Background Check:** For chaperones attending a field trip for any reason, whether with a specific class or sports team, must pass a background check. Overnight chaperones must also pass an MCPS criminal background check, have NO DUI convictions on their record, and not have any of the prior convictions listed on Page 7.
- **Insurance/Vehicle information:** If the chaperone will be driving students, they must fill out paperwork detailing their vehicle information and registration and meet certain insurance limits. If asked to drive students to an event as a chaperone, volunteers should ask the school secretary or teacher/administrator they work with for this paperwork.

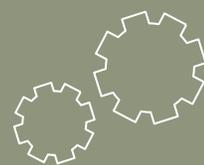
55 years or older?

If yes, the volunteer is eligible to register as an RSVP Tutor or Foster Grandparent volunteer through Missoula Aging Services.

Through these Senior Corps programs, volunteers can join more than 500,000 Americans who are giving back to their communities through service.

As a Senior Corps volunteer, a person may be eligible to receive a small stipend for their service and be covered under an insurance plan that protects them while volunteering in MCPS schools.

To learn more about these programs and the benefits and training members can receive, contact Missoula Aging Services at **(406) 728-7682**.



Special Volunteer Positions Cont.

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Afterschool Programs and Outside Organizations

Volunteers connecting with MCPS through an outside organization or program (e.g., Flagship, YMCA, YWCA GUTS!, Writing Coaches of Missoula, Missoula Aging Services, Boys and Girls Club, Missoula Parks & Rec. etc.,) must adhere to the policies of that organization **in addition to** MCPS Volunteer Program policies and procedures.

Any additional screening and/or background checking required by the outside organization must be fulfilled before volunteering within MCPS. If the organization does not run criminal background checks on their volunteers, those individuals wanting to work in an unsupervised capacity at MCPS must pass a Criminal Background Check prior to volunteering with MCPS.

If volunteers have any questions, or if any policies or procedures outlined by the outside organization conflict with anything detailed in this handbook, please contact the MCPS District Volunteer Coordinator at 728-2400, ext. 1030.

Parent/Teacher Organizations

Parents are the strongest source of volunteers in the District, from PTA/PTOs to booster clubs. However, volunteer work with these organizations does not necessarily fall under the requirements of other MCPS volunteer positions.

If a parent's volunteer activity is limited to a parent/teacher organization or booster club in an out-of-school capacity, and does not involve direct contact with students, then that parent will not be required to register as an MCPS volunteer. However, group-sponsored activities involving parent/student interaction will require a parent to register as an MCPS volunteer.

Building principals and PTA/PTO/booster club leadership will decide whether the volunteer/student interaction at events such as School Stores, Dances/Carnivals, Book Fairs, Coffee Carts, etc., will be classified as supervised or unsupervised, as defined on Page 6 of this handbook. Volunteers wanting to work in an unsupervised capacity are required to pass an MCPS criminal background check.

Family members (e.g., Aunts, Uncles, Grandparents, etc.) wishing to volunteer, and who will be in direct contact with students, must register as MCPS volunteers.

Positions involving unsupervised student contact will require a successful MCPS criminal background check, prior to beginning the volunteer work.

Last-minute volunteers are certainly welcome but, according to MCPS policy, are not permitted to work directly with students because no paperwork or background checks have been completed on their behalf.

Confidentiality Agreement

Volunteer applicants must include a signed Confidentiality Agreement in their completed application packet. Packets must be submitted to the school secretary, who forwards them to the District Volunteer Coordinator for processing and approval. Volunteers cannot begin work until the Coordinator notifies them that they are cleared to do so.

Missoula County Public Schools Confidentiality Agreement

Students in Missoula County Public Schools have the right to expect that information about them will be kept confidential by all volunteers, student interns, practicum students and student job shadow observers. Additionally, the U.S. Congress has addressed the privacy-related concerns of educators, parents, and students by enacting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (known more commonly as “FERPA” or the “Buckley Amendment”). Among other provisions, FERPA allows the government to withdraw federal funds from any educational institution, including Missoula County Public Schools, which disseminates a student’s education records without his or her parent’s consent.

