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Mountain Home Public Schools Volunteer Handbook



“Every Student Every Time”

Mission

The Mountain Home Public School District works to include community volunteers in an effort to provide assistance to teachers and other staff members of the Mountain Home Public School District by promoting school volunteerism within the district. All volunteer hours are collected and reported by Partners In Education.

Beliefs and Values

- Provide all students the opportunity for excellence
- Pride in the district
- Citizenship and developing students into responsible citizens
- Excellent, well-rounded education
- Commitment to the education and development of our children
- Students first
- Fiscal accountability
- Trust and respect of the community

Goals of the Mountain Home Public School District Volunteer Program

Our aim is to recruit, train, and place volunteers who can provide services deemed appropriate by professional staff in order to maximize effectiveness of the district's educational and extra-curricular programs. The volunteer program serves as a link between the district and the community, providing patrons and citizens an opportunity to be significantly involved in the education of the children at Mountain Home Public Schools.

Welcome Message

Dear Volunteers,

Thank you for expressing an interest in volunteering with Mountain Home Public Schools.

The Mountain Home Public Schools (MHPS) Volunteer Program relies on the help of more than 200 volunteers to serve the best interests and traditions of our district. Volunteers are an essential part of the district and honor MHPS with their dedicated service.

MHPS Volunteer Program provides a variety of assistance designed to support educational opportunities for students in grades K-12. Students benefit from the collective support between school, home, and community.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Mountain Home Public School District Administration Building at 870-425-1201.

Sincerely,

***Jake Long, Ed.D
Superintendent***

***Leigh A. Gigliotti, Ed.D
Assistant Superintendent***

Table of Contents

5	Frequently Asked Questions
8	Mountain Home Public School District Volunteer Policy
8	Definition of a Volunteer
8	Becoming a Volunteer --Application and Background Check --Appeals Process
9	Serving as a Volunteer --General Guidelines --Volunteer Dress and Behavior
10	Volunteer and District Personnel Relations
11	Expectations --What the District Personnel Expect of the Volunteer --What the Volunteer Expects of the District Personnel
12	Volunteer Organization Flow Chart
12	Offenses
13	Volunteer Release Form/Duty to Maintain Confidentiality of Student and District Records and Information
15	Resources

Addendum

Mountain Home Volunteer Application and Background Check

Mountain Home Public Schools

Volunteer Policy Guidance

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why must I have a criminal background check to participate in volunteer activities at my child's school?

The safety of all students in MHPS is our first priority. While we encourage, appreciate and celebrate parental involvement in your child's school, it's important that we avoid any situation in which a volunteer might compromise safety. All information obtained for background checks is kept confidential within MHPS Administration.

2. What is the difference between a Volunteer, a Visitor, and an Involved Parent?

A **Volunteer** provides a service to the school district, has an ongoing relationship with the school district personnel, often participates in activities as supervisors of students unrelated to them, and may be involved with activities at multiple schools in the district. Volunteers have submitted the Volunteer Application Packet, have undergone a background check, and have been approved to assist in the schools. Volunteers check in at the front office, present their identification for clearance through the Raptor system, and wear a "Volunteer" sticker at all times while in the building, at an off-campus school event, or field trip during school hours (excluding events which are open to the public).

A **Visitor** is a parent, relative, or other adult with permission of the child's parent or guardian who visits the school for a specific event or reason, or attends an off-campus school-sponsored event. These reasons include but are not limited to having lunch with the student, accompanying the student to a book fair, attending a class party, attending a school function or program, appearing as a guest speaker or doing a special presentation at the request of the school personnel. The Visitor will be in situations where contact with children other than their own is to be expected, but will not supervise children other than their own. A Visitor checks in at the front office, presents their identification for clearance through the Raptor system, and wears a "Visitor" sticker at all times while in the building, at an off-campus school event, or field trip during school hours (excluding events which are open to the public).

An **Involved Parent** participates in regular, two-way communication with their student's teachers, school administrators, and district administrators regarding the student's academics, athletics, and other school-sponsored activities. Involved Parents are on campus for very specific and time-limited reasons related only to their child and are not expected to have contact with other children. Involved parents may be included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their student at the discretion of the district. Involved Parents check in at the front office, present their identification for clearance through the Raptor system, and wear a "Visitor"

sticker at all times while in the building, at an off-campus school event, or field trip during school hours (excluding events which are open to the public).

3. How can I be involved with the school without a background check?

We welcome and value your participation in your child's school. We encourage you to take advantage of open house events, attend book fairs, school performances, attend school sporting events, support booster and school fundraisers, and attend parent-teacher conferences. We encourage you to have open communication with your child's teachers regarding the child's progress and about class rules and expectations. You may also contact the school principal about ways you can be involved without submitting to a background check.

