

# *Southern Maryland Christian Academy*

## Volunteer Handbook



The SMCA Volunteer Handbook includes guidelines, rules, and expectations for all volunteers interested in supporting staff and students. As part of our safety efforts, SMCA has a new volunteer support system to ensure all volunteers receive proper training, information, and easy access to a required background check. Please use the information in this handbook as a guide to support you as a member of the SMCA community.

## **Welcome to Our Volunteer Team**

Dear Southern Maryland Christian Academy Volunteers,

Welcome to the Southern Maryland Christian Academy family! We are grateful for your willingness to partner with us in serving our students and supporting our mission of providing a Christ-centered education.

At SMCA, we believe that education is most successful when teachers, staff, parents, church members, and community volunteers work together to nurture the academic, spiritual, and personal growth of every child. Your dedication and willingness to give your time and talents make a lasting impact on the lives of our students and contribute to the strong sense of community that defines our school.

The safety and well-being of our students remain our highest priority. To help maintain a secure and positive learning environment, all volunteers are expected to complete the required application process, background screening, and review of school policies and procedures before serving. This handbook is designed to provide you with the information and guidance needed to confidently fulfill your role while supporting the mission and values of SMCA.

We are truly thankful for your partnership and your commitment to investing in the next generation. Through your service, you are helping us create an environment where students can grow in faith, character, and academic excellence while experiencing the love of Christ each day.

**Thank you for answering the call to serve. We are blessed to have you as part of the SMCA community!**

*"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."*

**Colossians 3:23 (KJV)**

## Introduction/Table of Contents

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at Southern Maryland Christian Academy (SMCA). Our volunteers play an important role in supporting our students, teachers, and school community, and we are grateful for your willingness to serve.

By giving your time and talents, you help enrich the educational experience and contribute to the Christ-centered environment that makes SMCA special. Whether assisting in the classroom, chaperoning a field trip, or supporting school events, your partnership makes a meaningful difference.

While volunteers are not employees of SMCA, they are expected to follow all school policies, procedures, and guidelines. This handbook outlines the volunteer process, safety expectations, confidentiality standards, and responsibilities to help ensure a positive and secure experience for everyone.

Thank you for partnering with us as we educate and inspire the next generation for Christ.

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## Volunteer Screening Process

SMCA identifies volunteers as follows:

A volunteer is any individual who freely offers their time and services to support Southern Maryland Christian Academy (SMCA) without financial compensation. Volunteers provide valuable assistance to students, teachers, and staff while contributing to the school's mission and daily operations.

Individuals who may be considered volunteers include, but are not limited to:

- Parents, guardians, and grandparents
- Family members of students
- Church or community members
- Alumni
- Classroom helpers
- Field trip chaperones
- Event and fundraising volunteers
- Guest readers or presenters
- Coaches or club assistants serving in a volunteer capacity

Specific Qualifications of Volunteers:

All Volunteers must be:

- \* 18 years of age for general volunteers
- \* 21 years of age or older for chaperones
- \* 25 years of age or older for drivers
- \* A relative of a current SMCA student or affiliated with SMCA

All volunteers, regardless of the frequency or duration of their service, are expected to comply with SMCA's volunteer policies and procedures, including any required applications, background screenings, confidentiality expectations, and safety guidelines.

## Volunteer Program Goals

- Volunteers support teachers and staff with curriculum and school programs.
- Volunteers expand parent and community involvement with SMCA while meeting the unique needs of our students.
- Volunteers help school staff and students with extracurricular activities and afterschool programs.
- Volunteers provide supervision and direction for students while participating in off-site learning opportunities like field trips.
- Volunteers offer direct support to students needing assistance with assigned tasks.

### Volunteer Guidelines - General

#### All Volunteers should...

- Complete volunteer application and background check
- Sign in at the beginning of each school visit and sign out prior to leaving school grounds in the main office.
- Wear a visible Volunteer Badge during times of service. A volunteer badge/chaperone tag will be provided when you sign in to the main office
- Make every effort to perform volunteer duties in the presence of a SMCA employee and avoid unsupervised, one-on-one student contact.
- Report immediately to the school principal any expression or behavior that suggests an individual may intend to harm another person or commit an act of violence.
- Work under the direction of SMCA staff.
- Only be present in the area in which you are assigned.
- Observe all SMCA policies, regulations and school rules.
- Report behavior and/or safety concerns to a teacher or school administrator.
- Maintain strict confidentiality concerning information you might see or hear about students or staff, including grades, records and abilities.
- Refrain from using electronic devices while volunteering except to call for assistance in an emergency. SMCA electronic devices, such as computers, may not be used for personal business.
- Set a good example for students by your manner, appearance and behavior. Dress appropriate to the work setting and assignment. The principal has the discretion to determine whether attire is disruptive to the educational process.
- Maintain communication with your volunteer supervisor.
- Conduct yourself to the standards of behavior, which secures maximum education benefits.
- Maintain good public relations and contribute to individual and group safety.
- Notify the school as soon as possible if you are unable to come at a scheduled volunteer time.

