



**Volunteer Policy – Updated October 20, 2016**

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Parents' active participation at Collegium (CCS) communicates to children the value placed on education. CCS asks each CCS parent to perform the equivalent of two hours of service per month. These hours may be performed each month or can be "banked" when a single volunteer opportunity exceeds two hours. Service time can be fulfilled year round, not just during the school year.

CCS expects participation from all parents in maintaining facilities, providing services and raising funds. With the involvement of all parents, CCS is able to save thousands of dollars that allows CCS to spend money on your children's education. There are many opportunities to volunteer at CCS. Families should check the weekly CCS newsletter for opportunities, or contact your child's teachers or the class homeroom parent for more volunteer opportunities.

The purpose of the policy is to provide the safest educational environment possible for our students by requiring background checks for volunteers who have contact with students. While the steps listed below may be viewed as inconvenient and costly, the time spent and price paid is necessary to help secure our students' safety.

Before having contact with CCS students or volunteering in a manner consistent with the examples listed below, volunteers (CCS parents and non-parents) must have presented the following completed background checks, obtained from the required State Departments listed below, to CCS:

1. PA Child Abuse History Clearance (23 Pa. C.S. § 6354-6358) (Dept. of Public Welfare),
2. PA State Police Request for Criminal Record Check (24 P.S. § 1-111), and
3. Federal Criminal History Record Information (24 P.S. § 1-111) via the PA Department of Education or PA Department of Human Services. Collegium prefers processing via the PA Department of Education as Collegium has the ability to access electronic verification of the record.

For the purposes of this policy, items 1, 2, and 3 above will be collectively referred to as "background checks."

Volunteers are not permitted to have contact with students until all required background checks, have been provided to CCS and reviewed by CCS. Background checks not obtained from the above indicated sources cannot be verified by Collegium and therefore will not be accepted.

Background checks are accepted and considered valid when the date of the check is within one calendar year of the date of receipt by CCS. Background checks are valid in CCS's files for 5 years from the date on the check. A reminder notification will be provided to volunteers when their background checks are approaching the end of the 5-year period. In order to remain eligible as a volunteer, updated background checks will need to be provided prior to the end of the 5-year period. CCS reserves the right to request an updated background check from a volunteer at any time.

Background checks are processed by departments of the state of PA and the FBI, not CCS. Processing, especially of the PA Child Abuse History Clearance, may take weeks. CCS suggests that those who anticipate volunteering start the process of completing their background checks in the very beginning of the school year or in the summer preceding the start of school.

#### Examples

A volunteer in the following capacities must have all three background checks on file:

- Chaperoning field trips or any school event.
- Homeroom parents (organize classroom events, engage students in crafts, activities, etc.)
- Assisting or working in the school at any time during the school day.
- Assisting or working on behalf of the school during an event outside of the school day in which the volunteer would come in contact with students.
- Driving a team/group to an activity. Driving requires an additional check, a driving record check, to be completed by CCS.



Background checks are not needed for:

- Attending a classroom presentation or party (in a guest capacity only.)
- Attending a school-sponsored event.
- Attending a meeting at school.
- Presenting to a group of students when accompanied and supervised by a CCS employee.
- Providing expertise to CCS when accompanied and supervised by a CCS employee and/or designated volunteers having valid background checks on file. Example: science fair judge or career day speaker.

*The items listed above are provided as examples only – other situations, not specifically listed, must follow the standard included in the policy.*

Any potential volunteer found to have a disqualifying conviction under the Public School Code shall be prohibited from volunteering at CCS. Any potential volunteer who is found to have a conviction that is not disqualifying under the Public School Code may still be, at the discretion of CCS, prohibited from volunteering at CCS. Collegium reserves the right to disqualify potential volunteers from future volunteer opportunities based on past behavior of the potential volunteer that Collegium, in its sole discretion, determines to be unsuitable and/or inappropriate for a volunteer working with our students.

Instructions for obtaining background checks and applicable forms are available on the *Volunteering* page of the CCS website, as is information on how to submit the completed background checks to CCS.

#### Procedures for Volunteers

- Confidentiality is of the utmost importance in your association with teachers and students.
  - What you see and hear at the school is private. You are in a unique position when you volunteer in the classroom to have information that is not to be shared. Students you observe in the classroom or the school cannot be discussed with other parents, faculty or staff. You may not discuss a child even with that child's parents. You must always refer any question regarding students to the child's teacher or the principal.
- Unless specifically permitted in advance by a teacher or administrator, do not bring any children with you when you are volunteering.
- Remember we are all - teachers, staff and volunteers - role models for the students around us. "Little eyes" are watching, listening and learning appropriate behavior from our actions. Cursing and inappropriate language or discussions are not permitted.
- Teachers need the attention of the students to direct instruction. Extraneous conversations distract from the task at hand. Please do not talk during instruction.
- Cell phones are to be turned to vibrate when volunteering. No conversations/texting should take place while volunteering. If you must take an urgent/emergency call, please do not do so around students.
- CCS is a tobacco-free, drug-free, and alcohol-free zone. Do not bring these products to campus, use while volunteering, or be under the influence when volunteering.
- Volunteers are not to discipline students. Discipline is solely the responsibility of the teacher. On field trips, when you are the adult supervising a group of children and the teacher is not available, volunteers may appropriately address safety or behavior issues. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to inform the teacher as soon as possible about these issues. However, any consequences for behavior are the responsibility of the teacher, not the volunteer.
- Adults are respectful to students and students are always expected to be respectful in return. If on any occasion you are treated disrespectfully, tell the teacher or the principal as soon as possible. Students should address volunteers by using Mr., Ms. or Mrs., not by first name.