



Volunteer Handbook

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This Handbook is designed provide you with information about working as a volunteer for the Children's Science Center.

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WELCOME

Dear Volunteer,

On behalf of the Children's Science Center, I would like to welcome you to our volunteer program. We are thrilled to have you as a member of our volunteer corps. We hope that your service with the Center will be a rewarding experience.

Time is a valuable gift and we are grateful that you are willing to share yours with us. Without you and the hundreds of dedicated volunteers to date, we couldn't provide programming or many essential activities that help us to fulfill our mission. Thank you for helping us inspire the next generation to love STEM learning.

This handbook is designed to acquaint you with the Center and serve as a guide for operations/procedures. We depend greatly on your reliability as a volunteer and this document details your responsibilities and our expectations.

Please don't hesitate to come to me with questions, ideas, and feedback.

Sincerely,

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Volunteer Coordinator

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ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S SCIENCE CENTER

The Children's Science Center is an interactive museum for children being planned for the Dulles region of Northern Virginia that will offer hands-on exhibits, activities and programs focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Currently in our first phase, Museum Without Walls, we bring hands-on science activities to thousands of children in our area, allowing us to fulfill our mission before our doors open, to instill a love of learning STEM in all children by providing unique opportunities to explore, create, and be inspired. Phase II is a 5,400-square-foot hands-on, interactive exploration center, called the Lab, located at the Fair Oaks Mall opening in June 2015, followed by a five year project, phase III, a 30,000-square-foot world-class children's science museum located at the Kincora development in Dulles, Virginia, with additional opportunities to grow and expand in future years.

The Children's Science Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Children's Science Center is grateful for the support of its founding partner, the Junior League of Northern Virginia. Learn more: www.ChildSci.org. Follow us on Twitter [@ChildSci](https://twitter.com/ChildSci) and Facebook [/ChildrensScienceCenter](https://www.facebook.com/ChildrensScienceCenter).

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Mission: To instill a love of learning STEM in all children by providing unique opportunities to explore, create, and be inspired.

Vision: To build a world-class children's science museum.

Core values: Community, Fun, Excellence, Innovation, Leadership

These core values serve as guiding principles for our employees, board of directors, advisors, and volunteers. We exemplify these values as we fulfill our mission, engage with our stakeholders, and recruit new employees and volunteers.

- **Community**

We serve as the community anchor for STEM, filling a critical need in our current learning ecosystem and leveraging our region's unique STEM resources to deliver innovative and relevant content. We foster a sense of community for our region and our stakeholders, including employees, volunteers, donors, children, parents, schools, teachers, and partner organizations. We believe in a community based on respect, trust, and teamwork and embrace the power of diversity.

- **Fun**

Learning should be fun. The Center provides experiential learning opportunities, problem solving and design challenges, and creates fun memories that spark interest in STEM. Our employee and volunteer culture celebrates fun.

- **Excellence**

We always strive for excellence and quality in all that we do by approaching our mission with passion, ensuring a safe and productive learning environment. We act as stewards of our community. We delight our visitors, leading to sustained and repeat visits.

- **Innovation**

We inspire future innovators by fostering creativity, problem solving and new ways of thinking. We are bold and take risks. We learn from our outcomes as we seek continuous improvement and relevance for our team, our organization and community. We are committed to our For Kids, By Kids design philosophy, capturing children's input into every aspect of our facility, exhibits and programs.

- **Leadership**

The Center plays a leadership role as a catalyst of STEM interest, ideas and conversations. We collaborate with the highest caliber local and national partner organizations. Our employee and volunteer leaders are passionate about our mission and propel it forward with confidence. We are dedicated and demonstrate the highest levels of ethics, integrity and accountability.

CHILDREN'S SCIENCE CENTER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Children's Science Center's Volunteer program provides support to the museum's mission by helping the Center's staff to work more efficiently and effectively for community programming as well as other essential activities.

We offer a variety of opportunities for children, teens, adults and groups depending on your interests and availability:

- Occasional, short term or regular commitment
- Behind the scenes support or direct program presentation and visitor interaction
- At home, at our office, or around the region at our events

Our volunteer team will work with you to match your skills and talents with our needs and opportunities.

