

# Putnam County Schools Volunteer Program



Putnam County  
School District

*On Course for a Successful Future*

**Procedures, Resources, and  
Opportunities for Volunteers**

**Dear School Community Member,**

**We are excited to have you as a volunteer. We are extremely appreciative of our community resources.**

**Volunteers work in every aspect of school operation, from classroom and health room helpers, one-on-one tutors and mentors, to organizing and manning special events and extracurricular activities.**

**Please review this handbook. It gives an overview of the program and provides important guidelines you should be aware of prior to volunteering and during your volunteer service. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your school's volunteer coordinator or the school principal.**

**Thank you for providing your precious time, individual talents, and expertise as a volunteer. With the continued support of our community, we can provide a high quality education where every student can "be on course for a successful future!"**

**Sincerely,**

**The Putnam County School District**

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## **Who is a School Volunteer?**

A school volunteer is a person willing to take time to share wisdom and experience with those on the threshold of the future. A school volunteer helps to expand and enrich the students' learning experiences by working under the direction of teachers and school staff.

According to F.S. 1012.01 (5) – “A school volunteer is any nonpaid person who may be appointed by a district school board or its designee. School volunteers may include, but may not be limited to, parents, senior citizens, students, and others who assist the teacher or other members of the school staff.”

Occasionally it can be difficult to decide if an individual falls into the classification of a school volunteer. A school volunteer usually meets all of the following criteria:

- The individual will provide a service to the school.
- The individual will NOT be compensated monetarily by the School District.
- The individual will be providing service for more than one (1) day at any one (1) site.
- The individual may have access to students while performing the service.

A school volunteer:

- Provides individual educational assistance to students.
- Improves students' self-worth by increasing opportunities for educational.
- Relieves teachers of many non-instructional tasks and duties.
- Stimulates business and community interest, concern, and support for the educational system.
- Enhances all aspects of the educational process.

## **Qualifications and Responsibilities**

Volunteers should have a genuine interest in students, a professional commitment to the volunteer activity, regular attendance, a cooperative attitude, flexibility, good health, and a willingness to attend training sessions, as needed.

Many schools have the benefit of many volunteers who are willing to contribute thousands of hours of invaluable time. Each school's volunteer program is individualized to meet the needs of the students and teachers at the school. This requires a tremendous coordination between service offered and services needed. It is suggested that each school have at least one (1) person who is designated as the school's volunteer coordinator. This person must and will be a current staff member.

Any volunteer who is assigned the responsibility for supervising the safety and welfare of students, such as during the loading and unloading of buses or during lunch periods, shall meet the same age requirements as those established for certificated personnel.

School administrator responsibilities:

- Surveying needs of teachers.
- Recruiting and registering volunteers - especially parents.
- Arranging for any needed training.
- Placing volunteers by matching their skills/interests to job assignments.
- Serving as a resource for volunteers.
- Keeping accurate records of volunteer applications and service hours.
- Coordinating school recognition events for volunteers.

Volunteer responsibilities:

- Volunteers must report to the school office, sign in through the Raptor Management System, and wear an ID badge.
- VOLUNTEERS MUST MAINTAIN STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY concerning information they see and hear about students and staff, including students' grades, records, and abilities.
- Volunteers DO NOT discipline students. Report discipline problems to the teacher.
- Volunteers do not diagnose student weaknesses and strengths, prescribe activities for students, or evaluate student progress.
- Volunteers will not establish instructional objectives, make decisions about teaching materials, or make decisions regarding the relevancy of activities to the attainment of

instructional objectives.

