



# **Volunteer Handbook**

## ***Guidelines & Procedures***

Dysart Unified School District  
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## **Volunteer Handbook**

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Volunteer Program Overview</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Fingerprinting Process</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Volunteer Chaperones</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Volunteer Athletic Coaches</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Parent Support Organizations</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Photo ID Badge</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Volunteer Attendance Program</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Volunteer Responsibilities</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Volunteer Guidelines</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>When working directly with students</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>First Few Days</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>You Represent the school</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Volunteer Conference Checklist</b>	<b>9</b>

## Volunteer Program Overview

The purpose of the Dysart Unified School District Volunteer Program is to assist schools in providing the highest quality education to each and every student. The services of volunteers are utilized in schools and district offices to:

- ☐ Enrich children's learning opportunities
- ☐ Provide individual attention to those children who need more one-on-one assistance
- ☐ Promote a school-home-community partnership for quality education
- ☐ Provide staff members with more time to work with students
- ☐ Assist staff members and support personnel with non-instructional tasks

Every person who cares about children and education is a potential volunteer. Prior teaching experience is not necessary. Members of the community 18 years of age or older who want to make a difference in the lives of children and support educators are encouraged to apply to become a volunteer with Dysart Unified School District. Volunteers are welcome in all of our schools.

A Dysart volunteer is an individual who has been given a scheduled, pre-arranged activity by a district staff member to assist in one of the district schools. Any person who volunteers more than five (5) hours **per year** must be fingerprinted. The fingerprint fee will be paid by the district. All potential volunteers, including parents of students attending schools within Dysart Unified School District, must complete a volunteer application online and approved by the Volunteer and Compliance Specialist. All applicants will begin by completing the online application after reviewing this doc: [Online Volunteer Application](#)

After a volunteer is approved, the volunteer may contact the school office Administrative Secretary III, or the volunteer point of contact, to set up a meeting with the staff member. The staff member will help you set up your volunteer schedule, discuss tasks and expectations, and answer any questions you may have.

## Fingerprinting Process

All volunteers must be fingerprinted unless they have a current Arizona Fingerprint Clearance Card. Individuals with a current Arizona Fingerprint Clearance Card are still required to complete the Volunteer Application Packet. Background checks performed by previous employers or organizations will not be accepted in lieu of fingerprint clearance by the district. The Volunteer and Compliance Specialist will take your fingerprints. Please be aware that fingerprint clearance may take up to six weeks. A photo ID will be required for proof of identity when fingerprints are taken. Fingerprint

clearance and background checks must be renewed every five years. Volunteer badges will reflect the date your fingerprint clearance expires.

### **Volunteer Chaperones**

If an individual will attend only one field trip per year, they do not need to complete the volunteer process. If more than one field trip will be attended per year, individuals must complete the process to become an approved volunteer. Volunteer chaperones on overnight field trips must be fingerprinted, regardless of the total number of hours volunteered.

### **Volunteer Athletic Coaches**

Prior to any coaching activities, all Volunteer Athletic Coaches must be interviewed by a school administrator. Volunteer Coaches will apply for positions within human relations. Contact 623-876-7912 with any questions or information regarding the volunteer coach application process.

### **Parent Support Organization**

All Booster/PTO/PTA officers and members appointed to a role with financial responsibilities must be approved volunteers in the district. Please complete a volunteer application and associated documents if you are interested in volunteering for a Parent Support Organization. For more information, contact the Volunteer and Compliance Specialist at (623) 876-7875.

Officers of parent organizations should refer to the Parent Support Organization webpage for additional information located on our website at [Dysart.org/Parents/GetInvolved/Parent](https://dysart.org/Parents/GetInvolved/Parent)

### **Photo ID Badge**

Dysart works diligently to maintain safe schools. Wearing your photo ID badge is very important to school safety and must be worn at all times. This will enable the staff to recognize you as a registered volunteer and also identify you as an important member of the school's educational team. Please make sure your ID badge is visible at all times when volunteering. When a volunteer discontinues participation in the Dysart Volunteer Program, the ID badge must be returned to the Volunteer & Compliance Specialist, the school Administrative Secretary III, or the volunteer point of contact at the school site.

### **Volunteer Attendance Program**

Volunteers are covered by the district's liability insurance policy while they are on campus and working under the direct supervision of the school staff. Volunteers must be registered at their school site.

For security and liability insurance coverage reasons, the district must have a record showing the days and hours each volunteer works on campus. For this reason, it is very important that all volunteers log in and out of the attendance computer program each time they volunteer. A special *volunteer attendance computer program* has been set up for volunteers to log their attendance. They are not covered under the district's health and medical benefits or workers' compensation insurance.

A record of each volunteer's hours enables the school to evaluate its volunteer program and recognize volunteers for their valuable contribution to the district. In order to remain an active volunteer each year, you will need to log your hours through the volunteer attendance page.

