



Volunteer Handbook
for the Newaygo County Regional
Educational Service Agency

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WELCOME

Welcome to the Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency (NC RESA) and thank you for volunteering in our programs. At NC RESA, our vision is that we will provide the highest quality of educational service, from birth through career(s), serving as a responsive regional center for academic and technical education, as a partner in economic, workforce and community development; and as a diverse and accessible community of learners. Our mission is that NC RESA provides results-driven educational services and support through visionary thinking, innovation, and cooperative efforts. It is through the work of our employees and volunteers, like you, that our vision and mission can be achieved.

NC RESA has adopted the following belief statements that guide the work and decisions of the Agency. As volunteers, you are an extension of our employees and programs and these guiding principles pertain to you as well.

1. Each learner, employee, board member and customer can achieve their maximum potential and has the right to high expectations, a safe and secure environment and appropriate levels of support.
2. Each employee and board member will be valued and respected as they support NC RESA in achieving its mission and realizing its vision.
3. Exemplary performance by each employee is essential to high quality service.
4. Collaboration and communication are essential to an effective organization.
5. Quality professional learning and feedback are critical to successful job performance.
6. The utilization of valid and reliable data is essential for continuous improvement.
7. Capacity-building in schools and systems is key to sustained improvement.
8. Change is expected and is an opportunity for growth.
9. It is everyone's responsibility to demonstrate leadership in advancing a safe, secure and positive culture.

We ask that volunteers read the following procedures, responsibilities, and guidelines. An individual who is interested in volunteering must adhere to the procedures outlined in this document prior to volunteering at a school. To assure the safety of our students, a background check is required.

GOALS OF THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The goal of the NC RESA volunteer program is to assist staff in providing the best possible education for each student. The services of volunteers are utilized to accomplish the following objectives:

- Assist teachers and support personnel with some of the non-instructional tasks
- Provide teachers with more time to work with students
- Enrich the curriculum and student learning opportunities
- Provide individual attention to those students who need more one-on-one assistance
- Promote a school-home-community partnership for quality education

VOLUNTEER DEFINITION & QUALITIES

Definition

A volunteer is an individual who performs hours of service for a public agency for civic, charitable or humanitarian reasons without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered.

Volunteers are an important part of our educational team. The suggestions and opinions of volunteers are always welcome. It is the professional staff, however, that is held responsible by law for 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 teachers and administrators.

Qualities

Because NC RESA has set important objectives for our volunteers, it is essential to understand the qualities that each volunteer should have to reach those objectives. Volunteers should:

- Recognize that well-educated students are our greatest natural resource
- Have good health and moral character
- Are willing to accept direct supervision
- Understand and appreciate the work of the school staff

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

NC RESA offers a wide variety of volunteer opportunities working with students as well as jobs for those who prefer not to work directly with students. Volunteers choose the jobs that interest them and decide how many hours and days they wish to contribute. Here is a sampling of volunteer opportunities:

Classroom Speaker Volunteer

Works directly with individual or small groups of students.

Classroom Assistance Volunteer

Works with a teacher and performs tasks as assigned.

Career-Tech Student Organization (CTSO) Volunteer

Works with the teacher and paraprofessional to perform tasks while attending a CTSO.

PROCEDURES

Every Volunteer Must Register

To assure the safety of students, every volunteer in in NC RESA programs must complete a Volunteer Application Form (page 14) and be cleared before he/she begins work.

It is imperative that volunteers understand their responsibilities and limitations. Volunteers must be aware of and agree to abide by all district volunteer policies and regulations. Please read the handbook carefully before signing the Volunteer Agreement on page 13.

Volunteer Responsibilities

1. Review the Volunteer Handbook.
2. Complete the Volunteer Application and Volunteer Agreement annually and submit to school office.
3. Undergo a criminal background check (annually) before beginning duties. Human Resources will complete this process and there is no cost to the volunteer.
4. Sign in at each visit and receive a volunteer badge.
5. Wear the volunteer badge so it is always visible throughout each visit.
6. Sign out at the end of each visit and return the volunteer badge.