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

1. Complete online volunteer application available on our website (<http://childsci.org/volunteer-how-to/>).
2. Attend to orientation e-mail by New Volunteer Liaison.
3. Complete all training and forms required for the selected volunteer position.
4. Commit to a minimum of 4 hours per year for active volunteer benefits.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS

Sign-in

Please arrive to the venue on time and annotate your arrival time next to your name on the volunteer sign in sheet. This will (1) let the event Lead know that you have arrived and (2) will help us keep track of your hours.

Dress

Wear comfortable clothes in layers that you can remove if you become too warm or chilly. Comfortable shoes are a must—you will be doing a lot of standing and moving about. You are welcome to wear a t-shirt with your organization's logo (for example, a JLNv logo t-shirt or SAIC-branded apparel). We will provide each volunteer with an apron bearing the Children's Science Center's logo to wear during the course of the event, as well.

Shift changes and cancellations

We regard our volunteers highly, and plan events and activities carefully based on volunteer support, thus we depend on you to take your volunteer role very seriously considering that our visitors and fellow team members are relying on you too. If you are unable to make a scheduled assignment, it is imperative that you let the event organizer and/or Volunteer Coordinator (volunteer@childsci.org) know as soon as possible (preferably at least 48 hours in advance) so that a replacement can be identified. We do not have available staff to fill in for a volunteer who does not show up.

Personal possessions

The Center is not responsible for any losses or thefts of personal property. Upon arrival at a venue, it is your responsibility to determine where to store your personal belongings. Our suggestion is to travel light.

Snacks and drinks

During shifts, we expect all volunteers to attend to their station throughout their entire shift. You are welcome to drink water during your shift. If necessary, please avail yourself of the facilities at the venue. It is preferable that this happen during a planned break so that your exhibit/activity remains staffed. Please do not eat in public areas unless deemed appropriate by your Volunteer Shift Lead.

Internet, Email, Phone Use

Electronic devices (e.g., iPods, cell phones, etc.) should not be used during your volunteer shift. We discourage cell phone use during volunteer shifts except for in the case of an emergency. Cell phones should be kept on silent mode while volunteering. If you need to make a personal call, please do so away from your exhibit/activity station. If your job

requires you to access the Internet, please do so for business purposes only. Accessing inappropriate sites and other actions unbecoming of a Center Volunteer is strictly prohibited.

Smoking

No smoking is permitted at the Children's Science Center, its offices, or any of the venues at which we staff events.

Emergencies

If the fire alarm goes off, make your way to the nearest exit, using the stairs, not the elevator. Instruct visitors to do the same, but do not consider it your responsibility to clear the building. Your own safety should be your primary concern. Staff and emergency professionals will make sure the building and/or venue are cleared.

For a medical emergency, call 911 and notify a staff member as soon as possible. An incident form must be filled out for ANY accident or injury, no matter how small. For information on insurance, please refer to museum staff who can provide the insurance agent's name and number. Please do not comment on coverage to any guest who may be injured – that information is to be privileged between the injured person and the insurance agent.

OTHER GENERAL INFORMATION AND PROVISIONS

- Child(ren) and guests are not approved to accompany you or attend an event during your volunteer shift unless special arrangements have been made in advance with the Volunteer Coordinator a staff member.
- Excessive socialization and public displays of affection should be avoided.
- Alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs are forbidden inside the Center, its offices, and any of the venues at which we staff events.
- The Center reserves the right conduct a background check on all volunteers. All Center volunteers are required to report any criminal offenses to the Volunteer Coordinator. The Center reserves the right to not hire or remove volunteers from their positions based on reported criminal offenses.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The Center does not tolerate discrimination or harassment in its programs activities, or employment based on race, color, sex, sexual preference, marital or parental status, religion, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, or veteran status. Any concerns about discrimination or harassment can be voiced to Volunteer Shift Leads or staff members at any time without fear of reprisal.

WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

A whistleblower is defined by this policy as an employee, volunteer, or member of the Center who reports an activity that he or she considers to be illegal or dishonest to one or more of the parties specified in this Policy. The whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the activity or for determining fault or corrective measures; appropriate management officials are charged with these responsibilities.

