



Guidelines, Resources & Information
for
Visitors and Volunteers

Hernando County School District
Office of Safe Schools

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Volunteers in Schools: Benefits for Everyone:

The volunteer gains:

- Personal satisfaction from helping children learn,
- Opportunities to learn new skills, polish old ones,
- Knowledge and understanding of Hernando County Schools,
- Work experience that may lead to a future career.

The student gains:

- Additional individual attention,
- An accepting atmosphere for reinforced learning,
- A chance to succeed, thus building better self-esteem, and
- A warm and caring adult who is a role model.

The school gains:

- Positive interaction with the community,
- Improved student achievement and behavior,
- Additional services without extra costs, and
- Increase community understanding and support.

The Hernando County community gains:

- Better-educated students, and
- Greater' confidence in the educational system

Florida statute 1012.01 (5)- “A K-12 school volunteer is any nonpaid person who may be appointed by a district school board or its designee. School volunteers may include, but may not be limited to, parents, senior citizens, students, and others who assist the teacher or other members of the school staff”

Key Points:

- **Visitors = Attend** (short visit, always supervised)
- **Level 1 = Help** (approved, but always with staff)
- **Level 2 = Lead/Support** (fully screened, can work independently with students under line-of-sight supervision of staff, unless chaperoning a group of students on a field trip)

Who is a visitor?

Visitors are typically at a school for a specific limited purpose. For example, school tours, parent meetings, award ceremonies, parent conference, walking your child to class, spectators at a school event, shopping at a bookfair, guest speaker, presentation/performance, school celebration, classroom observation, lunch with your child, etc.

These types of visitors are not in direct supervision of students.

It is encouraged that parents obtain and complete a level 1 volunteer with the Office of Safe Schools to facilitate opportunities for parents and their children to engage in activities offered by the school with minimal or any inconveniences.

Who is a School Volunteer?

A school volunteer is a person providing a volunteer service to the school and/or engaging with students in a non-paid capacity while under the direction of a school staff member. Those who are on campus for volunteer opportunities are required to have a current/active volunteer application and should sign-in as a volunteer. A school volunteer will fall under one of the following categories:

1. The individual will provide a service to the school.
2. The individual will NOT be compensated monetarily by the school district.
3. The individual will be providing volunteer service for more than one day at any one site (except for chaperones).

The individual may have access to students while performing the service under the direction of a school staff member.

The Following chart included examples of the differences between visitors and volunteers. Examples include, but are not limited to, assisting staff and supporting school activities in the following ways: chaplain, classroom volunteer, clerical volunteer, coaching volunteer, field trip chaperone, tutor volunteer, mentor volunteer, lunchroom helper, music/band instructor-coach, etc.

Visitor vs. Level 1 vs. Level 2 (Hernando County School District)

Category	Visitor	Level 1 Volunteer	Level 2 Volunteer
Definition	On campus for a specific, short-term purpose	Approved volunteer with limited access to students	Approved volunteer with greater access/direct access to students
Purpose	Attend events, meetings, or visit campus	Assist staff or support school activities	Provide ongoing support, mentoring, or supervision/chaperone a group of students on a field trip
Frequency	One-time or occasional	Can be recurring	Typically, ongoing/regular
Application Required	No	Yes	Yes
Background Screening	None (Current Gov't issued ID check only)	Level 1 background check (name-based national criminal history)	Level 2 screening (fingerprinting + national database)
Approval Required Before Entry	No (cleared at front office)	Yes	Yes
Badge Requirement	Visitor badge each visit	Volunteer badge	Volunteer badge
Supervision Requirement	Must be escorted at all times	Must be under direct supervision/line-of-sight of staff	Must be line-of-sight supervision of staff unless chaperoning a group of students on a field trip
Student Interaction	Minimal or none	Direct interaction with staff present	Direct interaction with or without staff present – certain circumstances only
Alone with Students	Never	Never	Allowed as a chaperone for a group of students on a field trip
Field Trips	Not allowed to supervise	Allowed but must stay with staff	Can supervise groups independently on a field trip
Off-Campus Supervision	Not permitted	Limited (with staff oversight)	Permitted on a field trip
Examples	- Lunch with child	- Classroom helper	- Mentor (Big Brothers/Big Sisters) under line-of-sight supervision by staff
	- Attend ceremony	- Field Day support	- Coach under supervision of a staff athletic coach
	- Conference	- Chaperone (with staff)	- Club sponsor under supervision of an employee club sponsor
Key Safety Rule	Always monitored	Always supervised	Cleared for direct student contact with line-of-sight supervision by staff

