



# Communities In Schools

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Tacoma

**VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

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# About Communities in Schools of Tacoma

## Our Mission

Communities in Schools (CIS) of Tacoma is an integral part of Communities In Schools, the nation's largest dropout prevention organization working in public schools to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

CIS of Tacoma serves pre-K, elementary, middle and high school aged students who are at risk of not completing their education. Currently the CIS of Tacoma program is staffed on six K-12 campuses in the Tacoma Public School District as well as 28 pre-K elementary school sites.

Our Site Coordinators work with at-risk students, families, and schools, to provide students with the resources they need to stay in school. CIS academic support includes providing tutoring or mentoring, physical and mental health care, basic needs like food and clothing, life skills, and college and career preparation—all offered right at the school.

Our *Core Beliefs*: All children need and deserve five basic life tools:

- ♥ A personal, one-on-one relationship with a caring adult
- ♥ A safe place to learn and grow
- ♥ A marketable skill to use upon graduation
- ♥ A chance to give back to peers and community
- ♥ A healthy start and a healthy future

***"Programs don't change kids—relationships do."***

***–Bill Milliken, Founder of Communities in Schools***

## Program Description

Communities In Schools of Tacoma is a non-profit, in-school program designed to assist students and their families in Tacoma Public School District. We do this by bringing professionals from the community into participating schools, and connecting available community services with students at their schools. Working closely with parents and school staff, CIS of Tacoma Site Coordinators are available at the school to address students' needs in an efficient and professional manner. Students are seen individually and in group settings, and are given opportunities to participate in special events and activities designed to enhance their educational experiences at school.

Participants are eligible for CIS of Tacoma services upon referral by appropriate school district personnel including teachers, counselors, principals, mental health staff or nurses. Other referral sources include self-referrals, parents, law enforcement agencies or social service organizations.

## Goals

The objective of CIS of Tacoma is to bring resources from the community into the schools, where the students are, to make these services more accessible to those who most need them. Our specific goals are to:

- Improve academic achievement and school attendance;
- Promote personal and social development;
- Help youth develop skills required to function in a positive, productive manner in today's society;
- Provide positive alternative activities for students; and
- Make students and family members aware of services available in the community.

# Basic Volunteer Information

## The Role of Volunteers at CIS of Tacoma

Volunteers are an integral part of the Communities In Schools of Tacoma program and help in a variety of ways at each school campus. Volunteers are recruited from the community, which includes parents, university students, local business leaders, and individuals from community service organizations. All volunteers complete a volunteer application and are processed through a screening program. All volunteer activities are supervised by CIS of Tacoma staff.

It is Communities In Schools of Tacoma's policy to utilize community volunteers in a variety of ways in order to enhance program activities and strengthen student support. Once an individual signs up to volunteer, CIS of Tacoma staff follows certain procedures to ensure prompt and efficient assignment. These procedures include processing applications, completing background checks, and placing individuals at specific site locations.

Volunteers contribute by tutoring, mentoring, providing career guidance, serving as committee members and participating in various special events or projects. Volunteers are recognized for their contribution to the CIS of Tacoma program.

CIS of Tacoma requests that all volunteers make a personal commitment to a prearranged schedule (e.g. 1 hour per week). All volunteers report to the CIS of Tacoma staff for assignments. It is expected that adequate notice will be given when volunteers are unable to fulfill their obligation as scheduled.

## General Volunteer Job Description

### **Objective**

To help motivate and guide students, challenge them to upgrade their academic performance and help them succeed and function more effectively both inside and outside of the school setting.

### **Duties**

*A volunteer provides support to a student by:*

- Committing to a regular schedule (and notifying CIS of Tacoma staff if an emergency arises),
- Helping individual students or small groups in a specific area or activity.
- Helping to motivate students to improve study skills, self-esteem, goal attainment and life skills.

### **Qualifications**

*A volunteer is expected to have:*

- The ability and desire to work with and motivate young people,
- Effective communication skills,
- Dependability and patience.

### **Benefits**

The major benefit of becoming a CIS tutor is the satisfaction of having a positive impact on students by providing skills, encouragement and motivation for academic and social skills improvement.

### **Training**

Orientation is provided for new volunteers; ongoing training is available and recommended for continuing with CIS of Tacoma. Site Coordinators have information about available training.