4. Don't I have a right to volunteer and accompany my child on field trips or to events?

Mountain Home Public Schools gives many opportunities for parents and guardians to volunteer and participate in public education with their child. Alongside being as open to volunteerism as we can, we must make every effort to ensure the safety of all the children. We have put the Volunteer process and the Raptor identification check in place to add layers of security around the students. For specific instructions regarding volunteering, please see question #1 and the MHPS Volunteer Handbook.

5. How do these security measures affect my participation in field trips?

Field trips are school-sponsored activities provided by the district and are planned as part of the overall educational program of the school. As such, they fall under the same guidelines as activities or events on the school campus. Adults acting as chaperones of children other than their own will need to fill out the Volunteer Application Packet, clear a background check, check in at the front office, and submit their identification for the Raptor check. Adults wanting to attend but not as a chaperone for children other than their own will need to check in at the front office and submit their identification for the Raptor check. All adults will need permission to attend from the faculty arranging the trip.

6. If the field trip is being held in a public place and I choose to go there while the children are there to watch my child, am I allowed doing so?

If you have been approved but are going to the site separately from the school group, you will need to go by your school's office, submit to the Raptor check, and wear the appropriate sticker identification during the field trip. In addition, while the district has a public venue reserved, it is no longer a public space. Just as we prevent a stranger from walking up and interacting with our students, we also require any parent attending to wear a "Visitor" or "Volunteer" Raptor sticker to participate with the student group.

7. What if I turn in the Volunteer Application Packet and submit to the background check, but am denied as a volunteer?

MHPS recognizes that there are times when more information will be needed to make a determination about where someone can be involved in the district. In this case, please make your request for review in writing and mail or take it to the school principal.

8. What happens to the information that comes up during the background check?

All of the information is kept confidentially and is only seen by the minimum personnel necessary to make a determination. Be assured that the district personnel are held to a very high standard of confidentiality regarding these records. Being denied as a volunteer does not affect your ability to attend school events as a visitor or parent.

9. Is there a fee for the background check and if so, who pays it?

No. The background check shall be paid for by the MHPS.

10. Do I have to have a background check every year?

Yes. All volunteers must complete an MHPS approved, criminal background check annually before they can begin their duties, or as a condition of continued service as a volunteer at the discretion of the MHPS administration.

11. I have students at multiple schools. If I am cleared as a volunteer in one, can I volunteer in the other?

Yes. This process is designed to be district-wide for all volunteer organizations.

12. Do I have to have a background check if I only want to work for my child's teacher?

Yes. A Volunteer is defined as a person who provides a service to the school district without financial compensation. Volunteers are used in different capacities in many organizations in the MHPS. Every MHPS volunteer must complete the volunteer application and submit to a criminal background check.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS ABOUT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES CONTACT:

Mountain Home Public Schools

Administration Building

2465 Rodeo Drive

Mountain Home, AR 72653

870-425-1201/870-425-1316 fax

Homepage

<http://bombers.k12.ar.us/>

Mountain Home Public School District Volunteer Policy

The Mountain Home Public School Board recognizes that certain public school programs and activities are enhanced through the use of volunteers. These volunteers have particular knowledge or skills that are helpful to the district staff responsible for conducting the programs and activities. There is an endless variety of activities that volunteers may be doing in our school district. Specific jobs are established by the school staff based on the needs of the children, as well as the talents and abilities of the volunteers. It is this needs-based flexibility that makes our school volunteer program successful.

Definition of a Volunteer

A Volunteer is defined as a person who provides a service to the school district without financial compensation, has an ongoing relationship with district personnel, often participates in activities as supervisors or helpers to students unrelated to them, and may be involved with activities at multiple schools. Volunteers serve under the guidance and direction of district personnel. Volunteers have submitted a complete Volunteer Application Packet to the school district, have cleared a background check, and will wear identifying stickers or badges at all times while on school grounds or at school-sponsored events. All Volunteers, like all adults entering our school buildings, must check in at the front desk and present their identification for approval through the Raptor system.

Becoming a Volunteer

Application and Background Check

First, we appreciate your involvement! Your first step in becoming a volunteer is to fill out, completely, the Volunteer Application Packet. This application must be submitted annually to Central Office at 2465 Rodeo Drive, Mountain Home, AR. After your paperwork has been received, the district will process your background check. After completion of a background check, the Superintendent or his/her designee will notify the person wishing to volunteer of their status. You may also be asked to fill out an organization-specific, or school building-specific volunteer information sheet for contact and job assignment purposes.

