

# Helena Public Schools

## Volunteer Handbook



<http://helenaschools.org>

## WELCOME TO VOLUNTEERING IN THE HELENA PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering for Helena Public Schools. District schools depend on volunteers and value their contributions. Your willingness to serve the students and staff of the District is greatly appreciated.

The District serves kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and includes eleven (11) elementary schools, two (2) middle schools, two (2) high schools, an alternative learning center, gifted and talented programs, a preschool learning center, adult learning center, and an administrative building.

The District offers a wide variety of volunteer opportunities. Volunteers benefit District students by engaging them in experiential learning, getting them excited about their education, and developing closer relationships with members of the Helena community. Volunteers benefit District staff members by assisting them provide a comprehensive academic experience.

This handbook outlines the guidelines and expectations that volunteers must follow to create safe and successful experiences for students, staff and other volunteers.

Sometimes a volunteer placement may not be a fit for the volunteer, the teacher or the school. If your volunteer placement does not work for you, the teacher or the school for whatever reason, your volunteer assignment may be ended, modified or changed to a new assignment. You may request a different placement if you wish to continue volunteering.



All Helena Public Schools are Tobacco Free

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## Overview

- ✓ Prior to volunteering, complete the volunteer form available from the front office and in the student handbook.
- ✓ Complete a fingerprint criminal background investigation if you will have unsupervised access with students.

District policy requires all volunteers who will have **unsupervised** contact with students to pass a criminal background check. This policy helps ensure the safety of all students and is not intended to discriminate based on criminal history. Background checks do not include any financial information, such as credit history, taxes or income.

Any questions regarding the classification of your desired volunteer assignment or specific restrictions that may apply as a volunteer may be directed to the teacher/district employee you will work with, or the school's principal.

### What You Can Expect from the School District:

- ❖ Flexibility! You can select your hours, location and/or days of availability.
- ❖ Appreciation for your willingness to share your talents.
- ❖ Regarded as a professional.

### What the School District Expects from You:

- ❖ Sign in and wear an ID badge at all times.
- ❖ Wear professional attire productive to a learning environment.
- ❖ Interaction with parents, students and staff is respectful and conducted in a manner that reflects your professionalism.
- ❖ Share concerns regarding students with school staff only.
- ❖ Discuss any questions or concerns with the teacher or principal.
- ❖ Report as scheduled and on time. Others are counting on you; volunteer only for the time you can realistically expect to fulfill.
- ❖ Treat all information about a student in confidence.
- ❖ Using school equipment for business purposes only and in the manner instructed.
- ❖ Do not take photographs of students without permission of the teacher and the students' parents.
- ❖ Do not come to school if you are ill.
- ❖ Follow all rules and policies set by the school.

If you cannot make your scheduled volunteer time, please call the school so the teacher and students will know you will not be there. Please do not bring younger children to the school during your volunteer hours. You will also be asked to turn off your cell phone while you are volunteering in the classroom and are discouraged from making personal calls while on the school campus.

## Check-in Procedures

Sign in and out at the front desk of the school **each time** you volunteer. This procedure helps the schools keep track of volunteer numbers and hours. School secretaries can answer any questions you have about the sign-in/sign-out procedures.

Volunteers are required to wear a nametag or identification when in the schools, just like District employees. Each school may have different forms of volunteer nametags, and the school secretary can help you determine how to identify yourself. When filling out the nametag, use the name students call you (i.e. "Grandma Mary" or "Mr. Smith").

## Attire and Behavior

Your attire, grooming, and speech significantly influences student behavior and should serve as a good model for them to follow. We appreciate you dressing professionally in attire that reflects your status as an example for students. Thank you for refraining from wearing:

- ❖ T-shirts with logos depicting tobacco, alcohol or firearms
- ❖ Jeans with holes
- ❖ Low cut shirts/blouses
- ❖ Sweatpants
- ❖ Miniskirts

If you know that you will be doing a lot of walking or outdoor work during your service, please remember to bring sufficient shoes and clothing appropriate for the weather (i.e., jacket, gloves, scarf, etc.).

All interactions with students should be professional and focused on teaching and learning. Touching children carries a risk. A volunteer can be accused of impropriety, unnecessary physical contact, or sexual harassment. School volunteers and staff must use good judgment to determine whether or not to touch students and under what conditions.

