



## **BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF GREATER WATERBURY**

### **VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES**

On behalf of the staff of Boys & Girls Club of Greater Waterbury (“Club”), welcome and thank you for your interest in volunteering with our organization. Your volunteer service is highly valued. The experience, skills, and enthusiasm that you bring will add a refreshing dimension to this organization. Though the work will be challenging at times, rest assured that your efforts will bring enrichment to the lives of our members and empower them to become positive role models and leaders in their communities. The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Waterbury (“Club”) has been providing safe, after school programs for greater Waterbury’s children and teens since 1888. The Club, affiliated with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, offers after-school programs and summer day camp.

Through outcome focused programs that include athletic and recreational activities; academic and enrichment programs, including tutoring and mentoring; and other preventative services, the Club provides positive reinforcement and guidance to stem the problems facing today’s youth. We are dedicated to our mission: By providing a wide range of educational and recreational opportunities, a safe environment, and supportive relationships, the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Waterbury helps young people who need it most discover their interests, have a positive outlook for their future, and be confident, successful stewards of their communities.

The Boys & Girls Club believes that there are five key elements to positive youth development: a safe, positive environment; fun; supportive relationships; opportunities and expectations; and recognition. Our programs are designed to incorporate those elements into everything we do – the outcomes being that Club members have higher academic achievement; are more likely to abstain from high-risk behaviors; are more likely to serve their community; and are more likely to engage in regular physical activity. (National Youth Outcomes Initiative, 2014 Outcomes Report, BGCA)

We value volunteer service. The experience, skills, and enthusiasm that volunteers bring add a refreshing dimension to this organization. Though the work will be challenging at times, rest assured that your efforts will bring enrichment to the lives of our members and empower them to become positive role models and leaders in their communities. In turn, we hope our volunteer program can offer you the same life-altering experiences. We are confident that, for whatever reason you chose to volunteer, you will find fulfillment through your work here.

The purpose of this manual is to outline our expectations for volunteers and to provide you with some basic youth development information so that you can begin your volunteer commitment feeling confident and prepared. Should you have any questions, please ask.

## **Volunteers may assist in the following program areas:**

All volunteer assignments will be determined by the Director of Operations.

**Learning Center:** The Learning Center provides youth with opportunities to explore education and discover their own learning styles through a wide variety of programs. Volunteers offer homework help and educational enrichment.

**Technology Center:** The Technology Center introduces youth to the many different skills needed to become proficient with different computer systems and programs while increasing their comfort level in the process. Volunteers assist in running the technology programs.

**Game Room:** The Game Room is a place for members to gather, meet friends and learn to work together. Volunteers may assist in organizing and running tournaments.

**Arts:** In the art room, members are encouraged to develop skills in both fine arts and arts and crafts, through activities and exercises in drawing, painting and much more. Volunteers will assist as members work on individual and group projects. Volunteers are encouraged to offer assistance in the development and implementation of these projects – creativity is a plus.

**Athletics:** The gym offers opportunities for youth to learn the concept of responsibility, teamwork, and leadership, as well as to develop and maintain good health and physical fitness through a variety of activities. Volunteers assist in the planning and implementation of leagues and activities.

## **A few other things:**

### **Volunteer Application**

All people interested in volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club must complete an application in person. We reserved the right to decline any volunteer application for any reason. The completion of a Volunteer Application or these Guidelines and any other policy, procedure, practice or form, including serving as a volunteer, shall create or be construed as an expressed or implied contract of employment or as a guarantee of any fixed term(s) or condition(s) of employment.

### **Background Checks**

In order to ensure the safety and well-being of our members, all volunteers who will work with members, regardless of age, must submit to a criminal background check. We assume the cost of the procedure. Individuals with any record of youth-related and/or sexual offenses are not permitted to volunteer. Volunteers whose records indicate other types of criminal offenses will have their cases reviewed by the executive director and director of operations who, together, will determine whether or not it is appropriate for the person in question to volunteer.

