**CHESTER UPLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES**

At the Chester Upland School District, we highly value the work of our volunteers. Your support makes our schools a safer and more nurturing place for our children and families. You help us create a constellation and continuum of support for our students by strengthening our ties with families and community. Your time and energy truly make a difference in the lives of our young people, and we can’t thank you enough for that. As you are joining our school community, we wanted to share with you some tips and suggestions that would help us ensure that you are having a truly positive volunteering experience.

Clearances:

It is mandated by the state of Pennsylvania that anyone working or volunteering at a school should provide the following documentations:

- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance - Free

- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check - Free

Volunteers are excused from obtaining the Act 114 (FBI Criminal Background) clearance if the individual has been a **resident of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania during the entirety of the previous 10-year period** AND submits an affidavit attesting that they have not perpetrated or been convicted of any offense that would preclude their employment by the School District under Act 34 (Criminal History), Act 114 (FBI Criminal Background), or Act 151 (Child Abuse) or Section 6344(C) of the Child Protective Services Law.

If a volunteer **has not been a resident of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania** during the entirety of the previous 10- year period. You will need to provide FBI Criminal history certification.

-FBI Criminal History Report– $22.60

**Please note that you will not be able to volunteer without having the above clearances.**

Signing in:
Volunteers must sign in when they report to volunteer duty and sign-out when they leave. They also need to wear their ID inside the building.

Dress and Appearance:
Since our students will be looking up to you for a positive example and leadership, we ask you to please show good judgment and discretion in your choice of dress and come to school wearing clothing appropriate for a school setting.

Confidentiality:
One of the non-negotiable requirements of volunteering with the School District is full commitment to respect strict confidentiality of any student and parent information you come across through your volunteer engagement. Please respect the privacy of other people’s information and the trust you have been given. If parents ask you about their own or another student’s performance or behaviors, please refer them to the teacher. Refrain from discussing with others the situations observed while acting as a volunteer. If you have a question or information you need to share about a specific child, please talk to staff members privately, not in the presence of other students or parents.

Knowing and Respecting School Rules:

Each school building has its rules, policies, norms and protocols that regulate how the school operates, including when the school day starts and ends, how students are admitted and dismissed, the uniform policy, the cell phone policy, how parents can get an appointment with the teacher or the principal, how parents can make arrangements to visit their child’s classroom, how the school handles and resolves parent concerns, how parents can sign up to volunteer etc. We expect our volunteers to know, respect and follow school rules as well as encourage other parents to do the same. School Handbook and the staff at your school are great resources to get you up to speed on the rules at your building. On the other hand, if you have ideas how to improve any current policies or protocols at your school, please share them with the principal. However, please be aware that changing routines is not easy. It takes a lot of time and preparation. Plus, there may be many reasons why your ideas may or may not work. Be open to these possibilities.

Value Judgments:

Every child brings to school his or her own special skills and abilities, their own personality and their way of processing information and learn. Every child is unique and special. Some students are traditional learners, and some are not. Some students can acquire certain skills faster than others. Each child grows and learns at his/her own pace and every child needs encouragement and support to rise up to their true potential. We are here to provide our students with this support and encouragement. Please do not make value judgments or label the abilities or skills of any child. Try to praise the effort and help students make better choices.

Questions and Issues:

 We don’t expect you to agree with everything other people do, but we expect you to respect the actions and decisions of others. If you have a problem, issue, or disagreement with something one of the staff members said or did, please bring it to their attention privately at an appropriate time. Discussing issues in the middle of class or with other staff members or parents is not appropriate at any time. Clear, open, and direct communication is vital to our success.

Student Discipline:

Each school building has an established discipline policy. Please talk with the principal and staff to see how you can fit into and support the policy at your school. When issues arise concerning inappropriate student behavior, we encourage volunteers to check with the staff for the appropriate action and to support students by encouraging them to make good choices and demonstrate appropriate behavior. Whenever possible, we try to work toward positive discipline, praising students for the good choices and actions they make. And even if the student makes a bad choice, we have to be clear to evaluate the behavior and not the student. There is a difference between being a bad person and being a good person who did a bad thing. If we believe in the first, we won’t have much incentive to try and change. If we believe in the second, we will.

Accepting and Valuing Diversity and Managing Conflict:

Each of us comes from a different background and culture, and we all have our own ideas and experiences related to raising children. The diversity of people, values, cultures, and beliefs is what makes life a rich experience. Please embrace the differences and respect other people’s right to have their own opinions, even if those are very different from yours. We can only learn and change if we start with this foundation of respect. Instead of arguing, ask questions and try to understand the rationale behind the opinions you don’t agree with. We don’t have to always agree to be able to work together and have great relationships, but we need to respect each other and seek to understand each other as well. If you are having difficulty managing conflict, ask for a third person (colleague, principal or one of our staff members to step in and mediate).

Managing Explosive Situations:
When working with people, try to refrain from judgment. Deploy tact and empathy and keep your cool. A lot of times both students and adults may use profane language. Remember that these instances can be an indication of many different things: these people may be upset, angry, stressed out, may want to provoke a certain reaction from you or may be just automatically reproducing the sounds they are used to hearing from others. Please do not take these instances personally. If you feel like you can handle the situation, acknowledge the speaker’s sentiments, and calmly redirect the conversation. Otherwise, politely excuse yourself and call a staff member in. And please at all costs refrain from any physical contact – leave it to trained professionals and don’t put yourself in harm’s way.

Keeping Commitments:

Any work requires planning, and we plan based on the resources we have. In order to be able to use your support we need to plan as well, so it is very important that you set a schedule and commit to it. If things change, please provide as much in advance notice as possible. You need to contact your school, so we know what is happening. And please remember that whether volunteering or working we need to keep our focus on the task and on our “customers” (be it parents, students or colleagues depending on the situation). If you are not able to commit, we are not going to be able to use you.

Thank you for joining us in this educational partnership!

If you are ready to embrace this commitment, please sign and date below.

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I have read the volunteer guidelines, understand their purpose, and agree to abide by them as a volunteer at the Chester Upland School District.

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 Print First and Last Name Signature Date