Program Structure

At the District - The District's Office of Safe Schools has responsibility to ensure registered volunteers are screened for eligibility. All volunteer applicants will be entered into SafeVisitor (or the district's visitor/ volunteer management system). Staff from the Office of Safe Schools will indicate through Safevisitor whether a volunteer applicant is approved to volunteer. A volunteer must have their hard badge in order to volunteer. The Office of Safe Schools is the point of contact for volunteer badges.

At the School - Each school's volunteer program is individualized to meet the needs of the students and teachers at the school. In cooperation with the principal, the school's volunteer coordinator directs the school's volunteer program. Many schools have both a staff contact and a volunteer who works jointly to coordinate the program.

Making the Right Match

Whether preparing materials for a lab experiment, cleaning lunch tables, or mentoring/tutoring a student one-on-one, there is a volunteer opportunity to suit every person's background and interest.

- Would you like to work directly with students?
- Would you like to be a tutor or a classroom assistant, an office worker, motivator/mentor, or to work with exceptional students?
- Do you have special talents and/or skills that would benefit music, art, drama, physical education, or an extracurricular program?
- Would you prefer elementary, middle, or high school?
- How much time can you commit to volunteering?
- What days or hours do you prefer?
- Can you make a weekly commitment or are you only available occasionally?
- What experience do you have that would prepare you for your volunteer opportunity?
- What is your motivation for volunteering?

School Procedures and Expectations

Getting Started

If you are not yet a volunteer in our schools, please go to our district website at www.hernandoschools.org and fill out an application to volunteer. Applications are processed by a third-party vendor and take a minimum of 3-5 business days to process. We do not have the ability to expedite applications.

School Procedures

Each school has specific information for the volunteer to learn. Volunteers need to know procedures, restroom locations, school dress code, rules about smoking, parking areas, absence procedures, the opening and closing times of the school, the eating facilities, rules about the use of cell phones, safety procedures such as Crisis Go and general regulations in the school

Volunteer Applications

All volunteer applicants, including field trip chaperones, must complete the on-line web-based *Application to Volunteer* and wait for clearance **PRIOR** to volunteering or chaperoning. The application needs to be completed accurately and in its entirety. A criminal background check is performed to maximize the safety of our students and to meet Florida legal requirements. When HCSD employees plan to volunteer, e.g. as a chaperone at an event or on a field trip, they should also complete a volunteer application. *(HCSD employee volunteers should see the Staff Handbook volunteer section for information.)*

Clearance

In meeting the criteria of [Florida Statute 943.04351](#), ALL volunteers must be cleared through Hernando County School District Office of Safe Schools prior to being placed or beginning service in a volunteer capacity. Each individual whose criminal background screening would make them **ineligible for employment** with the Hernando County School District **will be ineligible** to volunteer in **any** District or Charter school in **any** capacity. An email will notify volunteers when their application status has been approved.

Annual Renewal Requirements

Applications **MUST** be completed annually or renewed in the allotted time frame. A fee will be collected by Safe Hiring Solutions for Level 1 volunteers, which will cover the national background check. An additional fee will be collected to cover real-time arrest monitoring and notification, as well as identification badge once the application is approved. Employee volunteers and student volunteers will not have a fee requirement to volunteer.