### **Record Keeping**

You will be required to sign in and out every time that you volunteer and to provide to the Director of Operations any documentation required by your school or program. You are responsible for any documents/recording required by school.

### **Volunteer Commitment**

A successful volunteer experience depends, in part, upon you setting realistic expectations of how much time you can give. Consistency in honoring your commitment is very important. If, for example, you commit to volunteering every Tuesday, we expect you to come every Tuesday barring an unforeseen circumstance.

Because relationship building is a core component, we ask that long-term, non-project-based volunteers try to commit to at least three months of service. You have the right to terminate your volunteer commitment at any time --without any reason. We reserve the same right.

### **Hours**

Hours for after-school volunteers are Monday – Friday, from 3 – 6pm, during the school year. We follow the City of Waterbury Department of Education calendar. Generally, we are open when school is open and closed when they are closed.

Hours for the summer camp will be determined by the Camp Director. Camp runs Monday – Friday.

### **Age**

Volunteers for the after-school and summer day camp must be at least 18 years of age, unless part of a school or other organizational program or part of a government sponsored youth employment program. Exceptions may be made during summer day camp for current members who are 15 – 17 years old (as on June 1<sup>st</sup>). Said exception shall be made at the discretion of the Director of Operations.

### **Club Closings and Changes in Hours of Operations**

Please make yourself aware of flyers or posted announcements on Facebook and local news channels regarding any events that might excuse you from your commitment on a given day. We will make our best efforts to notify or remind volunteers of any impending dates of Club closures or changes in operating hours. But your attention to this detail will ensure that you do not arrive to find the doors locked!

The Club is closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. We are also closed during school holidays; however, we may, from time to time, open during extended school vacations. We follow the City of Waterbury Department of Education's schedule, including inclement weather closings; we are closed when they are closed.

The Club closes approximately one week prior to the beginning of the school year (late August) and one week following the end of the school year (mid – late June), in order to prepare for changes in the Clubs' programming and activities. The Club may also close or alter its operating hours at other times for staff in-services, field trips and other occasions.

### **Discrimination and Harassment**

The Club is committed to diversity. We do not discriminate in volunteer opportunities on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, national origin or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. Harassment by or directed toward volunteers, staff or members will not be tolerated. Use of slurs, epithets, threats, derogatory comments or visual depictions, unwelcome jokes and/or teasing should immediately be reported to the Director of Operations.

### **Rules**

We have rules regarding conduct and attire (e.g. no gum chewing, no swearing, no cell phones or other electronics, etc.). Please take the time to familiarize yourself with these rules. Volunteers, staff and members, alike, are expected to follow these rules at all times.

### **Smoking, Drugs and Alcohol Policy**

Smoking is prohibited inside and outside the club at all times, including at special events and during times the club is closed but open to organizations who have rented the facilities. Volunteers should never engage in any club activity while under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances. Furthermore, volunteers are prohibited from engaging in the unlawful or unauthorized manufacture, distribution or possession of illegal substances on Club time or on Club premises. We reserve the right to take all appropriate and lawful actions to enforce this substance abuse policy when there is reasonable suspicion to believe that a volunteer has violated this policy.

### **Personal Safety and Injury**

Please be aware of personal safety while volunteering at the Club. Use reasonable judgment when participating in any activity that may involve physical injury. In the event of an injury, please report it to the appropriate personnel.

The Club is not responsible for personal items that are lost or stolen. Please do not bring valuables to the Club.

### **And Most Importantly, Your Role as a Volunteer**

Club staff have the ultimate authority policies and procedures. They officially represent the Club and are held legally accountable for matters affecting the safety and welfare of our members. If you feel that a staff member is acting inappropriately or a policy or procedure is inappropriate or ineffective, feel free to speak to the Director of Operations. It is important, however, that all volunteers respect staff decisions regarding discipline and procedures at all times.

Volunteers are **never** responsible for contacting parents, schools, medical professionals, or others on behalf of the Club, unless specifically directed by appropriate personnel. If you suspect that an interaction is necessary between the Club and a parent, doctor, educator, etc., you should notify the Director of Operations of your concerns.

