DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Site Supervisors' Guide to Community Service

DCPS Beautification Day 2013

In 1992, The District of Columbia was one of the first large urban school districts in the country to include community service as a graduation requirement. The community service requirement aims to equip students with the necessary skills and abilities for career and educational advancement as well as motivate students to take an active role as leaders in their communities.

The following is an overview of the basic guidelines for community service for District of Columbia Public Schools. Please consult with the student's school counselor or community service coordinator for additional guidelines and requirements.

Goals of Community Service

Community Service is an independent act of providing a needed service to a person or persons. It helps:

- To foster a life-long habit of serving others;
- To increase a student's sense of social responsibility and civic engagement;
- To provide opportunities for students to identify and engage issues impacting their community;
- To provide access to real-life authentic experiences that will prepare them for college, career and life.

"We must serve consciously as caring role models, emphasizing the ethic of service, not consumption."

- Marian Wright Edelman

Responsibilities of the Community Service Site Supervisors

SUPERVISORS CANNOT:

- Provide monetary compensation for community service.
- Be the student's parent or close relative.
- Issue service hours to students who are clients of the organization (student cannot get hours for receiving a service.)

SUPERVISORS MUST:

- Verify community service hours by:
  1. Signing the **Project and Hours Form** (form can be found on DCPS website—www.dcps.dc.gov)
     or
  2. Writing a letter on official letterhead that includes:
     - Name of student
     - Number of service hours performed
     - Name and contact information of the on-site supervisor
     - Brief description of the service activity performed
- Serve as a point of contact for the student and school staff with regard to the community service hours performed.
- Belong to a federal, state, or local government agency, or 501(c)(3) organization.
- Provide supervision, and treat students professionally and with respect at all times.

Although it is not required, supervisors should conduct an on-site orientation that informs students of the agency's mission, their policies and the students' responsibilities.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions about Community Service

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Q: Can a student complete community service hours at their place of worship (church, temple, mosque or synagogue)?

A: Hours earned at a place of worship can only be applied if they were completed with a 501(c)(3) organization or a federal, state or local government agency; i.e. feeding the homeless, conducting a coat drive, providing tutoring services, etc. Students cannot apply hours earned completing worship service duties (examples: singing in the choir, acolyte duties, preparing the altar, teaching Sunday School, preparing communion, assisting the worship leader with service preparation).

Q: Can a student participate in an election and receive community service hours?

A: No. In general, a student cannot participate in a national, federal, state or local election, or apply their volunteer hours from a political candidate or campaign and apply those hours toward their community service requirement. 501(c)(3) organizations and federal, state and local government agencies are prohibited from participating in political campaigns.

However students are encouraged to engage in advocacy type activities that encourage citizens and policy makers to change their behaviors including registering to vote. For example, Students can apply community service hours from the following organizations to support the electoral process:

- DC Board of Elections
- Registrar of Voters
- DC Vote (DC Vote is a 501(c)(3) educational and advocacy organization)
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
- Rock The Vote

Q: Can students perform office assistant tasks and receive community service hours?

A: All community service hours must be completed through a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization or a federal, state or local government agency. Indirect activities that support the work of a 501(c)(3) organization or a federal, state or local government agency may be counted towards the graduation requirement.

Q: When students perform community service with an organization or agency, what kind of documentation do they need to provide? Is a phone call enough?

A: No, a phone call is not sufficient documentation for a student to provide. Students must either provide the *Project and Hours Form* or a letter on official letterhead from the organization.

Examples of Non-Qualifying Activities

Some activities are admirable but cannot be counted toward the graduation requirement of 100 hours of community service. For example:

- Babysitting for a family member
- Waitressing at a restaurant, café or a for-profit event
- Participating in an election campaign
- Hairstyling or doing manicures for a friend
- Donating items such as money, food, clothes or blood
- Raking leaves for a neighbor
- Participating in traditional school-sponsored activities such as student government meetings, band practices, choir rehearsal, athletics,

We are here to help.

If you or your organization needs clarification about the service guidelines or support promoting your service opportunity to students, contact us by e-mail at occr@dc.gov