Students' ages can affect their interactions. Generally, the following should be considered when dealing with students of different ages:

- ❖ *Grades K-3.* It is virtually impossible to avoid all contact with students of this age. However, it is important to use caution and attempt to keep touches to arms, back and shoulders only.
- ❖ *Grades 4-9.* Female students may view a touch on the shoulder or back as sexual in nature. They are extremely sensitive regarding remarks about clothing and physical appearance. Safeguard students' personal boundaries by not patting knees, putting arms around shoulders, hands or waist. Girls this age may be very sensitive about being touched on the back over their bras.
- ❖ *Grades 10-12.* Very little touching is acceptable with this group. Also avoid trying to counsel students of this age, especially about sexual, personal or romantic matters.

Some students may be comfortable with touch and want to sit in your lap or give you a full frontal hug. As the adult and role model, you can direct that affection into a physically appropriate action like a side hug or sitting without frontal contact.

By modeling appropriate touch, you are building trust with the student and helping them understand the ways it is safe and appropriate for a non-relative adult to touch them. Below are some general guidelines regarding appropriate and inappropriate touching:

Appropriate

- ✓ Shoulder-to-shoulder or side hugs
- ✓ Handshakes, high fives
- ✓ Get permission before touching

Inappropriate

- ⊗ Stroking the hair, head
- ⊗ Piggyback rides
- ⊗ Full-frontal hugs
- ⊗ Tickling, wrestling or any action that immobilizes or compromises the child's movements
- ⊗ Sitting on laps
- ⊗ Contact with the child's private areas

It is essential you exercise good judgment when interacting with students. If you are working alone with students, make sure to always keep the door open and work with the student in a room with a clear, unobstructed view into your working area.

Good judgment also includes refraining from engaging in the following:

- ⊗ Taking a student or students on private outings.
- ⊗ Initiating social activities with students.
- ⊗ Engaging in social networking with students via Facebook, MySpace, Twitter or any other social networking website to initiate or maintain relationship(s) with any student that is not consistent with appropriate professional behavior and/or boundaries and District policies and procedures regarding social networking.
- ⊗ Making a request such as, "Give me a hug," or "Come sit on my lap."
- ⊗ Touching one gender differently than the other gender.
- ⊗ Making sexist or sexual comments or innuendos or jokes with double meaning.

## Communication

Keeping the lines of communication open between volunteers and teachers can help both feel more comfortable with your time in the classroom. The responsibility for this communication falls on both parties. Little misunderstandings can become conflicts if left unaddressed, the same way a small “thank you” or nice word can go a long way toward a happy volunteering experience.

## Confidentiality

All school records and reports should be handled with care and confidentiality. They are maintained to provide information on child development for the professional staff. It is essential that, as a volunteer, you do not divulge any confidential information which has been received. This includes not making references to a student’s abilities in front of other students. The only person who should be told about a student’s work is their teacher. If parents ask about their student’s progress, suggest in a friendly way that they contact the teacher.

## Classroom Etiquette

Classroom materials and supplies should be used with discretion, as there are many instances in which the teacher has planned for their use. All teaching materials, library materials, technology and audio-visual aids, etc., should be properly cared for and left in an orderly fashion.

- DO leave the classroom in the same order as when you arrived.
- DO follow specific student protocol for release and supervision.
- Thank you for refraining from using your cell phone during class time.

## Pronouns

Pronouns are used when referring to someone in the third person, without using their name. The most common pronouns are she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs.

Pronouns do not always correlate with a person’s perceived gender. It is important to be intentional about the way we use pronouns as we all work to create as inclusive an environment as possible.

## Gift Giving

The District discourages any gift giving to students. If you believe a small token is appropriate to reward students, you must first obtain the approval of the token by an administrator before giving it to any students.

## Discipline

The District has detailed procedures regarding discipline of students. The responsibility to discipline rests solely with school administrators and teachers. Volunteers may not discipline students. Please make an administrator or the teacher aware of any discipline problems that may arise while working with students.

## Mandatory Reporting

All District employees are required to report reasonable cause of suspected abuse, neglect, or sex trafficking of a student to DPHHS. As a volunteer, you are in a unique position to observe students. You are encouraged to consult with the school principal, school counselor, or another school district employee if you have concerns on the welfare of a student.

## Accidents or Illness

Please ask about the guidelines for handling situations involving student accidents or illnesses. In general, report all accidents or illnesses of a serious nature to a teacher, secretary, or principal.

## Safety & Emergency Procedures

Emergencies can arise at any time, and you should be prepared to handle them with a minimum of confusion. Procedures differ throughout the district, depending on whether you are serving at an elementary, middle, or high school. Evacuation routes are posted in each room in the building. A drill will be signified by the continuous ringing of the bell or an announcement over the intercom.

