

City of Tampa
Parks and Recreation Department

Volunteer Handbook

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City of Tampa

Jane Castor, Mayor

Parks & Recreation Department **Sherisha Hills, Director**

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Dear Volunteer:

Welcome to the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation! Our volunteers are an important part of creating a great experience for those enjoying the natural resources in Tampa. This handbook will serve as your guide to the best possible experience as a volunteer. It answers frequently asked questions and gives information about the Tampa Parks and Recreation Department, our mission and your role.

Your community and the Tampa Parks and Recreation Department want to express our sincere gratitude for your volunteer efforts and contribution to our success. Without your continued assistance, our achievements would be limited, and our department would not meet its full potential.

In this handbook you will find a variety of volunteer positions that will assist our department in its mission to conserve the City of Tampa's natural heritage. We hope you will find a volunteer opportunity that fits your interest and skills. Once established as a volunteer, you will work with the Volunteer Coordinator to answer additional questions.

We appreciate your commitment to serving the community and want to create an uplifting environment for all volunteers. We value our volunteers for going above and beyond and believe they are a part of making this community a success. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all you do to make our park system the treasure we all enjoy and love.

Sincerely,

Sherisha Hills

Sherisha Hills
Parks and Recreation Director

tampagov.net

About this Handbook

Volunteers are an essential tool in our success. The volunteer program is designed to coordinate and manage volunteer efforts which support the vision and mission of the Tampa Parks and Recreation Department.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance, structure and direction to Parks and Recreation staff and volunteers. The handbook will provide policies, procedures, volunteer job descriptions and guidelines to promote a healthy relationship between volunteers who share their time, talents, and skills, and Parks and Recreation staff. The Department's policies and expectations are outlined to ensure a good volunteer experience for each individual and group.

Our Mission

The mission of the Tampa Parks and Recreation Department is to provide and preserve quality parks and recreation opportunities for all.

Our highest priority is to meet the Mayor's goal of advancing the quality of life in Tampa's neighborhoods by delivering consistent services; maintaining the safety and appearance of city parks and recreation facilities; and instilling community pride.

Our parks and facilities feature amenities to suit all interests including athletic fields and courts; arts, performance and event spaces; fitness and wellness opportunities; marine and waterfront areas; natural and open spaces; playgrounds and picnic shelters; just to name a few.

If you have any questions regarding volunteer information, please email the Volunteer Coordinator at PRVolunteer@tampagov.net

General Volunteer Policies

The primary purpose of the volunteer program is to augment and enhance community engagement and the delivery of services. Additionally, the program encourages hands on involvement in local government and promotes participation by individuals and groups within the community.

The city benefits from volunteer involvement which:

- Extends the city's ability to provide services effectively and efficiently and to conserve resources;
- Builds understanding of and participation in city government;
- Strengthens the community through collaboration and partnership.

Benefits to volunteers include:

- The opportunity to develop skills and gain experience;
- An increased understanding of city government and the opportunity to positively influence its effectiveness;
- Personal satisfaction in helping the community.

For all activities related to the recruitment and retention of volunteers, the Tampa Parks and Recreation Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or sexual orientation, national origin, disability, marital status, or political beliefs. Individuals requesting accommodation or accessibility information should contact the department's Volunteer Coordinator.

The Volunteer

Volunteers are valuable assets providing needed resources to the Tampa Parks & Recreation Department. Our volunteers are individuals who willingly and freely offer services with no expectation of payment or other compensation. Volunteers may include but are not limited to individuals and groups engaging in service opportunities defined by the department.

Volunteers must comply with the guidelines and procedures outlined in the Tampa Parks & Recreation Volunteer Handbook. They must also follow all ordinances, policies, and procedures, and abide by the same rules of conduct, ethical standards and confidentiality requirements that govern City of Tampa employees.

Parks and Recreation Volunteers are NOT:

- City employees
- Those ordered or sentenced by the court to work in the community
- Those who are seeking volunteer opportunities as a requirement to receive government assistance

- Individuals affiliated with youth sports leagues that are supervised and administered by the parent organization of that league by the standards outlined in the agreement between the league and the City of Tampa
- Those who were former city employees who were terminated

The Volunteer Process

Volunteer Requirements

All volunteers must meet minimum qualifications for placement into any city-related assignment. The primary qualification for volunteer placement is the ability and suitability to perform a task on behalf of Tampa Parks & Recreation.