Appeals Process

All information obtained in the Volunteer Application Packet and the background check shall be kept confidential by district administration. In the event a background check turns up something that may prevent a volunteer from serving or affect the area in which he or she serves, the applicant will be notified and given the opportunity to appeal the decision in writing. If this process is necessary, please submit a written appeal to Central Office at 2465 Rodeo Drive, Mountain Home, AR.

Serving as a Volunteer

General Guidelines

Being a Volunteer in the schools among many students' means you have a special obligation to maintain the confidentiality of all the information you see, hear, or collect on behalf of the district. The word "confidential" includes the Latin root *fides*, which means "faith, trust". This obligation to confidentiality covers all information pertaining to a student, or faculty member, including but not limited to grades, disciplinary issues, medical issues, and personal demographic information. Here are some guidelines to help you strengthen the bond of trust between yourself and the school and protect yourself from violating confidentiality:

- Treat all student information as personal and confidential.
- Share relevant information about students only with the respective classroom teacher or building principal.
- Seek clarification of unusual situations that may occur in the school from the person(s) involved or the building principal and avoid discussing such matters with non-school personnel.
- Respect the customs and courtesies of the school and retain a sense of perspective regarding the comments you hear and actions you observe.
- Remember that you are perhaps only seeing a small part of the big picture in any given situation.
- Respect the right to privacy of all students, parents, guardians, and school personnel by not releasing or permitting access to any and all personal information.

Volunteer Dress and Behavior

- Please dress appropriately for the school setting.
- Smoking is not permitted in the school or on the school grounds.
- All adults shall use appropriate language with children and other adults.
- Show you are interested in the students by listening carefully to what they have to say.
- If you are working in a classroom, try to learn the names of the children. This is important to them.
- While we hope you will establish new friendships from your involvement in the volunteer program, remember that you are here to do specific tasks. Please do not use the school as social time.
- Please remember that the school office is a place where the business of the school is conducted and it is important not to use it as a place to socialize.
- Please avoid stepping outside your role as volunteer and guessing at causes of behaviors or learning problems that you see in children. Take any of your concerns to the teacher of that student.
- Please do not bring preschool siblings or other children to school with you while you are volunteering.
- Do not use the student bathrooms. Adult bathrooms are available.

- No volunteer should be left alone with a student or students.
- Volunteers shall not dispense medication of any kind to any student. All medication needs should be routed to the school nurse.
- Volunteers are to use the copy machine and other office machines only after they have been trained. Teachers are given priority in the use of school equipment.
- Please respect the staff lounge areas. These areas are usually reserved for staff only, unless otherwise specified by the building principal.

Volunteer and District Personnel Relations

-Volunteers are required to read this handbook and fill out the Volunteer Application Packet, participate in the background check, and wear Volunteer identification. This is so all school personnel will know by your identification that you have been authorized to work in the building, for a school-sponsored event, or a specific school organization.

-All Volunteers must serve under the guidance of a MHPS employee.

-Volunteers shall not be called “aides” or “teachers” except in the case of student teachers.

-Volunteers shall not be given any assignments that would displace employees or existing contracts for service.

-Volunteers shall not be placed in classrooms in the event of a labor dispute.

-Volunteers may not discipline students. All disciplinary issues must be referred to the teacher or other district employees.

-The school administrator has the authorization to accept or deny a volunteer for placement within their school.

-Teachers may terminate a volunteer assignment.

-Volunteers may terminate their assignment at any time and for any reason by contacting the volunteer coordinator at that school building or the MHPS staff for whom they are working directly.

-All active volunteers are to be registered with the MHPS organization and their service time reported regularly throughout the year by Partners in Education.

-All volunteers working with individual students must do so in publicly designated areas.

Expectations

What the District Personnel expect of the volunteer:

- Be punctual. Arrive by your assigned time, ready to work.
- Be reliable. If you cannot be there for your scheduled time, please notify the school as soon as possible so other arrangements can be made.
- Wear your identification sticker at all times while in the building.
- Complete your tasks in a timely fashion. If you are unable to complete something, leave detailed instructions so that the teacher or next volunteer can easily complete it.
- Be sensitive to the teacher's time and needs and non-disruptive to the classroom. You may know a lot of the children in the class, but you are there to work and they are there to learn, so please help them to stay on task by being the example.
- Do not use your volunteering time as an opportunity for extra parent-teacher conferences. Conferences are separate from the volunteering experience and should be scheduled separately.

