



Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County
2023 Volunteer Handbook

212 Centre Street
Trenton, NJ 08611

P (609)392-3191
www.bgcm Mercer.org

For Further information please contact the
Director of Volunteer Services & Engagement

Ashley K. Nwankwo

Anwankwo@bgcm Mercer.org

P (609)392-3191 ext. 125



Welcome to the Volunteer Experience at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County!

We are excited to have you volunteer in service to the Mercer County community and the members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County (BGCMC). Please review the handbook, sign the complete virtual acknowledgment form. We look forward to you beginning your service.

Sincerely,

Ashley K. Nwankwo

Director of Volunteer Services & Engagement

Purpose of the Volunteer Handbook:

The volunteer handbook is a resource for all volunteers during their time with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County. This will share the history, mission, and policies of BGCMC to better prepare volunteers for service within the Clubs. It does not answer all questions about club programs, facilities, members, or staff. At any time, volunteers are welcome to ask any questions or have any policies clarified. We hope this will allow volunteers to feel comfortable within the Clubs and in their new position as valued volunteers.

BGCMC depends on volunteers and your success is our success. We ask that volunteers read this handbook carefully, entirely, and refer to it whenever questions arise. If the volunteer's questions are not answered by the handbook, they may contact the Director of Volunteer Services and Engagement.

Purpose of Volunteer Policies:

The policies described in this handbook are intended to provide guidance and direction for volunteers. These policies do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personal agreement with The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County. BGCMC reserves the right to change, at any time, any and all policies, procedures, and rules described in this handbook. Copies of the changes will be made available to all volunteers.



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Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County

Who We Are

Mission

To inspire and enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens.

Vision

Inspire and prepare all Mercer County youths to achieve their dreams.

Our History

BGCMC was incorporated in 1937 and has been continually serving Trenton youth since then. Originally known as The Boys Club of Trenton, early services were offered only for boys. In the 1980's the Board of Trustees changed the name and the scope of the agency to include services for girls. In 2014, the name changed once again to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County as the Club expanded services to Ewing and Lawrence communities.

As a member agency of Boys & Girls Clubs of America, we provide many national programs and services. To find out more about these programs and services log on to www.bgca.org.

Locally the Club serves the Mercer County community through the following goals.

- ★ Increase the number of Club members graduating from High School.
- ★ Increase the number of Club members entering college and or careers.
- ★ Increase Club member's social emotional development.
- ★ Ensure Club members are on grade level reading skills
- ★ Increase Club member's wellness levels

The Boys and Girls Club of Mercer County is guided by a Board of Directors of approximately 20 Directors who approve organizational policies, determine our strategic plan and oversee finances.

In addition, they employ a President & CEO who is accountable to the Board. The President & CEO administers all daily functions of the agency including personnel decisions. The Club's Leadership team plans, directs and coordinates the association's day-to-day activities.

Club Safety

At the heart of the Boys & Girls Club mission is the commitment to provide safe places for children to grow and learn. A fundamental prerequisite for the fulfillment of our mission is ensuring the safety of the young people we serve. All our policies and procedures are in place to ensure not only our members' safety, but the safety of our staff, volunteers, and the organization. Safety controls in our procedures regarding programs, members, facilities, aquatics and emergency management can be found throughout this handbook. Our Volunteer Handbook outlines safety policies regarding background checks, confidentiality, social media, proper interaction with members, etc. Each volunteer signs that they reviewed and will abide by these policies.



Programs and Services

Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County provides a variety of activities to our members in three core program areas:

- Summer Camp
 - Youth Camp
 - Teen Camp
- After School Programs
 - Ewing Schools (Lore, Antheil, Parkway) pick up from Fisher
 - Lawrence Schools – pick up from Slackwood,
 - Trenton Schools (Parker, Grant, Mott, Rivera, MLK, PJ Hill, Gregory, Cadwalader) pick up from numerous other.
 - Community Center locations
 - Centre Street, Trenton
 - Spruce Street, Lawrenceville
- Holiday Camp
- Tweens/Middle School
 - Tween Drop-in
- Teens
 - Teen Drop-In
 - College Access Program
 - Career Launch Program
 - Career Based Learning Experiences
 - Mentoring Program
 - Youth of the Year
 - Teen Enrichment Program
- Sports
 - Adult Soccer League
 - Summer Youth Soccer League
 - Youth Basketball
- Super Saturdays
- STEM
- Enrichment
- Volunteer Lead Initiatives
 - Bike Exchange
 - Garden Club
 - Chess Club



Locations

The Boys & Girls Club of Mercer County operates Clubs in two different settings: Shared Space Sites and our Community Center sites. Currently, there are 2 community center sites and 11 school-based sites in Mercer County.

