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Volunteer Policies and Procedures Handbook

2024-2025

MISSION STATEMENT: We seek to empower 2nd-8th graders to reach their full academic potential through free, individualized tutoring.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear HOPE Tutor,

We deeply appreciate your time and commitment to strengthening the academic foundation of a 2nd-8th grader in Arlington. As you may know, the pandemic created an increased need for tutoring. This is especially critical in the community we serve where low-income families were most negatively impacted by the disruptions caused by COVID-19. Even before the pandemic, most children in Central and East Arlington were considered at high risk of dropping out of school before graduating. A strong academic foundation in their early years can set students on a path toward high school graduation and future success in life. Your tutoring will help build that foundation.

At HOPE, we know one-on-one tutoring is not just about helping students with their schoolwork. It's an opportunity to be a mentor and build up a young person's confidence. It's a chance to model core values, such as integrity and perseverance, and to remind them how education can change their lives. It's also a time for volunteers and students to laugh, grow, and create lasting memories together.

HOPE Tutoring is here to support you so that you may enjoy a rewarding volunteer experience. Please reach out to any of our staff if you ever need assistance. Once again, thank you for your time and dedication to impacting the trajectory of a student's life!

Sincerely,



Kathy Mitchell
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HOPE Tutoring
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Introduction

Welcome to HOPE Tutoring Center! We appreciate and value your contribution of time, energy and enthusiasm to help fulfill our mission statement. HOPE Tutoring has established the following guidelines and policies for all volunteers. These policies are designed to ensure the safety and well-being of students, tutors, and staff. The content and materials may be modified at any time in order to provide you with the most updated information available.

Please read carefully through the code of conduct to understand our expectations of volunteers

Pay special attention to Child Abuse Prevention rules on page 7:

- a. Appropriate physical/verbal interactions
- b. Not having contact with youth outside of HOPE Tutoring
- c. Holding other adults/volunteer accountable to these rules
- d. Reporting concerns, rule violations and suspect abuse

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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Equal Opportunity and Accommodations

HOPE Tutoring Center offers equal consideration of a volunteer applicant's preferences to available volunteer opportunities. Further, we believe that every staff member and volunteer has the right to work in an environment free from harassment and discrimination, and we will not tolerate harassment or discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual preference or orientation, disability, age, marital status, or status with regard to public assistance.

Should a volunteer need to request an accommodation due to a disability, the volunteer should reach out to the Executive Director to make the request. Reasonable accommodations will be offered to volunteers with qualifying disabilities.

Background Checks

Because tutors work one-on-one with children, HOPE Tutoring is required to conduct a criminal background check before a tutor's service can begin. Gaining eligibility to volunteer is dependent upon first passing a background screening. Any waivers or releases that may be necessary to obtain access to relevant information must be provided. Since we partner with Arlington Independent School District, we also require our volunteers to complete the AISD background check process. HOPE Tutoring reserves the right to withdraw any conditional offers to serve as a volunteer based on information contained in a consumer report.

If you decide to withdraw as a tutor before at least two sessions, we ask that you donate \$10.00 to HOPE Tutoring to help cover your background check processing fee.

Age Requirement

HOPE wishes to engage and inspire volunteerism for everyone interested in helping 3rd-8th grade students to succeed academically. For safety purposes, our minimum age for volunteers is 16 years of age. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have 1) signed permission from a parent or legal guardian prior to placement as a volunteer tutor, 2) a letter of recommendation from a teacher, principal or school counselor, and 3) be in good academic standing at the time of service.

Confidentiality

We value and respect the confidentiality of our staff, students, parents and volunteers. We will not disclose, sell or distribute any of your information. As a tutor, you will have access to confidential information about student academic performance and/or personal or sensitive information (such as name, grade, school, and medical issues). This information must not be shared with anyone other than a HOPE staff member for any reason. Any data on student academic performance are to be used and disclosed solely for instructional purposes, unless legally required.

Subject to legal requirements, you agree not to access, use, or share information from HOPE Tutoring for any other reasons. Volunteers who disclose any confidential information regarding students, parents, co-volunteers or employees of HOPE are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

HOPE Tutoring staff are not allowed to release personal information about students or their parents, such as home address, phone number, or email address. Volunteers are not to ask students for such information, or share their own. In addition, anything students may tell you about themselves or their home lives should be treated as confidential unless it falls under the safety concerns described in the paragraph below.

Safety

Abuse Reporting

HOPE Tutoring will do everything in our power to prevent physical, emotional, or sexual abuse against children, youth, adults and other vulnerable populations, including people with developmental disabilities who are involved with our operations or with any program/event sponsored by HOPE Tutoring.

As a tutor, you may receive information or have concerns for a student's well-being. If you suspect that a child is being physically, emotionally, or verbally abused or neglected, notify a HOPE Tutoring staff as soon as you can. All staff are bound by law to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect. Some signs to watch out for are crying or sleeping during a tutoring session, physical discomfort, tardy or truant behavior, self-deprecating talk, concern about making family contact, and self-medication through substance use.