What the Volunteer expects of the District Personnel:

- Staff should provide materials and necessary instructions/expectations for assigned tasks and have them ready at the volunteer's assigned time.
- Volunteers shall be treated as professional assistants, with respect, courtesy, and a friendly and welcoming attitude.
- Staff should notify the volunteer about any schedule changes which may interrupt their regular schedule.
- Staff shall assign tasks that volunteers are capable of doing and give assistance as needed.
- Staff shall be open to creative ideas and suggestions from a volunteer.
- Staff shall offer constructive criticism regarding task completion but not in front of the students.
- Staff shall explain policies and procedures that the volunteer may need to be familiar with to carry out their tasks.
- Staff shall not leave the volunteer alone with students.

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION FLOW CHART

To help volunteers understand who to go to with issues, how to resolve a problem, or simply get more information about something, we have developed the following flow chart. This illustration shows you how to proceed when you have questions or need to handle an unfamiliar situation while volunteering. The chart reads from bottom to top.

MHPS School Board
Superintendent
Assistant Superintendent
Principal/District PIE Coordinator/Other Volunteer Coordinators
Organization President
Organization Committee Leader
Teacher/Director/Coach
Volunteer

Offenses

All volunteers shall be held to a high standard and expected to adhere to the school's rules and procedures. Negligent acts by volunteers are unacceptable. Negligence is "the failure to do something that a reasonably careful person would do" or "the doing of an action that a reasonably careful person would not do." Volunteers are advised of grounds for discharge, which may include, but are not limited to; theft, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs during volunteer services, mistreatment of staff or children, inappropriate dress or language, unsatisfactory performance, and criminal history. The District Administration shall investigate the complaint and inform the volunteer if the district is no longer interested in maintaining his/her volunteer service or what duties the volunteer will be assigned to in regards to the best interest of our district. All information obtained by the District Administration shall be kept confidential

VOLUNTEER RELEASE FORM

I, _____ have offered my services as a volunteer to help the Mountain Home School District. I agree to abide by all relevant Board policies and administrative guidelines while on duty for the District (including, but not limited to, the volunteer's obligation to keep confidential and not release or permit access to any and all student personally identifiable information to which s/he is exposed except as authorized by law).

I understand further that, as a volunteer, I am not in any manner considered an employee of the District or entitled to any benefits provided to employees. I further release the Board of Education from any and all liability for any damages, whatever their nature, which may result as a consequence of my volunteer services.

All volunteers need to display appropriate behavior at all times. Volunteers are representatives of the District. If inappropriate behavior/criminal background issues arise, the District Administration will investigate the report as a condition of initial or continued service as a volunteer for the Mountain Home Public School District.

DUTY TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT RECORDS AND INFORMATION

The District is committed to maintaining the security and confidentiality of all student records and/or student personally identifiable information. As an approved volunteer in the District, you may have access to student records and/or student personally identifiable information that must be maintained as confidential and not released and/or permitted to except as authorized by Board policy and law. Violations of this duty may result in reassignment and/or restriction of your volunteer responsibilities by the District Administration.

Volunteers must comply with the following:

- All student records are considered confidential.
- Directory information including the student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially-recognized activities and sports, weight and height of students, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received and previous educational agencies or institutions attended, can only be shared with administrative approval.
- Records may not be left in a place where they may be viewed by others.
- Copies of records may only be shared with administrative approval.
- Volunteers may not discuss or repeat information overheard while in the staff lounge, classrooms, offices, school grounds, hallways, school or extra-curricular activities.

-Volunteers may not discuss information obtained while in a classroom, such as a student's grade or behavior, with anyone other than the student's teacher or the building principal.

-Concerns or questions regarding student records or issues of confidentiality should be brought to the attention of the staff member responsible for supervising your activities and/or the building principal.

-Any knowledge of a violation of these provisions must be immediately reported to the staff member responsible for supervising your activities and/or the building principal.

Volunteering is a privilege, not a right. Volunteering begins with a positive and productive relationship with teachers and administration. The district's administration reserves the right to reassign and/or remove a volunteer from the school setting in response to a volunteer violating confidentiality or any district or volunteer policy.

By signing below you acknowledge that you have read and understood, and agree to comply with the terms and conditions set forth above.

Volunteer's signature

Volunteer's name printed

Date

Resources

Various handbooks and guidelines from other public schools were viewed when writing the Mountain Home Public Schools Volunteer Handbook. Although the handbook has been created by the Partners in Education Board and school administration to meet the needs of our district and organization, information for the Mountain Home Public Schools Volunteer Handbook has also been collected from the following resources:

- The Legal Guide For Arkansas Non-Profit and Volunteer Organizations
- Flagler County, Fl School Board Volunteer Program (www.flaglerschools.com)
- Greenon, Oh Local School District Volunteer Handbook (www.greenon.k12.oh.us)
- Mountain Home, AR Public School District Partners in Education Bylaws
- Volunteers in Public Schools, Little Rock Public Schools