## Applications and Background Check

Volunteer applicants complete a CIS of Tacoma Volunteer Application form, which requires both personal and professional references. The application is then submitted to the Administration office where references will be called and documented. Upon completion of the application procedure, CIS of Tacoma staff will provide a meet & greet and building tour before placing volunteers in a specific program. The application procedure is complete upon receipt of all volunteer forms and background checks.

**Our CIS of Tacoma Volunteer Application includes an authorization to complete a background check performed by the Washington State Patrol, Criminal Records Division and any other agencies required as needed to ensure the background check is fully completed. This is in accordance with Tacoma Public School policy and Washington State Law regarding access to children or vulnerable persons.**

*For more information Washington State law requiring a background check for school-based volunteers, visit <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=43.43.830>*

## School Procedures and Policies for Volunteers

Because CIS of Tacoma employees and volunteers work on the school campus, many factors such as appropriate dress and behavior are dictated by Tacoma Public Schools and CIS of Tacoma.

### General Procedures

*CIS of Tacoma volunteers must:*

- Always sign-in at the front office and wear a name badge or sticker (if required by the site).
- Meet with student(s) in the designated area, not ever taking student(s) off-campus, or to a non-designated area.
- Refrain from discussing the performance or actions of a student except with the CIS of Tacoma staff or appropriate school personnel.
- Maintain consistent and regular attendance. If volunteers are unable to attend, we request that they please call the CIS of Tacoma staff member as soon as possible, or leave a message at the school's front office.
- CIS of Tacoma staff member will contact volunteers if their student is absent from school on the day they are to volunteer.
- Follow all campus policies and procedures.
- Dress appropriately.
- Follow the rules about no smoking or vaping on school property.
- CIS of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Schools are committed to keeping schools drug-free. As such, volunteers are not permitted to report under the influence of alcohol, illegal and/or controlled substances, including marijuana (cannabis). Using, possessing, or transmitting any of these substances on school property or at a CIS of Tacoma function will result in termination of the volunteer's services.
- Follow the sign out procedures at the designated campus.
- For a complete listing of Tacoma Schools policies for volunteers, visit <https://www.tacomaschools.org/board/Pages/policies.aspx>

## Physical Setting

Volunteers are asked to consider the physical setting when working with students and always stay in open areas where both they and the students are highly visible. Being in plain view is for the protection of the volunteers as well as the students'. Volunteers should use the adult bathrooms designated for staff.

Volunteers may only work with students at the school site, with the exception of participating in authorized CIS of Tacoma business with a school district employee in attendance, while always adhering to the policies of the Tacoma School District. Volunteers shall not transport students; if a student is in need of transportation, the volunteer shall notify CIS of Tacoma staff.

## School Emergency Procedures

There are several key procedures that Tacoma schools follow in an emergency to protect students and staff. Schools perform various safety drills throughout the year, and emergency procedures are practiced on a monthly basis at a minimum. Volunteers are required to follow any school-administered safety protocols that may occur during their volunteering time.

During emergency events school staff will make every effort to provide information to parents and guardians of our students.

### **The primary emergency procedures used are:**

- **Lockdown** is used to minimize student/staff exposure to a potential threat. For example, this procedure may be used when police warn the school of a fugitive in the neighborhood. All exterior doors and windows will be locked. The students may be kept safe in individual classrooms during the event. If the threat is considered external and not directed at the school, the school may call a modified lockdown where normal instructional activities continue as much as possible. In either case, entry and exit to the school will be restricted.
- **Evacuation** is used when leaving the building is the safest alternative. For example, the school may order an evacuation in the case of a fire or earthquake. During evacuations a designated point is used for assembly. Attendance is taken to assure all staff and students are safely out of the building.
- **Shelter-in-Place** is used when there is an environmental threat where the outside air is considered at risk. Some examples include highway tank truck accidents, neighborhood fires and volcanic eruptions. All windows and exterior doors are locked. The ventilation systems are shut down and students remain inside the building.

## Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Washington State law mandates that school personnel, including Communities in Schools of Tacoma employees and volunteers, who have reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered from abuse or neglect, including physical injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or negligent treatment or maltreatment, shall report such abuse or misconduct to his or her appropriate school administrator such as the CIS of Tacoma Site Coordinator or Executive Director, School Counselor, Nurse, Principal, or Assistant Principal. The report shall be made at the first opportunity but no later than twenty-four hours after there is reasonable cause to believe a child has suffered abuse or neglect.

If a student discloses any of the following to you, you **must** report it to either the CIS of Tacoma Site Coordinator, Executive Director, School Counselor, Nurse, Principal, or Assistant Principal:

- 1. Any suspicion/intention of harming himself/herself or another person.**
- 2. Any suspicion/information regarding child abuse, including sexual abuse or neglect.**

3. **Any suspicion/intention of running away.**
4. **Any suspicion/disclosure of illegal activity (such as drug use or vandalism)**

For more information on Washington State mandatory reporting law visit the Washington State Legislature page here: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=26.44.030>

## Responding to Disclosure of Abuse

It is important to know that if a student discloses any of the above to a volunteer, it is the job of the School Counselor, **not the CIS of Tacoma volunteer**, to assess the risk and contact the student's parent, guardian, or the appropriate authorities. However, if such a disclosure does occur, we recommend using the following guidelines for how to respond to the situation:

- If a disclosure occurs during a lesson, acknowledge it, e.g., "That sounds like something you need to talk about."
- **Do not promise not to tell.**
- Do not panic or express shock.
- Talk privately with the student, not in front of other students.
- Reassure the student that it is good to tell, you are sorry it happened, and you know it is hard.
- Use the student's vocabulary.
- Tell the student you believe him or her.
- Reassure the child that it is not his or her fault, that he or she is not bad, no matter what.
- Recognize your own feelings about abuse --- the pain, fear, anger and powerlessness. If you do not, you might project them onto the student and harm the relationship.
- Do not be overly critical of the offender (e.g. "Your uncle should be shot!"). The student may care for that person, regardless of what happened. Simply tell the student that the perpetrator needs help, because what they did was wrong.
- Let the student know what you will do.
- Tell the student that CIS of Tacoma will do their best to protect and support him or her.
- Immediately report the situation to the CIS Site Coordinator, Executive Director, School Counselor, Nurse, Principal, or Assistant Principal on campus.
- Do not ask for specifics and do not ask probing questions. Probing questions can cause anxiety and guilt for a student who seeks support and trust.
- **Remember, your role is not to investigate the situation. It is your responsibility to report the abuse, set in motion the process of getting help for the student, and be supportive of the student.**

## Transportation of Students

Most of our activities involving volunteer participation (such as after-school tutoring and enrichment programs) do not require transportation of students. If an event or activity does require transportation and transportation is not provided by the school district, it is the responsibility of the student's guardian to provide or secure transportation for them. Volunteers with CIS of Tacoma shall not transport students under any circumstances.

# Guidelines for Interaction with Our Students

Volunteering with Communities In Schools of Tacoma and working with the students we serve is a rewarding venture! In order for this to be the most fulfilling and successful experience possible, we have gathered some tips and guidelines for interacting with our students.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important aspect of any youth serving program. Do not take any student pictures with phones or other cameras unless specifically requested by the Site Coordinator using CIS of Tacoma cameras or staff phones. When talking to others about the program, keep comments about the students on a general level; do not mention names or specific characteristics and respect the students' privacy. With the exception of the mandatory reporting guidelines in the previous section, volunteers should maintain student confidentiality at all times.

## Physical Contact

Awareness of the messages physical contact can send and the impact of physical contact are important. Appropriate contact might include a hand on the shoulder or a side-to-side hug. Children may want to hug you or sit on your lap—find alternate ways of affirming your friendship. This protects you from misunderstandings and also helps to teach the student appropriate physical boundaries with adults. You should take the lead in modeling a positive example for appropriate contact. If you have any questions regarding appropriate behavior, or have been asked to go beyond these guidelines, contact the Site Coordinator.

## Social Media Policy

In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, CIS volunteers shall not communicate or interact with Tacoma Public School students on personal social media sites. Social media is defined as any form of online platform including (but not limited to) social networks, blogs, websites, forums, or mobile apps; examples include (but are not limited to) Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, or Pinterest. CIS of Tacoma volunteers shall not invite nor accept any "friend requests", requests to "follow" a student, or communication received from Tacoma Public School students via social media.