During fire, earthquake, and other emergency drills

- Remain calm.
- Assist in guiding assigned students to the evacuation point in an orderly manner.
- Permit students to re-enter the room only upon administrative clearance.

## Strangers On or Near Campus

The maintenance of a secure and safe environment is a primary responsibility of the district and site managers. The following guidelines will assist in establishing the appropriateness of a person's presence on campus. All visitors should report to the office and sign in to receive a name badge.

Should a person be on campus who is unknown to the district, please:

- ❖ Politely approach and question the person as to identity and purpose. Then escort or direct this person to the office for verification and sign in. If you direct the person to the office, the office should be notified to expect the visitor.

**OR**

- ❖ Contact the office and request that the building administrator or other district employee approach and question the person.

Should the person become confrontational; or if the person is obviously a threat to the safety and well-being of students and staff, in possession of a weapon, under the influence of intoxicants, or verbally or physically abusive, the following, if possible, is recommended:

- ❖ Contact the office and they will alert teachers that all students must be kept in the classroom and the doors locked.
- ❖ Secure yourself and others in a safe area.

## General Safety Rules

- Minimize the danger of slips, trips and falls, especially during snow and icy conditions. Wear proper footwear, plan ahead, and make multiple trips if needed.
- Report all safety issues to the day custodian or front office staff. We appreciate your help in fostering a safety culture.
- Do not prop exterior doors (an alarm will sound).
- Know the location of the nearest fire extinguisher.
- Know your primary and secondary exit routes.

## Helena School District Policies

### 4015 Conduct on School Property

In addition to prohibitions stated in other District policies, no person on school property shall:

- Injure or threaten to injure another person;
- Damage another's property or that of the District;
- Violate any provision of the criminal law of the state of Montana or town or county ordinance;
- Smoke or otherwise use tobacco products (tobacco includes, but is not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or any other tobacco innovation or nicotine innovation);
- Consume, possess, or distribute alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, and marijuana products including medical marijuana, or possess dangerous weapons at any time;
- Impede, delay, or otherwise interfere with the orderly conduct of the District's educational program or any other activity occurring on school property;
- Use vulgar or obscene language or gestures.
- Disregard the directives of school officials or security personnel;
- Enter upon any portion of school premises at any time for purposes other than those which are lawful and authorized by the Board; or
- Violate other District rules and regulations.

"School property" means within school buildings, in vehicles used for school purposes, or on owned or leased school grounds. These regulations are in effect year-round, and during all District extra or co-curricular activities. District administrators will take appropriate action as circumstances warrant, up to and including recommending that the individual violating this policy be denied access to District property. If a recommendation is made to the Board to deny access to District property to an individual, that individual will be notified of date, time and place of the meeting of the Board as well as of the specific allegations to be presented to the Board.



## 5000 Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination

As required by federal law, including but not limited to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX, and Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act and their regulations, the District will provide equal employment opportunities and will not discriminate in its educational programs or activities, including in the area of employment, with respect to all persons, regardless of their race, color, religion, creed, national origin, sex, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, ancestry, marital status, military status, citizenship status, culture, social origin or condition, use of lawful products while not at work, political affiliation or a mental, physical or sensory handicap, or by any other distinguishing characteristic if otherwise able to perform essential functions of a job with reasonable accommodations, and other legally protected categories.

The District shall not retaliate against any employee for complaining about not receiving equal employment opportunities or other unlawful discriminatory practices, participating in a proceeding regarding the denial of equal employment opportunities, or otherwise opposing discrimination.

The District will make reasonable accommodation for an individual with a disability known to the District, if the individual is otherwise qualified for the position, unless the accommodation would impose undue hardship on the District. Covid-19 vaccine status will not be used as a basis to deny or allow equal opportunity to employment.

Persons who believe they have not received equal employment opportunities or have been retaliated against should report their claims to the building principal or department supervisor. Inquiries regarding sex discrimination or sexual harassment may also be directed to the District's Title IX Coordinator, the Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Education, or both. Claims of sexual harassment will be handled through the District's Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedures. Claims of disability discrimination will be handled through the District's Section 504 and ADA Grievance Procedure. All other claims will be handled through the Uniform Complaint Procedure.