Community Center sites are brick-and-mortar facilities that are owned by BGCMC and operate both during the school year and the summer. While each site is unique in its layout; all have an education center, gymnasium, age specific rooms, and teen center.

Our Free-Standing sites are the following:

- Centre Street, 212 Centre Street, Trenton NJ 08611
- Spruce Street, 1040 Spruce Street, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

Our Shared Space sites operate in local elementary and middle schools. These Clubs run the same Boys & Girls Club programming as our free-standing sites, but they utilize the school's gym, library, computer lab, & cafeteria after the school day has ended. Additionally, hours of operation may vary from traditional sites. Our Shared Space sites are:

- Cadwalader Elementary School;
- Grant Lower Middle School, Trenton;
- Rivera Community Middle School, Trenton;
- Mott Elementary School, Trenton;
- Gregory Elementary School, Trenton;
- Parker Lower Middle School, Trenton;
- PJ Hill Elementary School, Trenton
- MLK Elementary School, Trenton
- Antheil Elementary School, Ewing;
- Francis Lore Elementary, Ewing;
- Parkway Elementary, Ewing.

Volunteers

Definition of a Volunteer

A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the Club. A volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled by the Club prior to performance of services. A volunteer contributes time and services to assist the Club in the accomplishment of its mission. Volunteers shall not be considered employees of Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County.

Types of Volunteers:

- Core – a volunteer that provides services on a regular, scheduled basis and may continue providing service over many months and/or years.



- One Time – a volunteer that assists with a special event or project. Service hours and length of service will vary.
- Group Volunteers – an organization’s members volunteer together. Can be either short-term or on-going.
 - An example of an on-going group volunteer position would be tutoring Members once a week.
 - An example of a short-term group volunteer activity would be organizing a field day for one or all the Clubs.

Volunteer Application and Background Check

All volunteers must submit the appropriate volunteer application to be considered for a volunteer position. Volunteer applications can be obtained through the Director of Volunteer Services and Engagement, the Clubs, or the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County website (www.bgcmercer.org).

Core volunteers who volunteer more than three times in a calendar year must complete a background check prior to starting their volunteer experience. This is an on-line check through Sterling Volunteers which generally has a 1 day turn around.

In addition, a new background check must be completed each year for ongoing volunteers, you will receive a notification when it is time to re-up your background check.

Who Needs a Background Check?

- All on-going volunteers must submit a background check form at the same time they submit their application. Failure to submit a background check form will cause a delay in the application process. Volunteers will complete their online background check during volunteer onboarding.
- One-time volunteers do not need to submit a background check form. If a one-time volunteer wishes to continue the service on a more regular basis, they must then complete a background check form before further service can take place.
- Group volunteers who will be participating in a one-day volunteer activity do not need to submit a volunteer application, but will need to complete a day of caring form each time the volunteer.
- Groups planning to participate in an on-going or a multiple day volunteer opportunity need to complete background checks.

The background check process is to ensure the safety of our club members, staff, and volunteers while they are at the club locations. Volunteer background checks are used to ensure the safety of our members and to help us continue to provide a safe and positive place for kids.

Disqualification from Volunteer Participation

The following are examples of criminal offenses which will result in disqualification of eligibility to volunteer with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County:



- All crimes against children, including child pornography, child molestation, child abuse, abandonment, child neglect, enticing a child into a motor vehicle, structure, or isolated area, and endangering the welfare of a child
- Crimes involving sexual assault, rape, criminal sexual contact or lewdness
- Murder, manslaughter or homicide
- Stalking, kidnapping and related offenses involving restraint, imprisonment, or criminal coercion
- Crimes involving assault with a weapon or an assault that results in bodily harm
- Sale of controlled substances
- Terrorist threats
- Cruelty to animals
- Any attempt or conspiracy to commit any of the crimes listed
- Multiple offenses (misdemeanor or felony) over a period of time BGCMC reserves the right to re-screen any volunteer on a periodic or episodic basis as needed.

If a person is charged with any misconduct or offense, involvement with BGCMC as a volunteer may be suspended temporarily during the disposition or investigation of the occurrence.