School Responsibilities

1. Provide volunteer with a Volunteer Handbook.
2. Obtain the completed Volunteer Application and Volunteer Agreement from the volunteer annually. School is required to keep these documents on-site for one year after the volunteer concludes his/her volunteer activities.
3. Before allowing the individual to volunteer, wait for Human Resources to notify you that the volunteer has been cleared.
4. Provide supervision and direction for the volunteer. Any employee who supervises a volunteer must complete an Agreement to Supervise Volunteer.
5. Ensure the volunteer signs in and out at each visit.
6. Ensure the volunteer receives and returns a volunteer badge at each visit.

GUIDELINES

Confidentiality

As you work with the staff and student, information of a confidential matter may be overheard. The problems, abilities relationships and confidences of students, their parents and the staff should never be discussed with anyone who does not have a professional right or need to know. Like teachers, volunteers are bound by a code of ethics and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) law to keep confidential matters within the school.

Please do not discuss a student's school progress or difficulties with his/her parents. This is the teacher's responsibility.

Occasionally, a student might confide in you about family matters or personal problems. Keep this confidential. If you feel that it is vital for the school to have this information in order to help the student, discuss the student's conversation in private with the program administrator.

Discipline

Students rarely have behavior problems while working with volunteers. However, our schools have detailed discipline plans, and the responsibility for discipline rests with the professional staff. Volunteers may not discipline students. Please make the teacher aware of any discipline problem that might arise while you are working with a student.

Dismissal of Students

Volunteers may never dismiss a student from school. Students who must leave school early for any reason must receive permission from the school professional and sign out before leaving. Under no circumstances may a volunteer take a student off campus. Volunteers may not walk or drive students to their homes unless the student's parent has notified the school office in advance and given permission for the volunteer to do so.

Dress and Behavior

Take your lead from the professional staff and dress appropriately for the job you are doing. Casual clothing is fine, but we ask that attire be neat and conservative. Your appearance should attract no undue attention. Keep in mind you are in a position to set an example for students. Your speech and behavior should serve as good models for them to follow.

Your Commitment

Before you agree to volunteer, carefully consider the commitment you are making. The work volunteers do is important. Whether they work in the classroom or front office, staff and students quickly become dependent upon volunteer assistance. Do not promise to volunteer more time than you will be able to comfortably give. It is better to start out with a few hours a week and gradually increase if you find you have additional time.

Dependability

We know there will be times when you will be ill, on vacation or unable to volunteer. Please telephone the school office as far in advance as possible to leave a message for the teacher or staff member with whom you work when you are unable to volunteer.

School Rules

Become familiar with the rules and policies of the school where you volunteer. It is a good idea to read through the school's Parent-Student handbook. Ask your professional staff to explain the school's policy for use of telephones, cell phones, eating facilities, fire drills and emergency procedures. Use reasonable judgment in making decisions when there appears to be no policy or when the policy is not communicated. As soon as possible, consult with the professional staff for future guidance.

Volunteers May NOT

- Provide the curriculum or teaching plan
- Discipline students
- Grade or correct papers
- Take charge of the classroom for any length of time

- Access materials in the student's permanent or electronic files (psychological records, grade cards, health history, etc.)
- Diagnose student needs
- Evaluate achievement
- Counsel students
- Discuss student progress with parents
- Ever be considered a substitute for a member of the school staff
- Give advertisements or fund solicitations

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH STAFF

The staff appreciates your willingness to be a part of the educational team. Teachers and support personnel will come to depend upon your assistance. Below are some tips to help build good working relationships:

Getting to Know You

Let the staff know what types of jobs you are interested in doing and what your special skills are so they can utilize your talents.

A New Experience for You and Perhaps for the Staff Member

If you have never been a school volunteer, you will find that there are many new and exciting things to learn about the job. Please be aware that some staff members have never had an opportunity to work with volunteers. This may be a new experience for staff, as they learn to utilize your services.

Be a Good Communicator

We will welcome your questions and comments. If you do not understand something, please ask. Volunteering should be an enjoyable and rewarding job. If you are unhappy or concerned about something, discuss the situation with the professional staff or administrator.

Routine Tasks are Important

Volunteers are often relied upon to do the "routine" jobs such as photocopying and organizing materials. Because volunteers can assist with these jobs, teachers are able to spend more time working with students or planning for quality instruction.

We All Have Different Ways of Doing Things

When you are assigned a task, be sure you know exactly how the teacher wants the job done. Ask for clear directions and, if necessary, ask the teacher to give you samples or demonstrate how tasks are to be performed.

