



# **Volunteer Handbook**

## 2023-24

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## WELCOME

Prospective volunteer of Yellowstone,

Thank you for showing interest in volunteering with Yellowstone Schools.

Yellowstone Schools' mission is to empower, inspire, and invest in our students for them to reach their highest potential. We believe every student is born with a purpose and destined for success.

Founded in 2001 and rooted in the Christian faith, Yellowstone Schools\* collectively educates 600 children in Pre-K through 9th grade and will grow a grade each year to serve 12th grade by 2026. Yellowstone partners with students and families—regardless of financial means—to provide a life-changing education, develop a strong moral foundation, and prepare scholars for life beyond high school. The K12 campus is located in the Third Ward, one of Houston's oldest historically Black neighborhoods.

Most students served live in communities without access to strong educational opportunities. With an average class size of 16 to 18, our students experience a rich academic and co-curricular model while receiving bus transportation, two meals a day, and access to a comprehensive student support program.

Yellowstone Schools consists of a cooperative of two school systems: a lower school (a private Christian school serving PreK-5th grade) and an upper school (a tuition-free, public charter school growing to serve 6th-12th grade).\*\* The lower school and upper school are distinct legal and financial entities with separate governing boards. The name Yellowstone Schools reflects each school system's shared mission, vision, values, culture, and leadership. Each school complies with all applicable federal and state laws.

At Yellowstone, we couple strong curriculum, dynamic teachers, and robust athletic and extracurricular programming with transportation assistance, free daily meals, and social services to serve our students best. The school also consistently connects with our students' caregivers to promote strong family participation in their child's educational success and individual well-being. Yellowstone sets high academic expectations for our students and places a premium on developing their faith, character, and responsibility.

We need help from volunteers like you to continue fulfilling our mission and beliefs. Volunteers are crucial to our family, and our students and staff greatly enjoy welcoming you to our campus. Your work ensures that Yellowstone's students achieve their God-given potential through a faith-based education. As volunteers, we hope you share our beliefs and keep our goals in mind while serving. Every volunteer, big and small, makes a difference in the lives of our students. Through your time as a Yellowstone volunteer, you will assist in creating a lasting impact on Yellowstone students. We hope you find your experience fun, fulfilling, and rewarding.

Please read the following information, which contains essential information about your volunteer experience. If you have any questions, please contact our team at [advancement@yellowstoneschools.org](mailto:advancement@yellowstoneschools.org) or 713.741.8000.

Once again, welcome, and thank you!

Sincerely,

Maricela Ramos  
Volunteer Manager

## **Purpose of Handbook**

Please use this handbook to assist you throughout this year at Yellowstone and learn about our volunteer philosophy, practices, policies, and what you can expect as a valued volunteer.

This handbook should answer many of your questions about volunteering at Yellowstone; however, it cannot provide the full scope of Yellowstone's volunteer program. For any additional questions, please contact us via email, phone, or in person during business hours.

We hope you enjoy volunteering at Yellowstone Schools. Please read this handbook carefully before volunteering and refer to it whenever questions arise.

Yellowstone Schools reserves the right to amend, revise, or delete any policies or procedures mentioned in this handbook without notice. If you have any questions or concerns about the material in this book, please contact the volunteer manager.

## **Philosophy**

Yellowstone Schools operates in a structured and disciplined environment that is vibrant, innovative, and animated by optimism and hope. Staff, board members, caregivers, students, and volunteers share the same academic, moral, and spiritual commitment to the purposes of the school. These shared purposes guide our policies and decisions and provide direction and consistency.

Yellowstone Schools sets high expectations for its students and places a premium on essential attributes necessary for success: character, responsibility, self-reliance, and faith. The school actively involves caregivers in all aspects of the child's educational, social, emotional, and spiritual process.

We organize the school day to maximize the allotted instructional time and provide teachers with the training and support they need to improve and enhance their instructional skills. Yellowstone students participate in a print-rich environment that fosters the development of independent literacy in every classroom.

## **BECOMING A VOLUNTEER**

### **Yellowstone Volunteer Program**

The advancement team manages the volunteer program. You can contact us at [advancement@yellowstoneschools.org](mailto:advancement@yellowstoneschools.org).

### **Definition of Volunteer**

Yellowstone Schools defines a volunteer as an individual who performs a service—without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation—for the benefit of Yellowstone students, families, staff members, or the Yellowstone community. Whether occurring on or off-campus, volunteers must have prior approval from the volunteer manager to perform such tasks, and all volunteer projects must directly benefit the mission of Yellowstone Schools.

### **Volunteer Clearance, Application, Orientation, and Training**

All individuals interested in volunteering at Yellowstone Schools must complete once per year an [online application](#) that includes a criminal history check and before their first shift. Approved volunteers will receive an email from Raptor (our school's safety and volunteer software) with an application expiration date.

Volunteers interacting one-on-one with students, including but not limited to office helpers, classroom helpers, and Lunch Buddies, must interview with the volunteer manager, submit

two professional references, attend orientation, and complete the assigned *Child Abuse: Identification and Intervention and Mandatory Reporting* training. The courses take approximately one hour and 15 minutes to complete. The volunteer manager will provide a link to the courses.

