



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

TOSS IN AN  
HOUR OR  
TWO!



## **About this Handbook**

Coppell Independent School District (CISD) is grateful for community partners who join us in our mission. We strive to ensure your experience volunteering with CISD is a positive one and that it enhances your relationship with our schools and community. We appreciate the time and effort all of our volunteers give to make our district a great place to live, learn, and work.

This handbook is designed to help volunteers understand the important role they play in helping learners achieve success. It includes information on volunteer dos and don'ts, as well as important policies, practices, and procedures that volunteers must follow to ensure learners and adults in our schools are safe. This handbook also answers common questions that are often asked during volunteer service.

## **Benefits of Volunteering in Coppell ISD Schools**

Being a school volunteer benefits, learners, staff, and volunteers'. Each person who helps a child learn makes a difference in that child's life. The work of our volunteers make the learning environment even more rich and meaningful.

### **Benefits for the LEARNER:**

- Increases student learning & success
- Exposes learners to authentic and engaging projects
- Helps learners discover their passions and builds confidence
- Makes connections between skills learned in school and skills needed in the workforce
- Enhances positive relationships with our community

### **Benefits for the SCHOOL & STAFF:**

- Expands services schools can offer
- Builds outside support for schools & education
- Increases communication and trust with the community
- Allows educators additional time to work with students

### **Benefits for the VOLUNTEER:**

- Builds community
- Gains an understanding of school operations
- Provides a sense of fulfillment
- Helps support our future workforce
- Fulfills corporate responsibility goals and increases employee moral

## **Volunteers can help maintain an atmosphere of learning by:**

- Silencing cell phones while in the school
- Giving full intention to your tasks
- Using good judgement and being a positive role model
- Expecting students to treat you with respect, just as you treat them with respect
- Following all policies and procedures; if you aren't sure about something, ask a staff member

## **Intake**

All volunteers for CISD must complete a background check at the start of each new school year. The appropriate campus or department will schedule a short intake meeting prior to volunteering in order to provide the appropriate information, policies, and expectations.

For our business partners and community members, an intake meeting is helpful to provide the appropriate information, policies and expectations prior to coming to campus or hosting students. A CISD representative will connect with you to provide you with the information you need to have a successful experience.

## **Supervision of Volunteers**

Volunteers are an integral part of the educational team. The suggestions and opinions of volunteers are always welcome. However, it is the employees, who are held responsible by law for decisions that are made regarding the learning and management of learners. For this reason, volunteers always work under the direct supervision of educators, administrators, and educational support staff.

## **Maintaining Appropriate Adult-Student Boundaries**

The purpose of volunteering is to support academic and/or school activities. Volunteers must maintain appropriate boundaries with learners at all times. Each situation and each child is unique so please contact the school administrator, school counselor, or classroom educator if you have any questions or concerns. It is important that everyone take an active role in helping ensure a safe and healthy environment for students.

### **General Guidelines for Safe Interaction with Learners:**

Do not:

- Take a learner or learners on private outings
- Initiate social activities with learners
- Say or write things to a learner that you would be uncomfortable sharing with the learner's parents, district/school administrators or the educator you are working with
- Make any comments that are based on gender or could be construed as sexist

- Make any comments and/or innuendos that are sexual in nature or could be construed as sexual
- Make jokes that are inappropriate
- Initiate conversations or correspondence of private and/or personal nature with learners. This includes digital correspondence.

## **Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drugs**

The use of tobacco, tobacco products, alcohol and other drugs (exclusive of those prescribed by a medical provider and over the counter medication) by staff, volunteers and the public at school events, on district property (including district vehicles), while volunteering at an off campus event, is prohibited by law.

## **Discipline**

Learners rarely have discipline issues while working with volunteers. However, the district has a discipline plan in place should a situation arise. The responsibility of discipline rests with the staff; volunteers may not discipline learners. Please make the educator or a staff member aware of any discipline concerns that might arise while you are working with a learner.

## **Protecting Student Privacy**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects student privacy. School staff and volunteers must abide by the FERPA regulations. Some examples of information protected by FERPA include details about a student's:

- Health
- Behavior
- Academic performance
- Family or living situation
- Other

It is appropriate and expected that volunteers will share private information gained about learners with the appropriate school staff. However, such information must not be shared with anyone outside the school unless the principal has authorized you to do so.

A good way to ensure you are staying within the legal requirements is to remember, "What happens at school stays at school." Personal information about learners that you gain while volunteering should not be shared with anyone but school staff.

There is one important exception to this rule: illegal activity, such as suspected child abuse, must be reported to the principal and law enforcement, even if it means sharing information that would normally be protected.

## **Taking photos of students**

FERPA also protects parents' and guardians' rights to prevent photographs of their learners from being taken while at school or while involved in school related activities. Here are the steps to follow before taking pictures of learners:

1. Get the principal's permission prior to taking photographs of students.
2. Check with the school office to see if a parent has denied permission to photograph their child.
3. Even if permission is granted, never identify students in photos by full name.

## **Volunteer Safety**

The district recognizes that the work and physical surroundings for volunteers may be unfamiliar. The district will provide training and proper tools when necessary. However, we ask all volunteers to take safety precautions.

## **Emergency Procedures**

The district has emergency procedures in place for each campus. Be sure to review the procedures with a staff member prior to volunteering on campus.

## **Dress Code**

Appropriate school attire at school is an important way to help establish a productive learning environment. Learners, staff and volunteers alike are expected to follow the school's dress code.

A volunteer's attire should be modest, professional and not a distraction from learning. It is important that volunteers set an example for students by modeling appropriate dress while volunteering.

The dress code may vary slightly depending on the task or program in which a volunteer is working. Please check with the school administration for details.

## **School Policies and Guidelines**

Become familiar with the rules, policies, and guidelines of the school where you volunteer. It is a good idea to read the school's staff handbook. Ask your supervising educator to explain the school's policy for use of cell phones, eating facilities, emergency drills and emergency procedures. Use reasonable judgement in making decisions when there appears to be no policy or when the policy is not communicated.

<http://www.coppellisd.com/studenthandbooks>

## **Closing**

As a volunteer, you not only serve the needs of the learners, you also provide a vital link between the school and community. Learners, parents, and community members will view you as a representative of the school. You will have an opportunity to share the many positive things that learners and educators are doing and what makes Coppel ISD such a great place to live, learn, and work. On behalf of all, district staff and learners, thank you for being part of the greatest school district in Texas. We appreciate your service and your commitment to CISD.