Volunteer applications expire June 30th of each year. The online web application will be available for each school year from July 1- May 15th, on the Hernando County School District website. (hernandoschools.org). The website will not be open from May 15-June 30. Individuals will remit the fee to cover their renewal **during the open renewal period** to keep their volunteer status active. Volunteers who let their application lapse will be required to initiate a new volunteer application.

Health Regulations

Please do not come to school if you are ill. This includes a fever, cold, sore throat, or cough. You may think you are leaving the teacher shorthanded, and you may want to volunteer even though you are not well, but doing so is not good for you, the children, or the teacher. Please inform the teacher when you have an unforeseen absence. Children learn by example, and we ask that you, as a role model, use good health habits when you are at school.

Attendance

Punctuality and reliability are expected since students are counting on you. Please inform teacher in advance of planned absences and call the school for unforeseen absences. Students will be disappointed you cannot come but will be reassured that you cared enough to call.

Appearance and Manner

Volunteers should be well groomed and dress professionally. Hats, short skirts and shorts, exposed midriffs, low cut blouses, and inappropriate graphics/language on t-shirts are not allowable for students, let alone volunteers. If you are not sure how you should dress, please ask the teacher, or your volunteer coordinator. Volunteers should set a good example for students by always maintaining professional conduct.

Volunteer Behavior on Field Trips

When volunteers are chaperoning a class and/or field trip there is to be no inappropriate language, drinking or smoking/vaping. Volunteers are to stay with their assigned groups. The purpose of volunteers being present is to ensure the safety and well-being of the students. It is the goal of all involved that our students enjoy field trips and feel safe. Students on the trip as well as volunteer chaperones may not get to do all the things that they want to do if the entire group doesn't agree or time is short. Volunteers must follow all the directions given by the school and/or teacher. Failure to follow directions may result in disqualification from volunteering for a limited time up to permanent disqualification as a volunteer at any site. No exceptions will be made for not following the rules of the school or the volunteer handbook.

Confidentiality

Volunteers must maintain strict confidentiality concerning information they learn about students or faculty. Information about students should be kept between the volunteer and the teacher. A misplaced comment can be devastating to a student, the family, and/or the volunteer program. If questions or concerns arise, the volunteer can talk with the volunteer coordinator, teacher, guidance counselor or the principal.

Sign In/Out and Wear a Badge

When volunteering always:

1. Report to the school's front office.
2. Wear volunteer badge. Safeguarding our students and maintaining campus security is of utmost importance.

Information to Remember:

- Volunteers who have been approved and follow the procedures (sign in) are covered by School District liability policies while volunteering.
- Some outside companies may consider verified volunteer service as work experience for employment.
- Individual volunteers may be recognized for their dedication and service to Hernando County schools. The record of volunteer attendance is one basis for consideration of these awards.
- State awards are granted to schools who log a designated number of volunteer hours per enrolled student.

Orientation

Hernando County School District designates volunteers as Level I or Level II.

Level I volunteers must always remain under the supervision of an employee of the district while working with or in the presence of students. For example, a Level I volunteer in the media center may not work with students on a project in the media center if the media specialist or another employee is not present. The volunteers could work in the media center alone if no students are present.

A Level II volunteer is an individual who has completed fingerprinting for an in-depth background check and is interested in one-on-one student contact such as tutoring, mentoring, field trip chaperone or coaching.

Volunteers at either level are not allowed to instruct, discipline, or replace a member of the school staff at any time. Volunteers at both levels should be under supervision of a District employee while interacting with students, unless it is a rare occasion such as a field trip.

Every volunteer (Level I and Level II volunteer) should meet with the school's volunteer coordinator to discuss school procedures, e.g., sign-in/out procedures, school layout, expectations for behavior, school safety procedures etc. This session will be completed by the school volunteer coordinator. Volunteers should sign a log indicating they have received the school-level orientation annually. The school will keep the checklist.

