

Wesley Chapel Mission Center



Volunteer Manual

Helping children thrive: body, mind, and soul

Hello and welcome to Wesley Chapel Mission Center! We are excited you have chosen to volunteer with us.

This manual is designed to answer some of the most basic questions you may have as a volunteer. Informed volunteers are empowered volunteers; so please do not hesitate to ask for clarification on anything you read.

As a volunteer you will support and strengthen the programs you're placed in. Yes, you will help in passing out snacks; yes, you will help to keep the kids on task; but the most important thing you will be doing is building relationships with students.

So it is with great anticipation I look forward to seeing what God will do through you and for you here at Wesley Chapel Mission Center.

Sincerely,

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What is WESLEY CHAPEL MISSION CENTER?

MISSION

We minister to our Over-the-Rhine children and families by demonstrating God's unconditional love, nurturing personal relationships with Jesus Christ, providing educational programs, guiding social and moral development and collaborating within the community.

VISION

Wesley Chapel Mission Center is a guiding light and trusted, loving, safe haven that empowers children and families in Over-the-Rhine to demonstrate Christ-like decisions and behaviors that transform the community.

HISTORY

Wesley Chapel Mission Center, an extension ministry of the United Methodist Church, was created from the resources, dreams, and love of the former Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church.

The church served downtown Cincinnati and Over-the-Rhine for 200 years. After the Church closed in 2002, Wesley Chapel Mission Center was formed to continue Christian service in Over-the-Rhine.

Wesley Chapel Mission Center was started to connect urban children with the love and grace of God. It provides children with a safe place to go after school and during the summer—a place where they can have their physical, academic, emotional and social needs met in a Christian environment.

How does WCMC work to fulfill this Mission/Vision?

PreK-6th Grade After School Program

High energy, after school care designed to empower PreK-6th grade students to succeed at school and beyond. *Volunteers attend from 2:00pm – 5:15pm on days that Cincinnati Public Schools are open.*

This program provides:

- A safe place for elementary school students to have their academic, physical, emotional and spiritual needs met in a caring Christian environment.
- A positive alternative for children who might otherwise be on their own after school.
- Homework assistance, recreation, social interaction, Bible lessons, healthy snacks and creative activities.

7-12th Grade After School Program

Unless an alternative schedule has been arranged with the High School Coordinator, volunteers attend from 2:30pm – 6:00pm on days that Cincinnati Public Schools are open.

This program provides:

- A safe place for high school students to have their academic, physical, emotional and spiritual needs met in a caring Christian environment.
- Learning that goes beyond academics. It encourages students to explore new things through life skills training, career development, and community outreach.
- A partnership with families to help students become who God has created them to be. Here they will be challenged to take ownership of their actions and to display positive behavior.

Junior Assistant Program

A job program which allows active participants in our high school program to apply, interview and be hired to work at WCMC.

This program provides:

- Practical life skills such as how to fill out a time sheet, open a bank account, file tax forms, etc.
- Soft skills such as how to engage with students, build positive relationships with coworkers and handle employer evaluations.

STAR Club “Science Technology Arithmetic Reading”

A Saturday-morning tutoring program offering remedial academic assistance to give children in grades PreK–12 the fundamental building blocks of knowledge necessary to succeed in school.

Volunteers attend from 10:20am – 12:30pm.

This program provides:

- A healthy breakfast
- **One-on-one** academic assistance supplementary to regular school work and customized to each student’s individual needs

SUMMER PROGRAM

Our summer camp is open to children who have completed PreK–6th grade and runs for six weeks each summer. *Volunteers attend from 11:30am-4:00pm.*

This program provides:

- Academic engagement designed to help children retain what they learned during the school year.
- Spiritual enrichment that encourages children and youth to be a light in their community.
- Fun activities that peak the children's interest.

Jr./Sr. High School Summer Camp

This program is designed for students who have completed 7th-12th grade. It offers them safe, productive activities to do for six weeks of each summer.

Volunteer hours are based on each day's activities.

This program provides:

- Tours of several local colleges
- Job shadowing at a variety of businesses
- Field trips to local parks and playgrounds
- Continued Christian and academic education

SUPER SATURDAY

An afternoon planned and implemented by a group of volunteers for children in grades PreK–8. *Volunteers attend from 12:00pm – 3:30pm.*

This program provides:

- Opportunities for community engagement
- A chance to recruit new students into our programming
- A safe place for school-aged children to play and have fun

What are my responsibilities during programs?

