

POLICY

Harford County Public Schools

POLICY TITLE: Volunteers		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE:	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED:	MOST RECENTLY REAFFIRMED:
POLICY/PROCEDURE MANUAL SUMMARY CATEGORY:		

I. **Purpose**

To reinforce the Board's commitment to encouraging and effectively engaging parents/guardians, caregivers, and community volunteers as active partners in supporting the academic success of all students within Harford County Public Schools (HCPS).

II. **Definitions**

- A. Volunteer – Volunteers may include parents/guardians and other family members, as well as other non-staff members of the community interested in the education of children, who are willing to donate their time and energy to support HCPS students in accord with this policy. Volunteers do not include interns, students completing field or shadowing experiences for university requirements, or similar work or experience-related opportunities that are governed by separate agreement. Additionally, volunteers are distinguished from visitors by their engagement in activities assigned by the schools which support the educational experiences of students.
- B. Chaperone – A teacher, parent/guardian, or other volunteer who accompanies an educational field trip to assist staff in providing supervision for students.
- C. Community partners – Community partners, include but are not limited to, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, advocacy groups, and businesses. A community partner is a group that seeks to support the BOE and schools' goals. A community partner may have a memorandum of understanding with the Board that delineates the parties' legal obligations, roles, and responsibilities.
- D. Criminal background check – A criminal background investigation, including fingerprinting, conducted by the HCPS Office of Internal Investigations, that reviews federal and state databases of criminal records.
- E. Registered Sex Offender ("Registrant") – An individual who is required to register with Maryland's public sex offender registry under Annotated Code of Maryland, Criminal Procedure, §§ 11-701, et seq.
- F. School Property – All Board property, including buildings, land that surrounds the buildings, and vehicles that are owned, operated, or leased by the Board. School property also includes athletic fields, parking lots, school buses

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(including buses operated by contracted vendors), all areas of the school building, and any other property owned, used, leased, or operated for school administration.

III. Statement of Policy

- A. The academic achievement and educational experiences of all students are enhanced by a community invested in their learning. Volunteers who become active in the student learning process assist school personnel to meet the needs of students more effectively, provide students with additional role models, and enrich the educational experience of students as well as their own understanding of HCPS.
- B. The school system shall collaborate with parents, caregivers, families, and the community at large, recognizing that engagement is a shared responsibility, and offering multiple ways for volunteers to be involved.
- C. The school system shall support involvement by parents, caregivers, families, and the community at-large in organizations and other school-based committees, offering volunteers the opportunity to participate in school governance and improvement, decision-making processes, and opportunities to provide ongoing feedback.
- D. The school system shall be proactive, timely, and promote various forms of communication, including newsletters, phone calls, emails, social media, and websites to keep volunteers and potential volunteers informed of activities, students' progress, and upcoming events. Two-way communication between the school and parents/ guardians will be promoted.

IV. Volunteer Guidelines

- A. The school system shall engage parents and community partners to support student achievement through volunteerism. Volunteer activities should specifically aim to meet the needs of the school while allowing volunteers the opportunity to contribute through a variety of experiences.
- B. All volunteer activities will align with district goals, safety standards, and legal requirements. The district values volunteer engagement, recognizing that positive involvement leads to improved student outcomes. HCPS is committed to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment where all volunteers feel respected, valued, and engaged.
- C. How to indicate interest in volunteering:
 - 1. A prospective volunteer (or group) can indicate their interest in volunteering with Harford County Public Schools by:
 - a. contacting a specific school.

- b. contacting the Office of Family and Community Partnerships; or
 - c. visiting the school or HCPS website.
- 2. Individuals and groups who are interested in volunteer opportunities with HCPS but need help with being placed should contact the Office of Family and Community Partnerships.
- D. HCPS Office of Family and Community Partnerships, in partnership with Student Support Services (Community Schools and Title I), will:
 - 1. Support schools and offices by providing assistance in volunteer activity development;
 - 2. Develop a plan to promote volunteer recruitment; and
 - 3. Report annually to the Board of Education on the progress and/or initiatives of HCPS' various volunteer activities.
- E. School staff members will:
 - 1. Ensure volunteers are informed about and welcomed into the school's positive culture and climate.
 - 2. Share volunteer service opportunities and use their school website and other means to make these opportunities known to parents/caregivers and community volunteers.
 - 3. Follow guidance provided by the Office of Family and Community Partnerships regarding use of volunteers in schools.
 - 4. Provide appropriate supervision for volunteers, depending on the type of volunteer contact with students.
- F. Classification- There are three types of volunteers:
 - 1. *Supervised* - HCPS staff are always physically present when the volunteer is working with students other than their own children.
 - 2. *Indirectly Supervised* - HCPS staff might not always be present while the volunteer is in the company of students other than their own children (e.g., tutors, mentors). This class of volunteers must undergo a criminal background check at their own expense.
 - 3. *No-Student Contact* - All services by the volunteer will be performed at times when students will not be present. HCPS staff are present when volunteer services are being performed.

G. Criminal Background Investigations and Other Screenings

1. All schools shall follow HCPS procedure regarding required background checks and screenings of volunteers.
2. All volunteers must be checked in and screened against the state sex offender registry before serving in any capacity.
3. A formal criminal background investigation is required under the following circumstances:
 - a. When the volunteer is likely to be alone with students.
 - b. When the volunteer is frequently present in a school.
4. If the school determines that a volunteer will be **Indirectly Supervised**, a criminal background check must be completed **prior to the volunteer's start date**.
 - a. This background investigation includes both **state and federal** reviews.
 - b. The Office of Internal Investigations will coordinate and administer the background check process.

H. Eligibility

1. The Office of Human Resources receives and retains a copy of the prospective volunteer's state and federal criminal background check.
2. The Office of Human Resources uses the results of both reports to determine if a prospective volunteer is "eligible" or "ineligible." Volunteers are held to the same eligibility requirements as employees.
3. The Office of Human Resources is responsible for notifying principals whether prospective volunteers are deemed "eligible" or "ineligible."
4. Harford County Public Schools, along with each individual school within the district, reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer whose conduct violates established expectations or poses a potential risk to the well-being of students and staff. Maintaining a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment is a top priority, and any behavior that undermines this commitment whether through inappropriate actions, failure to follow school guidelines, or other concerning conduct—may result in the immediate termination of volunteer privileges. This policy ensures that all individuals contributing to the school community uphold the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.

HCPS Volunteer Screening Overview

	Description	Sample Activities	Sex Offender Registry	Background Check Required
Supervised	- School staff are always present - Volunteer is never alone with students	Guest speaker or reader in the classroom; parent helper with class activities	School checks prior to volunteers' service through front desk check-in	No
Indirectly Supervised	- School staff may or may not be present - Possibility volunteer is alone with student	Mentor, tutor, and chaperone (overnight travel)	School or central office checks prior to volunteers' service	School or Office volunteer to Investigative Services
No-Student Contact	- School staff may or may not be present - Students are not present	Saturday clean-up at school, administrative work, and district office activities	School or office checks prior to volunteers' service	No

Board Approval Acknowledged by:

Sean W. Bulson, Ed.D. Superintendent