*Please remember to log in and out of the volunteer attendance program each time you volunteer.*

### **Volunteer Responsibilities**

Volunteers are an important part of the educational team. The suggestions and opinions of volunteers are always welcome. It is the professional staff, however, that is held responsible by law for the decisions that are made regarding the instruction of students and the management of the school. For this reason, volunteers always work under the direct supervision of staff members and administrators. The final decision rests with the school administration and staff.

*Is there anything volunteers shouldn't do?* The school staff where you volunteer is responsible for everything that goes on in your building, including student instruction, safety and discipline. Volunteers supplement and support the program, but may not:

- Provide the curriculum or teaching plan
- Discipline students
- Take charge of the classroom for any length of time
- Have access to students' permanent record files (psychological records, grades, health histories, etc.)
- Diagnose student needs
- Evaluate achievement which includes grading of any student work
- Counsel students
- Discuss student progress with anyone

A volunteer is *never* considered a substitute for a member of the professional school staff.

**Volunteer Guidelines:**

- **Supervision of Volunteers:** School volunteers work under the direct supervision of the professional staff at each school and only with those staff members who have requested the services of the volunteer. The district is responsible for the education, safety and well-being of each student. Any volunteer whose actions are not in the best interests of the school or students will be dismissed.
- **Discipline:** Students rarely exhibit behavior problems while working with volunteers. Our schools have a detailed discipline plan included in the Student and Parent Handbook. The responsibility for discipline rests with the school staff. Volunteers may not discipline students. Please make the staff member aware of any discipline problems that may occur while you are working with a student.
- **Restrooms:** Staff restrooms are located in the school offices and are available to volunteers. We ask that you do not use student restrooms.
- **Confidentiality:** As you work with the school staff and students, you may become aware of information of a confidential nature. Issues, challenges, behaviors, problems, and confidential information of students, their parents, and the staff should never be disclosed to anyone who does not have a professional right or need to know. Like staff members, volunteers are bound by a code of ethics to keep confidential matters within the school. The staff and students need to know they can trust you. Please do not discuss a child's school progress or difficulties with his/her parents. This is the staff member's responsibility. Occasionally, a child might confide in you about family matters or personal problems. Please keep this information confidential. If you feel it is vital for the school to have this information in order to help the student, discuss the child's conversation with the staff member or principal in private. If you suspect child abuse, you have a responsibility to report it to the school principal and the Arizona Department of Child Safety.
- **Dismissal of Students:** Volunteers may never dismiss a student from school. Children who must leave school early must receive permission from the school office. A parent or guardian must sign the student out before leaving. Under no circumstances may a volunteer take a student off campus.
- **Dress:** Casual clothing is fine, but we ask that your attire be neat and conservative. Please keep in mind that you are in a position to set an example for students. Revealing clothing, tube tops, tank tops, and short-shorts are not acceptable. You are required to follow the district dress code.
- **Health:** If you are not feeling well, please don't try to keep up with your volunteer duties. You'll accomplish more in the long run if you allow yourself time to recuperate. Please call in advance to let the staff member know you

won't be coming in at your scheduled time. Schools are particularly concerned about keeping students and staff healthy. This is another reason for staying away from school if you are ill.

- **Your Commitment:** Before you agree to volunteer, carefully consider the commitment you are making. The work of volunteers is important work. Whether in the classroom, main office, media center or health office, the staff and students quickly become dependent upon volunteer assistance. Don't promise to volunteer more time than you will be able to provide. It's better to start out with a few hours per week and gradually build up to more hours or days if you find you have the additional time.
- **Dependability:** Please be prompt and consistent. We know there will be times when you will be ill, on vacation, or unable to volunteer. Remember that the staff member will be expecting you on the days you are scheduled to volunteer – and so will the children. Please call the school office and leave a message for the staff member or staff member with whom you work. Let them know in advance if you will be unable to volunteer on that day.
- **School Rules:** Become familiar with the rules and procedures of the school where you will be volunteering. It is a good idea to read through the Dysart Unified School District Student Handbook in addition to the school's handbook. Ask your supervising staff member to explain the school's procedures for use of telephones, eating facilities, fire drills and emergency procedures.
- **Children of Volunteers:** Volunteers may not bring children with them to school when volunteering.

The staff will appreciate your willingness to be a part of the team. Staff members will come to depend upon your assistance. Here are some tips for working effectively with the staff:

- **Getting to Know You –** Let the staff know what type of jobs you are interested in doing and what your special skills are so they can fully utilize your talents. You are part of the team, and getting to know you, as well as your interests and your skillset, is critical!
- **Be a Good Communicator –** The staff will welcome your questions and comments. If you don't understand something, please ask. Volunteering should be an enjoyable and rewarding job. If you are unhappy or concerned about an issue, discuss the situation with the school staff. If you have concerns about your placement and/or the job you are doing, feel free to call the Volunteer & Compliance Specialist at (623) 876-7875.
- **Routine Tasks are Important –** The staff often relies upon volunteers to do routine jobs such as filing, preparing learning aides and organizing materials.

