

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



**350 Hwy 10 S. Ste. 100
ST. CLOUD, MN 56304**

(320) 253-8110

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AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome and thank you for your interest in volunteering at Reach-Up Head Start. Reach-Up Head Start's programs include Early Head Start, Head Start, and Kindergarten Transition.

The volunteer handbook will provide you with information about Reach-Up Head Start, its various programs, and expectations of volunteers. Staff and volunteers work in partnership with families to make a difference in the lives of young children.

It is important for volunteers to understand the overall mission, values and professional boundaries of the agency:

MISSION STATEMENT

Reach-Up Head Start and Early Head Start provide comprehensive education and support services that strengthen young children and their families who are experiencing low income.

CORE VALUES

We value:

- All relationships and base them on integrity, trust and respect
- Strength-based partnerships with children, families and community agencies
- Uniqueness and diversity within communities

VISION STATEMENT

Reach-Up Head Start and Early Head Start is recognized throughout the community and state as a family focused early childhood development model of excellence that has lasting impact.

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARY STATEMENTS

We believe in the value of professional boundaries and use them in our relationships with children, families and each other.

Professional boundaries give us guidance in our work and how we conduct ourselves.

These statements address the various relationships which staff members encounter in their work.

Staff with Children

- We promote children's self-expression, creativity and positive behavior.
- We provide positive role models and a safe learning environment for children.
- We respect children's physical, emotional, and cultural boundaries.
- We teach children how to develop appropriate boundaries for themselves and with other children and adults.

Staff with Parents/Families

- We respect families' time and their personal space.
- We listen to families and encourage family decision-making.
- We respect each other's roles.
- We respect families' privacy and cultures.
- We maintain a clear distinction between friendliness and friendship with families.
- We promote open and honest communication with consideration of personal thoughts and feelings.
- We recognize the limits of our roles with families and stay within our job responsibilities.

Staff with staff

- We respect the privacy of co-workers and ask their permission to share personal information with staff and families.
- We respect the job responsibilities of co-workers and their ability to perform their duties.
- We recognize the difference between personal and professional relationships among staff and interact in a professional manner.

Reach-Up Head Start provides the following programs which cover the counties of Benton, Sherburne and Stearns:

Head Start: A comprehensive, family support program which provides a spectrum of services including: early childhood education, health, nutrition, inclusion of children with disabilities, family education, social services, mental health services, connections to community resources, family involvement and decision making, goal setting and accomplishments, literacy services. Head Start is for families with children age's three to five. Head Start programming is provided in a variety of ways. The programs include center based, home based, and **Kindergarten Transition** services. Head Start is available in all 3 counties and is funded by Federal and State funds.

Early Head Start: This program provides comprehensive family support services as described in the Head Start description except the Early Head Start program serves families from pregnancy to three. This program operates year round at the following sites at an Early Head Start Child Care Center in St. Cloud. Early Head Start is funded by Federal and State funds.

Using Reach-Up Head Start's mission statement and core values this agency has developed expectations and standards for its employees and volunteers. These include:

Standards of Conduct

Reach-Up Head Start expects standards of conduct from all employees, volunteers and non-employees in their work with families, children and the community.

Staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers doing work on behalf of Reach-Up Head Start will:

1. Uphold and implement the mission statement and core values of Reach-Up Head Start.
2. Respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, disability or family composition.
3. Require staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers to comply with program confidentiality policies concerning personally identifiable information about children, families, and other staff members in accordance with performance standards and applicable federal, state, and local laws.
4. Leave no child alone or unsupervised while under their care.
5. Use positive methods of child guidance and will not engage in:
 - corporal punishment;
 - isolation to discipline a child;

- bind or tie a child to restrict movement or tape a child's mouth;
 - use or withhold food as a punishment or reward;
 - use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;
 - Use any form of emotional abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corrupting a child;
 - Physically abuse a child
 - Use any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child's family; or
 - Use physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward.
6. Staff follow all agency policies and procedures while representing Reach-Up Head Start.

The following conduct is prohibited and may result in termination of the volunteer's involvement with Reach-Up Head Start.

The following conduct is prohibited:

1. Reporting to the site under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs and narcotics or the use, sale, dispensing, or possession of alcohol and/or illegal drugs and narcotics on Reach-Up Head Start's property.
2. Leaving any child alone unsupervised while under their care.
3. The possession of firearms or other weapons on Reach-Up Head Start's property or during the course and scope of employment or volunteering.
4. Fighting or assault on a staff person or client.
5. Theft, destruction, defacement, or misuse of Reach-Up Head Start's property or of another employee's property.
6. Threatening or intimidating management or co-workers.
7. Failure to abide by safety rules and policies.
8. Engaging in any form of sexual harassment.
9. Improper disclosure of confidential information.

Confidentiality

In working with Reach-Up Head Start, volunteers have access to confidential information regarding children, parents, family members, employees, internal operations or other matters. Written and non-written information involving a child, family, employee or volunteer is confidential. Written information will be kept in locked files. Release of confidential information shall not be allowed without written consent. Reach-Up Head Start employees, volunteers and student interns are required to comply with Agency policy which follows State Data Privacy laws. Violations of this policy may result in the termination of the volunteer.

Staff and volunteers may share information regarding families on a need to know basis. This sharing of information will contribute to providing services that meet families' needs.

