



Springfield  
School  
Volunteers 

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SPRINGFIELDSCHOOLVOLUNTEERS.ORG

**ORIENTATION HANDBOOK**



# WELCOME

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for committing to share your time and talents with our students. Volunteers have been a part of the success story of the Springfield Public Schools for many years. Regardless of your specific volunteer role, you will contribute greatly to the future success of Springfield's students.

As you take on this important challenge, this handbook will provide you with helpful information to support and guide you along the way. If you have questions or concerns that are not covered in this handbook, please feel free to reach out to us. A staff directory is on page 12.

We look forward to partnering with you to make a difference in the lives of students – one student at a time!

With gratitude,

*Denise N. Cogman*

## **ABOUT SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS(SSV)**

SSV is a non-profit organization that has been matching the resources of the community with the needs of the Springfield Public Schools (SPS) since 1969. In 1979, First Lady Rosalynn Carter selected SSV as a model of the spirit of volunteerism. We have been proudly carrying that torch ever since.

SSV is governed by a board of directors, managed by a small staff, and supported by many caring and committed volunteers. We are funded by the City of Springfield through a contract with the Springfield Public Schools, as well as by grants and individual gifts. SSV's primary focus is to support positive youth-adult relationships with the goal of helping students reach their highest potential.

# THE SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## ABOUT THE SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL (SPS)

With approximately 23,000 students, nearly 5,000 employees, and more than 70 schools, the Springfield school system is the third largest district in New England. Led by its Superintendent and the school committee, chaired by the mayor, the district's mission, The Springfield Promise, is reimagining schools to:

- Partner with families and the community as essential to student success;
- Attract, develop, support, retain, and promote exceptional and diverse educators and staff;
- Prioritize purposeful teaching, empowered learners, culturally responsive instruction, collaborative learning environments, and joyful and meaningful learning;
- Empower students to grow as whole people; and,
- Graduate students ready for success in college, career, and life.



## Springfield Public Schools Portrait of a Graduate

### LEARN



"I have the academic knowledge and skills to critically understand the world, form opinions, and solve problems."

### COMMUNICATE



"I listen to others and convey ideas with respect, openness and clarity."

### PERSIST



"I practice resilience, self-awareness, and advocacy to navigate challenges and new situations"

### THRIVE



"I can independently navigate the world as an empathetic and respectful adult."

### LEAD



"I will lead with confidence, empathy and kindness in my family, my community, in Springfield, and beyond."

### WORK



"I can identify and pursue career pathways that empower and sustain me."

During a period of more than two years, SPS engaged students, parents, school staff, business and faith leaders, and other community members in a series of conversations that led to a community-created vision of what every student in the Springfield Public Schools should know and be able to do by the time they graduate high school - the Portrait of a Graduate.

The Portrait of a Graduate is built on six pillars or key themes: the elements of specific knowledge, skills, or mindsets that every student should master. The six pillars are: Learn, Communicate, Persist, Thrive, Lead, and Work.

# THE SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The Springfield Public Schools is committed to providing a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It values and appreciates the voices of students, parents, staff, and the community. As a volunteer in the Springfield school system, you are part of that community.

As you volunteer, you will encounter students who represent different races, ethnicities, abilities, and cultures. Below is a chart that highlights that diversity:

<b>Selected Population</b>	<b>% of District</b>	<b>% of State</b>
First Language not English	28.4	25
English Language Learner	16.8	12.1
Low-income	86	42.3
Students With Disabilities	25.2	19.4
High Needs	89.6	55.1
<b>Race</b>	<b>% of District</b>	<b>% of State</b>
African American	17.6	9.4
Asian	1.8	7.3
Hispanic	69	24.2
Native American	0.1	0.2
White	8.3	54.4
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	0.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	3.1	4.4

Culture refers to more than just one's race or ethnicity. It encompasses values, social norms, and lifestyle, and includes different communication styles, ways of dressing, and family structures.

Here are a few helpful tips for working with students from diverse cultures:

- Try to understand your student's culture from your student's perspective.
- Don't assign values to differences such as, better or worse, right or wrong.
- Ask questions instead of making assumptions.
- Keep your student's comfort level in mind when asking questions.
- Be careful not to over-identify with your student - Be yourself.

# VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME?

### Attendance

It is important for volunteers to arrive at their assignment when expected and to notify the school, student, or SSV as far in advance as possible if they will be late or unable to make it to an assignment for any reason.

### Appearance

Volunteers are expected to dress appropriately for their assigned duties and should present a positive, professional demeanor.

### Conduct

Volunteers are expected to follow rules of conduct that protect the safety and privacy of all staff, students, families, and other volunteers. Inappropriate conduct may lead to termination of the volunteer assignment and if necessary, further legal measures may be taken. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse of a child, volunteer, or school staff.
- Volunteering under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs and/or possession, distribution, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs on school grounds.
- Creating a disturbance on school grounds or at SSV-sponsored events that jeopardizes the safety of others.
- Threatening, intimidating, or harassing behavior of any kind.
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information.

### Exchanging of Information

In an effort to maintain appropriate boundaries, volunteers are discouraged from exchanging personal contact information and communicating with students, unless pre-approved by SSV or the program/assignment contact. This information includes but is not limited to cellphone number, email address, home address, or social media connections.

# VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

## **Use of Cell Phones and other Portable Communication Devices (PCDs)**

To reduce interruption or distraction while you are volunteering in a school, please keep PCDs off or on silent mode. If you must take a call, please excuse yourself and go to an appropriate location. Cell phones should not be used to capture unauthorized images or videos.

## **Weather**

Volunteers are encouraged to be safe. If school is delayed due to inclement weather but you are scheduled to volunteer after the delayed opening, use your best judgment and notify the school if you decide not to volunteer.

## **Testing**

Please follow the school's guidelines for visitors during standardized testing.

## **Breaks**

If you need to take a break during your scheduled volunteer time, ask a school staff member where you may go. Please note that all school grounds are smoke-free environments.

## **Emergency Procedures**

If there is an emergency while you are volunteering, the school's emergency plan and procedures should be followed. As a volunteer, you have the right to ask school personnel for their school's emergency policies and procedures.

## **Face Masks**

When face mask requirements are in place in the district, a face mask that covers a person's nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals in school buildings when school is in session, even when social distancing is observed. Individuals are prohibited from wearing face masks containing language or symbols that cause disruption or disorder within the school.

# SSV POLICIES

## CORI POLICY

Anyone who wishes to volunteer in a Springfield public school must agree to a CORI/SORI check by submitting a CORI/SORI Acknowledgment form along with proof of identity (copy of a valid, government-issued photo ID) to SSV. Applicants and schools indicated on the CORI form will be notified when the background check is complete.

Please note that SSV does not receive information from the background check, and a past criminal offense does not automatically disqualify an individual from volunteering. SPS's Office of Safety & Security determines volunteer eligibility and will contact an applicant directly if more information is needed.

SPS obtains all available criminal offender record information (CORI) from the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) and sex offender registry information (SORI) from the Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB) for the purpose of determining the suitability of individuals, including volunteers, who may have direct, unmonitored contact with children.

A background check is valid for three years, as long as an individual is actively volunteering for each of those school years. Applicants will be contacted when their background check needs to be renewed.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is the policy of SSV not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, covered veteran status, physical or mental disability, or other categories as defined by state and federal law. To the extent possible, SSV will work with schools to ensure that reasonable accommodations are made for qualified volunteers with known disabilities or circumstances that might require an accommodation.



# SSV POLICIES

## CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

In connection with your activities as a volunteer, SSV or SPS employees may disclose information (confidential information) to you regarding certain students or their parents/guardians. Except as may be permitted in writing by the Superintendent of the Springfield Public Schools (Superintendent), you shall use any such confidential information only in connection with your volunteer commitment and should never, directly or indirectly, use, publish, disseminate or otherwise disclose any confidential information unless compelled to do so by a court, oral questions at a deposition, subpoena, interrogatories, civil investigative demand or similar process, in which event you will reasonably attempt to notify the Superintendent of any attempt by a third party to legally compel such disclosure.

## ILLNESS/INJURY POLICY

SPS and SSV are committed to providing a safe environment for volunteers. We acknowledge that illness or injury may occur as a result of participation in volunteer activities or attendance at SSV or SPS-sponsored events. Volunteers should follow the policies put in place by the Springfield Public Schools in accordance with guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the MA Department of Public Health (DPH) regarding the use of face masks.

Please note that except as otherwise agreed to by SSV or SPS in writing, SSV or SPS do not carry or maintain health, medical, or disability insurance coverage for any volunteer. Each volunteer is expected to obtain his or her own medical or health insurance coverage.

# VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

## DIRECTIONS & PARKING

The addresses of all schools can be found on the SPS website. If you need specific directions, feel free to contact SSV and we can help you navigate!

Parking availability varies per school. If there is a parking lot, you are free to park there as long as there is not a sign indicating otherwise and as long as the spot is not reserved. In the event there is no lot, you may have to find on-street parking. If you need information about handicap parking, please call the school. Remember to not leave any valuables unattended in your vehicle. SSV and SPS are not liable for damage or theft.

## ARRIVING AT THE SCHOOL

All schools are locked for the safety of our students so you will have to be buzzed in to enter. There will be a call box near the door. Press the button and let them know why you are there. Once you are inside, report to the front office and someone will direct you to where you need to go. As you enter some schools, you may be required to check in with a security guard and pass through metal detectors.

## SUPERVISION

Massachusetts law prohibits volunteers from being left in charge of the class or a group of children alone. Volunteers must be within sight or sound of an employee of the school at all times. Please do not hesitate to contact SSV with any questions or concerns you may have about your assignment.

# THE VOLUNTEER IMPACT

## BE A MODEL

Remember, your impact can go far beyond test scores! By sharing your time and talents, you can help broaden students' horizons and expose them to different perspectives. Students who have interactions with volunteers often show improvements in attitude, attendance, motivation and self-esteem. You might even help a student develop an appreciation for the value of community service.

Not only will your volunteerism have an impact on students and community as a whole, but it also has many personal benefits. Research has shown that those who volunteer experience:

- Increased socialization
- Improved self-esteem and self-confidence
- An expanded network
- A decrease in stress, anger, anxiety, and depression



# SSV STAFF DIRECTORY

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# JOIN THE SSV COMMUNITY

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## SOCIAL MEDIA:

