



Head Start/Great Start Readiness Program

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



We are so happy that you have decided to share your talent, time, and energy with us in one of our Washtenaw Intermediate School District Preschool programs!

There are many ways to volunteer, whether in the classroom or in some other capacity within our facilities. Our desire is that you feel welcome and enjoy your experience with us.

The next few pages will help you during your time here with us. If there is ever a concern or question, please feel free to ask any staff member for assistance.

Once again, WELCOME and we hope that your experience at WISD HS/GSRP sites will be an enjoyable one!

Sincerely,

WISD Head Start/GSRP Staff

Confidentiality

All information concerning participating children and information shared by families is confidential. Volunteers are not permitted to access student records. Information will not be shared with others about students or their families. This program does not disclose the names of children who may have caused injuries to other children in the program, as a safeguard for each family's privacy. As a volunteer, you will be asked to sign a statement that you understand and will abide by the confidentiality policy. Once again, this means that **under no circumstances** can you discuss children or families that you come in contact with at the center or the home, with anyone except the staff working with the child.

Education

Our intention is to provide children with happy, nurturing environments. Our programs are based on active learning, developmentally appropriate practices, and self-esteem building activities. We use an integrated curriculum that strongly fosters positive verbal interactions. You are invited to be an asset conducive to learning in our centers by supporting children and families with a positive attitude and becoming a part of our community while volunteering in preschool programs.

Remember, at **no time** are you to be left alone with a child or group of children.

Authorization/Emergency Contact Forms

Only staff are allowed to release children from the program. Volunteers are **not** allowed to release children under any circumstances. Each child has emergency contact information that has been shared with the teaching team. They are aware of individuals to whom children may be released. If you are approached and asked by an individual to allow a child to leave with him/her, **always refer this individual to the teaching team.** Children must always be signed into the classroom as well as out when leaving.

Nutrition

Children are served nutritious meals and snacks daily. Meals are served “family style,” to encourage social interactions, to help children learn about table manners, and to provide quality interactions with teachers and opportunities for learning (For example, table conversations about where the food they are eating comes from and what process it may have been through before arriving on the table.) As a volunteer, you should be aware that adults model tasting new foods and are not permitted to bring in outside food into the classroom or to the table-- One very important reason is the increased presence of food allergies among the children in our programs.



Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect

All Head Start programs are required by law to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the local child protective services office. The signs of abuse may include bruises, burns, scars, scrapes, or cuts that are reoccurring. Signs of neglect might include lack of appropriate clothing, nutrition, medical or other care. If you have any concerns regarding possible signs of suspected child abuse or neglect, please notify the staff person in charge of the center or teacher **IMMEDIATELY**.

Guidance and Discipline Procedures

When behavior issues arise, we will look at our classroom routines and environment as well as individual needs of the child to help him/her learn the appropriate behavior. It is important for all adults to be aware of the language, the tone of the voice, and the manner of speech they use when working with young children. Practices such as providing each child with choices, anticipating when problems may occur, and responding to children and their needs immediately enable us to help children in a positive manner, without using punitive measures.

All staff and volunteers are to model appropriate behavior and communication, use calm voice levels, and tell children what they **are to do**, using a positive tone.

Staff and Volunteers should **NEVER**:

- Use any form of corporal punishment
- Use any form of emotional abuse, such as name calling, ostracism, or threatening /harmful language
- Withdraw food, rest, or using the bathroom from a child
- Use traditional “time out” procedures.

If you have any concerns regarding children’s behavior, please notify the classroom teacher, or person in charge of the center.

School Closings

Programs follow the decision to close according to the local school district that your site is affiliated with. The program may cancel part of the school day or the entire day. You can find out by tuning in to radio/TV announcements on the early morning broadcast.



Standards of Conduct

Volunteers must follow the standards of conduct in the Head Start Performance Standards regarding work in the program:

- Agree to respect the uniqueness of each child and family
- Agree to follow program confidentiality policies concerning children, families and other staff
- Agree to never leave a child alone or unsupervised
- Agree to use only positive measures of child guidance and not use punishment or reward to affect a child's behavior

Volunteer Rights

This is what you should expect as a volunteer in our Head Start Program:

- The right to be treated with respect
- The right to have the same working conditions as staff doing similar tasks
- The right to receive feedback on the quality of work you produce, including areas that may need improvement
- The right to be kept informed about program activities and calendar changes
- The right to express grievances in an appropriate forum
- The right to be assigned meaningful volunteer work

Helpful Hints

- Speak with the assigned supervisor, the teacher or person in charge about expectations/responsibilities prior to your volunteering time
- Communicate any problems, questions, concerns or personal observations to the person in charge in the classroom, whether you are observing or interacting with the children
- Remember, **all information about children and families is confidential.**
- Ask for assistance/advise in handling teaching/office materials or situations with which you are unfamiliar
- When you have doubts about a procedure say to the child, “Let’s ask the teacher (or supervisor) in charge.”
- You are an important role model. Be positive and appropriate
- This is a learning experience for you, as well as the children and staff. Please, ask if you have questions and be sure to share your ideas!