#### Volunteers should not...

- Discipline students.
- Bring visitors, children, siblings or others in their care to the volunteer site.
- Take photographs or videos of students unless requested by a teacher or administrator for a school project.
- Post any student photographs, videos or information on any social media network.
- Give medication to students. Only authorized SMCA staff and school nurses may dispense medicine.
- Touch students in any way that is aggressive, disciplinary or sexual in nature.

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## **Volunteers should not...**

- Touch a student's personal belongings.
- Share contact information with students, including phone numbers, addresses, email or social media sites.
- Bring any food or drinks intended for student consumption due to potential student allergies.

## **Volunteer Guidelines - Chaperone**

This pertains to volunteers who would also like to chaperone:

### **What is a chaperone?**

- An SMCA Chaperone is a responsible adult who supervises students during SMCA-sponsored activities and/or off-campus trips.
- He/she acts as a representative of SMCA and always under the direction of an SMCA employee.
- Must be at least 21 years of age and either a relative of a current SMCA student or affiliated with SMCA.

### **Chaperone Responsibilities - Before the Trip**

- Pack appropriately (lunch, drinks etc.)
- Wear appropriate modest attire
- Arrive 20-30 minutes early before the trip for last minute instructions.
- Sign in WITH YOUR PHOTO IDENTIFICATION in the main office. Visibly wear the visitor tag on the outermost portion of your clothes/coat at all times throughout the trip.
- Understand the planned itinerary
- Collect students assigned to your group
- Gather SMCA emergency contact's names, phone numbers and location
- Exchange cell phone numbers with the lead teacher for emergency contact info
- Contact the teacher 48 hrs prior to the field trip if you cannot attend

### **Chaperone Responsibilities - During the Trip**

- Supervise assigned students at all times
- Take headcounts regularly and with all transitions to new activities/locations.
- Report any lost students to the lead teacher immediately
- Enforce behavior expectations according to SMCA's Student Handbook
- Contact the lead teacher for behavior problems.
- Do not yell at, reprimand or inappropriately touch any student.
- Report any issues immediately to SMCA staff

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## Chaperone Responsibilities - Emergency Procedures

- Know who to contact if there is an emergency or incident
- Handing off students to an SMCA teacher or staff is permitted. Do not hand off a student to an adult not approved by SMCA
- Do not leave any student unattended
- Only provide first aid and CPR if certification is active

## Chaperone Responsibilities - Transportation

- Never transport a student in a non-SMCA approved vehicle unless it is your custodial child
- Seat belts must be worn (if applicable)
- Know the student drop-off and pick-up plans and times
- Never allow students to switch bus/van vehicles without staff permission
- If a parent arrives at the trip site and desires to take their child home, you must alert the teacher/staff member in charge to gain verification of legal guardianship and written consent BEFORE allowing the child to leave.

## Do's and Don'ts

### Do's:

- Stay with your group
- Follow the lead teacher's/staff's direction
- Use the buddy system (i.e. send two girls into a bathroom together at a time etc.)
- Know where the medication/first aid bag will be located and authorized staff

### Don'ts

- Use your phone for personal use while supervising.
- Leave students unattended
- Share snacks or food with students. Many students have severe food allergies.
- Release any student(s) to anyone other than an SMCA teacher. If the child's parent wishes to take their child home, get the lead SMCA teacher involved first!
- Administer any medications to students (unless you are his/her custodial parent)

## Safety and Security - All Volunteers

### Background Screening and Sex Offender Registry

All volunteers are screened through a national sex offender registry. SMCA requires an additional background check for volunteers who have regular contact with students. Volunteers who are cleared through a confidential background check are placed on a school volunteer list. School administrators/teachers will contact volunteers when there is a school/student need that matches a volunteer's interest or skills.

### Child Abuse Reporting

All SMCA employees and volunteers are required by state law and the Board of Education to report suspected child abuse or neglect cases to the Department of Social Services or the appropriate law enforcement agency. Any parent or student who would like to report child abuse or neglect is encouraged to call the Charles County Department of Social Services at 301-392-6400, or the Charles County Sheriff's Office at 301-932-2222, or the National Child Abuse Hotline at 800-422-4453. Volunteers will abide by SMCA's Child Abuse, Neglect & Grooming Identification Policy and Procedure.