Examples of illegal or dishonest activities are violations of federal, state or local laws; billing for services not performed or for goods not delivered; and fraudulent financial reporting. If an employee or volunteer has knowledge of or a concern of illegal or dishonest fraudulent activity, the employee or volunteer is to contact his/her immediate supervisor, the Executive Director, or the Chair of the Board. The employee or volunteer must exercise sound judgment to avoid baseless allegations. An employee who intentionally files a false report of wrongdoing will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

Whistleblower protections are provided in two important areas --confidentiality and against retaliation. Insofar as possible, the confidentiality of the whistleblower will be maintained. However, identity may have to be disclosed to conduct a thorough investigation, to comply with the law and to provide accused individuals their legal rights of defense. The Center will not retaliate against a whistleblower. This includes, but is not limited to, protection from retaliation in

the form of an adverse employment action such as termination, compensation decreases, or poor work assignments and threats of physical harm. Any whistleblower who believes he/she is being retaliated against must contact their immediate supervisor, the Executive Director, or the Chair of the Board immediately. The right of a whistleblower for protection against retaliation does not include immunity for any personal wrongdoing that is alleged and investigated.

CODE OF ETHICS

Volunteers must read, understand, and follow the Center's *Code of Ethics*. Any breach of policy will result in termination from the volunteer program.

Integrity: Our organization's activities, services, and programs are consistent with our mission, compatible with our capacity, respectful of the varied interests of our constituencies, and managed with a high level of professionalism.

Fiscal Responsibility: The Children's Science Center is committed to using and managing our resources wisely and in accordance with all applicable laws and standards of accounting. Our financial systems will ensure that accurate records are kept and that resources are used to further the mission and charitable purposes of the organization.

Accountability: The Children's Science Center shall monitor and review all program and community activities to ensure compliance with the mission and purpose of the organization. We will produce measurable outcomes and conduct program evaluations for activities that are reasonable for the scope of the program and organization.

Good Citizenship: The Children's Science Center will make their best efforts to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. We will keep the broader interests of the community in mind even as we advance our own specific interests.

Conflict of Interest: The Children's Science Center will act in the best interest of the organization, rather than on the basis of personal interests or interests of third parties.

Openness and Respect: The Children's Science Center is committed to being responsive and inclusive, to ensuring that communication is accessible to all, and to share information openly and honestly, consistent with any privacy and confidentiality obligations. We will show respect and consideration for all, which includes courtesy, compassion, and the celebration of diversity.

Excellence: The Children's Science Center will support and encourage visionary governance, exemplary management, excellent service and program delivery, and exceptional staff and volunteers. We value and uphold the highest ethical and professional standards in all working relations.

Non-Discrimination

The Children's Science Center does not promote or discriminate against any person, population group, or organization with regard to categories protected by applicable United States law in any dealings or hiring practices. These include, but are not limited to race, color, religion, sex, gender expression, physical appearance, language, education background, national origin, age, disability, and veteran status.

VOLUNTEER STATUS

Volunteers have many roles at the Center and are designated with a particular status as well as secondary status in VolunteerMatters to categorize their general volunteering type. These statuses include, but are not limited to:

- **New Volunteer:** Any volunteer who has recently registered through the self-registration form. These volunteers have yet to be evaluated for approved volunteering.

- *Holding Volunteer:* Any volunteer who has recently registered through the self-registration form, but has a profile that has been deemed incomplete by the New Volunteer Liaison.
- *Active Volunteer:* Any volunteer with an up-to-date VolunteerMatters profile who has volunteered either in-person or behind-the-scenes in the last several months.
- *Inactive Volunteer:* Any volunteer who has not actively participated in the volunteer program for several months. Each case will be considered individually before the volunteer is placed on inactive status.
- *Under 16 Volunteer:* Any volunteer under the age of 16. This designation is critical to denote eligibility for volunteering for specific events.

PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS

Center volunteers are held at the highest standards. Should a volunteer’s performance be below the standards required by the Center, the Volunteer Coordinator or the individual’s supervisor may issue a verbal warning outlining the problem. If the problem persists, the Volunteer Coordinator may present the individual with a written warning or have a meeting to discuss whether it is appropriate for the individual to continue volunteering with the Center.