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH STUDENTS

Call Students by Name at Each Opportunity

A student's name is very important. Make every effort to pronounce and spell each student's name correctly.

Observe the Techniques Used by the Teacher

Try to model these instructional methods when working with students.

Accept Students As They Are

Each student is unique and may be very different from your own child. Be ready to accept the differences in background, values and aspirations.

Encourage and Praise Students

Your positive words of encouragement will go a long way in helping students feel good about themselves even when they are having difficulty. Be ready to praise students for even the smallest successes! Let each student know that you care about him/her using verbal affirmations.

Keep Your Promises

If you promise them something, be prepared to keep the promise. Be careful not to make promises that you may not be able to keep.

Encourage Students to do Their Own Thinking

Try not to give students the answers before they have had an opportunity to solve problems on their own. Give students plenty of time to answer your questions. Silence often means a student is thinking.

Follow the Teacher's Lead

Be consistent with the teacher's rules for classroom behavior. Remember, the teacher is always available and ready to handle discipline problems.

Reinforce Good Behavior

When students are behaving well, let them know how proud you are and how much you appreciate their effort. This will encourage the student to try even harder.

It is OK if You Do Not Know All of the Answers

It is OK to admit to the student that you do not know the answer or are not sure what to do. Let the student know that you will work the answers out together or feel free to ask the teacher for assistance.

Keep Students on Task

You will want the student to learn as much as possible during their time with you. Keep the lesson or activity moving; avoid letting anyone get the group off track by discussing topics that have nothing to do with the lesson.

Supervise Students Carefully

Under no circumstances should you leave students unsupervised. Be aware of what students are doing at all times.

VOLUNTEERS REPRESENT THE SCHOOL AND NC RESA

As a volunteer, you not only serve the needs of the student, you also provide a vital link between the school and 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 will be able to share the many positive things that students and staff are doing and the wonderful opportunities that are available for students. Please remember though that you are not to share confidential information.

MEDICAL INSURANCE AND WORKER'S COMPENSATION

The district does not carry medical insurance or worker's compensation coverage for volunteers.

Volunteer Agreement

(THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED ANNUALLY)

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Newaygo County RESA Volunteer Handbook and that I have read and will abide by its contents and all other applicable Newaygo County RESA policies and procedures.

I understand that, as a volunteer, I am not compensated for any services, including wages and insurance. I further understand that I have that right to terminate my arrangement at any time with or without cause, and the Newaygo County RESA has a similar right.

I make this Agreement in order to provide and to be authorized to perform the following uncompensated services to the Newaygo County RESA:

- I am 18 years of age or older and know of no reason which would prevent me from performing the tasks required as detailed in the Volunteer Handbook.
- I agree to a background check as part of the process.
- I have acquainted myself with what is required to perform those tasks, and I represent that I have the skill and ability to perform them.
- I assume full responsibility for my own safety and the safety of others.
- I will perform the volunteer service in compliance with the standards and specifications established, or approved by NC RESA, and I will honor the direction of District official, to suspend or terminate service.

As a volunteer, I agree to abide by the following conduct:

- Immediately upon arrival I will sign in at the front office or designated sign-in location.
- I will wear a volunteer identification badge at all times.
- I will use only adult bathroom facilities.
- I agree to never be alone with individual students without authorization of teachers and/or school authorities.
- I will not solicit outside contact with students.
- I agree not to exchange telephone numbers, home address, e-mail address (including social network information) with students for any purpose.
- I will maintain confidentiality outside of school and will share any concerns that I may have with teachers or school administrators.
- I agree not to transport students.
- I will not disclose, use, or disseminate student photographs or personal information about students, self, or others.
- I agree not to post, transmit, publish, or display harmful or inappropriate matter that is threatening, obscene, disruptive, or sexually explicit or that could be construed as any form of harassment.
- I agree not to photograph students.
- I agree only to do what is the best personal and educational interest of every student with whom I come into contact.

