

# Chicago HOPES for Kids Policies for Volunteers

*The following are policies of the organization that are in effect at all sites. Volunteers and Site Coordinators are expected to comply with these policies to ensure a positive environment for all participants of the Chicago HOPES or Kids program.*

**Volunteers should let their Site Coordinator(s) know at least 24 hours in advance if they are going to be absent from a session.** The quality of the program is significantly impacted when our student-to-volunteer ratio is less than ideal. The sooner that a Site Coordinator is informed of an absence, the better chance he/she has of finding a substitute for that session.

**Volunteers who miss more than two sessions (without providing appropriate notice) or are consistently late to sessions may be asked to rethink their commitment to the Chicago HOPES for Kids program.** Allowances can be made in the event of a personal or family emergency, but this policy will be uniformly enforced.

**All volunteers must attend a Chicago HOPES for Kids volunteer training session and pass a background check before they are allowed to visit a site.** If a friend or family member of a volunteer is interested in attending a program session to determine their interest in volunteering with the organization, the following must occur:

1. The Site Coordinator(s) and VISTA member must be notified *at least one week in advance* to provide ample time to reach a decision.
2. Unanimous consent must be given by the Site Coordinator(s), VISTA member, and Program Manager.
3. The prospective volunteer must complete a Background Check Consent Form and pay \$10 for the processing of the background check. This must occur *at least 48 hours* before the volunteer session.
4. The prospective volunteer must pass the background check.
5. While at the site, the HOPES volunteer is responsible for the actions and orientation of the prospective volunteer.
6. After the site-visit, if the prospective volunteer is interested in volunteering with HOPES on a weekly basis, they must sign-up for and attend the volunteer training session before returning to the site.

**Tutors must dress appropriately when in the tutoring room.** The dress code for the sites is casual and relaxed; however, please avoid revealing outfits or any clothing promoting adult themes. It might be helpful to check the enrichment schedule before attending a session, as some of our activities can be a bit messy or active, and your many want to dress accordingly.

**Volunteers are not permitted to take pictures at the site or of the students.** Our students are in a very delicate situation living in a homeless/domestic violence shelter. We must respect their privacy by keeping their names and homeless status completely confidential.

Sometimes even the child's safety is at stake. *Occasionally, HOPES staff members may take photos of the students and program sessions to post on social media. Volunteers are allowed (and encouraged) to share these photos and posts!*

**Volunteers should not use cell phones or other non-educational electronic devices while at the site.** Out of respect for our students and other volunteers, please turn cell phones off or set them on silent mode, waiting until the end of the session to check messages. If you are expecting a phone call or message, please let your Site Coordinator know. Phones may be used for educational purposes, as needed.

**Gifts may be provided to every student in the room or donations may be made to the program as a whole, but individual gifts to a student are not permitted.** This is difficult, because the urge to treat our students with a presents from time to time is understandable. However, when one child receives a gift from their tutor and another does not, this can cause issues of jealousy on the part of students and embarrassment or guilt on the part of the tutors. If you plan to bring a gift, please let your Site Coordinator know, in advance.

**Volunteers should follow the instruction of Site Coordinators and model appropriate behavior for students.** It's important that volunteers set an example for the students throughout the program and assist the Site Coordinator with behavior management. This is especially important during transitions.

**Volunteers should never be alone with a child (unless directed by the Site Coordinator).** Generally speaking, a Site Coordinator or second volunteer must always be present if a volunteer and student leave the room together. Students always use the restroom alone.

**Volunteers may not make outside contact with the students currently participating in Chicago HOPES for Kids.** If students are no longer part of HOPES, then it is up to the discretion of the parents as to whether to allow outside contact. Additionally, should a tutor see a HOPES student in the community, the tutor should refrain from initiating contact with the student. Should the student initiate contact, the tutor must be sensitive to discussing how the tutor knows the student.

**Volunteers are asked to keep all personal student information confidential.** While we view all volunteers as ambassadors for Chicago HOPES for Kids and encourage you to discuss your experience with others, we are always mindful of protecting our students' privacy and safety. Please be conscious of they type of information you share with others and on social media outlets, such as Twitter and Facebook. Specific student information should always remain confidential.

**If a volunteer suspects a child is being abused, it should be immediately reported to the Site Coordinator(s).** If you suspect any kind of abuse or neglect or have concerns for the well-being of any student, please let us know.