CIS of Tacoma volunteers are never permitted to photograph students using their personal cameras or phones, and shall never share any student information (including photographs, student names, or student personal information) on their own personal social media sites.

## Non-Discrimination

Volunteers will not exclude from participation in or deny benefits to or discriminate in any other way against any staff person, recipient of services, partners or other volunteers of Communities in Schools of Tacoma in any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, disability, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law.

## Characteristics of At-Risk Students

The student population that CIS works with is "at-risk" students—students who are "at-risk" are more likely to fail at school or drop out, and often require temporary or ongoing intervention in order to succeed academically. It is important to be aware of and sensitive to the barriers that CIS students are facing.

The list below illustrates some examples of characteristics or circumstances that might result in a student being at-risk. Many of the students that CIS of Tacoma serves struggle with more than one of these circumstances:

- Siblings or parents have low education levels and/or have dropped out of school, the family has no tradition of success in school, or fails to see school as a priority;
- Fails to see the relevance or connection between education and later life experiences or successes;
- Family tends to be near or at poverty level or below because parents can only work at minimum wage-paying jobs, need to work long hours or two jobs to make ends meet;
- Evidence of poor communication, if any, between the home and school;
- Home language is not English;
- Resides in a single-parent home;
- Moves frequently and often changes schools;
- Exhibits disruptive behavior and rebellious attitudes/poor social adjustment;
- Often are loners/not accepted by their peers;
- Frequently tardy and/or absent;
- Is behind in school work;
- Is below grade level with low grade point averages and/or achievement scores;
- Failed to learn to read or is currently below grade level on reading skills;
- Inability to tolerate structured activities;
- Limited extracurricular participation;
- Has experimented with drugs and alcohol
- Has become sexually active and possibly dealing with teenage parenthood.

**Goals for working with at-risk students:**

- To build self-esteem and help students develop a positive self-image
- To help students see that learning can be a positive experience
- To provide reinforcement for learning that occurs in the classroom
- To share interests, skills and know-how with student(s)
- To be a role model and set an example for your student

**DO...**

- Be interested in your student.
- Express concern. *Try to understand how your student feels.*
- Provide positive reinforcement. *It does not take much failure to discourage at-risk students. Take time to reinforce even the smallest effort. Congratulate and encourage in every possible way; by the expression on your face, by sharing your time and by showing personal interest in what your student does. When you praise your students and give small rewards, you are reinforcing success. End each session with a positive comment.*
- Be patient. *Progress may seem slow at first. Remember these students were referred to CIS of Tacoma because they need help. Once a relationship with a student is established, you will see results.*
- Be a positive role model.
- Ask for help from CIS of Tacoma staff.
- Keep your volunteer commitment.
- Keep CIS of Tacoma staff informed of your concerns.

**DON'T...**

- Do not miss a volunteer session with your student if possible.
- Do not patronize or talk down to your student. He/she deserves to be treated according to his/her maturity. Never embarrass a student.

- Do not allow your student to be discourteous to you or to others.
- Do not criticize a teacher in front of a student or a student in front of a teacher.
- Do not try to assert authority or force with your student, but be firm in expectations.
- Do not keep your student overtime.

### **TIPS...**

- Meet with your student in a friendly, relaxed manner. You are not an authority figure. You are a friend with skills, interests and time who wants to share with a friend.
- The volunteer's attitude is the most important factor. Take time to listen and learn as well as to talk and teach. Set an example for your student by being courteous and respectful. Let him/her know you expect them to be courteous and respectful. Keep your sense of humor, it reduces tension. Be yourself!
- Get to know and like your student.
- Share your interests and wishes with your student. Many young people do not get to know adults. Let your student know you are human too. Do not be afraid to make mistakes.
- Try not to be absent or late for volunteer sessions with students.
- Listen carefully. Pay close attention. Always give your student a chance to communicate. Allow your student to do as much thinking as possible. Remember, the most important goal is to build self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Be prepared. Materials will be available to help in the CIS of Tacoma office, or you may bring your own. It is a good idea to have a "work plan" in mind for each session. (For example: discussion with student – 10 minutes, homework review – 15 minutes, wrap up – 5 minutes).