- Each student with whom you work has the right to expect that nothing that happens to or about him or her will be repeated to anyone other than authorized school department employees, as designated by the administrators at your school. Even when discussing a student with those who are directly involved in a student’s education, such as a teacher, principal, or guidance counselor, you may not share otherwise confidential information with them unless it is relevant to the student’s educational growth, safety, or well being.
- You may not share information about a student even with others who are genuinely interested in the student’s welfare, such as social workers, scout leaders, clergy, or nurses/physicians (a grave medical emergency, in which confidential information may be necessary for a student’s care, is the only exception). Thus, you must refer all such questions to the school employees so authorized and indicated to you, typically the student’s teacher or principal.
- Parents, friends, or community members may in good faith ask you questions about a student’s problems or progress. Again, you must refer all such questions to the authorized school employees. You may not share information about a student even with members of your own family or the student’s family.

Before you speak, always remember that violating a student’s confidentiality isn’t just impolite, it’s against the law!

Agreement:

I, (print name) _____, as a volunteer, student intern, practicum student, student job shadow observer, for Missoula County Public Schools agree never to disclose information about a student’s records to anyone other than an authorized school department employee. I will refer all requests for such information from those not directly involved in the student’s education to authorized school department employees.

Signature _____

Date _____



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Criminal Background Checks

District Policy 5122 requires that all volunteers who will have **unsupervised** contact with MCPS students must pass a name-based criminal background check. This policy helps ensure the safety of all MCPS students and is not intended to discriminate based on criminal history. Background checks do not require, and will not reveal, any financial information (e.g., credit history, taxes or income).

If a volunteer declines to complete a criminal background check, or has a prior conviction from the list on page 7, they may still be eligible to volunteer with MCPS, however in a limited **supervised** capacity.

- **Unsupervised** status allows volunteers to be in contact with students without the presence/supervision of an MCPS employee (i.e. teacher, administrator).
- **Supervised** status allows volunteers to be in contact with students only while in the presence of or under the supervision of an MCPS employee or approved program supervisor.

Supervised status is attained through evaluation of a completed application form and confidentiality agreement. The District Volunteer Coordinator evaluates all materials and then notifies each applicant accordingly.

Unsupervised status is attained through the evaluation of a completed volunteer application and results of an MCPS criminal background check, which also requires a payment of **\$8.00**. The background check process is an automated process and completed through our volunteer platform. If all paperwork is complete and the background check is passed successfully, then the system will automatically update your profile to an unsupervised status.

Questions regarding the classification of a volunteer's status as supervised or unsupervised, should be directed to the District Volunteer Coordinator. Visit www.mcpsmt.org/domain/818 for more information.

PLEASE NOTE:

- The provision of a social security number is required for completing a background check; and
- To work in an unsupervised capacity, volunteers must be age 18 or older.
- There may be times when volunteers are asked to pay an additional \$20 as a Source/Access Fee. This fee is not collected by MCPS or Sterling Volunteers (our background check provider) but rather by the State of Montana. This fee is assessed when Sterling is required to verify a potential record through Montana's Database.

Criminal Background Checks

The following convictions would restrict a volunteer from working with students in an unsupervised capacity. Convictions listed **in bold** would restrict a volunteer from serving during school hours, though the school's principal or teacher may suggest ways a volunteer could help from home. Additional restrictions may apply for certain volunteer positions.

- **Aggravated murder**
- **First or second degree murder**
- **First or second degree kidnapping**
- **First, second, or third degree assault**
- **First, second, or third degree assault of a child**
- **First, second, or third degree rape**
- **First, second, or third degree rape of a child**
- **First or second degree manslaughter**
- **Indecent liberties**
- **Incest**
- **First degree promoting prostitution**
- **Communication with a minor**
- **Unlawful imprisonment**
- **Sexual exploitation of minors**
- **First or second degree criminal mistreatment**
- **Child abuse or neglect**
- **First or second degree custodial interference**
- **First or second degree custodial sexual misconduct**
- **First, second or third degree child molestation**
- **Selling or distributing erotic material to a minor**
- **First or second degree sexual misconduct with a minor**
- **Child abandonment; promoting pornography**
- **Patronizing a juvenile prostitute**
- **Custodial assault**
- **Violation of child abuse restraining order**
- **Child buying or selling; prostitution**
- **Felony indecent exposure**
- Manufacture, delivery, or possession with intent to manufacture or deliver a controlled substance
- First, second, or third degree theft
- Forgery
- Or any of these crimes as they may be renamed in the future
- First or second degree robbery
- First degree arson
- First degree burglary
- First, second or third degree extortion
- Vehicular homicide
- Simple assault
- Endangerment with a controlled substance
- Malicious harassment
- Criminal abandonment