In the event that a child reports abuse to you, follow these steps:

- Stay calm
- Don't overreact
- Listen and believe what the child is telling you
- Ask a few open-ended questions:
 - Tell me more about that...
 - Who did that?
 - Where were you when that happened?
 - How old were you when that happened?
- Don't investigate but do get the basic information so you can report it.

Some things you can say if abuse is reported:

- Sexual abuse is often embarrassing and hard to talk about. It is very unlikely that a child will make up a sexual abuse experience. Let the child know that you believe him or her. You can say, *"I believe what you are telling me."*
- Acknowledge the importance of talking about the abuse and getting help. Let the child know you are very glad they told you about the abuse. You can say, *"I'm glad you told me about this."*
- Tricks and manipulations are often part of the victimization process. Reinforce to the child that the abuse is not their fault, and that they are not to blame, regardless of the circumstances. You can say, *"This was not your fault."*
- A victim of sexual abuse often feels helpless and powerless. By affirming, supporting and educating him or her about available resources, as well as giving the NO, GO, TELL, rules if the abuse should happen again, the child is empowered with some control over his or her life. You can say, *"There are some things we can do to help you."*

- In Texas, all suspected cases of child abuse or neglect must be reported to Child Protective Services and/or the local police department. You can say, *"I'm going to talk to some people who can help."*

Basic safety rules

All volunteers are expected to report any safety concerns that they might encounter. Likewise, all volunteers should report any injuries incurred during tutoring sessions. Safety concerns and injuries should be reported to your Site Manager or the Executive Director.

HOPE Tutoring follows CDC's recommendations and will keep you updated in the event that facemasks are ever recommended again. It is rare that anyone requests facemasks to be worn, but please note that if a tutor or a child's parents feel strongly that they want the other party to wear a facemask during tutoring, we will ask that both parties comply with that request since various medical conditions can result in doctors' recommendations to wear facemasks when in close contact with others.

Complaints and Concerns

All volunteers have a duty and right to report any business practices contrary to the policies of HOPE Tutoring. No volunteer acting in good faith will be retaliated against for reporting such concerns. Concerns should be reported to the Executive Director or the President of the Board of Directors. The Executive Director or President of the Board of Directors will conduct an investigation and take appropriate action.

Any and all instances of perceived harassment (whether physical, sexual, psychological, or otherwise) should be reported immediately to the Executive Director or the President of the Board of Directors. Any HOPE employee, volunteer, or student accused of harassment will be suspended from HOPE activities until such time that an investigation is completed. Any harassment on the part of any employee, volunteer, or student can be grounds for immediate dismissal.

Any terminated or disassociated employee, volunteer, or student is entitled to provide HOPE with a written statement to express concerns regarding the decision to terminate their ties with HOPE. Additionally, if an accused person or a person making a harassment complaint wishes to protest any decision made regarding the complaint, they can present their concerns in writing to the Board of Directors. Depending on the severity of the matter, either the Executive Committee or the entire Board of Directors will review the concerns and make a final ruling on the matter.

Attendance

Dependable tutor attendance is critical to the success of the HOPE Tutoring program and, most importantly, *to the success of the students we serve*. If an emergency arises causing you to miss your session, notify your Site Manager as soon as possible.

In order for students to receive maximum benefit from the tutoring session, we request that you arrive/log on for your scheduled tutoring session on time. Excessive late arrivals of more than 10 minutes after the session presents challenges in providing a secure and focused environment for the

student. While we appreciate your desire to tutor, repeated absences and/or late arrivals may result in dismissal from the tutoring role.

Note: Tutoring sessions are not held on days when Arlington ISD is not in session for any reason.

If you need to discontinue your service with HOPE Tutoring, we ask that you give the Site Manager at least two weeks' notice so that a replacement tutor can be found for your student.

Attire

Volunteers are expected to dress appropriately for your role (i.e., avoid “dressing to distract”). In general, if you are unsure about wearing something, **don't wear it**. Volunteers who wear clothing that promotes sex, drugs, bad language, or violence, will be asked to change or cover up the article of clothing in question.

Cell Phone Usage

During the session you are asked to refrain from using your cell phone. Please turn off your phone or turn it to silent or vibrate. The use of a cell phone to take pictures or video of a student is strictly prohibited.

Audio/Video Recording

All online tutoring sessions are subject to monitoring and recording for safety and training purposes.

Change in Personal Information

Site Managers will communicate with volunteers regularly regarding important notifications, closures, student absences, etc. Please notify HOPE of any change of name, address, phone number or emergency contact information.

Fire and Evacuation Plan

In case of fire or a weather emergency, it is the responsibility of the Site Manager to ensure that volunteers and students are alerted and moved to a secure area. Please remain calm, follow the lead of the Site Manager, and assist students as directed.

