

# MCPS

## Volunteer Handbook



Forward Thinking, High Achieving.

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[www.mcpsmt.org](http://www.mcpsmt.org)

**M**issoula County Public Schools 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.

Sign-in procedures should be explained to volunteers prior to or on their first day as a volunteer. School secretaries can answer any questions about the sign-in/sign-out procedures.

## Attire

MCPS volunteers should wear attire appropriate for working with minors. T-shirts with logos depicting tobacco, alcohol or firearms are prohibited for volunteers as well as students. As a general guideline, if a shirt reveals a bare stomach when hands are raised, it is too short; and skirts, dresses or shorts should extend below fingers when arms are held at the side.

If volunteers know they will be doing a lot of walking or outdoor work during their service, remember to bring sufficient shoes and a jacket, as the school will not have extras to provide.

## 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

If a volunteer will serve as an overnight chaperone for students on a trip, certain additional requirements and restrictions apply.

- **Age:** Overnight chaperones must be at least 21 years old.
- **Background Checks:** Overnight chaperones must submit to a Criminal Background Check and not have any prior convictions listed on Page 7 **in addition to** no DUI convictions.
- **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. Volunteers should ask the teacher/administrator they work with or the school secretary for this paperwork if asked to drive students to an event as a chaperone.

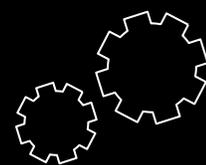
## 55 years or older?

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

If a volunteer is from an outside organization or afterschool program that works within MCPS such as The Flagship Program, Big Brothers Big Sisters, YMCA, YWCA GUTS!, Writing Coaches of Missoula, etc., they must adhere to the policies of that organization **in addition to** the policies and procedures of the MCPS Volunteer Program.

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 a Criminal Background Check and the volunteer will be working in an unsupervised position with MCPS students, they must submit to an MCPS Criminal Background Check prior to volunteering.

If any policies and/or procedures outlined by the outside organization conflict with the MCPS policies and procedures detailed in this handbook, or if volunteers have any questions, please contact Denise Small at 728-2400, ext. 1030, or by e-mail at [kstrelnik@mcps.k12.mt.us](mailto:kstrelnik@mcps.k12.mt.us).

## Parent/Teacher Organizations

Parents are the strongest source of volunteers in the school 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 only volunteers with a parent/teacher organization or booster club in an out-of-school capacity and does not work directly with students, that parent is not required to register as an MCPS volunteer. Activities sponsored by these groups that include interaction with students will require parents to register as an MCPS volunteer.

Building principals and PTA/PTO/booster club leadership will decide if the interaction between volunteers and students at events such as Sock Hops, fluoride rinses, dances, coffee carts, etc., will be supervised or unsupervised, as defined on Page 6. Unsupervised positions will require a volunteer to submit to a Criminal Background Check.

Family volunteers - aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc. - who sign up to help with events and will be in contact with students, must register as an MCPS volunteer. Keep in mind, for positions that include unsupervised contact, Criminal Background Check results must be returned to MCPS before that volunteer can work with students. This process may take up to two weeks, so registering volunteers early is crucial.

Incidental volunteers who show up at the last minute to help with an event are welcome, but are not permitted by MCPS policy to work directly with students.

# Confidentiality Agreement

All volunteers are required to sign and submit a Confidentiality Agreement along with the Volunteer Application. The signed agreement must be turned into the secretary of the school, along with all other required forms before volunteers can begin service.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Principal/Administrator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Criminal Background Checks

District Policy 5122 requires all volunteers who will have **unsupervised** contact with students to 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 include any financial information, such as credit history, taxes or income.

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

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

Any questions regarding the classification of a volunteer's assignment or specific restrictions that may apply as a supervised volunteer may be directed to the teacher or administrator, or the school's principal. Visit [www.mcpsmt.org](http://www.mcpsmt.org) for more information.

To become an unsupervised volunteer, registrants must submit the District Volunteer Application, a signed Confidentiality Agreement and pass a background check approved by the District. To receive a background check through MCPS, volunteers must submit a Criminal Background Check form and **\$6.00** background check fee. Volunteers will remain in "supervised" status until the background check has been confirmed and the volunteer has been notified of the change in status to "unsupervised."