Volunteer Application: All volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application. Some Tampa Parks & Recreation sites may have additional required forms associated with the utilization of volunteers. Volunteers will be made aware of such additional forms during the application process.

Age: The nature of volunteer assignments with the Tampa Parks and Recreation Department may vary in complexity, therefore it is our policy to determine age requirements for volunteers on a case by case basis. For most projects, we welcome children ages 12 to 15 with parental supervision. The minimum age for an unaccompanied volunteer is sixteen (16).

Background Investigations: Anyone who will be volunteering directly for the Tampa Parks & Recreation Department is required to successfully complete a background screening, reference checks, and drug test.

Volunteer Agreement: All volunteers are required to sign an “Agreement to Volunteer and Accept Workers Compensation Benefits Form” as part of their application. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have the form signed by a parent or legal guardian. It covers any injuries sustained during any authorized volunteer service performed on behalf of the Parks & Recreation Department.

Volunteer training: Volunteer training will be determined by opportunity. Some opportunities will only require a quick overview of the day’s work with a staff supervisor prior to completing the project. Other opportunities will require the volunteer to be trained by the appropriate staff.

Types of Volunteer Service

Individual Regular Volunteer Service are scheduled on a regular frequency to assist staff with:

Administrative Work
Park/Trail Clean-up

Photography/Videography
Coaching

Community/Service-Learning Volunteers

Volunteer opportunities will be available for service activities assigned by educational or civic organizations such as an Eagle Scout Project.

Special Event Volunteers

Tampa Parks and Recreation has numerous events throughout the year with informational and activity booths. Staff and volunteers are scheduled to work the booth to interact with the public. The volunteer will be trained to help answer questions about our parks and assist with children's activities when appropriate.

Volunteer Groups may be scheduled to assist with large projects such as:

- Park/Trail Clean-ups
- Playground Builds
- Day of Service Projects
- Community Clean-ups

We will do our best to match your groups' skills and location request whenever possible. The group representative should email the Volunteer Coordinator (at least 6 weeks in advance) with their request to PRVolunteer@tampagov.net to discuss the volunteer options.

Bike/Parks and Trails Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to adopt a park area or sections of trail that require attention. The volunteer will visit the site a couple times a month to:

- Remove trash and recycling along trails/parks
- Help keep trails clear of potential hazards (sticks, trash, etc.)
- Report feedback of experience and maintenance needs to staff

Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

Conduct and Expectations

As a volunteer, you may be the first person someone meets from Tampa Parks and Recreation and you now have the responsibility of making a good first impression. A smile or a short "Hello, how are you?" can go a long way to our patrons.

Volunteers are representing the City of Tampa and the Parks and Recreation Department; therefore all volunteers are expected to abide by the handbook guidelines and following all policies. In addition, volunteers are expected to be:

- Dependable – attendance, punctuality, completion of all required paperwork
- Cooperative in spirit
- Courteous and polite to staff and public
- Respectful of others

Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they have access while serving as a volunteer including confidential information concerning personnel matters, members of the community, or related to the Tampa Parks & Recreation Department. Volunteers must sign a Confidentiality Statement to this effect.

Attendance

Volunteer attendance is important to the operation of our programs. Please make every effort to honor your volunteer commitment. Volunteers should notify their on-site contact or volunteer coordinator in advance if they are unable to be present for their volunteer project or assignment.

Dress Code

The personal appearance of the Tampa Parks & Recreation Department employees is a form of non-verbal communication that conveys to the public an image of pride, competence, and professionalism. Clothing and personal appearance have an effect on perceptions and feelings that others have on us as individuals. Volunteers are expected to report to their assignment dressed and groomed appropriately for the task assigned. All volunteers must wear their city provided badge when volunteering.

Interaction with Youth Participants

Under no circumstances is a volunteer allowed to be alone with any youth participant at any time. Volunteers may not and will not strike or physically punish any participant. Matters of discipline must always be referred to a staff member.

Interaction with the Public

We all want to make patrons happy, however if you're approached by someone with a question that you do not know the answer to, please be honest and say you don't know that answer, but will get the information to the right staff member for follow up.

Interaction with Media

City policy states that any media inquiries for interviews, comments, etc. must be directed to the department director. As a volunteer you should direct all media inquiries to a supervisor.

Credentialed journalists **may** take photographs and video footage on any park and recreation sites **without** permission. Please inform the site supervisor of anyone taking still or video photography.

