

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I get started as a volunteer?

All prospective volunteers must complete the following steps to participate in a CIS volunteer program: submit a [volunteer application](#), complete an online orientation module, schedule a 30-minute screening interview, review and sign a CIS volunteer agreement via DocuSign, pass a criminal background check, and attend an hour-long training session.

Are applications accepted all year round?

Volunteer placements begin in September and end in early March. Applications submitted anytime between March-September will be added to a volunteer waitlist and contacted at a later date to schedule a volunteer screening.

When does registration close for mentors?

Mentor placements start in August and continue until October. Applications submitted anytime between October and February may be channeled to one of our other traditional volunteer roles. Applicants may also request to be added to our mentor waitlist for the following year.

Is there a minimum age requirement to volunteer?

All volunteers must be at least 18 years of age or older.

What is the weekly time commitment for volunteers?

Volunteers commit to serving 30-60 minutes per week during or after school hours.

How are volunteer sessions structured?

Each session begins with an ice-breaker activity and ends with a closing ritual. Volunteers are encouraged to ask getting-to-know you questions and allow students to take the lead in deciding what activities to work on.

How do I schedule a volunteer screening?

A link to our booking platform, 10to8, will be provided upon successful completion of the orientation module. If you are unable to find the link, please contact the Volunteer Department at volunteer@ciscentraltexas.org to schedule an appointment.

What should I expect for the volunteer screening?

The goal of the meeting is to learn about your availability, previous volunteer experiences, and volunteer goals.

How do you match volunteers with students?

Volunteers are matched with students based on similar interests, goals, strengths, personality traits, and backgrounds to ensure a lasting relationship.

Are volunteers required to attend a training session?

Yes, volunteers are required to attend an hour-long training before beginning the service term.

Do I have to complete a criminal background check?

To ensure the safety of our students and staff, Communities In Schools conducts criminal background checks on all campus-based staff and volunteers. A link to the criminal background check platform will be provided upon successful completion of the volunteer screening.

Does CIS cover the cost of the background check?

The background check is covered by CIS with an option for volunteers to contribute towards the cost.

When should I expect to start volunteering?

The volunteer process typically takes around 3-5 weeks from initial application to placement. Once all steps in the onboarding process are complete, your designated Program Manager will contact you to schedule an introductory meeting to discuss logistical details.

What if I travel out of town frequently?

If you travel out of town frequently during the work week, our pen pal program or one-time volunteer opportunities may be a better fit for you.

How should I spend my time with my Reading Buddy?

Reading Buddies take turns reading aloud and playing literacy games and activities.

How should I spend my time with my mentee?

Sessions vary by grade level but typically include activities such as spending time getting to know each other, playing games, making arts and crafts, working through challenges, offering career advice, and much more.

Is there a current need for Pen Pals?

Yes, we are actively seeking pen pals. If you are unable to volunteer on a weekly basis, please consider serving as a pen pal mentor.

What if I am unable to volunteer during the school day?

After-school opportunities may be available for the 2021-2022 school year. To serve as an after-school volunteer, be sure to indicate your availability in the volunteer application. One-time volunteer opportunities are also available throughout the year. If you are interested in learning more about our one-time opportunities, please contact the Volunteer Department at volunteer@ciscentraltexas.org for more information.

What support is provided?

CIS provides in depth training, monthly newsletters with tips and resources, and ongoing guidance and support from Program Staff.

Who should I contact for additional support during my service term?

Reach out to your designated Program Staff for additional support.

What if I need to reschedule a volunteer session?

Absences negatively impact students. If you must be late or absent, advise your Program Manager *as soon as possible*. Calls must be made at least **24 hours** in advance. Three no shows may result in a termination from volunteering with Communities In Schools.

Can I contact my student outside of the scheduled program hours?

No, Communities In Schools does NOT authorize anyone associated with our program to have contact with students outside of approved and supervised assigned time. This includes telephone calls, texting, email contact, social media websites, and face-to-face contact with students or students' families. Personal contact information such as a volunteer's telephone number, address, social media information, or email address must NEVER be shared with students. This policy also applies to students sharing their personal contact information.

Can I switch volunteer roles if I decide to serve another year?

Position transfers may be requested at the end of the school year.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions?

Please contact the Volunteer Department at 512-464-9767 or email volunteer@ciscentraltexas.org.