No employee or applicant will be discriminated against because he or she initiated a complaint, was a witness, supplied information or otherwise participated in an investigation or proceeding involving an alleged violation of this policy or State or federal laws. The District reserves the right to take action against any individual who knowingly makes false accusations or knowingly provides false information.

Retaliation against an employee who has filed a discrimination complaint, testified or participated in any manner in a discrimination investigation or proceeding is prohibited.

## 5005 Sexual Harassment

The District shall provide employees an employment environment free of sexual harassment as defined and otherwise prohibited by state and federal law including Title IX and its implementing regulations, in the education programs and activities it offers, including the area of employment, volunteering and their party contractors.

Sexual harassment means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- (1) An employee of the District conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the District on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
- (2) Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the District's education program or activity; or
- (3) "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 U.S.C. § 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "dating violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(8), or "stalking" as defined in 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(30).

Reporting procedure: Individuals should report claims of sexual harassment to the District's Title IX Coordinator and/or use the District's Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedures (available on the HPS webpage). All formal complaints about behavior that may violate this policy shall be addressed through the District's Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedures.

Initiating a complaint of sexual harassment shall not adversely affect the complainant's employment, compensation, or work assignments.

## 5015 Bullying/Harassment/Intimidation & Hazing Prevention and Reporting

The Helena Public School District strives to provide a safe and civil working and learning environment. Bullying, harassment, intimidation, between employees or by third parties, are strictly prohibited and shall not be tolerated. This includes bullying, harassment, or intimidation via electronic communication devices (“cyberbullying”).

The District expressly prohibits any form of harassment, intimidation or bullying including but not limited to the following: any gesture or written, verbal or physical act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, culture, social origin or condition, marital status, political affiliation or a mental, physical or sensory handicap, or by any other distinguishing characteristic.

“Third parties” include but are not limited to students, coaches, school volunteers, parents, school visitors, service contractors or others engaged in District business, such as School District Trustees, employees of businesses or organizations participating in cooperative work programs with the District, and others not directly subject to District control at inter-district and intra-District athletic competitions or other school events.

1. “Harassment, intimidation, or bullying” means any act that substantially interferes with an individual’s opportunities, work or learning performance, that takes place on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation, or anywhere conduct may reasonably be considered to be a threat or an attempted intimidation of a staff member / third party or an interference with educational function, and that has the effect of:

- A. Physically harming an individual or damaging an individual’s property;
- B. Knowingly placing an individual in reasonable fear of physical harm to the individual or damage to the individual’s property; or
- C. Creating a hostile working environment.

2. “Electronic communication device” means any mode of electronic communication, including, but not limited to, computers, cell phones, PDAs, or the Internet.

### **Reporting**

If an employee feels that he or she has been the subject of harassment, intimidation, hazing or bullying or has witnessed or become aware of harassment, intimidation, hazing or bullying in violation of these policies, he or she should immediately report his/her concerns to the building principal or the District Administrator, who has overall responsibility for such investigations. Complaints against the building principal or other supervisors shall be filed with the Superintendent. Complaints against the Superintendent or District Administrator shall be filed with the Board.

All complaints about behavior that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated. Upon receipt of the complaint alleging harassment, Human Resources will take appropriate action to prevent the alleged conduct from continuing pending completion of the investigation. All complaints of harassment will be investigated as discreetly and confidentially as possible, but the District cannot promise anonymity to any individual. Employees are required to participate fully in investigations related to harassment, intimidation and bullying. No employee will be retaliated against for making a complaint in good faith or for participating in an investigation regarding a violation of District policy.

The complainant shall be notified of the findings of the investigation and, as appropriate, that remedial action has been taken.

### **Responsibilities**

The District Administrator shall be responsible for ensuring that notice of this policy is provided to staff and third parties and for the development of administrative regulations, including reporting and investigative procedures, as needed.

All staff have the responsibility to maintain a safe environment. Further, staff have a responsibility to report incidents. Educators and school staff can help prevent harassment, intimidation, hazing or bullying by building strong relationships with students, intervening when signs of bullying are witnessed, or reported and supporting a bullying prevention climate in the school.

### **Consequences**

Staff whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal. Third parties whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy shall be subject to appropriate sanctions as determined and imposed by the District Administrator or the Board. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

### **Retaliation and Reprisal**

Retaliation is prohibited against any person who reports or is thought to have reported a violation, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation of Board policy, whether or not a complaint is substantiated. False charges shall also be regarded as a serious offense and will result in disciplinary action or other appropriate sanctions.