Reporting Volunteer Hours

Please be sure to report to the school your completed volunteer hours. Volunteers who check in and out of the school on the visitor/volunteer management system will have their volunteer hours captured automatically. Volunteers who fail to check out will be awarded no more than one hour for the day on which volunteer services are provided. Report on all hours that you provide as a service to the school, including work done at home for the school. When deciding what constitutes volunteer service, the hours must be completed while providing nonpaid service to the school, not while attending a PTA meeting or school event (ex: Open House, school play, athletic event, etc.).

Sample Volunteer Duties

Chaplain (Level II)

- Provide support services to students at parent request
- Must follow procedures to apply and qualify under school chaplain program

Classroom Volunteer

(Reading, Math, English, Science, Social Studies, Electives)

- Uses flash cards to help students learn words, multiplication tables, and word sounds
- Assists younger children with learning the alphabet, colors, numbers and identifying letters, shapes, rhyming words, etc.
- Supervises learning centers, games, and other areas where an extra pair of hands are needed
- Assists students with special projects
- Assists students in academic work without evaluating
- Prepares bulletin boards or hands-on teaching materials

Clerical Volunteer

- Assists the support staff in the operation of our schools by working as receptionist, typist, or file clerk.

Coaching Volunteer (Level II Required)

- Attends and participates in practices, games/meets and tournaments
- Implements program policies as set forth by the head coach and principal
- Expresses a positive attitude at all times
- Teaches competitiveness, sportsmanship and additional traits of positive character
- Must complete the 5 Free FHSAA mandated NFHS courses- see Athletic Director for details
- Volunteer coach may facilitate drills/skills and/or supervise a game or practice, provided a supplemental coach working for the District or Athletic Director is present

Field Trip Chaperone

- Assists teachers during field trips. (Level I)
- Takes responsibility for a group of students assigned by the teacher. (Level II)
- Specific chaperone guidelines are provided by the school
- **An overnight chaperone is required to be a Level 2 volunteer**

Tutor Volunteer (Level II Required)

- Works with small groups to reinforce basic skills
- Works at any grade level and in any subject area
- Offers remedial help or reinforcement activities

Mentor Volunteer (Level II Required)

- Works with an at-risk student needing extra support
- Serves as a role model and advisor, helping the student understand how education will help him or her reach personal goals
- Encourages school attendance; discourages tardiness
- Attends a mentor training which provides an overview of the program and mentoring responsibilities/conduct

Important Volunteer Guidelines

When Working with Students

- **VOLUNTEERS MUST MAINTAIN STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY** concerning information they see and hear about students and staff, including students' grades, records, and abilities.
- **Volunteers DO NOT discipline students.** Provide "instruction" to students regarding behavior. Report discipline problems to the teacher.
- **Level I & II Volunteers must always be supervised when working with students.**
- Level II volunteers are allowed to participate in activities which may include one-on-one contact with students. These activities may include mentoring, tutoring, volunteer coaching, chaperoning overnight field trips or chaperoning a group of students in a public setting.
- Volunteers may not supervise a classroom or give permission for a student to leave a classroom. These are the teacher's responsibility.
- Volunteers do not diagnose student weaknesses and strengths, prescribe activities for students, or evaluate student progress.
- Volunteers' discussions with teachers should not interrupt class time. Please turn cell phones off.
- Volunteers are not to bring preschool children into the classroom during instruction time. This presents a liability issue and is disruptive to the classroom.
- Volunteers should set a good example for students by their manner, appearance and behavior. They should be well groomed, appropriately dressed, and maintain professional conduct/language.
- Volunteers should be in good physical and mental health.
- Volunteers may not give any medication to students. Notify a staff member if an accident occurs.
- Volunteers comments should not be written on student papers.
- Volunteers should not laugh at or belittle student answers, or efforts.
- Volunteers should contact ONLY school staff members with any concerns regarding students.
- Volunteers are assigned only to staff members who request their services.
- Comparing and criticizing teachers and students is not acceptable volunteer behavior.
- Volunteers may not hold informal parent/teacher conferences or leisure conversations with staff members or other volunteers during volunteer time.
- Volunteers may not conduct personal business at school.
- Volunteers may not take photographs, videos or recordings of students, unless permitted by a school administrator for a school project. Never post any student photographs or student information on social networks.
- Volunteers should practice safety in the classroom and follow all the safety procedures for the school.
- Volunteers should never touch students in any way that is aggressive, disciplinary, or sexual in nature.
- Volunteers who are hurt or involved in an accident while serving in your volunteer capacity should report the incident to the school office and complete an accident report immediately.
- All volunteers must sign in/out and wear an identifying badge while on a school campus.