Code of Conduct

The following situations/behaviors/acts are grounds for immediate volunteer dismissal:

- Bringing a weapon, knife/gun or anything construed to be a threat to any tutoring site or event sponsored by HOPE.
- Arriving/logging into to your volunteer assignment intoxicated or perceived to have been engaging in any drug or alcohol use prior to your scheduled assignment.
- The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession or use of any controlled substance in the tutoring environment.
- Use of cigarettes by a minor or the sale or distribution of cigarettes by an adult to a minor.
- Discriminatory actions
- Verbal abuse or name-calling towards anyone.

- Any intentional physical harm caused by you towards anyone.
- Any form of sexual harassment.
- Any theft or removal of HOPE property without permission.
- Any intentional damage or destruction of HOPE property.
- Safety violations or failure to report safety concerns

Gifts

In order to ensure equity among all of our students, we ask that you not bring individual gifts. There will be opportunities during the semester to contribute to organization-wide gifting events for students, and/or to include a personalized note to your student. Further, no volunteer may accept payment of any kind (including substantial gifts or cash, discounts, concessions, services or other similar item or benefits) for services rendered as part of his or her volunteer service with HOPE Tutoring.

HOPE Tutoring Child Abuse Prevention Code of Conduct

- I will not abuse children in any manner, this includes physical (such as striking, spanking, shaking, or slapping), verbal (such as humiliating, degrading, threatening), sexual (such as inappropriate touch or verbal exchange), mental (such as shaming or cruelty), or neglect (such as withholding food, water, basic care).
- I will adhere to HOPE Tutoring policies and best practices regarding appropriate physical, verbal, and electronic interactions with and about students:
 - **Appropriate interactions:** Side hugs, pats on the back, handshakes, high-fives, praise, encouragement, and hand holding when escorting very young children.
 - **Inappropriate interactions:** Tickling, wrestling, lap-sitting, rubbing, or massaging, piggy back rides, full body contact hugs. Giving individual gifts, isolated affection, or telling secrets. Discussing personal information or complimenting a child's physique or body development.
- I will not solicit contact with students outside of HOPE Tutoring sanctioned program times; this includes but is not limited to mentoring the child outside of the program, unsanctioned tutoring sessions, babysitting, offering rides, etc. Nor will I communicate with students electronically or telephonically.
- Incidental contact with HOPE students due to neighborhood relationships, carpools, or child friendships, etc. are part of any community, however volunteers should ensure their own child and/or the child's parent, or guardian is present in these circumstances.
- I will not possess, obtain, view, download, distribute, etc. any sexually oriented, offensive/objectionable, or inappropriate materials while on duty or during HOPE activities.
- I will use reasonable judgment to avoid being in a one-on-one situation with a child where they cannot be observed by others. If an emergency requires or I find myself in a one-on-one situation with a child I will take immediate action to protect myself and the child including, but not limited to, the following steps:
 - i. I will attempt to eliminate being one-on-one by moving into the view of others, asking a person to stay with me, or calling a staff person to be on the phone with me until another person is present.
 - ii. I will avoid physical touch unless it is an emergency or necessary to protect the child from harm.
 - iii. I will avoid conversations regarding personal matters with the child.
 - iv. I will document and immediately report the details of the situation to my Site Manager and will note any unusual incidents, disclosures, etc.
- If working with children, volunteers should never leave a child involved with their program unsupervised.
- HOPE Tutoring reserves the right to investigate any situation or behavior that is concerning in any manner or inconsistent with HOPE Tutoring Child Abuse Prevention rules.
- I will be alert to any signs of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, or neglect. I will report to HOPE Tutoring any signs I detect.
- I will monitor the actions of other staff, volunteers and adults and will bring any behavior that is concerning in any manner or inconsistent with HOPE Tutoring Child Abuse Prevention standards to the attention of someone in authority at HOPE Tutoring.
- I will fully and unconditionally cooperate with all internal and third-party investigations.
- I understand HOPE Tutoring will pursue the prosecution of child abuse to the full extent of Texas state laws. Any person accused or reported will be placed on temporary suspension pending the outcome of the investigation.

Volunteer Intake Form

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Emergency Contact Name and Phone Number:

Age Bracket

- Under 18 (if under 18, Section 2 below must be completed)
- 18-25
- 26-45
- 46-64
- 65-84
- Over 85

PHOTO AUTHORIZATION

We would like to take pictures of our tutors and students to publish in print, TV, or the Internet so that others may see the success of our programs. Should you agree to this, HOPE may alter or edit photos at its sole discretion. You understand that you are not entitled to any compensation, that you release HOPE Tutoring and any of its representatives from any liability for any violation of any personal property rights which you might have in connection with such materials, and you waive any right to approve accompanying written or narrative material. Please indicate your permission selection below.

I DO give permission to HOPE Tutoring to take and publish photos of me (or my child if my child is tutoring).

I DO NOT give permission to HOPE Tutoring to take and publish photos of me (or my child if my child is tutoring).

Volunteer Signature

Date

Staff Signature

Date