The volunteer manager will hold an initial orientation and training session for all volunteers interacting with students one-on-one. Volunteers must sign a form indicating they have attended orientation and completed training.

We design the orientation to provide information and answer questions about the role of volunteers at Yellowstone Schools. During the session, volunteers get an overview of our safety precautions, emergency procedures, confidentiality policy, and abuse and neglect reporting, among many other items. Volunteers also receive recommendations and suggestions for successfully volunteering at Yellowstone Schools.

We provide each volunteer with a copy of this handbook, including rules, regulations, guidelines, and expectations. Prospective volunteers must review and sign the online application indicating they have read and understood the handbook.

Volunteers who fail to complete all steps appropriate to their volunteer functions will be unable to volunteer at Yellowstone. Yellowstone Schools reserves the right to verify all documents concerning a volunteer, including any information on the application, and decline, ban, or terminate volunteers at any time.

The minimum age for a volunteer is 21 years old unless previously approved by the volunteer manager and accompanied by a caregiver or participating in an approved volunteer group activity.

Visit our online application here: <https://yellowstoneschools.org/volunteer/>.

### **Signing In and Out**

Volunteers are responsible for signing in and out at the front office upon arrival and before leaving. Volunteers will receive a name tag every time they sign in and must wear it while volunteering on campus. Yellowstone Schools must know who is in the building in case of emergencies and track hours for safety and security.

### **Equal Opportunity Volunteering**

Yellowstone Schools provides equal volunteer opportunities to all people regardless of gender, race, marital status, political belief, or disability that does not interfere with the volunteer's responsibilities. Selected volunteers are chosen based on their ability to be reliable, dependable, responsible, and perform the duties appropriate to their role.

### **Issues**

Please contact the volunteer manager immediately if any issues arise.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Commitment to Volunteering**

Whether a volunteer's position is weekly or one-time, Yellowstone Schools asks that all volunteers are faithful in their commitment to the students of Yellowstone through the volunteer program. Please contact the volunteer manager as soon as possible if you can not make the scheduled time.

If a volunteer cannot meet their commitment for an extended period, a replacement may need to be found. A volunteer may request a leave of absence but is not guaranteed the same role upon return.

If a volunteer is new to the placement, the volunteer manager will introduce the volunteer to the appropriate staff members/students.

While volunteering, Yellowstone Schools asks that all volunteers keep their cell phones with them at all times but on silent mode. If there is a school emergency, we will use the cell phone number you provide to the front office to contact you. Volunteers needing to place personal phone calls may excuse themselves and go outside to a private area.

Notify the volunteer manager member of any change of address or phone number.

### **Grievances, Concerns, and Confidential Information**

It is common for a student to share personal information with volunteers, e.g., a conflict at school that is upsetting them, a challenging situation at home, or a struggle they are having in the classroom.

Other than information about abuse or neglect, information that volunteers learn through time spent with children regarding children and their families must remain confidential. Volunteers may not gossip or discuss the children with others within or outside Yellowstone Schools. Volunteers must bring any concerns about a child to the attention of the volunteer manager and on-site social worker/counselor.

### **Dress Code**

To maintain a standard that will represent the school well, Yellowstone Schools asks that the volunteers adhere to a business casual dress code:

- No short shorts, miniskirts, workout attire, or short dresses
- No low-cut shirts or shirts that reveal a bare midriff
- No muscle shirts
- No spaghetti straps, halter tops, or any other shirt revealing undergarments
- No leggings, torn pants, or torn jeans
- No t-shirts with inappropriate slogans or advertisements for alcohol or tobacco products
- As a general rule, please use modesty and discretion.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **General Health**

If a student needs immediate health attention or needs to see a health professional, please immediately notify the teacher, school nurse, main office staff, or nearest staff member. The superintendent, director of campus services, nurse, or principals decide if 911 is necessary.

## **Abuse and Neglect**

Yellowstone Schools intends to make the campus and sponsored activities free from neglect, abuse, exploitation, or harassment. If a volunteer is believed to engage or has engaged in any of the above, the situation will be investigated, and appropriate actions will occur, including termination of the volunteer.

Neglect, abuse, exploitation, abandonment, and harassment include all but are not limited to

- Moral or social behavior that could be detrimental to others
- Intentional physical or emotional abuse
- Offensive comments, jokes, or behavior dealing with a person's race, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital status, or medical condition
- Sexual suggestions, advances, and talk
- Sexual physical contact or any attempted sexual relationships
- For a complete [list of definitions](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/define.pdf#page=83%22%3E) of child abuse and neglect, please visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/define.pdf#page=83%22%3E>

Two unrelated adults should be present at all times during programs and activities. When only one adult is present, doors to the room should remain open. A volunteer should maintain appropriate boundaries with children and refrain from any behavior that could be considered inappropriate contact with children, such as hugging, kissing, or touching. Volunteers should not allow children to hold their hands, sit on their laps, climb on them, play with their hair, or hold anything of value, etc., at any time. Volunteers must not give rides to students or give them or their family members money or gifts.