Student Contact

Volunteers have a great impact on the lives and education of MCPS students. The relationships forged between volunteers and youth can instill confidence and ambition in students as they go through school. However, it is important to remember the nature of the relationship as a volunteer to students in MCPS.

Students inevitably look to volunteers as mentors, role models and even friends. Volunteers must keep the "mentor" and "role model" aspect of any friendship with a student at the forefront. Students will take guidance from a volunteer's speech, behavior and opinions, so be conscious of what is said and what is shared in conversation.

As students are more connected to technology, they may want to exchange phone numbers with volunteers or become "friends" on a social networking site.

Any contact between volunteers and students outside of the MCPS environment is NOT related to the MCPS Volunteer role, and the student's parents and/or guardians should be made aware of this contact.

Conduct on School Property – District Policy 4332

In addition to prohibitions stated in other District policies, no person on school property shall:

1. Injure or threaten to injure another person;
2. Damage another's property or that of the District;
3. Violate any provision of the criminal law of the state of Montana or town or county ordinance;
4. Smoke or otherwise use tobacco products; (tobacco includes, but is not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or any other tobacco or nicotine innovation);
5. Consume, possess, or distribute alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, or possess dangerous weapons at any time;
6. Impede, delay, or otherwise interfere with the orderly conduct of the District's educational program or any other activity occurring on school property;
7. Enter upon any portion of school premises at any time for purposes other than those which are lawful and authorized by the Board; or
8. Willfully violate other District rules and regulations.

"School property" means within school buildings, in vehicles used for school purposes, or on owned or leased school grounds. District administrators will take appropriate action as circumstances warrant.

The Missoula County Public School District, inclusive of all its building and property, shall be tobacco free 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. This includes all days when school is not in session and all events and other activities not associated with, or sponsored by, the school.

Use of tobacco products (tobacco includes, but is not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or any other tobacco or nicotine innovation) by school employees and visitors on district property, in district vehicles and at school sponsored events (whether on or off district property) is prohibited at all times.

Exceptions to this include:

- In a classroom or on other school property as part of a lecture or demonstration or educational forum sanctioned by a school administrator or faculty member concerning the risks associated with use of a tobacco product or involving Native American use of traditional tobacco for ceremonial purposes under the supervision of a faculty member or other responsible adult.

The use of tobacco products by all visitors to the school district property is prohibited. This includes non-school hours and all events sponsored by the school or others.

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Prevention – District Policy 3225

The policy of the Board of Trustees of Missoula County Public Schools is to provide students and staff with a school environment free from harassment, intimidation and bullying. Missoula County Public School District will not tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying in any form at school or school-sponsored activities and events, including off-campus events, school buses or any event related to school business.

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying include: Any gesture, visual depiction, written or electronic communication, or verbal or physical act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived attribute such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, culture, social origin or condition, political affiliation, mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other characteristic, that a reasonable person knows or should have known:

- Will have the effect of harming the person or damaging the person's property; or
- Will place a person in reasonable fear of physical harm; or
- Will demean any person or group of people in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission, the education of any student, or the ability of a staff member to perform the essential functions of the staff member's job.

A person, who cites, aides, coerces or directs others to commit acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying will be held responsible to the same extent as the person who commits the act.

Non-Instructional Activities

MCPS Volunteers are a great asset for **assisting** instruction in the classroom; however, they cannot serve as instructors.

Examples of assisting instruction include: giving a guest lecture on an area of expertise, tutoring or enriching curriculum for particular students, reading to a class or demonstrating the proper way to perform a science experiment. Examples of prohibited instructional duties include: serving as a substitute teacher (unless the volunteer is registered as a substitute and hired through the District for a particular class), teaching curriculum to the class while the teacher grades student tests, or conducting the main lecture for a subject on a regular basis. MCPS volunteers should be aware of the difference between assisting instruction and acting as the instructor.

