



BCPS

**Volunteer
Handbook**

Superintendent's Message

Dear Volunteer:

Welcome to Baltimore County Public Schools, and thank you for your interest in volunteering in our schools.

For BCPS, preparing students to be globally-competitive graduates is our top priority. A community-wide effort is required to create, sustain and invest in a culture of deliberate excellence, and your role as a volunteer is integral to the achievement of these goals.

By lending your services in the classroom and the cafeteria, on the playground and at after-school activities and events, you will support our schools in a variety of ways, all of which are essential to the success of our students from Pre-kindergarten to Grade 12. Through your active involvement in BCPS, you also will bridge the gap between home and school, strengthening students' sense of community commitment to the school system and allowing learning to continue beyond the school day.

Please refer to the information in this handbook as a guide to support you in becoming an even more dynamic member of Team BCPS. If you have any questions regarding the content of this handbook and/or your role as a volunteer, please contact your school's volunteer coordinator.

Thank you again for your help in realizing the vision and fulfilling the purpose of BCPS. The success of Team BCPS depends on the dedication of time and knowledge by volunteers like you.

Sincerely,

S. Dallas Dance
Superintendent

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in volunteering in Baltimore County Public Schools. Our schools depend on volunteers and value their contributions to enhance the programs and services provided for students. Volunteers are important members of Team BCPS and help our professional staff sustain effective learning environments, enrich the education and experiences of students and build critical partnerships to increase achievement for all students.

As a volunteer, you are essential to the educational process, as you bring your knowledge and skills into our schools and strengthen classroom instruction. Volunteers are placed by schools and offices according to identified needs and perform tasks that support our established goals. Although volunteers are not paid staff members, they are expected to follow BCPS policies, rules and procedures at all times.

Our Vision

Baltimore County Public Schools will be among the highest performing school systems in the nation as a result of creating, sustaining and investing in a culture of deliberate excellence for every student, every school and every community.

Our Purpose

Baltimore County Public Schools will provide every student with a high-quality, 21st-century education in a safe, secure and positive environment in order to produce globally-competitive graduates who are prepared for their chosen college and/or career paths.

Goals of the BCPS Volunteer Program

- Expand parental involvement and engagement strategies to meet the unique needs of all families in the school communities.
- Acknowledge parents and community members as important partners in the education of all students.
- Strengthen the relationship between schools and parents, guardians and community stakeholders through meaningful service opportunities.
- Support teachers and staff with the implementation of curriculum and school programs.
- Utilize the knowledge and skills of volunteers to promote student achievement.

- Offer direct support to students needing additional assistance with assigned tasks.
- Assist school staff and students with extra-curricular activities, afterschool programs and fundraising opportunities.
- Provide supervision and direction for students while participating in off-campus learning experiences (field trips).

Volunteer Orientation/Training

Before volunteering in any BCPS school or office, each volunteer candidate must complete the following steps annually:

- Complete the BCPS volunteer screening process, which includes submitting a signed BCPS Application for Volunteer Services. Volunteer screening includes a criminal background check, which helps ensure that students and staff work in safe environments and allows the school system to identify individuals who may pose a risk to students, staff or the school system. BCPS does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, marital status, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status or any other characteristic in its educational programs, services or employment as provided in federal and state law.
- Attend a volunteer training session at a school OR complete the BCPS online volunteer training. In-person training sessions are offered at each school, usually during the first few weeks of the school year, but may occur at any time throughout the school year. Information covered in all trainings will include a review of the BCPS Volunteer Handbook; the role and conduct of volunteers in the schools; school and student safety and security; and laws, policies and rules related to volunteering. An in-person orientation specific to the school site/volunteer assignment may also be held.
- Receive and sign a BCPS Volunteer Training Certificate. This document is valid at any BCPS school and will be kept on file with the school or office where the volunteer is serving until the end of the school year. The online volunteer training will provide users with a printable certificate when completed.
- Be matched with a suitable task by the school volunteer coordinator and/or appropriate administrator. Volunteers will be placed according to needs of the school and based on the qualifications required for effective job performance.