- Volunteers' discussions with teachers should not interrupt class time. Please turn cell phones off.
- Volunteers are not to bring their children while volunteering. This presents a liability issue and potentially disruptive.
- Volunteers should set a good example for students by their manner, appearance, and behavior. They should be well-groomed, appropriately dressed, and maintain professional conduct and language.
- Volunteers should be in good physical and mental health.
- Volunteers may not give any medication to students.
- Volunteers' comments should not be written on student papers.
- Volunteers should not laugh at or belittle student answers, or efforts.
- Volunteers should contact ONLY school staff members with any concerns regarding students.
- Comparing and criticizing teachers and students is not acceptable volunteer.
- Volunteers may not hold informal parent/teacher conferences or leisure conversations with staff members or other volunteers during volunteer time.
- Volunteers may not conduct personal business at school.
- Volunteer may not take photographs of students, unless permitted by a school administrator for a school project. Never post any student photographs or student information on social networks.
- Volunteers should never touch students in any way that is aggressive, disciplinary, or sexual in nature.

### **Process and Levels**

There are two (2) levels of volunteers in the program, supervised and unsupervised. Persons interested in volunteering must visit the school and speak with the facility's volunteer coordinator. Once the coordinator has made a determination as to which volunteer level is appropriate, the applicant will be directed accordingly. Any person volunteering must complete

the appropriate process, scan a photo identification, and be approved PRIOR to volunteering or chaperoning. All school sites have access to the volunteer and visitor module provided by the Raptor Management System and information pertaining to volunteers. Make sure to apply for the appropriate level of volunteer service as described below.

### **Unsupervised**

All volunteer applicants that work with students in an unsupervised manner (out of sight or hearing of supervising staff) are required to pass a criminal background screening. Also, all volunteer chaperones on any school-sponsored trip, including overnight and day trips, must be cleared with the criminal background screening process. School administrators may require the volunteer background screening for any other situation or activity deemed appropriate. Volunteers that are approved through this process are classified as an "unsupervised volunteer". Applicants will be notified of the approval status via email. Approved unsupervised volunteer applications are good for three years.

Prior to being accepted as an unsupervised volunteer, a candidate shall complete an application, and may be required to participate in an interview. All unsupervised volunteers must pass a criminal background check. The unsupervised volunteer application may require that the applicant disclose if s/he has ever been convicted or had adjudication withheld in a criminal offense other than a minor traffic violation or if any criminal charges are pending.

### **Supervised**

School volunteers that work exclusively under the supervision of a staff member may be screened through the "supervised volunteer" component of the Visitor Module. Supervised volunteers are not to be left unattended or unsupervised with students.

Parents/guardians may be allowed to attend daytime field trips as a visitor or a supervised volunteer with permission from the Principal. Parents/Guardians who accompany their own child as a visitor on a daytime trip may not supervise other children. Parents/Guardians that attend a daytime trip as a supervised volunteer must have a staff member oversee them at all times. Supervised volunteers may not be left unattended with students. Parents/Guardians attending as visitors or supervised volunteers are not required to complete a volunteer application. The school will screen each parent/guardian requesting a visitor or supervised volunteer status as described in Policy 9150.

### **Disqualifications**

Any applicant who has been convicted of a crime that would disqualify him/her for employment in the District, under the criteria of Policy 4121.01, Criminal Background and Employment, shall not be accepted as an unsupervised volunteer/chaperone.

A person convicted of any offense identified in F.S. 1012.315 or 435.04, regardless of adjudication, or entered a plea of nolo contendere or guilty to any offense constituting a felony under Florida law or the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred is not eligible to become an unsupervised volunteer/chaperone.

A crime involving moral turpitude may also disqualify a volunteer. The term moral turpitude shall be defined as conduct that is inconsistent with the standards of public conscience and good morals. It is conduct that is serious, rather than minor in nature, and which constitutes a flagrant disregard for proper moral standards. Further, the conduct brings the individual concerned or the education profession into public disgrace or disrespect and impairs the individual's service in the community.

An act of moral turpitude shall be defined as a crime, regardless of whether the individual is charged or convicted, that is a felony or a first degree misdemeanor under the laws of the State of Florida or equivalent law in another state or U.S. Territory, or laws of the United States of America, that is evidenced by an act of baseness, vileness or depravity in the private and social duties, which, according to the accepted standards of the time, a man owes to his or her fellow man or to society in general, and the doing of the act itself and not its prohibition by statute fixes the moral turpitude.