For questions regarding volunteer duties, please contact the District Volunteer Coordinator at 728-2400 ext. 1030.

Enhancing Education and Building Relationships

Our biggest expectation and hope for MCPS volunteers is that they enjoy their work with our teachers, staff and students. We view volunteers as an integral part of the education system. The additional support they provide helps enhance our students' experience in education, and the relationships volunteers and students build in the classroom can be the difference between a student loving or dreading school. The District thanks all MCPS volunteers for taking time to volunteer and support the MCPS Community.

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies, procedures or your volunteer service, please contact the District Volunteer Coordinator at 728-2400, x1030.



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Appropriate physical contact with youth

Everyone has a different comfort level with physical contact and touch, and it's no different with students. Here are some safe-touch guidelines.

Safe touch: Child has control of the touch. Limit touching to avoid confusion.

Appropriate

- Shoulder-to-shoulder or side hugs
- Handshakes, high fives
- Get permission before touching

Inappropriate

- Stroking the hair, head
- Piggyback rides
- Sitting on laps
- Full-frontal hugs
- Tickling, wrestling or any action that immobilizes or compromises the child's movements
- Contact with the child's private areas
- Any other action that could be construed to be sexual (massage, etc.).

Things to keep in mind

- No exchange of phone numbers or emails without parental permission.
- No exchange of gifts without permission from agency and parent/legal guardian.

Some students may be comfortable with touch and want to sit in your lap or give you a full frontal hug. As the adult and role model, you can direct that affection into a physically appropriate action like a side hug or sitting without frontal contact.

By modeling appropriate touch, you are building trust with the student and helping them understand the ways it is safe and appropriate for a non-relative adult to touch them.

Preparedness Checklist

Reviewing this checklist with a teacher or administrator can help alleviate volunteer concerns or uncertainty. Teachers, school staff, the Family Resource Specialist and the District Volunteer Coordinator can assist volunteers by providing the layout of the school, and/or explaining relevant policies and procedures.

Requirements	Position	Orientation
<p>Have you met the basic requirements to volunteer for MCPS?</p>	<p>Do you understand your volunteer role and position duties?</p>	<p>Do you know where you are going and what to do in the school?</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Turned in Application and Confidentiality Agreement</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I have reviewed my position description and cleared up any questions with my supervisor</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Where should you park? <input type="checkbox"/> Where are the adult bathrooms?</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Submitted a Criminal Background Check as required by my volunteer position or will remain a supervised volunteer.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I am aware of time and date commitments of my service</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Where is the volunteer sign-in/sign-out sheet?</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed the Volunteer Handbook</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Understand any restrictions that apply to your contact with students if you are in a “supervised” position</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Where can volunteers “take a break”?</p>
Identification	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Ask the teacher about any classroom procedures you need to be aware of, including: Restroom policy, discipline, daily schedule, class rewards, emergency protocol</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Where are special rooms in the school (music, gym)?</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> How will students refer to you? (Mr., Mrs., Grandma, first name, etc.)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Get a list of important school contacts (teacher, aides, principal, secretary)</p>	Extra
<p><input type="checkbox"/> What nametag will you use?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Have alternate plans ready for volunteering when your teacher or a student you work with is absent.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss your interests and hobbies with your teacher if you prefer. You may be able to give students a special presentation</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Have nametag made</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you registered as a Senior Corps volunteer if you are age 55 or older? (optional)</p>

Q: I've never had to fill out a volunteer application packet before. Why now?

A: MCPS has instituted a District-wide volunteer management program to help safely increase the number of parent and community volunteers used in the schools and support the current volunteers we have. These forms will help us set realistic goals for increasing volunteerism and also help keep our students and staff safe.

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

A: No. Your volunteer file identifies you as a District-wide volunteer. If you plan to volunteer at multiple schools, notify the appropriate school secretaries and they can work with the MCPS District Volunteer coordinator to obtain necessary information.

Q: Will I be contacted to volunteer by other schools?