### Restroom Use by Adult Volunteers and Visitors

To ensure the safety and privacy of all students, adult volunteers and visitors must follow the restroom procedures outlined below:

- Before entering a student restroom, the adult must verify that no students are present inside.
- If the restroom is unoccupied by students, the adult must place the **red "Do Not Enter" strap** across the entrance before entering.
- The red "Do Not Enter" strap must remain in place for the entire time the restroom is occupied by the adult to prevent students from entering.
- Upon exiting the restroom, the adult must remove the strap so that the restroom is once again available for student use.

### Visitor Badge

All volunteers and visitors must sign in at the school office on arrival. Visitors will be given a Visitor Badge that must be visible at all times. ID is required. Please sign out when you leave so administrators know you are no longer in the building.

### Confidentiality, Legal and Ethical Considerations

Volunteers may not share any confidential information that they learn from their time spent volunteering at a school. SMCA students have the right to confidentiality of their information. Additionally, Congress has addressed the privacy-related concerns of educators, parents, and students by enacting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Your volunteer service with SMCA assumes an obligation to maintain student confidentiality. Volunteers who violate confidentiality laws by disclosing confidential information will be dismissed. Confidentiality is the protection of all personally identifiable data, information and records collected, used or maintained by SMCA. Volunteers will not have unauthorized access to student records or any confidential records at the schools. Confidentiality requirements also apply to discussions about a student.

Parents, friends or community members may ask you questions about a student's problems or progress. You must refer all questions to an authorized school employee. You may not share information about a student,



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even with members of your own family or the student's family. Remember, violating a student's confidentiality is against the law.

- Avoid favoritism or inappropriate behavior
- For the safety of both students and Volunteers, one-on-one situations between a Volunteer and a student should be avoided at all times.
- No private communication with students.
- No disciplining students (verbally, mentally or physically).
- No sharing of personal information with students (phone numbers, address, email, social media).
  - Do not take, share or post pictures of students to any social media sites.
- Do not conduct non-field trip related business while supervising SMCA students.
- Volunteers are expected to model respectful behavior, promptly address concerns, and report incidents in accordance with school policy. Any violations will be taken seriously and addressed through appropriate disciplinary procedures. Harassment, intimidation and bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

### **Anti-Discrimination Policy**

#### **Statement of non-discrimination**

As a Christian institution of learning, SMCA is devoted to the fair, complete education of all of its students in an environment that is loving and free of all bigotry or prejudice. As outlined in the Statement of Faith (Section 1.3), SMCA's Nondiscrimination Policy is as follows: ...That the Church is composed of all those who truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. It is the body and bride of Christ. Every believer, whether Jew or Gentile, is baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, and having become members of one another we are responsible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian prejudices and denominational bigotry and loving one another with a pure heart. All staff, faculty and volunteers understand the importance of fair treatment to all students, regardless of race, gender, or background, and furthermore, all staff, faculty and volunteers understand the importance of keeping each other accountable to Christ's standards of love and fairness. SMCA does not discriminate based on race, gender or age.

### **Protecting Our Volunteers**

Please stay in sight of school staff when working with students. Make sure you are working in an open, visible area and do not allow yourself to be in a situation where your actions might be misconstrued. Avoid physical contact beyond handshakes and high fives.

### **Resignation and Dismissal**

If you choose to discontinue your volunteer service with SMCA, please notify, in writing, your school principal and the staff members you serve with directly, providing your anticipated end date whenever possible. SMCA reserves the right to discontinue the volunteer relationship with any individual at any time.

### Questions and Answers

Q. I signed up to volunteer last school year. Do I need to sign up again?

A. Yes, all volunteers must sign up this year and each subsequent year. Volunteers complete online training and agree to a background check, which is valid for five years. You will receive an email when the background check is complete, and you are approved.

Q. My child's teacher knows my schedule and me. Do I really have to check in and out in the office every time I volunteer?

A. Yes. The sign-in process helps school administrators track volunteer involvement, who is in the building, and keep students safe.

Q. How soon after completing training and turning in my application can I start volunteering?

A. You may begin volunteering once you have received notice that you have been approved to volunteer and the school invites you. If you know you will be volunteering at some time during the year, completing your registration forms at the beginning of the year can cut out any lag time between registration and approval. It can take up to a week for the background check to clear. Principals place volunteer's according to the needs of the school and based on the qualifications required for effective job performance.

### Steps to Becoming an SMCA Volunteer

**The following steps are required to be completed yearly:**

- Fill out a short application on SMCA's website
- Read SMCA's Volunteer Handbook (you may download a copy for your records).
- Sign the SMCA Volunteer Acknowledgement Form
- Complete SMCA's online TalentLMS Policies and Procedures:
  - Volunteer Orientation
  - Child Abuse, Neglect, & Mental Injury Policy- Mandated Reporting
  - Incident Reporting

**The following steps are required to be completed at initial application and every 5 years thereafter.**

- Complete a background check (State and FBI) with sex offender registry check. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to pay for this background check.

**Thank You for Volunteering!**