Performance problems include:

- Conducting excessive personal business during a volunteer shift
- Littering or otherwise creating unsanitary conditions
- Safety violations
- Repetitive tardiness or absenteeism
- Unauthorized operation of equipment
- Interference or delay of your work or the work of staff or other volunteers
- Unfriendly or uncooperative attitude in dealing with visitors, staff, or other volunteers
- Waste, misuse, or damage of the Center’s property
- Modification of the Center’s programs or exhibits without authorization
- Inappropriate conduct or behavior

Serious violation and grounds for immediate termination of volunteer status include:

- Falsifying records
- Physical or sexual harassment
- Negligent or willful damage of property; Theft
- Breaking the *Code of Ethics*
- Unlawful discrimination
- Willfully endangering the safety of others
- Working under the influence of intoxicants or drugs

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

- To be treated like valuable members of the Center’s team.
- To be given complete, clear instructions as well as the appropriate materials so that duties can be performed effectively.
- To be given meaningful jobs which reflect the temperament, education, and interests of the volunteer as available.
- To be given encouragement and feedback about job performance.

- To be given the opportunity to make suggestions.
- To be recognized and appreciated spontaneously and at scheduled events.
- To have any risks associated with volunteering clearly explained.
- To volunteer in a safe workplace free of discrimination.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

- To maintain a professional demeanor with visitors, volunteers, and staff. (Your immediate supervisor defines appropriate attire).
- To be open and honest regarding intent, goals, and skills.
- To prepare for volunteer duties and carry them out promptly and reliably.
- To accept guidance and direction of Center staff and other volunteers.
- To participate in any training required for the volunteer position/shift.
- To respect the Center's Code of Ethics.
- To communicate ideas, concerns, and questions with staff.
- To keep an accurate record of volunteer hours.
- To be punctual and notify appropriate individual of absences in advance if possible.
- To accept sudden changes to schedules and job assignments when the need dictates.
- To never guess the answer to a visitor's question.
- To abide by volunteer policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.
- To maintain an updated VolunteerMatters profile with current name, address, telephone, legal, and emergency contact information.

VOLUNTEER BENEFITS

- Volunteers receive a name badge and other materials necessary for their job.
- Volunteers are invited to the Annual Volunteer Thank You Event.
- Upon request, volunteers may receive letters of recommendation.
- Upon request to the Volunteer Coordinator or shift supervisor, when appropriate, volunteers will receive verification of hours volunteered for the Center.
- Upon request, volunteers may receive job references.

PUBLIC IMAGE GUIDELINES

Every individual volunteering or working for the Children's Science Center is responsible for protecting the Center's public image. Public relations are not just news releases or interviews with the media, but also your interaction with the public including your tone of voice, your expression, what you say, and how you say it.

Why is the Center concerned with public image?

The Children's Science Center is an organization serving the community with a mission to inspire others. We must maintain the highest levels of professionalism, customer satisfaction and integrity to achieve our mission. How the public perceives our methods and work is critical to achieve our mission and vision.

How can I help the Center establish a good image?

The best way to help the Center establish a good image is to be prepared for your volunteer assignments. Always put safety, courtesy and professionalism before all else.

Is any contact with the public considered public relations?

You are the face of the Children's Science Center every time you volunteer. All contact you have is an opportunity to present the Children's Science Center in the best of lights and to embody our mission and values.

How do I handle a difficult situation?

There may be times when a visitor is not using materials properly or is not satisfied with an activity. If after trying to redirect them to the activity at hand does not work, then stop the interaction with, “I understand you ... feel this way, want more information, want to use the materials like that... but I will need to get the supervisor now.”

What should I do if the media visit the Lab, our offices or an event?

It is our policy that only the Executive Director or Board Chair speak to the media. You can direct any media requests for information or interviews to them. If there is a video taping at a Center event, then please continue your activity as if they were not there and show how exciting and eventful experiences at the Center can be.

MANY THANKS

Thank you again for sharing your time and talents with the Children’s Science Center as a volunteer. We are glad to have your help as a dedicated volunteer and look forward to working with you.

The Children’s Science Center is grateful to the Museum of Science & History in Jacksonville, FL for graciously sharing their volunteer handbook text and outline with us. Their generous gift of appropriate language has yielded this guide to volunteer operations for the Center.