Smoke-Free Environment

Reach-Up Head Start promotes healthy development of children and families which it serves. This philosophy with the considerable evidence that environmental tobacco smoke is harmful to children and adults, Reach-Up Head Start will promote a smoke-free environment at all of its locations, including vehicles and during all activities sponsored by the agency. Sponsored activities are field trips, neighborhood walks, Discovery days, volunteer events, recruitment events, parent meetings, year end celebrations and all related events. This also includes a smoke-free zone around each program site.

Volunteers serve as role models for families and children, therefore, staff and volunteers will not smoke in front of families and children. The only situation under which this does not apply is during a presentation or field trip related to American Indian cultural customs in which tobacco is utilized.

Volunteers who smoke will do so during breaks and off of Reach-Up Head Start's premises. This includes buildings, outdoor play areas, parking lots, and sidewalks in front of and around each site. The main office premise includes Reach-Up Head Start's exclusive parking lot and the sidewalk of the leased building.

Drug-Free Workplace

Reach-Up Head Start is a drug-free workplace. The use, possession, sale, distribution, transportation, unsatisfactory performance, or being under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol on Reach-Up Head Start's property or while operating vehicles or while performing assigned duties is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Universal Precautions

Volunteers will utilize universal precautions in dealing with all bodily fluids. All individuals will assume all blood and human bodily fluids are potentially infectious of hepatitis, HIV and other blood borne pathogens. If a volunteer has questions regarding universal precautions they should contact Reach-Up Head Start's Nurse.

Safety

Reach-Up Head Start is committed to creating and promoting an environment for all individuals in which safe and healthful conditions will prevail and in which no one will suffer needless injury or illness. This will be accomplished through the continuous efforts of all individuals. Safety rules are posted at each site location and volunteers are responsible for reading and following them.

Mandated Reporting

The law requires mandated reporters to make a report if they know or have reason to believe a child is being neglected or abused. Failure to report is a misdemeanor. If you are uncertain whether or not a situation should be reported, you should call the County's Human Services office. The child protection staff will help you decide if a report should be made based on your information.

As a volunteer with our agency you are expected to follow the mandated reporting policies as follow:

- 1.) Reach-Up Head Start's policy states that only the Nurse can remove or lift a child's clothing. If this needs to be done, contact the Nurse immediately. If a child initiates lifting his/her clothing, include that information in the documentation of the report.
- 2.) Be prepared to provide the following information:
 - A.) Child's full legal name, birth date, address, telephone number
 - B.) Guardian or parent(s) full legal name
 - C.) Other people living with the child
 - D.) What you suspect (what happened to the child and when)
 - E.) Your name, phone number, program name, location and phone
- 3.) A verbal report must be filed immediately, exclusive of weekends and holidays. A written report must be filed within 72 hours. Contact your Supervisor or the Family Engagement Coordinator to complete the appropriate paperwork.
- 4.) If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member of Reach-Up Head Start or of a local school district, contact the Family Engagement Coordinator or the Executive Director for guidelines in making the report.

Dress Code

The dress code for Reach-Up Head Start employees is business casual. A summarized version of Reach-Up Head Start's dress code is listed below. Although volunteers are not employees of Reach-Up Head Start, the agency asks that volunteers respect and follow the agency's dress code if and when at all possible.

Clothing should be neat and clean. Torn, dirty, ill-fitting, faded or frayed clothing is unacceptable. Any clothing that has words, terms or pictures that may be offensive to others is also unacceptable. Spaghetti-strap clothing, tank tops, midriff tops, halter-tops, and shorts are all inappropriate clothing for work. Jeans can only be worn on "casual Wednesdays".

Flip-flops, slippers, and shoes with an open toe or heel are not acceptable in the workplace. Closed toe and a strapped heel shoes are required at Reach-Up Head Start.

If you are uncertain about acceptable, professional business casual attire for your volunteer experience, please ask your site supervisor.

In-Kind

Reach-Up Head Start receives federal and state funding to provide its major programs. The federal funding source requires each agency to secure non-federal resources to implement the Head Start program.

Your donated time helps to meet this requirement and enhances the quality of Reach-Up Head Start's programs. Please be sure to note your volunteer hours on an in-kind form, sign the form and give it to a Reach-Up Head Start staff member.

Required Forms & Procedures

All community volunteers need to complete:

- 1.) A volunteer information form and a volunteer emergency contact information form.
- 2.) A Background Study, if the volunteer experience brings the volunteer into contact with children. **The initial cost for a background study is \$40.00 and must be done in person with the Volunteer Coordinator or HR Coordinator. Fingerprinting is also required to complete the background check. Fingerprinting is an additional \$9.10 and is done at an off-site location in Sartell. A photo ID is required to complete both the initial background study and fingerprinting.** No background check is required if the volunteer experience doesn't involve direct contact with children.
- 3.) Documentation of receiving flu vaccine (if the volunteer service happens between November 1 and April 1). This must be provided prior to starting the volunteer experience.
- 3.) Interview with appropriate program area supervisor in your area of interest.

Other Expectations

- 1.) You cannot begin your volunteer experience until a background check has been completed and a Background Study Clearance has been received by Reach-Up Head Start.
- 2.) If you plan to volunteer directly with children more than ten hours per week on a regular basis then you need to complete Health Care Provider Certification to verify absence of a communicable disease. You need to do this through your clinic and provide us with the signed form.