### Gifts

You are to encourage and support the students in the program but not take on their problems or try to meet all their needs. Your greatest gift is your time. Bringing food or other gifts is discouraged as this could quickly become an expectation.

### Personal Questions

Never give a student your phone number, email address or home address. Personal questions about you need not to be answered. It is acceptable to tell students that your views, such as religious or political beliefs, are personal and you would prefer not to answer. Remember a student's family may have completely different values and opinions from your own.

### **101 WAYS TO PRAISE A STUDENT**

**•Wow • Way to Go • Super • You're Special • Outstanding •Excellent • Great • Good • Neat • Well Done • Remarkable • I Knew You Could Do It • I'm Proud of You • Fantastic • Super-star • Nice Work • Looking Good • You're On Top Of It • Beautiful • Now You're Flying • You're Catching On • Now You've Got It • You're Incredible • Bravo • You're Fantastic • Hurray For You • You're On Target • You're On Your Way • How Nice • How Smart • Good Job • That's Incredible • Amazing • Dynamite • You're Beautiful •You're Unique • Nothing Can Stop You Now • Good For You • I Like You • You're Super • You're A Winner • Remarkable Job • Beautiful Work • Spectacular • You're Spectacular • You're Precious • Great Discovery • You've Discovered The Secret • You Figured It Out • Fantastic Job • Hip, Hip Hurray • Bingo • Magnificent • Marvelous • Terrific • You're Important • Phenomenal • You're Sensational • Super Work • Creative Job • Super Job • Fantastic Job • Exceptional Performance • You're A Real Trooper • You Are Responsible • You Are Exciting • You Learned It Right • What An Imagination • What A Good Listener • You Are Fun • You're Growing Up • You Tried Hard • You Care • Beautiful Sharing • Outstanding Performance • You're A Good Friend • I Trust You • You're Important • You Mean A Lot To Me • You Make Me Happy • You Belong • You've Got A Friend • You Make Me Laugh • You Brighten My Day • I Respect You • You Mean The World To Me • That's Correct • You're A Joy • You're A Treasure • You're Wonderful • You're Perfect • Awesome • A+ Job • You're A-OK-My Buddy • You Made My Day • That's The Best • A High Five • Remember A Smile Is Worth 1000 Words!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

#### **Remember...**

***You may be the one person in your student's life who will be able to change "at-risk" to "understanding".***

We hope you find your volunteer experience very rewarding and decide to volunteer with us for years to come! We are here to be a support to you and answer any questions or concerns you have.

If you have any questions or concerns either contact your school's Site Coordinator, or the CIS of Tacoma office at 253-571-4983.

Thank you for making a difference in the life of a child!



# VOLUNTEER STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING & CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I hereby acknowledge and declare that:

- I have received a copy of the Communities in Schools of Tacoma Volunteer Handbook. It is my responsibility to familiarize myself with these policies.
- I have read and understand the following sections:
  - School Emergency Procedures
  - Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect
  - Transportation of Students
  - Guidelines for Interaction With Our Students
- I agree to conduct my activities in accordance with Communities in Schools of Tacoma policies and understand that breaching these standards may result in dismissal from/discontinuation of participation in all Communities In Schools of Tacoma events, activities, and programs.

Additionally, I understand and accept the following conditions and responsibilities of volunteering with Communities in Schools of Tacoma:

In the performance of my duties, I may gain access to or encounter sensitive or confidential information and records that may be protected from disclosure by federal or state law. Examples include education records protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) records that are protected from disclosure under Federal and State law. I understand that unauthorized disclosure of such Protected Information can adversely impact the Communities in Schools of Tacoma, Tacoma School District, individual persons, or affiliated organizations.

I shall treat ALL information accessible to me in the performance of my duties as Protected Information, regardless of its format (e.g., electronic, paper, oral), unless and until advised otherwise.

I shall use Protected Information for the sole purpose of performing my volunteer duties and I shall not disclose Protected Information to ANYONE without prior authorization. I shall not permit myself or any other person to copy or reproduce Protected Information other than what is required in the regular performance of my volunteer duties. I shall immediately report to my Communities In Schools of Tacoma staff any unauthorized use, duplication, or disclosure of Protected Information by myself or others.

I received a volunteer orientation on \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Staff Name

Volunteer Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_