Mutual Expectations

What BGCMC expects from volunteers:

1. Enthusiasm for position.
2. Maturity/Positive role models.
3. Ability to treat members with respect and dignity; and
4. Reliability and punctuality

What volunteers can expect from BGCMC

1. Positive recognition.
2. Support from staff.
3. Meaningful and impactful positions; and
4. Memories from Club Members

Equal Opportunity for Volunteers

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County will not discriminate against an otherwise qualified volunteer based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, color, religion, national origin, marital status, citizenship,



ancestry, veteran status, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation. Volunteers are expected to adhere to these same standards in the course of their service.

Volunteer Records

Volunteer records, including but not limited to applications, background checks, and any evaluations, are maintained at the administrative office on Centre Streets. Certain forms and information are maintained at the volunteer's Club location such as time logs, emergency contact information, and a copy of the application.

Voluntarism At-Will and Resignation/Termination

All volunteers have an at-will relationship with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County. An at-will relationship means volunteers are free to resign from their position at any time for any reason, just as BGCMC reserves the right to terminate any volunteer, at any time, with or without cause and without prior notice. A violation of the policies listed in this handbook may result in termination.

Trial Period & Club Transfers

BGCMC does not have a traditional trial period, if, at any time the volunteer is unsatisfied with their placement, they can request a transfer to a new position or a new Club location. Volunteers may request a transfer by contacting the Director of Volunteer Services. Remember each Club has its own unique personality based on the staff and members present, just because a volunteer does not fit well with one Club does not mean that the volunteer will not fit anywhere. Please consider transferring clubs prior to resigning from volunteering with BGCMC.

Attire and Grooming

All volunteers should be dressed in appropriate clothing or a Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County T-shirt and groomed in appropriate good taste. Remember you will be working with children in a relaxed environment and should be ready for anything.

While volunteers may wear casual clothes, attire that should not be worn includes:

- Clothing that does not fit correctly: too tight or too loose.
- Clothing that is faded, stained, discolored, torn, patched, ripped, frayed, or with missing buttons.
- Sandals, thongs, flip-flops, or similar footwear.
- Shorts (casual shorts are allowed in summer), halter tops, gym, athletic, or sweat clothes.
- Clothing with offensive slogans or pictures, e.g., profanity and nude or seminude pictures, offensive gestures, suggestive cartoons.
- Clothing with political slogans, derogatory words, gang colors, or advertisements for competitive products or services.
- Undergarments worn over regular clothing.
- Hats inside the building



A Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County T-shirt can be picked up by contacting the Director of Volunteer Services & Engagement, Ashley Nwankwo at anwankwo@bgcmercer.org or 609-392-3191 ext. 125. Volunteers are encouraged to wear their BGCMC shirts during their service, so they are easily identified by club members. Badges are available at each location as well; volunteers should wear the badges while in clubs and leave them at the club when the service is complete.

Attendance

The positions volunteers fill is critical to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County and should be performed on a regularly scheduled and timely basis. Volunteers are asked to commit to 1 hour every other week. The Club, staff, and volunteers may be the only consistent elements in a child's life; therefore, it is vital that you do your best to honor your commitment to our members. If you fail to show up or show up late, we may be faced with many disappointed children. If you are unable to attend or are running late, please contact the Club as soon as possible. If you cannot contact the Club, then call the Director of Volunteer Services and she will contact the Club. Please try to contact the Club first. Excessive absences may be the cause for termination.

Volunteer attendance is tracked by signing in and out of the Clubs. If a volunteer does not sign in OR out and does not report hours, it will be assumed that they were absent from their service.

Personal Belongings

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County assumes no responsibility for lost or stolen personal property. Each volunteer is responsible for his/her own belongings. We recommend taking the least number of personal items into the Club as possible.

Check with Club staff for a location to keep your belongings during your service, but remember they are not responsible if something goes missing.

Cell Phone Usage

Volunteers may keep their cell phones on them while serving at a Club. However, volunteers should not use their cell phones (whether texting or taking calls) while working with members. If a volunteer needs to take a call, they should discreetly step away and return when they have finished. Volunteers should alert a staff member that they are stepping out to take a call.

Volunteers should neither give members their cell phone or home number nor allow members to hold or play with their cell phones.

Volunteers should not take pictures of youth with their cell phone.