# Criminal Background Checks

The following convictions would restrict a volunteer from working with students in an unsupervised capacity. Convictions **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 volunteer service, and the student's parents and/or guardians should be 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

Volunteers are a great asset to assist instruction in the classroom, but MCPS volunteers cannot serve as an instructor. 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, conducting the main lecture for a subject on a regular basis.

MCPS does not expect volunteers to be asked to perform any of the prohibited duties, but volunteers should be aware of the difference between assisting instruction and acting as the instructor.

For questions regarding volunteer duties, please call Denise Small 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 join the MCPS community of educational support.

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies, procedures or your volunteer service, please contact Denise Small.



**Phone:** 728-2400, X. 1030 **E-mail:**

## 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 from the "Working With Kids Training", available in its full form online at [www.mcpsmt.org](http://www.mcpsmt.org).

**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).

- 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.

### Things to keep in mind

To learn more check out [mcpsmt.org](http://mcpsmt.org)

# Preparedness Checklist

Going through this list with a teacher or administrator can help alleviate any concerns or uncertainty volunteers may have when beginning service in their volunteer role. Teachers, school staff, the Family Resource Specialist and district volunteer coordinators can help volunteers understand the layout of the school, as well as proper policies and procedures.

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

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: I've never needed to fill out these volunteer application materials before. Why now?**

**A:** Missoula County Public Schools 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. These forms certify you as a volunteer across the District. If you plan to volunteer at multiple schools, tell the secretaries and they can access your records from the District.

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

**A:** No. District volunteer records help us track involvement numbers and keep students and staff safe. We understand a volunteer commitment comes from the volunteer. You will only be contacted to volunteer at schools where you have expressed an interest in helping.

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

**A:** Maybe. If you only want to serve on the PTA/PTO/booster club and will not be working with MCPS students directly or during school hours, you will not need to fill out the District Volunteer Application forms. However, if you are working with students at a school-sponsored event (ice cream social, Sock Hop) you will need to fill out the forms and ask your group's leadership and the school principal if your work will be supervised or unsupervised. Unsupervised positions require an approved Criminal Background Check.

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

**A:** Family involvement is absolutely encouraged and welcomed by MCPS. Family volunteers will need to fill out the basic District Volunteer Application and Confidentiality Agreement to participate in one-stop volunteer activities. We understand the desire to be involved, but we must ensure the safety of all students and staff.

If you know family will be visiting, feel free to mail them a copy of this handbook with the proper forms and/or refer them to the MCPS Volunteer webpage at

**[www.mcpsmt.org](http://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 Criminal Background Checks will be run by the MCPS district-wide Human Resources Department through a company called Victig. The results include criminal convictions only. No financial or education history is included in the background check. Teachers, aides and secretaries at the schools will only know if your background check is approved or not approved, and principals will have access to the results of your report if you are not approved for unsupervised contact with students. Please refer to Page 6-7 for more information and a list of restricted convictions.

## **Q: What if I can't afford to pay the \$6.00 Criminal Background Check 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, MCPS has 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 sign-in/sign-out sheets help us 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:** Any volunteer who declines a Criminal Background Check is still welcome to be involved in the school, but will be restricted to supervised volunteer positions. In these positions, you may never be in contact with students without the presence of a MCPS employee or approved program supervisor.

## **Q: How soon can I start volunteering after turning in my application materials?**

**A:** You may begin volunteering in a supervised position immediately after turning your application materials into the school. For unsupervised positions, you must wait until your Criminal Background Check results are returned. Checks are submitted once a week and take 24 to 48 hours to process, so it could take up to two weeks to get the results to your school. You may use that time to volunteer in a supervised capacity. If you know you will be volunteering at some time during the year, turning in your application and forms at the beginning of the year can cut out the lag time between application and approval.

# Frequently Asked Questions

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

**A:** Not necessarily. Your Criminal Background Check results are applicable for two school years. Your volunteer records will reflect when you need to renew your background check. You may fill out a new application and give it to school staff to update your information, and we recommend you fill out a new application every two years when you renew your background check.

## **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](http://mcpsmt.org). You will have access to F.A.Q.'s, volunteer forms and other resources. For further questions, please contact Denise Small at 728-2400, ext. 1030, or by e-mail at [dsmall@mcps.k12.mt.us](mailto:dsmall@mcps.k12.mt.us).

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies, procedures or your volunteer service, please contact Denise Small.



**Phone:** 728-2400, X. 1030 **E-mail:**