A volunteer should never physically discipline a child. Concerns about a child's behavior should be brought to the attention of the volunteer manager, on-site social worker/counselor, or teacher.

If a volunteer is with a student, they should not, under any circumstances, leave the student alone. If a volunteer must step out of the room, even for a moment, they must inform the volunteer manager or the nearest staff member.

Volunteers engaging in activities and conversations with children should occur in non-private areas. Activities should be observable and easily interrupted. If volunteers take students out of the classroom, it is only in the library or the hallway next to the teacher's classroom.

Profanity is not acceptable at Yellowstone Schools.

## **Mandatory Reporting**

By Texas state law, any individual with knowledge of suspected child abuse or neglect is a mandatory reporter. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment defines child abuse and neglect as "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caregiver that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm." Anyone who has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect and knowingly fails to make a report within 48 hours of the event that led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect may face a misdemeanor or felony. (Texas Family Code 261.109)

A person reporting or assisting in investigating a report according to the law is immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. Immunity extends to participation in any judicial proceeding resulting from the report. (Texas Family Code 261.106)

If a volunteer, at any time, suspects abuse or neglect, they must immediately bring this to the attention of the volunteer manager and on-site social worker/counselor. The volunteer will then receive assistance reporting this to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

Call the Texas Abuse 24-hour Hotline for the DFPS at 800.252.5400 and notify the volunteer manager to make an immediate report. You must provide detailed information on the abuse, including evidence. Keep a record of the call date and time and the contact information of the DFPS agent.

Volunteers should reassure the child that they are cared for and believed and have the right to be safe. The volunteer should inform the child of the steps they will take. A volunteer must never promise a child that any information about an abusive situation will be kept a secret.

Watch this [video](http://minorsoncampus.ue.org/shine-a-light-k12/) to inform you of potential sexual abuse of children and teens in schools.

For a [full list of definitions](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/define.pdf#page=83%22%3E) of child abuse and neglect, please visit

### **Firearms Policy**

Yellowstone Schools is a weapon-free environment. Under no circumstances may any individual bring a weapon into the school.

According to the Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 6, Rule §6.44, a licensed gun holder may not carry a handgun on the physical premises of a school, educational institution, or a vehicle of a school or educational institution. Violation is a third-degree felony.

### **Tobacco Use and Substance Abuse**

Yellowstone Schools is a non-smoking facility. All persons must refrain from any form of tobacco use while on the school property or at school-sponsored events.

All individuals are prohibited from possessing, manufacturing, soliciting, or distributing any form of a controlled or illegal substance while on school property or at a school-sponsored event.

### **Crisis Management**

Various drills, including fire, evacuation, and severe weather drills are held at least once a month. Instructions for exiting the building are posted in each room of the school building. Each volunteer will receive a copy of the Yellowstone Crisis Management Plan. Volunteers must follow these instructions and not act as leaders or staff members in any situation.

### **Terminating Volunteers**

The volunteer manager reserves the right to terminate any person selected as a volunteer under the following circumstances:

1. Failure to comply with the school's policies, rules, and regulations
2. Unacceptable attitude, actions, or appearance
3. Any other cases that the volunteer manager deems inappropriate and contrary to the standards of Yellowstone Schools



## OTHER INFORMATION

### Vehicle Safety

Yellowstone Schools is not responsible for any items left unattended in any vehicle.

### Mileage

Mileage traveling to and from the school is tax deductible. Volunteers are responsible for keeping the appropriate records, including a mileage log. Please consult a tax accountant for further information.

### Questions

If you have any questions after reading this document or once your volunteer position begins, please contact the volunteer manager at [mramos@yellowstoneschools.org](mailto:mramos@yellowstoneschools.org) or 713.741.8000.

### Advancement Team

Brooke Pollock  
Director of Advancement

Maricela Ramos  
Volunteer Manager

Tommy Parker  
Director of Marketing and Admissions

Alex Orman  
Donor Services Coordinator

## VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT/ACKNOWLEDGMENT

By signing the required online volunteer application, you certify that you have read and reviewed the Yellowstone Schools Volunteer Handbook and understand its contents, agree to the policies and procedures listed, and understand what you are signing. You also understand that this statement will become a permanent part of your volunteer file.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### Lower School

*As of July 1, 2023*

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David Dominy, <i>Chairman</i>	David Humphreys	William "Trey" McDonald
Venus Anderson	George Kaleh	Phillip Pace
Cedric Burgher II	Duane King	Jonathan Tauber
Brad Childers	David Lumpkins	Clark Thompson
Ryan Dolibois	Kristi Lumpkins	Frank Tsuru
Karey Dye	Mark McCollum	Elizabeth Wareing
Bryan Fisher	Devin McCord	James Zucker

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### Upper School

*As of July 1, 2023*

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Ken Cowan, <i>Chairman</i>	David Lumpkins
Janice Character	Tori Moore-Cofield
Les Csorba	John Peavy, <i>Secretary</i>
Ryan Dolibois	Valerie Williams, <i>Treasurer</i>
Lionel Jellins	