

## Volunteer Services



# Volunteer Screening Tools

for MPS Volunteer Liaisons

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## Screening - Overview

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**All volunteers in the school need to be screened.** This packet will help volunteer liaisons learn how to provide standard MPS volunteer screening measures including:

### ***Always***

- Name Tag
- Sign-in log
- Policies & Procedures
- Volunteer Information Form

### ***Usually***

- Volunteer Position Description
- Interview
- Reference Check
- Volunteer Orientation

### ***Sometimes***

- Criminal Background Check
- Credit Check
- Data Privacy Agreement

### **Determining Appropriate Screening**

We divide volunteer positions into four “levels” of risk. Level 1 has the least risk associated with the position and level 4 has the most. “Level 1” volunteers have little or no student contact. They pose little risk to our students – screening for these volunteers can be minimal. “Level 4” volunteers can be unsupervised when they work with students. These are potentially risky positions; therefore, we have a more in-depth screening process for these volunteers.

The chart on the next two pages explains each volunteer level and the corresponding screening requirements.

## Volunteer Screening Levels

Position Description	Screening Tools	Possible Examples	Party Responsible for ensuring screening is done
<b>LEVEL 1</b>			
<p>Position takes place under supervision and involves little or no student contact</p> <p>Descriptors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public setting</li> <li>2. Staff or adults can enter and observe at any time</li> <li>3. No solitary time with student</li> <li>4. Always within unbroken view of school staff or multiple adults</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MPS Volunteer Information Form</li> <li>▪ Position Descriptions</li> <li>▪ List of volunteers and volunteer sign-in record</li> <li>▪ Name tags required to be worn</li> </ul>	<p>Resource speakers</p> <p>Read-a-thon</p> <p>Clerical assistance</p> <p>PTA fundraising activities</p> <p>Outdoor projects, i.e. landscaping, installing playground equipment</p> <p>Media center support</p> <p>School Carnival</p>	<p>School site: Principal or designee</p> <p>District site: Central office staff</p>
<b>LEVEL 2</b>			
<p>Position takes place under supervision in classroom or other group setting</p> <p>Descriptors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public setting</li> <li>2. Staff or adults can enter and observe at any time</li> <li>3. No solitary time with student</li> <li>4. Always within sight of school staff or multiple adults, but ability of staff to monitor volunteer's interactions with students limited by own responsibilities or other factors</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MPS Volunteer Information Form</li> <li>▪ Position Descriptions</li> <li>▪ Attendance at volunteer orientation</li> <li>▪ Name tags required to be worn</li> <li>▪ List of volunteers and volunteer sign-in record</li> <li>▪ Personal interview with school staff or volunteer coordinator</li> <li>▪ Reference Check</li> <li>▪ Training</li> </ul>	<p>Classroom tutors</p> <p>Lunch buddies</p> <p>Reading buddies (in classroom)</p> <p>Classroom helpers</p> <p>Field Days</p> <p>Athletic concessions</p> <p>School fairs</p> <p>One-day field trip chaperone</p>	<p>School site: Principal or designee</p> <p>District site: Central office staff</p>

## Volunteer Screening Levels, contin.

Position Description	Screening Tools	Possible Examples	Party Responsible for ensuring screening is done
<b>LEVEL 3</b>			
<p>Position involves direct contact with students under limited supervision by school staff</p> <p>Descriptors: Public setting Staff or adults can enter/observe at any time Could have solitary time with student(s) of short duration (less than 30 minutes) May be outside of view of school staff or multiple adults for brief periods May involve access to confidential student information (only if parent consents) Handles money or school funds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MPS Volunteer Information form</li> <li>▪ Attendance at volunteer orientation</li> <li>▪ Name tags required to be worn</li> <li>▪ List of volunteers and volunteer sign-in record</li> <li>▪ Position description</li> <li>▪ Personal interview</li> <li>▪ Reference checks (minimum two non-family members)</li> <li>▪ Local criminal record checks conducted through date of birth of volunteer, race, gender and Social Security Number</li> <li>▪ Credit history</li> <li>▪ Training for volunteers by appropriate school staff, including thorough position descriptions</li> </ul>	<p>Athletic Coach Small group sessions (in separate room) Reading Buddies (in separate room) Health office volunteer Volunteers with access to significant sums of money</p>	<p>School site: Principal or designee</p> <p>District site: Central office staff</p>
<b>LEVEL 4</b>			
<p>Position allows unsupervised contact with student on or off campus*</p> <p>Descriptors: 1. Private setting in home or community, or 2. Access can be restricted by volunteer, or 3. Extended solitary time with a student on a regular basis, or 4. Overnight trips</p> <p>*Student must have a signed parental consent form</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MPS Volunteer Information form</li> <li>▪ Attendance at volunteer orientation</li> <li>▪ List of volunteers and volunteer sign-in record</li> <li>▪ Name tags required to be worn</li> <li>▪ Position descriptions</li> <li>▪ In-depth personal interview</li> <li>▪ Reference checks</li> <li>▪ Criminal History Records Check*</li> <li>▪ Finger Printing</li> <li>▪ Training</li> </ul> <p>(Other screening methods such as home visits and driving history checks may be added as necessary)</p> <p>* MPS reserves the right to update records checks as needed.</p>	<p>Mentor Field trip chaperone on overnight trip Athletic coach</p>	<p>School site: Principal or designee</p> <p>District site: Central office staff</p>

## **How-To: Name Tags & Sign-in Logs**

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Volunteers must register and sign in at the school office at the beginning of each school visit and sign out when they leave. Schools shall require that each volunteer wear a nametag while in the building and volunteers shall wear them.