The following factors shall be considered in determining whether an act or omission rises to the level of gross immorality or moral turpitude:

- The volunteer's dishonesty or deception.
- The volunteer's use, attempted use or threatened use, of violence.
- The volunteer's malice or cruelty.
- The volunteer's deliberation, premeditation, or contemplation of an act.
- The volunteer's repeated behavior that displays a disregard for law, order, or human safety.
- The harm, injury, or insult to the victim.
- The age, ability, or limitation of the victim.
- The benefit derived by the volunteer.



- The presence or absence of mitigating factors, such as the volunteer's age, experience, mental illness, or actions in self-defense.

The lists represented below are not intended to be complete.

Further disqualifications include any offense related to the following categories:

- Murder.
- Manslaughter.
- Vehicular homicide.
- Killing of an unborn child by injury to the mother.
- Felony level assault, battery, or culpable negligence.
- Any crime of domestic violence.
- Kidnapping.
- False imprisonment.
- Luring or enticing a child.
- A crime involving domestic violence.
- Leading, taking, enticing, or removing a minor beyond the state limits, or concealing the location of a minor, with criminal intent pending custody proceedings.
- Leading, taking, enticing, or removing a minor beyond the State limits, or concealing the location of a minor, with criminal intent pending dependency proceedings or proceedings concerning alleged abuse or neglect of a minor.
- Exhibiting firearms or weapons at a school-sponsored event, on school property, or within 1,000 feet of a school.
- Possessing an electric weapon or device, destructive device, or other weapon at a school-sponsored event or on school property.
- Sexual battery.
- Sexual activity with or solicitation of a child by a person in familial or custodial authority.

- Unlawful sexual activity with certain minors.
- Genital mutilation.
- Prostitution.
- Lewdness and indecent exposure.
- Sexual Misconduct.
- Sexual performance by a child.
- Resisting arrest with violence.
- Obscenity.
- Child pornography.
- Voyeurism.
- Video voyeurism.
- Grand theft.
- Theft from persons sixty-five (65) years of age or older.
- Dealing in stolen property.
- Robbery.
- Carjacking.
- Home-invasion robbery.
- Fraudulent sale of controlled substances.
- Abuse, neglect, or exploitation of aged persons or disabled adults.
- Lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of an elderly person or disabled person.
- Incest.

- Child abuse, aggravated child abuse, or neglect of a child.
- Contributing to the delinquency or dependency of a child.
- Causing, encouraging, soliciting, or recruiting another to join a criminal street gang.
- Drug abuse prevention and control laws.
- Arson.
- Any violation of weapons laws.
- DUI felony offenses.
- Introduction, removal, or possession of contraband at a correctional facility, a juvenile detention facility or commitment program.
- Inflicting cruel or inhuman treatment on an inmate resulting in great bodily harm.
- Extortion.
- Burglary.
- Forgery.
- Fraud.
- Counterfeiting.
- Identity theft.
- Aiding or harboring escape.
- Depriving a law enforcement officer of protection or communication.
- Any other crime committed against a child not previously listed.
- Attempts, solicitation, and conspiracy to commit an offense listed in this subsection.

Any act committed in this state or any delinquent or criminal act committed in another State or under Federal law which, if committed in this state, qualifies an individual for inclusion on the Registered Juvenile Sex Offender List under F.S. 943.0435.

Any criminal adjudication less than ten (10) years old, starting from the adjudication date, relating to the following:

- Misdemeanor level assault, battery, and culpable negligence.
- Violation of probation or court order.
- Contempt of court.
- Worthless checks.
- Resisting arrest without violence or misdemeanor level.
- Drug paraphernalia.
- Shoplifting, retail theft, or petit theft.
- Possession of alcohol by a minor.
- Sale of alcohol to a person under twenty-one (21) years of age.
- Disorderly conduct.
- Possession or use of a false identification.