Since volunteers are able to assist with these important tasks, staff members are free to spend more time working with students or planning for quality instruction.

### **When Working Directly With Students**

Here are a few guidelines you can follow as you work with students as a volunteer:

- Call students by name at each opportunity. A child's name is very important. Please make every effort to pronounce and spell each child's name correctly.
- Closely observe the techniques used by the staff member. Try to model the staff member's instructional methods when working with students.
- Accept children as they are. Each child is unique. Some children may be very different from your own children. Be ready to accept these differences in background, values, skills, and aspirations.
- Encourage and praise students. Use positive comments that will encourage children to feel good about themselves even when they are having difficulty. Avoid saying anything that will make students feel negatively about themselves or affect their ability to learn. Be ready to praise children for every success.
- Encourage students to do their own thinking. Try not to give students the answers before they have had an opportunity to solve questions on their own. Give children plenty of time to answer your questions. Silence often means that a child is thinking. Be aware of students who may try to get you to do their work for them.
- Follow the staff member's lead. Always be consistent with the staff member's rules for classroom behavior. Don't allow children to do things that their staff member doesn't allow. Remember, the staff member is always available and ready to handle discipline problems. Make sure the children with whom you are working do not disturb the rest of the class.
- Reinforce good behavior. When children are behaving well, always let them know how proud you are of them and how much you appreciate their effort. This will encourage them to try even harder. If possible, do not pay attention to a child who shows minor misbehavior problems, but do note things the child is doing well and praise him/her for it.
- Remember: It's okay if you don't know all the answers. Admit to the children that you don't know the answer or aren't sure what to do. Work the answers out together with students or feel free to ask the staff member for assistance.
- Keep students on task. You'll want the children to learn as much as possible during the short time they spend with you. Try and keep the lesson or activity moving. Try to avoid letting one or more students get you or the group off track for long periods of time by discussing topics that have nothing to do with the lesson.



- Supervise students carefully. Under no circumstances should you leave a student or small group of students without supervision.
- Volunteers may not give students advertisements or fund solicitations.
- Volunteers may not share social media accounts with students, nor should they disclose or exchange personal contact information with students.

### **Your First Few Days**

Starting a new job is always exciting and can even be a bit frightening. The first days are usually the busiest because there are so many new people to meet and things to learn. As you become more familiar with the school and your assignment, you will feel more at home. Here are some suggestions to make the experience more fruitful:

- Initial Visit – At your initial visit to the school, the school volunteer delegate will give you a tour of the school. This will provide you with an opportunity to learn your way around the school and be introduced to key people. When you meet with your supervising staff member, plan to discuss the staff member/Volunteer Conference Checklist in this booklet. If you have any other questions or concerns, add them to the list now so you won't forget to bring them up at the conference.
- Take Time to Observe – If you'll be working with students, the first day or two in the classroom will probably be spent observing the staff member and children. You'll become familiar with the teaching style your supervising staff member uses. You'll also observe acceptable behavior for students and what is not, how much freedom is allowed, and what the daily routine is like.

### **You Represent the School**

As a volunteer, you not only serve the needs of the children, you also provide a vital link between the school and the community. Students, their parents, and the community will view you as a representative of the school. They will pay close attention to what you say about the staff and the educational programs. Sometimes the community hears about the negative aspects of education or stories about the few students who misbehave. Because of your volunteer experience, you'll be able to share the many positive things that students and staff are doing. You'll have an opportunity to let the community know what's going right in our schools.

### **Volunteer Conference Checklist**

- Plan to discuss these topics when you meet with the Staff member
- Days and times you will work
- How you will let the staff know if you are unable to work at your assigned time

- Alternate plans for days when the staff member is absent and a substitute is in charge of the class
- How the staff member will tell you of your day's assignments
- How you will tell the staff member what you have accomplished during the day, performance of students with whom you have worked, need for materials, etc.
- Where to leave your personal belongings
- Location of materials and workspace for your use
- Classroom rules and staff member's discipline plan
- Procedure for letting the staff member know when a child is having a discipline problem that requires his/her attention
- Daily class schedule
- Alternate plans if a student with whom you work is absent
- Student roll and/or seating chart
- Other concerns or questions

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This handbook is an open document intended to acquaint potential volunteers of the policies and guidelines as set forth by the Dysart Unified School District Community Education Department. The intent of these policies is to ensure our volunteers are provided every opportunity to engage students in a positive, safe and enriching environment. It is imperative that the contents of this handbook be read and understood by all volunteers. Your agreement to abide by the policies contained in this handbook is indicated by signing and returning this form to the Volunteer and Compliance Specialist.

Please click on the following and complete the initial online Dysart Volunteer Application to acknowledge your agreement to the policies and procedures contained in this handbook:

[I AGREE TO THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES  
WITHIN THIS VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK](#)