Volunteer Placement

Volunteer assignments are determined by the specific needs within each school. Principals will consider the skills, interests and preferences of each volunteer candidate in determining the best placement within the building. Volunteers are encouraged to share their preferences with the school volunteer coordinator.

Occasionally, a volunteer placement may not be the right fit for the volunteer. If you are not satisfied with your volunteer placement for any reason, please speak with the school volunteer coordinator to discuss other available options.

Volunteer Expectations and Guidelines

To best support school staff and students, volunteers are expected to follow these procedures each time that they volunteer:

- Sign in at the beginning of each school visit and sign out prior to leaving school grounds.
- Wear specific school/site identification while on school property or at school-related activities and return the identification prior to leaving the school and/or activity.
- Dress appropriately for the educational and work setting in a manner that is not disruptive to the educational process. The principal has the discretion to determine whether attire is disruptive to the educational process.
- Promote the worth and dignity of all individuals by displaying an attitude of cooperation, friendliness and acceptance.
- Demonstrate a commitment to education for all students.
- Maintain open communication with school staff, volunteer coordinators and other volunteers.
- Make every effort to perform volunteer duties in the presence of a BCPS employee. Avoid unsupervised, one-on-one student contact.
- Do not discipline any student at any time. Behavior concerns should be reported to a teacher or school administrator.
- Refrain from bringing visitors, children, siblings or others in your care to the volunteer site.
- Notify the school when unable to complete scheduled volunteer time.

- In accordance with the BCPS Telecommunications Policy, refrain from using electronic communication devices while volunteering, unless the device is used to call for assistance in an emergency situation. Volunteers may not use BCPS telecommunication devices, such as computers, for personal use.
- Due to potential student allergies, volunteers should not bring any food or drinks meant for student consumption. It is recommended that volunteers avoid handling unwrapped or open student food and drinks as well.

School Safety and Security

The safety of all students and staff in Baltimore County Public Schools is of utmost importance to all of us. Our schools are utilizing a system for checking in all visitors. The system is called V-soft by RaptorWare or Raptor. When volunteers visit any school for the first time, they will be asked to present a government-issued photo ID, or a driver's license to a staff member in the school office. The ID will be scanned and the following information will be collected: your photo, your name, and your date of birth. This information will be utilized to check you in, create an ID badge, and compare your information against sexual offender databases throughout the country. If your name appears on any of the lists or you refuse to allow the school to scan your ID, you will not be allowed access to the school. The only alternative will be to allow the staff to see your ID, verify your first name, last name, and date of birth to be entered into the system manually. However, this method does not store the information, and you must do this each time you visit the school. If you have your ID scanned, you will be asked to show your ID only on future visits, and your name will be selected from an existing list of previous visitors. You will also be asked to check out with the office staff upon leaving the school so that we know you are no longer in the building. The information collected will not be shared outside of the school and is kept on a secure server. Your assistance in keeping our students and schools safe is appreciated.

Working with Students from Diverse Backgrounds

Students in Baltimore County Public Schools represent many different racial, cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic groups. Our schools celebrate the diversity of our students, their families, cultures and experiences. Demonstrating appreciation and respect for different cultures in our classrooms will increase your ability to help students learn and achieve academically.

Special Circumstances and Important Requirements

Responding to health issues and emergencies

Volunteers will be oriented to and directed by school staff in the following universal emergency response procedures: school evacuation; security alert and lock down; shelter in place; severe weather safe area; drop, cover and hold emergencies.

Volunteers must inform principals or other appropriate administrators of any disabilities they have that might cause them to need special assistance in the event of an emergency. Volunteers can refer to the *Emergency Guidelines* flipchart available in the office of every school.

Volunteers should not render first aid to students or clean up blood or other bodily fluids. In the event of an emergency, volunteers must notify a school staff member. If a volunteer is exposed inadvertently to blood or other bodily fluids, he/she must report to the school nurse immediately for appropriate intervention.