Any criminal adjudication less than five years old, starting from the adjudication date, related to the following:

- DUI.
- Loitering.
- Trespassing.
- Driving while license suspended or revoked. (Excluding without knowledge violations.)
- Reckless driving.
- Criminal mischief.

Any criminal act committed in another State or under Federal law which, if committed in this State, constitutes an offense prohibited under any statute listed above.

For purposes of this policy, "convicted" means there has been a determination of guilt as a result of a trial or the entry of a plea of guilty or nolo contendere, regardless of whether adjudication is withheld or the record being sealed or expunged.

### **School Procedures**

Each school has specific information for the volunteer to learn. Volunteers need to know emergency drill procedures, restroom locations, school dress code, rules about smoking, parking areas, absence procedures, the location of the sign-in book/computer, the opening and closing times of the school, the eating facilities, the use of cell phones, and general regulations in the school.

Many schools hold orientations early in the school year for new and returning volunteers. Volunteer opportunities will be reviewed and school policies and procedures explained. If volunteers are unable to attend this session, contact the school volunteer coordinator, and another training will be scheduled.

Volunteers shall sign-in through the Raptor Management System to keep track of the volunteer hours. All hours provided as a service to the school will be recorded. These include not only hours in the classroom, but also service hours provided to school's PTA/PTSA, School Advisory Council, or special clubs/ organizations. When making a decision as to what constitutes volunteer service, the hours must be completed while providing non-paid service to the school, not while attending a PTA meeting or school event (ex: Open House, school play, athletic event, etc.).

### **State and District Rules**

F.S. 39.201 (1)(a) states: "Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, as defined in this chapter, shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department."

How does an individual make a report? Call the Florida Abuse Hotline (1-800- 96ABUSE or 1-800-962-2873) of the Department of Children and Families. A volunteer should also report to their school supervisor that they have made such report. Additional information can be obtained at the Department of Children and Families website: [www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse](http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse).

F.S. 943.04351 - This statute mandates the "search of registration information regarding sexual predators and sexual offenders prior to appointment or employment". See [www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm).

F.S. 768.1355 - This is the Florida Volunteer Protection Act and can be viewed at [www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm).

F.A.C. 6A-1.070 - These are the State's Board of Education's administrative rules regarding volunteers and can be viewed at [www.flrules.org](http://www.flrules.org).

### **Making the Right Match**

From preparing materials for a lab experiment, to cleaning lunch tables, or mentoring/tutoring a student one-on-one, there is a volunteer job to suit every person's background and interest. Following is an overview of possible volunteer opportunities available. All of these positions are not available on every school campus. Schools reserve the right to recruit volunteers only for job positions in need at their school.

To help with the placement process, please consider the following:

- Would the volunteer like to work directly with students?
- Would the volunteer like to be a tutor or a classroom assistant, an office worker, motivator/mentor, or to work with exceptional students?
- Does the volunteer have special talents and/or skills that would benefit music, art, drama, physical education, or an extra-curricular program?
- Would the volunteer prefer elementary, middle, or high school?
- How much time can the volunteer commit to volunteering?
- What days or hours does the volunteer prefer?
- Can the volunteer make a weekly commitment or is the volunteer only available occasionally?
- What experience does the volunteer have that would prepare the volunteer for the volunteer's job?

Even if the volunteer is not sure what the volunteer might like to do as a school volunteer, the volunteer probably knows when the volunteer is and is not available. Is the volunteer's schedule flexible and time is not an issue? Or does the volunteer work and would only be available occasionally at night or on the weekends? Maybe the volunteer works full time, but at night, so the volunteer still could volunteer during the school day. Some professionals are able to fit an hour of mentoring or tutoring into their schedule, once a week, during their lunchtime. Some employers allow flex hours or employee release time to volunteer one (1) hour each week.