## 5020 Tobacco Product, Drug, and Alcohol-Free Workplace

All District workplaces are tobacco product, drug and alcohol product free. All employees are prohibited from:

- Smoking or otherwise using a tobacco product, vapor product, or alternative nicotine product (tobacco includes, but is not limited to; cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco or any other tobacco or nicotine innovation) while on District premises or while performing work for the District;
- Unlawfully manufacturing, dispensing, distributing, possessing, using, or being under the influence of a controlled substance while on District premises or while performing work for the District; and
- Distributing, consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol while on District premises or while performing work for the District

Nothing herein prohibits an employee from using a smoking cessation product on school property. Upon prior notice and approval by a building administrator, a teacher or other employee may possess a tobacco product, vapor product, or alternative nicotine product in a classroom or otherwise on school property as part of a lecture, demonstration, or educational forum concerning the risks associated with the use of a tobacco product, vapor product, or alternative nicotine product.

For purposes of this policy, a controlled substance is one that is not legally attainable, being used in a manner other than as prescribed, legally obtainable but has not been legally obtained or referenced in federal or state controlled-substance acts. For purposes of this policy, a controlled substance includes medical marijuana. Any employee must notify his or her supervisor of his or her conviction under any criminal drug statute, for a violation occurring on District premises or while performing work for the District, no later than five (5) days after such conviction.

In order to make employees aware of dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, the District will endeavor to:

- Provide each employee with notice of the District drug and alcohol-free workplace policy;
- Enlist the aid of community and state agencies with drug and alcohol informational and rehabilitation programs, to provide information to District employees; and
- Inform employees of available drug and alcohol counseling, rehabilitation, reentry, and any employee-assistance programs.

An employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, including termination. Should District employees be engaged in the performance of work under a federal contract or grant, or under a state contract or grant of \$5,000 or more, the Superintendent will notify the appropriate state or federal agency from which the District receives contract or grant moneys of an employee's conviction, within ten (10) days after receiving notice of the conviction.

# Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgement

I understand that the contents of the handbook are guidelines, not a contract or implied contract with volunteers. The contents of the Volunteer Handbook may change at any time. In the event the District modifies any of the policies or procedures contained in the handbook, or on the website, the changes will become binding on me immediately upon issuance of the new policy or procedure by the District.

I understand that in the event there is a conflict between this Handbook and District policies and procedures, the policies and procedures will control.

I agree to review the Handbook and Policies of the Helena School District and I agree to act in accord with the expectations of volunteering for the Helena School District. Policies can be found on the Helena School District website: About/Board of Trustees/Policies.

I understand that if I have questions or concerns at any time about the handbook, I will consult with the District Human Resources Office.

By signing below, I consent that I have read the contents of this handbook and understand that I am required to review and follow the policies and procedures set forth in the Volunteer Handbook and I agree to do so.

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Signature

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Printed Name

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Date

Please return to the School Secretary

Broadwater 324-1122	900 HOLLINS AVENUE	KELLIE BOEDECKER, PRINCIPAL
Bryant 324-1177	1520 LIVINGSTON AVE	ERIN MAXWELL, PRINCIPAL
Capital High 324-2471	100 VALLEY DR	BRETT ZANTO, PRINCIPAL
Central 324-1228	402 NORTH WARREN	NICK RADLEY, PRINCIPAL
C.R. Anderson 324-2758	1200 KNIGHT STREET	KATHLEEN PRODY, PRINCIPAL
Four Georgians 324-1300	555 CUSTER AVE	CARRIE SHINKLE, PRINCIPAL
Hawthorne 324-1372	430 MADISON	TRISH KLOCK, PRINCIPAL
Helena High 324-2207	1300 BILLINGS AVENUE	STEVE THENNIS, PRINCIPAL
Helena Middle 324-1007	1025 NORTH RODNEY	CAL BOYLE, PRINCIPAL
Jefferson 324-2062	1023 BROADWAY	BRICE BURTON, PRINCIPAL
Jim Darcy 324-1412	990 LINCOLN ROAD WEST	JILL NYMAN, PRINCIPAL
Kessler 324-1690	2420 CHOTEAU AVENUE	RILEY THATCHER, PRINCIPAL
Rossiter 324-1482	1497 SIERRA ROAD EAST	WYNN RANDALL, PRINCIPAL
Smith 324-1530	2320 FIFTH AVENUE	SARAH SIMPSON, PRINCIPAL
Warren 324-1575	2690 OLD YORK ROAD	TIA WILKINS, PRINCIPAL