If a volunteer is injured while performing volunteer duties, he/she must seek immediate first aid from the school nurse or another designated school staff member. All injuries must be reported to the supervising staff member.

Maintaining student and staff confidentiality

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, a federal law more commonly known as FERPA, as well as state regulations, protect the privacy of student information. Therefore, Baltimore County Public Schools student records are confidential and must be treated in accordance with these laws. A volunteer is required to protect the confidentiality of all student information. Volunteers will not have unauthorized access to student records or any confidential records in the schools.

Volunteers may not share any confidential information that they learn from their time spent volunteering at a school. If a volunteer becomes aware of information regarding a student that he or she feels need to be shared with a third party, these concerns should be directed to the school principal. If a volunteer feels that a student's confidentiality has been violated, the volunteer should share his or her concerns with the school principal or the principal's designee.

Maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment

BCPS has an established policy that prohibits the possession of any weapon, look-alike weapon, firearm or look-alike firearm on school property, on school buses or at any school-related/sponsored event. Examples of prohibited weapons include but are not limited to knives, pocket knives, mace and guns. Volunteers are expected to report any weapons, look-alike weapons and firearms to school administrators immediately.

Consistent with the Federal Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, Board of Education policy prohibits the unlawful manufacture, distribution, possession or use of a controlled substance or alcohol in the workplace. BCPS is committed to providing a tobacco-free work environment for its students, volunteers and community members. BCPS prohibits the sale and use of any form of tobacco in school system-owned or leased buildings, grounds and vehicles at all times. Volunteers should not bring tobacco products, alcohol, inhalants and/or illegal drugs to school, on school property, on school buses or to school-related activities.

Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect

Child abuse and child neglect are against the law. Educators, health care workers, police officers, etc., are required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect. School volunteers, community members and other adults are also expected to make a report if there is a reason to believe that abuse or neglect of a child possibly occurred. Should you have reason to believe that a child is being abused or neglected, contact the Baltimore County Department of Social Services at (410) 853-3000 and notify the school principal or his/her designee. If the abuse or suspected abuse of a student involves a staff person, please notify the school principal or his/her designee. Reports should be made without attempts to do further investigation, interrogation or other verification of the allegation.

Child Abuse: Physical abuse is an injury, not necessarily visible, of a child by a parent, other individual who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child or a household or family member under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed. Sexual abuse is any act or acts involving sexual molestation or exploitation, whether physical injuries are sustained or not, by a parent, other individual who has permanent or temporary care or custody of a child or a household or family member. Mental abuse is the observable, identifiable and substantial impairment of a child's mental or psychological ability to function that is caused by the act of a parent or other individual who has permanent or temporary care, custody or responsibility for supervision of the child, or by a household or family member.

Child neglect is the failure to give proper care and attention to a child, under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or placed at substantial risk of harm.

Special Volunteer Assignments

Chaperones on overnight field trips

Chaperones volunteering to supervise students on overnight events must complete and submit a commercial background check. The commercial background check has a nominal cost and must be submitted by the school volunteer coordinator to the Investigations and Records Management Office at least 30 days prior to the scheduled trip/activity. The information obtained from the background check is only valid for the school year that it is requested.

Volunteers in the Health Office

Only licensed doctors and nurses may volunteer to perform duties in support of the school nurse and health office. The school nurse is responsible for retaining a copy of the practitioner's license and verifying its authenticity before any duties may be performed by the volunteer.

Termination of Volunteer Services

BCPS reserves the right to terminate the services of any volunteer at any time and for any reason. Principals or their designees may deny permission for individuals to serve as volunteers, limit the volunteer activities of individuals or dismiss any individual from volunteer service without providing a reason for denial or dismissal. Failure to follow the requirements noted under Special Circumstances and Important Requirements in this handbook will result in the immediate dismissal of the volunteer.

If you have any additional questions about volunteering in Baltimore County Public Schools, please contact the Office of Family and Community Engagement at 410-887-4554 or visit us online at www.bcps.org/community/volunteer_info.