Weapons

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County prohibits anyone from possessing or carrying weapons of any kind on BGCMC property, in vehicles, or while on BGCMC time. Including but not limited to the following:

- Any form of weapon or explosive



- All firearms
- All knives, regardless of blade size

Any volunteer found in violation of this policy will be immediately terminated and lose their eligibility to volunteer with BGCMC in the future.

Alcohol/Drugs/Tobacco

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County certifies that it will comply with the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988 and will strive to maintain its facilities free of drug and alcohol abuse. Volunteers serving with BGCMC shall not: use or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any improperly used controlled substance during their time of service. Alcohol and illegal drugs are not to be brought onto any BGCMC properties.

If a volunteer is found to be under the influence of or in possession of alcohol or illegal drugs while on BGCMC properties, they will be immediately terminated and lose their eligibility to volunteer with BGCMC in the future.

BGCMC is a smoke free work environment. Smoking is prohibited in the buildings, at entrances to buildings, and in the presence of Club Members, parents, and staff.

Insurance

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County does not provide accident insurance coverage or workers compensation for volunteers. Please consult your own insurance agents regarding the extension of personal insurance to include community volunteer work.

All volunteers are covered for liability while volunteering with the Boys & Girls Club under our liability insurance. They also fall under the state of New Jersey's good Samaritan law.

Snow/Inclement Weather

During the winter months, we may close the Clubs due to weather conditions. Club closings will be posted on the club's social media. It is the volunteer's responsibility to check for closings. You can feel free to reach out to the Director of Volunteer Services, or the Site Director. If the Clubs remain open but you are unable to attend because of the weather, please follow the normal absentee procedures.

Media Relations & Social Media

Volunteers may not speak to the media or allow access to the Club. If a volunteer encounters the media during their service, they should defer to the Club Director.

BGCMC prioritizes child safety and child privacy, as well as creating positive, respectful, and appropriate relationships between our members and our volunteers. Social Media including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, etc. may impact the safety and privacy of our club members. BGCMC asks that all volunteers refrain from posting any pictures, information, or comments from their volunteer experience on social media.



All volunteers should refrain from connecting or communicating with any member of our clubs, or members of their families, on any form of social media. These interactions are inappropriate and additionally jeopardize the safety of our members.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged and/or confidential information, both written and verbal, that they may be exposed to during their service. This includes information about members, other volunteers, staff, or The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County organization.

Working with Club Members

Volunteer & Member Interaction

Volunteers will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity. Volunteers should be aware of their surroundings and avoid any situation that would result in the volunteer being behind closed doors and alone with any members. It is vital that adult volunteers should always have another adult present when working with members in-person or online. This is both for the safety of the club members, staff, and volunteers.

General guidelines to follow when interacting with Members:

- Introduce yourself to the members
- Get down to their level so you are not speaking down to them
- Treat members with dignity and respect
- Be accepting
- Be dependable.
- Keep your promises
- Do not take members out of designated areas without prior approval
- Any concerns about a member should be reported immediately to Club Director

Volunteers should not have contact with Members outside of the Club and/or Club activities. If a volunteer has prior contact with a member (any contact with members before the start of the volunteer's initial service), the volunteer needs to alert both the Club Director and their immediate supervisor. Volunteers should never transport members; members should never be in the car of a volunteer. All transportation must be provided by club staff in club vehicles.

Discipline

Volunteers are not expected to take disciplinary measures into their own hands. If a serious behavioral problem arises with a member, alert the Club Director or Program Director and they will handle the problem.



Gratuities and Soliciting

Volunteers are not allowed to accept gifts or tips from members or members' families and friends. Homemade items, pictures, etc. are not covered under this policy and are okay to accept. We do not want our members to feel obligated to reward the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County volunteers for the service they provide. BGCMC does not permit the solicitation of any kind, including the collection of funds, pledges, circulation of petitions, distribution of non-BGCMC literature, and other similar types of activity during a volunteer's service time.

Transportation

All transportation of Club members will occur in Club-owned vehicles. Volunteers are prohibited from transporting Club Members in their personal vehicles. Volunteers cannot drive Club vehicles.

Abuse and Neglect

Any volunteer who suspects that a child has been abused or neglected must immediately notify the Club Director. The Club Director will take various steps to investigate, notify the appropriate internal and external authorities, and document the situation.

To report child abuse and neglect in New Jersey, you need to:

Call the State Central Registry (SCR) hotline at 1-877 NJ ABUSE.

Give as much information as you can, including the child's name and age, address, the city and county, name of the parents, and a brief and succinct description of what you have seen or suspected.