A: No. District volunteer records help us track involvement numbers and help ensure student and staff safety. Because we respect that volunteer commitment comes from the volunteer, only those schools you have indicated on your application will contact you.

Q: I want to serve on my school's PTA/PTO. Do I need to fill out these volunteer forms?

A: Maybe. If you plan to serve on a PTA/PTO/booster club and will not be in direct contact with MCPS students, then completion of a District volunteer application is not necessary. If you will be in contact with MCPS students at a school-sponsored event (e.g., ice cream social, Sock Hop, etc.) then you will need to submit a volunteer application. Your group's leadership or the school principal can tell you whether the work is classified as supervised or unsupervised. Unsupervised positions require a successful MCPS criminal background check.

Q: My child's extended family wants to volunteer while visiting. Is that allowed?

A: Yes. While MCPS encourages family member volunteers, they must complete and submit both a District volunteer application and a confidentiality agreement to volunteer in a supervised capacity. Should they wish to volunteer in an unsupervised capacity, family members must also submit to an MCPS criminal background check. We value their desire to be involved, but we must ensure the safety of all students and staff.

If family will be visiting, feel free to mail them the proper forms along with a copy of this handbook, or refer them to the MCPS Volunteer webpage at **www.mcpsmt.org**.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What will show up in my Criminal Background Check, and who will see the results?

A: The MCPS District Volunteer Coordinator runs all criminal background checks through a company called Sterling. The report that Sterling issues includes only information on criminal convictions, and will not include any financial or education history. In the event that a criminal history is reported, the MCPS Director of Human Resources will contact the applicant to discuss the report. The Coordinator only shares a volunteer's status (i.e., supervised or unsupervised) with a teacher or secretary upon request. The Coordinator does not share information in the volunteer application or background check report with anyone.

Q: What if I can't afford to pay the \$8.00 processing fee?

A: MCPS understands that while some families may be able to pay for their background check, others may not. To encourage involvement from all parents and community members, we have arranged to cover the fee in cases of financial hardship. We welcome the opportunity to help everyone volunteer in our schools, so please ask your school staff how you can get your fee covered.

Q: My teacher knows when I come and everyone at the school knows me. Do I still have to sign in and out at the front desk every time I volunteer?

A: Yes. The kiosk and sign-in/sign-out sheets help the District track volunteer involvement, keep students safe and provide proof you were in the school at certain times if you are injured while volunteering and file a Worker's Compensation claim through the District.

Q: What happens if I decline a Criminal Background Check?

A: Undergoing a background check is a matter of choice. Volunteer applicants who decline a criminal background check may still be involved in MCPS volunteer efforts; however, their status will be restricted to supervised activities and the presence/supervision of MCPS employees will always be required.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How soon can I start volunteering after I turn in my application materials?

A: You may volunteer in a supervised capacity as soon as you receive confirmation of your status from the District Volunteer Coordinator. The timing is completely dependent upon how quickly the Coordinator receives your application from the school secretary. For unsupervised positions, the same timing issue, as well as how quickly the Coordinator receives notification of a successful background check, both apply. As soon as the Coordinator notifies you of your clearance, you can begin volunteering.

Q: Do I have to fill out these forms every year?

A: Not necessarily. Your MCPS criminal background check is valid for two years from the date of the report, so those need to be repeated every two years. The District Volunteer Coordinator can let you know when your background check will expire. In order to capture rapidly changing contact information, volunteer interests, etc., we ask that volunteers complete a new application every two to three years **OR** when your information changes.

Q: How do I know if my volunteer position is supervised or unsupervised?

A: The teacher or administrator you volunteer with can tell you the contact level of your position. Positions are classified at the district level by the Human Resources Department, and to avoid discrimination, contact is not determined on a case-by-case basis.

Q: Who can I contact with more questions about these policies and procedures?

A: You can visit the MCPS Volunteer Webpage at mcpsmt.org. You will have access to F.A.Q.'s, volunteer forms and other resources. For further questions, please contact the District Volunteer Coordinator at 728-2400, x1030.

We'd love to hear from you! If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies and procedures or your volunteer service, please contact the District Volunteer Coordinator at (406) 728-2400, x1030.