When in doubt, check in with the school administrator, teacher or school counselor.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I become a volunteer?

Volunteer applications are only available online for everyone except students.

Your application process begins with our volunteer Level I application available under Safe Schools at www.hernandoschools.org. Applicants may not be placed in a volunteer position prior to clearance from the Volunteer Department coordinator. The on-line web application will inform you when your application has been processed and cleared. Please share your volunteer interests with the coordinator at the school.

I do not have teaching experience. Can I still volunteer?

Yes! A teaching background is not required since volunteers work under the direction of the school staff.

How do I find out which volunteer services are needed?

Each school has a volunteer coordinator who will assist you in your placement. Some schools hold informative orientations which explain the opportunities available and the volunteer program. Your volunteer assignment is determined by your skills, interests, and preferences, as well as by the needs of individual schools and teachers.

I'd like to volunteer, but I can't offer my services on a regular basis. Can I still volunteer?

Yes! You may volunteer on special school projects or with *PTN* *PTSNPTO*. While the meetings are not considered volunteer time, any activities on behalf of the school will count toward the annual volunteer hours. The time commitment will depend on the specific project. Another possibility is to arrange to take volunteer work home to execute at your convenience.

I would like to volunteer, but I have a preschool child. Can I bring my child with me?

No. Taking preschool children with you to school presents a liability problem for the school. In addition, having a very young child in a classroom interrupts class procedures, disrupts the students, and prevents the volunteer from giving full attention to the work the teacher has prepared. However, you can still help the school by making arrangements to do work at home.

May I choose the teacher with whom I want to work?

Volunteers are placed only in classrooms where teachers have specifically requested assistance.

Suppose I don't feel qualified to perform the assignment I have agreed to undertake?

Feel free to say so. Remember, there are many different jobs. Talk to your teacher or volunteer coordinator for possible reassignment.

What do I do about discipline?

Disciplinary action is the responsibility of the teachers and school staff. *Volunteers do not enforce discipline.* Immediately notify the teacher if there is a discipline problem.

My friends and neighbors will ask me about school. What may I say?

We want you to talk about your school and your involvement. But you may have access to "privileged" information, which must be treated as confidential. Privileged information is important for school business and must never be discussed outside of school. Also, remember that criticizing school personnel and school practices are not acceptable. In school, you are a professional working with other professionals.

VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST



I have:

- ☐ talked with the school's volunteer coordinator.
- ☐ completed an On-Line *Application to Volunteer*.
- ☐ waited for my application to be processed and cleared prior to volunteering.
- ☐ been assigned to a teacher or a supervisor of the project/ activity.
- ☐ a specific place and time to work.

I know:

- ☐ the school layout, parking, and facilities available.
- ☐ the school/classroom discipline policy.
- ☐ classroom policies, procedures, and rules.
- ☐ fire and other drill procedures and safety rules.
- ☐ where and when to report to work.
- ☐ what to do if I must be absent.
- ☐ what to do if I am working with a substitute teacher.
- ☐ where instructional materials/tools are kept.
- ☐ what is expected of me



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