Last Name (printed)

First Name

Middle Initial

Signature

Date

**PLEASE RETURN THIS AGREEMENT TO THE OFFICE WHERE YOU WISH TO VOLUNTEER.
ALL APPLICANTS WILL BE NOTIFIED BY NC RESA.**



Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency
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School or Program Volunteers

Board Policy 9230

The purposes of the school or program volunteer program are:

1. To increase the educational attainment of students;
2. To provide enrichment experiences beyond those that the school or program can provide;
3. To provide more effective utilization of teacher time and skills;
4. To give more individual attention to students who need it; and
5. To promote greater community involvement in the academic and co-curricular programs of the Agency.

General Principles

Volunteers are assigned to a school or program only upon the request of the teacher or program director or supervisor.

Volunteers serve only in an auxiliary capacity under the direction and supervision of the program director or supervisor or other certified school or program personnel.

A volunteer is not a substitute for a member of the school or program staff, but does supply supplemental and supportive services.

A volunteer does not have access to confidential files and records.

Wherever possible, volunteers are assigned to the particular school or program where they wish to serve.

The relationship between volunteers and the school or program staff should be one of mutual respect and confidence.

All school or program volunteers work under the direction of the school or program staff and provide supportive services to them. Volunteers are not teachers or licensed professionals; they assist professional staff and will only be assigned to those staff members who request them. The volunteers shall never replace the paid school or program staff, nor will their presence mean that fewer paid staff members will be needed.

All students are expected to obey and attend to directives and instructions given to them by authorized volunteers of the Agency. Failure to abide by directives and instructions given by an authorized Agency volunteer may result in disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct up to and including suspension from the school or program.

Persons interested in volunteering time or services to the Agency should contact the program director or supervisor for assignment.

School or program volunteers serving in the Agency without financial compensation are bound by the policies, rules/regulations, and procedures of the Agency. They, as any other employee, are to be supervised by each program director or supervisor or other authorized school or program employees. All volunteers shall be at least eighteen (18) years of age, unless their volunteer work is included as part of an Agency class offering or recognized student organization of the Agency and approved, in advance, by the Superintendent.

At the discretion of the Superintendent, the Agency may conduct criminal and/or professional background checks and/or check the sexual offender's list on volunteers in the same manner as for employees of the Agency. If a volunteer is a convicted felon, the individual will not be allowed to volunteer. If a volunteer is not a convicted felon but has other criminal history (i.e., misdemeanors), the Superintendent will determine if the individual can/cannot volunteer.

Staff and Volunteer Relationships

NC RESA strives to provide a safe and secure environment for all volunteers. Personal relationships between volunteers and staff members must not interfere with, be seen to interfere with, or influence practices in the workplace.

NC RESA requires all volunteers to disclose an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest arising from the existence of a personal relationship with staff members. The requirement to disclose the existence of a relationship is based on the potential for, or perception of, a conflict of interest, such that there is the possibility that a decision may be biased or prejudiced, either in favor of or against, a person with whom there is a personal relationship. This policy seeks to assure that no undue advantage or disadvantage occurs because of the existence of a personal relationship.

Personal relationships are defined as relationships which extend beyond professional relationships, based on factors irrelevant to the working competencies of staff. Personal relationships can include:

- Family relationships (siblings, parent/child, husband/wife, partner, cousins, or relations by marriage);
- Emotional relationships (including sexual relationships); or
- Financial relationships (commercial relationship where there is monetary interest).

The general principle to guide behavior is that it is unethical and undesirable for a personal relationship to intrude, or be perceived to intrude on, or influence working practices and decisions.

Approved: 2/11/08; 3/14/11; 5/13/19



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School or Program Volunteers

Administrative Regulation 9230

The Role of the Administrator

It is the administrator's responsibility:

1. To determine the scope and nature of the volunteer program in the building and if a criminal history check is required.
2. To provide whatever orientation is necessary in the acceptance of volunteers by instructors, students and parents/guardians.
3. To provide orientation of school or program policies and procedures to the volunteers.
4. To provide a sign-in, sign-out sheet for all volunteers.

The Role of the School Staff Member

An instructor should take part in the program only because the instructor has a desire to use the volunteer in an effective way. The instructor shall:

1. Make requests for volunteer services to the administrator.
2. Determine what specific duties a volunteer can perform in the particular classroom/department and give specific instructions when assigning tasks to a volunteer.
3. Help train and use volunteers in any way that will be helpful to the students.
4. Plan ahead to provide meaningful activities for volunteers.
5. Help volunteers feel comfortable among employees and students.

Implemented: 4/20/09