Emergency, Accident, and Incident

If a volunteer witnesses an accident or incident, they should immediately alert the nearest Club staff member and not get directly involved. During an accident or incident, volunteers should help remove members, who are not involved, in the situation and engage them in other activities. Volunteers should remain alert for instructions from Club staff and be willing to aid when asked/needed. When an accident or injury to a volunteer occurs, Club staff will make an immediate assessment about whether to call 911 or have the volunteer seek medical treatment.



Working with Club Staff

Volunteer & Staff Relationship

Volunteers and staff are partners in implementing the mission and programs of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County. It is essential for the proper operation of this relationship that each partner understands and respects the needs and abilities of the other. BGCMC strongly discourages volunteers from dating or pursuing romantic or sexual relationships with any BGCMC staff. BGCMC reserves the right to transfer volunteers should that be deemed necessary due to a personal relationship that affects the Club workplace.

Grievance Procedure

The Grievance procedure is viewed as a constructive tool utilized to resolve grievances between volunteers and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County staff or a volunteer's grievances with their placement. All attempts need to be made to resolve grievances informally with the affected parties. When resolving grievances ensure all appropriate information is obtained and the situation is dealt with professionally and appropriately. If or when volunteers cannot resolve issues informally, the following steps need to be followed:

1. Volunteers need to submit their grievance in writing to and consult with their immediate supervisor within 30 days.
2. If the supervisor and volunteer cannot resolve the issue in a mutually satisfactory manner, the volunteer will submit the issue and the description of the grievance in writing within five (5) working days to the Club Director, and Director of Volunteer Services, if the Club Director is the supervisor of the volunteer, the information needs to be submitted to the Director of Volunteer Services and the President and CEO.
3. Upon receipt of the grievance, the leadership will convene a meeting to address the grievance in a timely manner. No legal or outside counsel is permitted at these meetings. After the meeting, the leadership will put the decision in writing.
4. The Director of Volunteer Services is a resource for both volunteers and Club staff. If at any time a volunteer does not feel the Club staff are handling the situation in an unbiased manner the volunteer can request that the Director of Volunteer Services step in.
5. At any point, since the volunteer position is an at-will position, the volunteer may leave their role. However, it is recommended that the above steps be followed prior to leaving.

Harassment

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County prohibits any form of harassment or ridicule on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, marital status, citizenship, ancestry, veteran's status, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by Federal, state, or local law. It is the policy of BGCMC to provide all volunteers with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, including implied or expressed forms of sexual harassment.



Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can take the following forms:

1. Suggestive remarks, jokes, or other sexual contacts that interfere with another person's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.
2. Personnel decisions made by a supervisor based on the volunteer's submission to or rejection of sexual advances
3. Submission to a sexual advance is used as a condition of keeping or getting a job, whether expressed in explicit or implicit terms.

Any volunteer who feels subjected to harassment of any form should immediately report it to the Director of Volunteer Services. The director will ensure the report is processed properly. At this point, the volunteer may request to be transferred to a new position and/or a new location. If a report against a volunteer is filed, the volunteer will be suspended from service until an investigation has been completed. If the investigation proves the volunteer has not committed an act of harassment, the volunteer may return to their position or request a transfer. If a volunteer has been found in violation of the policy, the volunteer will be terminated and become ineligible for future volunteer activities with BGCMC.

Volunteer Acknowledgement Form

I have received a copy of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County Volunteer Handbook and reviewed the Volunteer Orientation PowerPoint and have been afforded the opportunity to ask questions regarding their content. I understand that I should consult with the Director of Volunteer Services if I have any further questions regarding the policies and procedures listed in this handbook and orientation PowerPoint.

Since the information and policies described in the BGCMC handbook and orientation are subject to change at the discretion of BGCMC, I acknowledge that revision to the Volunteer Handbook and orientation may occur. BGCMC reserves the right to make changes in content or application as it deems appropriate, and these changes may be implemented even if they have not been communicated and may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies. I understand that I have an at-will relationship with BGCMC. Accordingly, either BGCMC or I can terminate the relationship, with or without cause, at any time. Furthermore, I acknowledge that this handbook is neither a contract of employment or volunteering nor a legal document. Although some or all the policies or procedures may have been explained to me verbally, I understand that it is my responsibility to fully read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

Volunteer's Printed Name _____

Volunteer's Signature Date _____ Phone # _____