The volunteer's availability, whether it is during the day, night, or weekend is an important consideration. The volunteer's commitment to schedule will impact the volunteer opportunities offered to the volunteer by schools. It is also important to consider the volunteer's skills, talents, and interests when requesting a specific volunteer job. Be sure to be open-minded to the fact that not all jobs are available at all school.

### **Volunteer Job Descriptions**

- Art Volunteer
  - Works with small groups on special projects.
  - Helps teacher with preparations and clean-up.
  - Assists in designing and building stage sets for school performances.
  - Creates and/or makes costumes.
  
- Classroom Volunteer
  - Reads to children or listens to them read.
  - Uses flash cards to help students learn words, multiplication tables, and word sounds.
  - Assists younger children with learning the alphabet, colors, numbers and in identifying letters, shapes, rhyming words, etc.
  - Supervises learning centers, games, and other areas where an extra pair of hands are needed.
  - Assists students with special projects.
  - Assists students in academic work without evaluating.
  - Prepares bulletin boards or hands-on teaching materials.
  
- Clerical Volunteer
  - Working as a receptionist, typist, or file clerk.

- Assists the support staff in the operation of our schools.
- Field Study Chaperone for a Student Group
  - Assists teachers during field trips.
  - Takes responsibility of a group of students assigned by the teacher.  
(Unsupervised Volunteer only)
- Guidance Volunteer
  - Works with small groups on special projects.
  - Files and organizes paperwork, assists with bulletin boards and special project decorations, and generates certificates.
  - Tutors or mentors students.
  - Presents career or special topics.
- Health Room Volunteer
  - Provides tender loving care (the best medicine).
  - Helps conduct health screenings.
  - Maintains health room logs and supplies.
  - Takes care of minor injuries.
- Horticultural/Agricultural Volunteer
  - Assists agricultural or horticultural teachers.
  - Helps special interest clubs with beautification projects.
  - Works with FFA or gardening clubs.
  - Helps with school exhibits at the County Fair.
- Internet Volunteer
  - Helps students use the Internet.



- Performs research on the Internet for teachers.
- Media Center Volunteer
  - Responds to teachers' and students' requests for services.
  - Works at the circulation desk; shelves books.
  - Operates audio/visual equipment.
  - Assists with book fairs.
- Music/Band Volunteer
  - Accompanies choral groups as a pianist.
  - Works with small groups on special projects.
  - Files and organizes music and uniforms.
  - Travels with students to performances.
  - Organizes fundraisers.
- Physical Education Volunteer
  - Helps the PE teacher with team games.
  - Helps with field day events.
- School Advisory Council Volunteer
  - Serves on the school's advisory council through an election process.
  - Develops strategies for improving areas of need.
  - Participates in the development of the School Improvement Plan.
- Supervision Volunteer
  - Provides additional supervision.
  - Assists in the cafeteria, in the parking lot, or on the play-ground.

- Assists as a hall monitor.
- Tutor Volunteer
  - Works with small groups to reinforce basic skills.
  - Works at any grade level and in any subject area.
  - Offers remedial help or reinforcement activities.
  - Provides additional challenges to gifted students.
- Youth Motivator/Mentor Volunteer
  - Works with an at-risk student needing extra support.
  - Serves as a role model and advisor, helping the student understand how education will help him or her reach personal goals.
  - Encourages school attendance; discourages tardiness.

### **Safety Guidelines**

- Be aware of school playground regulations.
- Supervise physical activities carefully.
- Do not allow a child to use a paper cutter or adult scissors.
- Know and follow all of the school's safety rules.
- If an accident occurs, immediately notify a staff member.
- Never move a child involved in an accident.
- Please do not come to school if you are ill.
- If you are hurt or involved in an accident while serving in your volunteer capacity, you should report the incident to the school office and complete an accident report immediately.

