



**PUBLIC
SCHOOLS
BRANCH**

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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I WELCOME

We would like to welcome you as a school volunteer. Your contribution is greatly valued and appreciated. This handbook is meant to provide you with information about volunteering within the Public Schools Branch. It is our hope that you find your volunteer experience both enjoyable and rewarding. Thank you for your involvement.

II THE ROLE OF A SCHOOL VOLUNTEER

There are many different areas within a school that can benefit from the help of a school volunteer. Here are just a few:

- ❖ Breakfast and lunch programs
- ❖ Choir
- ❖ Coaching
- ❖ Computer lab support
- ❖ Field trip chaperone
- ❖ Fundraising
- ❖ Library support
- ❖ Photocopying
- ❖ Resource room support
- ❖ Safe arrival and playground supervision
- ❖ School beautification
- ❖ School Council/Home and School Association
- ❖ Special events (photo day, book fair, concerts. etc.)

III BECOMING A SCHOOL VOLUNTEER

To become a school volunteer you must:

- Read Operational Procedure 701.1 - Volunteer in Schools and this handbook.
- Complete and submit the Volunteer Application Form to the school principal
- Submit a valid Criminal Record Check/Vulnerable Sector Inquiry to the school.
- Complete and submit the Use of Private Vehicle Form for Transporting Students (if applicable).

By completing the Volunteer Application Form you agree to abide by the conditions that protect the safety, confidentiality and working environment of the school. You also make a signed declaration with regard to any criminal charges.

Obtaining a Criminal Record Check/Vulnerable Sector Inquiry (CRC/VSI)

You must make application, in person, to the local police authority closest to your residence.

- Proof of identification is required at the time of application for a **CRC/VSI**
- A **CRC/VSI** may require a few days to several weeks to process
- The **original** copy of the **CRC/VSI** must be submitted to the principal with your completed application form. The original will then be photocopied and returned to the applicant, if requested.

IV VOLUNTEER SCREENING

As a volunteer in a school you are placed in a position of trust with students, staff and property of the Public Schools Branch; therefore, reasonable background checks must be completed prior to utilizing your services.

Note: Guest speakers or presenters, visitors to the school and parents assisting only their own child in the school are not considered to be volunteers and therefore do not require a criminal record check.

In addition to the required **CRC/VSI**, the school principal may also choose to interview a volunteer and/or check references.

Administrators of the Public Schools Branch or assigned school have the right to request a volunteer cease his/her activities and dismiss where appropriate.

V WHAT TO EXPECT?

School volunteers should expect to be:

- Made to feel that the assistance given is worthwhile and contributes to the overall value of the area in which they are participating;
- Treated with respect and consideration by all students and staff;
- Given a suitable assignment in line with their areas of interest and skills;
- Given clear instruction and any training necessary for a particular volunteer assignment;
- Given an orientation of the school, introductions to key personnel, information about parking, washroom and break/lunch facilities; and
- Provided with direct support from staff if difficulties arise.

VI EXPECTATIONS

A school volunteer is expected to:

- Respect the authority of the school principal;

- Follow the policies of the Public Schools Branch and assigned school (i.e. sign-in procedures, code of conduct, nut free restrictions, etc.);
- Be reliable and responsible;
- Behave in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice to race, religious beliefs, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, disability, age ancestry or place of origin;
- Provide assistance under the direction of a qualified staff person following their instruction closely;
- Work only with those staff members who request assistance and only with students assigned by the supervising teacher;
- Report poor student behavior to the supervising teacher;
- Be a positive role model for students and the school community;
- Dress appropriately for volunteer duties and present a positive image to the school community; and
- Maintain the highest standards of confidentiality and ethics.

VII GUIDELINES

- It is of the utmost importance that a school volunteer respect confidentiality. It is essential that volunteers never publically discuss students, parents, or school staff. If there is a concern, the volunteer should contact the supervising teacher first and then, if necessary, the Principal of the school. *See the Public Schools Branch Concerns and Complaints Procedure.*
- Volunteers should ask the supervising teacher about and become familiar with the rules and routines of the school such as:
 - Fire drill, evacuation and lockdown procedures
 - Classroom routines and expectations
- A school volunteer is not a teacher, an educational assistant or a counsellor. A volunteer is a friend who accepts the students as they are. The volunteer can convey by his/her interest, attitude, and sincerity that the student is a worthwhile person. Only when people feel good about themselves are they able to learn.
- Try to learn the names of students.
- Help students with their work but do not do their work for them. If they get off-track, simply help them get back on track in a tactful manner.
- Work at the student's level; sit or stand with him/her. Show your interest and involvement.
- Speak in a positive way to students – point out the things they have done right, the things they do well. Rushing them may cause more problems than it solves. Negativity or making comparisons is harmful.
- Remind students of appropriate behavior if they are disruptive or break rules. Lead by example with a calm and responsible attitude.
- Corrective discipline is the responsibility of the teaching staff and Principal.

- Parents are expected not to use their volunteer time as an opportunity to discuss their own child's progress.
- Once you have committed to a volunteer time, please make every effort to honour that commitment. Please inform the teacher if you are not able to come to the school as planned. A last minute cancellation of a volunteer commitment may result in the activity/field trip being cancelled.

VIII DRESS CODE

Volunteers serve as role models and community leaders for the students with whom they work.

As members of the school community, volunteers set a positive example for students in modeling appropriate dress. This is important in establishing and maintaining a respectful and safe working and learning environment in our schools.

Volunteers are expected to dress in a manner consistent with the nature of service performed. The attire must be appropriate, clean, tidy and respectful. Good habits of grooming and personal hygiene are expected at all times.

IX DISCLOSURE OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

In Prince Edward Island, it is the legal obligation of all citizens to report a suspected case of child abuse under the *Child Protection Act*. If a child indicates to a volunteer that he/she has been or is the victim of abuse or if a volunteer has a strong suspicion that a student may be a victim of abuse, the volunteer must make a report to **Child Protective Services - 1-877-341-3101 or to the police.**

One of the most difficult things to handle may be when a student asks the person in whom they have confided in to "promise not to tell". A volunteer cannot make such a promise and should be clear about that to the child. Don't try to "counsel" the child. This is not your role. Remain a sympathetic listener without being judgmental or trying to offer solutions. Assistance and counselling should come from those professionals with the responsibility and experience to provide it.

X SCHOOL VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

The Public Schools Branch wishes to thank all volunteers for their participation and dedication to students and staff. Together we can make each child's year in Public Schools Branch a solid foundation upon which to build a lifetime of successful achievement.

Volunteers

*Where would we be without volunteers
Who quickly respond when a need appears?*

*This is the way you have chosen to serve~
What appreciation you deserve!*

*There are very many things to do
And **YOUR** time can only be given by **YOU!***

*So without complaint and without demands
You offer the labor of your hands.*

*The world is a better place to live
When people like you are so willing to give.*

*With this attitude of love and of care
You will find a welcome anywhere.*

*You may not always know when someone
Is especially blessed by a kindness you've done:*

*As you freely share your hours and days,
May you also be blessed in many ways.*

~ Author Unknown