## **How-To: Policies and Procedures**

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All volunteers must learn about the Volunteer Policies and Procedures. Minimally, they should be discussed, using the handout in the appendix. When possible, volunteers should also view the Volunteer Services Orientation Video/DVD. If your school does not already have a copy, this 8-minute video is available for \$5 from Volunteer Services.

## **How-To: Volunteer Information Form**

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*In the appendix, you'll find four versions of the district-wide Volunteer Information Form. The first one is the standard form. Others are tailored to more specific volunteer types. Read the descriptions to determine which will be most useful for your purposes. If you are not sure, use the "MPS Volunteer Information Form."*

**MPS Volunteer Information Form:** This is the standard district-wide Volunteer Information Form. It is appropriate for use with all volunteers. It includes two sections; one gathers general information about the volunteer's interests and availability, and the other collects the information required to screen a volunteer who works with students in a supervised setting.

**MPS Volunteer Information Form (electronic response format):** This is the same basic form, but it is formatted so that it can be filled in electronically, rather than printed on paper. The applicant can type his/her responses in the fields and then email the completed form to the MPS liaison/staff person.

**MPS Basic Elements Volunteer Information Form:** This is a pared down version of the standard Volunteer Information Form. It contains only the essential screening information that MPS schools are required to collect from volunteers who will be working with students in this district. If you are interested in creating a volunteer application or information form tailored to your specific school or program, use this form as a basic framework. Beyond this, you are free to customize!

**MPS Guest Speaker Information Form:** This is a volunteer information form tailored to the role of volunteer "resource speakers." Resource speakers are guest speakers who visit schools on a short-term basis to present information about a subject in which they have expertise. This form will help staff gather key information about this volunteer's visit.

## **How-To: Volunteer Position Description**

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Volunteers should receive a description of their role in the school. In addition to providing the volunteer with a clear sense of purpose, the description also allows the school to set clear boundaries for the roles that volunteers play in the school.

A good description includes a position title, purpose, responsibilities, required qualifications, screening, supervision and training to be provided, placement, expected time commitment, benefits, and contact information.

## **How-To: Interview**

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The interview is an opportunity to learn more about the volunteer and his/her interests while also screening for red flags that might indicate that a volunteer should not work with our students. Here are some topics to cover with the volunteer in the initial “interview” (either phone conversation or meeting):

- Learn about his or her educational & professional background
- Become familiar with the extent of the volunteer’s knowledge of the community
- Become familiar with the volunteer’s previous experience with children/youth
- Discuss the volunteer’s motivation for volunteering
- Discuss how much of a time commitment the volunteer is willing to make
- Establish how the volunteer heard about your school volunteerism program
- Find out about the volunteer’s other interests

## **How-To: Reference Check**

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Every volunteer who works with students needs to have a reference check. Volunteers are to list two references on their Volunteer Information Sheet. A staff member needs to talk to one, but have the option of calling both. If a volunteer comes to your school through Volunteer Services, usually our staff will conduct the reference check and send you reference notes along with volunteer’s information form. If you need to conduct a reference check, the following are the standard questions. The Reference Check Form is included on the next page.

## **How-To: Orientation**

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The volunteer orientation includes two components: a general orientation and a site orientation. If a volunteer comes to you through Volunteer Services, typically he/she will have already attended a general orientation conducted by our office. As the site liaison, you will be asked to give the volunteer a more specific introduction to their school and position. If a volunteer comes to you directly, please present the general orientation materials to them, as well.

- The Volunteer Orientation Guide presents the general orientation content and is available on our website or can be sent to you.
- The Volunteer Site Orientation Guide is a guide you can use for giving your site orientations. It is available on our website or can be sent to you.

## **How-To: Criminal Background Check**

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The criminal background check is only required for those volunteers who are not under staff supervision when working with students. There is a \$5 cost associated with performing the background check. The school is responsible for paying this fee. To do a criminal background check, the volunteer needs to complete the personal information release form, found in the appendix, agreeing to release personal record information to the school district staff. These forms must be labeled “confidential” and sent to Volunteer Services, along with payment. We will check the record and contact you if there is criminal history to report.

## **How-To: Credit Bureau Check**

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For those working with financial information. Contact Volunteer Services.

## **How-To: Data Privacy Agreement**

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For those working with private student data, such as academic records or home address. Such volunteers must sign the Data Privacy Act letter found in the appendix.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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**Do all volunteers need to be screened?** Yes. All Minneapolis Public School volunteers working in any setting will be screened. The screening used will be based upon the specific volunteer position description, the risks associated with the performance of that position, and the designation of supervised versus unsupervised student contact. The Volunteer Position Screening Chart sets forth in detail the various position descriptions and the type and frequencies of screening required for each position.

