



Get Involved!
Making a Difference

Durham Public Schools

Volunteer Policy Guidance for Parents

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 Durham Public Schools 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 student safety.

2. Last year, I volunteered at my child's school Book Fair and in the classroom. I didn't need a background check. Why do I need one this year?

For the past several years, DPS offered three "tiers" of volunteer participation. Unfortunately, it was impossible for schools to track volunteers closely enough to ensure that volunteers cleared for a lower tier activity - without a background check - did not participate in higher-tier activities. The elimination of tiers will ensure that all parents and all situations are treated consistently.

3. Last year, I chaperoned two field trips without a background check. Why has the policy changed?

The policy has not changed; the complexity of monitoring the tier information led to inconsistent application of the background check for field trips and similar activities. Background checks have always been a requirement for field trips to ensure student safety.

4. Does this mean I can't be involved with the school without a background check?

Not at all. We value your participation in your child's school. Take advantage of open houses, curriculum nights, book fairs, beautification days, athletic associations, booster clubs, school performances and parent-teacher conferences. Talk with your child's teachers, especially if you have questions or concerns about his/her performance of class rules and expectations. Parents and guardians are strongly encouraged to be involved with your school's parent-teacher association.

5. What's the difference between volunteering and parent involvement?

Volunteering takes involvement to another level in activities with potential contact with students. Individuals are defined as volunteers if participating in activities in which all students are not under the supervision of their parents/guardians. For instance, if a book fair takes place during the school day and the teacher brings the class to the fair, volunteers would have to possess an approved background check. A book fair in the evening in which students are accompanied by parents would not require volunteers with approved background checks.

6. I don't want to be a chaperone on a field trip - I simply want to go along to accompany my child. Can I do this without submitting a volunteer application form?

We understand your interest in accompanying your own child. However, any adult on a field trip is going to be potentially involved with other children. Teachers cannot monitor which parents on the trip are cleared and which are not. For the safety of your child and all children, it's important that any adult on a field trip be cleared as an approved volunteer.

7. Isn't it my right to be able to accompany my child?

We understand how you might feel this way. Field trips and similar educational opportunities are school activities that are provided for your child, and there's no requirement for you to participate in order for him/her to take part. However, accompanying your child on a field trip is a volunteer activity.

Volunteer!

8. If I can't accompany my child, is he/she required to participate?

No. You may choose for your child not to participate in the field trip but please remember that field trips are planned as part of the overall educational program of the school and the district attendance policy is in effect.

9. If I choose to provide my own transportation to the site of the field trip or activity so that I can keep an eye on my child, and I'm in a public space, how can the school system prevent me from being there?

Of course you have every right to be in a public place. As long as you keep a distance from the school group and don't interact with them there will be no problem. If you try to engage with the group, however, you will be asked to "sign out" your child from the group just as you "sign out" from school and cannot "sign in" at the end of the field trip for transportation back to school.

10. I paid to go on the field trip. What happens to my money if I am not cleared to go on the trip?

The decision to refund a person for a field trip is a site-based decision made by the principal and is typically addressed in the individual school's handbook.

11. What if I don't have a social security number?

The volunteer application form requires either a social security number or a US I-94 VISA number. If an applicant does not have either of the items listed, please see the school principal.

12. What if I don't have a driver's license?

The driver's license and/or state identification number are not required, however they are requested as additional items of identification for the background check only.

13. Is there an age limit to be a volunteer in DPS?

You must be at least 18 years old to submit a DPS volunteer application. Individuals under age 18 may volunteer with the permission of the school principal and with parental consent.

14. How long does the background check process take?

The normal processing time is 7-10 business days. The process may take longer in high volume months such as September, October, January and May. The background check is a national check and some states may take longer to process requests.

15. How do I sign up to be a volunteer?

You may go on-line to the DPS website and fill out the electronic application form at www.dpsnc.net/volunteers If you do not have access to the on-line application, you may use a paper application which take longer to process.

16. If I have additional questions who should I contact?

You should first contact the school volunteer coordinator or school principal.



Contact

For additional questions about volunteer opportunities contact:
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Volunteer and Partnership Coordinator
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For assistance in Spanish

contact the ESL Resource Center,
(ESL por su sigla en ingles)
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