### **Helping Students**

- LISTEN! Show that you are interested in each student as a person. Listen carefully to what the student has to say.
- Students make mistakes. Assure them that this is part of learning.
- Build the student's self-confidence. Praise your student honestly and frequently.
- Ask leading questions instead of telling the answer.
- Let students try new methods, even if you know an easier way.
- Give the students time to understand new ideas. Be patient.
- Be reliable. Students will be disappointed when you are absent.
- Allow your own child room to grow. Volunteer in a location other than your child's classroom.
- Students Learn By:
  - Doing - not by passive observing.
  - Asking questions and searching for answers to their questions.
  - Discovering - using all their senses, whenever possible.
  - Experimenting - sorting and combining objects.
  - Repeating experiences.
- Be sure the students understand what you're saying. We sometimes use words they do not comprehend.
- Keep your voice as low as possible. The students will get louder as your voice increases in volume.
- Instruct students as though you expect them to comply. Give sufficient warnings and timeframes.
- Positive statements greatly influence students' attitudes about themselves and contribute to their success-building experiences.
- If students gain your attention and praise only when they behave, they will soon learn that you expect proper conduct.

## FAQs

### **How do I become a volunteer?**

Contact the desired school and complete the online Application to Volunteer. To complete the process, you need to visit the school to have your identification with photo scanned (background check). Applicants may not be placed in a volunteer position prior to clearance from the Raptor Management System. You will be contacted as to the status of your clearance.

### **I do not have teaching experience. Can I still volunteer?**

Yes! A teaching background is not required since volunteers work under the direction of the professional staff. Qualifications for a school volunteer are: a personal desire to help, sincere interest in students, ability to follow school procedures and policies, and a willingness to make a definite time commitment. Any necessary training will be provided by the teacher or at a special workshop.

### **How do I find out which volunteer services are needed?**

Each school has a volunteer coordinator who will assist you in your placement. Some schools hold informative orientations which explain the opportunities available and the volunteer program. Your volunteer assignment is determined by your skills, interests, and preferences, as well as by the needs of individual schools and teachers.

### **I'd like to volunteer, but I can't offer my services on a regular basis. Can I still volunteer?**

Yes. You may volunteer on special school projects. The time commitment will depend on the specific project. Another possibility is to arrange to take volunteer work home to execute at your convenience.

### **I would like to volunteer, but I have a preschool child. Can I bring my child with me?**

No. Taking preschool children with you to school presents a liability problem for the school. In addition, having a very young child in a classroom interrupts class procedures, disrupts the students, and prevents the volunteer from giving full attention to the work the teacher has prepared. However, you can still help the school by making arrangements to do work at

home.

**May I choose the teacher with whom I want to work?**

Volunteers are placed only in classrooms where teachers have specifically requested assistance.

**Suppose I don't feel qualified to perform the assignment I have agreed to undertake?**

Feel free to say so. Remember, there are many different jobs. Talk to your teacher/supervisor or volunteer coordinator for possible re-assignment.

**What do I do about discipline?**

Disciplinary action is the responsibility of the teachers and school staff. Volunteers do not enforce discipline. Think instruction instead of discipline. Request students to work according to the rules in the classroom. Immediately notify the teacher if there is a discipline problem.

**My friends and neighbors will ask me about school. What may I say?**

We want you to talk about your school and your involvement. But you may have access to "privileged" information, which must be treated as confidential. Privileged information is important school business and must never be discussed outside of the school. Also, remember that criticizing school personnel and school practices are not acceptable. In school, you are a professional working with other professionals.

**CHECKLIST**

I have

- talked with the school's volunteer coordinator.
- completed an Application to Volunteer.
- waited for my application to be processed and cleared prior to volunteering.
- participated in any needed orientation/training session.
- been assigned to a teacher or a supervisor of a project/activity.

- ❑ a specific place and time to work.

I know

- ❑ the school layout, parking, and facilities available.
- ❑ the school/classroom discipline policy.
- ❑ classroom policies, procedures, and rules.
  
- ❑ fire drill procedures and emergency operation procedures.
- ❑ where and when to report to work.
- ❑ where the sign-in computer and name badges are located.
- ❑ what to do if I must be absent.

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