**Can the volunteer start before we've completed the reference check?** No. The screening process *must* be completed before any volunteer begins in any school or program.

### Adult Learners

**Are the policies different for working with adult learners?** Yes. Students in the Adult Basic Education Program are considered emancipated adults and their permission must be obtained to work with a tutor. Tutors working with adult learners are not required to be in view of the licensed teacher at all times.

### Student Confidentiality

**Can volunteers gain access to confidential student information?** Though discouraged, in some cases, yes. Volunteers will be informed of the privacy of all student information and will be asked to sign a letter agreeing to maintain the confidentiality of any student information. Volunteers are to be held to professional standards for maintaining the confidentiality of student records. Volunteers not working under the guidance of school staff will not be given access to student records without parent/guardian permission.

### Volunteer Confidentiality

**Do I need to keep the Volunteer Information Forms somewhere special?** Yes – they need to be kept in a secure place, such as a locked file cabinet. All personal information collected on the Volunteer Information Form is considered confidential and will only be used to process a volunteer's placement.

### Proper Volunteer Conduct

**What are some proper boundaries I can set around the volunteer's role in the school?** Volunteers shall not engage students, staff or others in political or religious activities while on School District premises and while performing School District duties.

School personnel are responsible for the instruction, safety, and discipline of students and consequently some tasks are not to be performed by volunteers. Volunteers shall not provide the curriculum or the teaching plan, diagnose student needs or evaluate achievement, counsel or discipline students or provide nursing care (i.e. administer medications, treatments, etc.).

## **E-Mentoring**

### **How do I set up an E-Mentoring project?**

All e-Mentoring programs must be coordinated through the district Information Media Technology Services Department.

E-Mentoring connects students with caring, supportive adults while providing students with information about careers and the workplace. The program works best, however, when teachers and corporate partners or individuals establish additional objectives aligned with the classroom goals. The program is designed to be academic. It is not simply a pen-pal program. In general, the goals are to increase the rigor of the classroom curriculum.

## **Ineligible Former Employees**

### **Are there any restrictions around former employees serving as volunteers?**

Yes. All former employees of the Minneapolis Public Schools who are coded as ineligible for rehire are ineligible to volunteer in Minneapolis Public Schools. Any individual guilty of any offense or behavior that disqualifies individuals for employment will also be ineligible to volunteer unless it's to give a classroom presentation related to the behavior or offense.

## **Liability**

### **Are we liable?**

Volunteers will be defended by the District for the purpose of liability for injuries caused by District fault while serving within the scope of duty.

## **MPS Employees**

### **If an MPS employee wants to be a volunteer, do we still have to do a reference check?**

No. Current employees are eligible to volunteer in Minneapolis Public Schools and are exempt from the reference check & criminal background check screening procedures as set forth in the Volunteer Position Screening Chart. However, they are expected to submit a standard volunteer information form to be kept on file at the school.

## **Parental Consent**

### **Do we need parental permission for students to work alone with volunteers?**

In some cases, yes. No student will participate with a volunteer in a *Level 4* activity or ride in a vehicle driven by a volunteer unless the student's parent or guardian has consented in writing.

### **Who is responsible for the volunteer screening process at my school?**

The Principal or his/her designee is responsible for assuring that all volunteers are screened. The assigned staff person will review the work a volunteer will be doing to determine the appropriate level of screening. Volunteers who are referred through other agencies are subject to screening requirements consistent with those listed herein. The Principal or designee must maintain a record of screening data. Department directors or managers are responsible for screening and monitoring volunteers located at their site.

## **Community Partner Organizations**

### **Should I be doing something special with volunteers from a partner program?**

Schools partnering with businesses or other groups or agencies must ensure that the partner is a certified MPS community partner, achieved by completing the Community Partners Online (CPO) process. (CPO is a web-based process found at [www.mpls.k12.mn.us/CPO](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/CPO).) Certified partners agree to follow the volunteer policies and procedures of the Minneapolis Public Schools.

## **System-wide Support**

### **How can the district support me as a volunteer liaison?**

The staff in the Volunteer Services Department will:

- Publicize needs, recruit, and identify volunteers.
- Provide assistance in developing position descriptions.
- Provide training in the process to implement the screening system.
- Conduct appropriate volunteer orientation and teacher in-service programs.
- Conduct and/or arrange workshops for volunteers in reading, math, and other content specific topics as requested.
- Conduct criminal background record checks for a fee

## **Volunteer Dismissal**

### **What happens if I have to let a volunteer go?**

Minneapolis Public Schools is an equal opportunity school district and does not discriminate based on any legally protected status under federal, state or local law. The school principal or other district staff does have the right to dismiss any volunteer who is deemed to have engaged in inappropriate behavior including, but not limited to, that described in these policies and regulations.

*Legal reference: Volunteers for children Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5119a (1998); Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, 42 U.S.C. § 14501 – 05 (1997)*