



Volunteer Policy

Utopian Academy for the Arts recognizes the research-based support and impact of parents being engaged in supporting the education of their student(s). Multiple research studies show the positive impact on student motivation, positive behaviors, and increased student achievement when parents are actively engaged both in and outside of the school. Parents who volunteer are better able to serve as advocates for the student and supporters of efforts to improve school culture and overall performance.

Purpose

This policy establishes the requirements all individuals must satisfy before volunteering with Utopian Academy for the Arts (UAFA), consistent with Georgia law, State Board of Education (SBOE) rule, and federal student-privacy requirements. It applies to all volunteers, including parents, guardians, community members, university tutors, and National Service members serving in any capacity, compensated or not.

Required Documentation & Compliance

- Background Check & Sex Offender Registry Screening: Level 2 volunteers must be cleared via the National Sex Offender Registry and Level 3 volunteers must undergo a federal background check, including screening to confirm they are not listed on the National or Georgia Sex Offender Registry, prior to volunteering (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211.1; O.C.G.A. § 42-1-15). Overnight chaperones and volunteers with unsupervised student access must additionally complete FBI and Georgia Bureau of Investigation fingerprint-based criminal history screening (O.C.G.A. § 35-3-34.2).
- Mandatory Reporter Training: All volunteers must complete Mandated Reporter training and sign an acknowledgment of their duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect (SBOE Rule 160-4-8-.04; O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5).
- FERPA Training: All volunteers with any potential access to student records or information must complete FERPA training addressing the limited circumstances under which school officials with a legitimate educational interest may access such records (34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)).

Volunteer Levels

- Level 1 — No student interaction (e.g., facility or grounds work when school is not in session). Requires a sign-in and presentation of identification.
- Level 2 — Direct student interaction with other adults always present. Requires background check clearance (including sex offender registry), Mandated Reporter training, FERPA training, and a signed Release and Waiver of Liability form.
- Level 3 — Unsupervised student interaction (e.g., chaperoning, tutoring). Requires fingerprint-based background check clearance, Mandated Reporter training, FERPA training, and a signed Release and Waiver of Liability form. Clearance is valid for two years.

Registration, Identification & Conduct

- Level 3 volunteers should register at least two weeks before a scheduled activity to allow time for fingerprinting and background check processing at the volunteers expense.
- All volunteers must present photo ID and receive a visitor/volunteer badge at the school's reception area upon arrival.
- Volunteers do not have access to confidential student information or systems such as Infinite Campus.
- Volunteers must be 18 or older, act as positive role models, and comply with all UAFA guidelines, chaperone responsibilities, and dress code standards described in the Volunteer Handbook.

Disqualification

School administrators may exclude an individual from Level 2 or 3 volunteer activities based on background check results, sex offender registry status, or other justified concerns. Excluded individuals may still participate in Level 1 activities and attend public school events.