Prohibited Items/Actions

Volunteers are not permitted to use tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and chewing tobacco, in City parks, buildings, and facilities including surrounding grounds and indoor and outdoor associated walkways during volunteer service activities. Profanity including ethnic or sexual slurs will not be tolerated and is cause for action up to and including termination of volunteer appointment.

Volunteers are prohibited from the possession, use or distribution of intoxicants (alcohol or drugs) of any kind in city/department areas. Violators will fully be turned over to law enforcement and prosecuted of the law. Volunteers are not permitted to carry or possess any weapon, including, but not limited to, guns (whether licensed to carry one or not), knives, sling shots, and explosives, on their person during the performance of their volunteer duties. Violation of these policies by any volunteer is cause for immediate termination of volunteer appointment.

Volunteers are strictly prohibited from using personal vehicles to transport participants and are strictly prohibited from operating City of Tampa vehicles and equipment. This includes but is not limited to cars, trucks, utility vehicles, mowers, blowers, chainsaws, power washers, power tools, etc.

All applicable City, State, and Federal laws must be adhered to while on assignment.

Accidents & Injuries

Any accident or injury must immediately be reported to Parks and Recreation staff in charge of your volunteer project so the proper safety measures can be taken.

Non-Discriminatory Policy

For all activities related to the recruitment and retention of volunteers, the Tampa Parks & Recreation Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or sexual orientation, national origin, disability, marital status, or political beliefs. Individuals requesting accommodation or accessibility information should contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Harassment Policy

Tampa Parks and Recreation is committed to providing volunteers with an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, ethnicity, age, religion, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated. The department encourages volunteers to bring any incidents of harassment to the immediate attention of the on-site supervisor.

Stay positive

It can be frustrating to hear a park visitor or other member of the public complain. Keep in mind there may be a logical reason the situation exists and it's up to all of us to educate users about the park processes. Apologize for the dissatisfaction and take the complaint to the Volunteer Coordinator. Be a promoter of the benefits of the park system and work toward understanding the reasons behind situations so you can offer an informed and positive answer. **You are part of the team!**

Ending a Volunteer Assignment/Termination

A volunteer assignment may end when the project is complete, when the volunteer has completed the specific time commitment, or when the volunteer, for any reason, must end his/her service. Any volunteer who does not adhere to the policies and procedures of Tampa Parks & Recreation or who fails to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment is subject to dismissal. A volunteer may be terminated at any time by the City with or without cause. There is no appeal from the termination of a volunteer appointment.

Every volunteer has the status of "volunteer-at-will," meaning that no one has a contractual right, express or implied, to remain a volunteer for the Tampa Parks and Recreation department.

Tampa Parks and Recreation may terminate a volunteer's placement, or a volunteer may terminate his/her volunteer commitment, without cause, and with or without notice, at any time for any reason.

Volunteer Dismissal

If you decide to end your volunteer commitment with the department, please tell the Volunteer Coordinator. You may do this in person, by phone, or via email. A short exit interview may be conducted. All responses are confidential and are used to strengthen our volunteer program.

Evaluating Volunteers

All volunteers will receive an evaluation. If the volunteer is an ongoing volunteer, the evaluation will be conducted annually or at the end of their term of service, whichever comes first. Evaluations are to be conducted by the site supervisor and completed forms are to be copied and sent to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteer Feedback

Feedback is important to us! Many times, volunteers and patrons have great ideas or important concerns and we want to hear from you. Please feel free to speak with the Volunteer Coordinator or a Site Supervisor if you have an interest or concern to discuss. You may also send an email to PRVolunteer@tampagov.net

Volunteer Handbook Statement of Certification

Volunteer First Name
(Please Print)

Last Name

Phone Number

Address

City

State

Zip

Your signature on this form acknowledges that you have reviewed the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation volunteer handbook.

I, _____, certify that I have received and reviewed the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Volunteer Handbook.

I further understand that, by signing this statement as required I am indicating that I have read the Volunteer Handbook and understand its contents and agree to abide by all guidelines and policies as specified. Furthermore, I agree to discuss and questions or concerns with these guidelines with the Volunteer Coordinator. I also realize that this statement will become a permanent part of my volunteer personnel file.

Signature

Date

Please sign and return to:
City of Tampa Parks and Recreation
Attn: Volunteer Coordinator
3402 W. Columbus Dr.
Tampa, FL 33607