As a volunteer, you are expected to maintain appropriate boundaries with members. Relationships that develop beyond a volunteer capacity within the Club are not appropriate. Such relationships can include, but are not limited to sexual relationships, providing housing, providing or accepting money and/or gifts, one-on-one mentoring of youth that is not regulated by the Club, and other acts that foster dependent relationships.

**PROTECT YOURSELF AND OUR MEMBERS!** A member or his/her parents may misinterpret behavior that you perceive as harmless. Always be aware of what may or may not be considered appropriate with regards to physical contact with a youth. Never work alone in a room with a child, unless the room can be seen from adjacent areas in the Club...e.g. through a window or open door.

Volunteers are never allowed to provide transportation to members in their own vehicles or in Club vehicles.

### **Mutual Respect and Disclosure**

The Club emphasizes a policy of mutual respect among volunteers, staff, and members. Self-respect and respect for others are absolutely necessary when serving young people. If at any time you feel as though there is a lack of respect at the club, please discuss your concerns with the Director of Operations.

### **Emergency Procedures**

In the event of a medical emergency, dial 911 immediately for medical attention. Volunteers should report any medical emergencies to staff immediately after contacting 911.

Volunteers are never permitted to transport sick or injured members within the Club or to another location unless the threat of further injury or danger exists (e.g. fire).

In the event of an emergency, volunteers are to make their best and reasonable efforts to ensure member safety takes priority in the event. Volunteers should make themselves aware of the location of emergency-related items, such as fire extinguishers and first-aid kits. Volunteers should take universal precautions when possible.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

The Club is required to report all suspicions of child abuse, neglect or endangerment. Volunteers are obligated to report any information to Club staff. In no way should any suspicion of abuse be overlooked or unreported. Volunteers should not assume responsibility for notifying law enforcement when abuse or neglect is suspected. This is the sole responsibility of Club personnel. As a volunteer, it is not your responsibility to investigate, but it is your responsibility to notify staff before leaving the building for the day.

### **Effective Supervision & Discipline Techniques**

The Club sets high standards of behavior for our members. Misbehaviors always result in some kind of action. We do not expect you to be “babysitters” for our members. But, as a volunteer, you can help to REMIND kids of how to follow a rule, as well as serve as a role model. A key thing to remember is that if you want young people to treat you with respect, you must treat them the same way. Try to say “please” and “thank you” when correcting a child’s behavior. Moreover, remember to follow the rules yourself (e.g. don’t chew gum or wear a hat in the Club.) If all else fails, get a staff member and he or she will take charge of the situation.

Acknowledging good behavior can go a long way in motivating kids. Remember to let a youth know that you have noticed when the young person made the right decisions and acted appropriately. Never ridicule or belittle a child. Never hit a member for any reason. And you should only raise your voice when it is absolutely necessary. Treating youth with courtesy and respect is paramount to their development.

As a volunteer, you can serve as a valuable role model by showing our members the proper way to handle conflict is through non-aggressive actions. Obviously, on those rare occasions that a physical fight occurs, you should get a staff member immediately and let him or her take control of

### **Boundaries for Volunteers**

Boundary violations are often a result of good intentions; however, they may foster situations that are not in the best interest of our members. While you may be very confident with some of these, you may not have considered all the possibilities with other situations. General guideline involves asking: Does this action or inaction pose a risk to the youth, the organization or myself? While not all of the tips below pose a risk to safety, they are best practices.

Some tips to remember:

1. Do not loan/give money to youth.
2. Avoid having youth in your lap.
3. Refrain from bringing valuables to the Club.
4. Be cautious about questions that start with “have you ever used...” or “if I tell you something you have to promise not to tell...”
5. Do not feel that you must answer all questions, in particular, personal questions, that may come from our members.
6. Members may ask you, “Can you give me a ride home?” – The answer to this question is *always* “no.”