At Wesley Chapel Mission Center there are four basic components to our programs. They are all present in the after school and summer programs. In other programs, only some activities will be included.

1. Bible

First and foremost, we are followers of Christ and desire to encourage our students to grow in their relationship with God. Each time students come into our buildings they can expect to hear Scripture read and to pray.

- During this time, modeling appropriate behaviors is of great importance. If the students see you active and engaged, they will be also.
- If you are unfamiliar with the text or are unsure how to contribute, please just sit quietly and listen while encouraging the students to do so as well. Feel free to talk with staff about how you can assist.

2. HOMEWORK

A portion of each day is set aside for the students to complete their homework. You may be assigned to work with a specific student one-on-one or to provide general assistance in a homework space.

- If you are helping with homework, make sure you help students find/discover/learn rather than just giving them the answers. If you aren't sure how to help, ask a staff member for assistance.
- Students who do not bring homework will be provided with academic work or academic games. There is always something for them to do.
- When finished, please check their work and then have them report to a staff member who will provide them with extra materials if necessary.

3. SNACK

After helping to pass out the food, you can sit and share a snack with the students. We use snack as a time to model the family meal. It is a mostly unstructured time where you can build relationships with the students while using good table manners, modeling appropriate conversation and sharing about your day.

- Snack should be eaten at the table while sitting in a chair. We ask this of our volunteers and staff as well.
- There are no seconds on prepackaged snacks, but the students may have seconds on other snacks.
- At the end of snack, remind the children at your table to clean up their areas.

4. ENRICHMENT

Depending on the day, this will take a lot of different forms. The goal during this time is to have the children experience and participate in learning in a more “hands on” or active environment.

- During this time, just take your cues from the staff. If the students are supposed to be quiet, help keep them quiet. If they are supposed to sing, sing along, etc.
- This is a great time for you to share your own skills/talents. Talk to the Program Coordinator about an appropriate time to do so.

What policies should I be aware of as a volunteer?

1. Volunteers are most valuable when we know they are coming. If your schedule changes, please email or call the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible. If you are unable to make a shift, you may reschedule for another shift.
2. Volunteers should plan to arrive in a timely manner, sign in and put on a nametag. The program coordinator will then brief you on the day's activities. If you plan to arrive later, please talk with the volunteer coordinator in advance.
3. We ask that our staff and volunteers dress modestly while at the center. Specifically, all dresses and shorts should be fingertip length. When wearing leggings, long shirts should be worn to cover the backside. Please no midriff, low-cut or political shirts. Hats are to be worn outdoors only.
4. Put cell phones away. Students are not allowed to have out electronic devices; therefore, we ask our volunteers to keep them out of sight. We want to make sure our focus is on the children.
5. Any pictures taken while at WCMC may NOT be posted to social media without prior permission from staff.
6. Students/staff are not allowed outside food, chewing gum, or beverages, so we ask that you refrain as well.
7. Do not unlock or open doors. We keep all doors locked during program hours. Let a staff member know if someone is at the door and they will either let them in or speak with them outside.
8. Remember that you are the adult and the role model. Children will look at your behavior and it will tell them more than words about how they should behave and the attitude they should have for the day.
9. Positive physical touch can be very important to a child but should be initiated by the child. Some of our children come from situations where even the most innocent touch is a cause for concern for them.
10. We are "hands-off" with the children. That means no piggyback rides, no children on your lap and no roughhousing. Often the children see things like piggyback rides as "favoritism." If a child does try to sit in your lap, just gently have them sit beside you.

11. There should always be three sets of eyes in a room. This means that you should NEVER be alone in a room with a child.
12. If you witness behavior which you deem worthy of consequences or punishment, please let a staff member know immediately. The paid staff is responsible for addressing any difficult behaviors. We do however want you to feel empowered to provide positive reinforcement and to intervene in minor behavioral issues.
13. If you see or hear anything from or about a child that causes you concern, please speak to a staff member as soon as possible. Even if you are uncertain about whether it is serious, it is better for staff to be informed.
14. In an emergency, stay calm and help children follow instructions from staff.

What do I do in case of severe threat of danger?

All staff wear whistles around their necks. The whistle is only to be blown in case of severe threat of danger. This may be a fight that has broken out, a gun or gunfire, or some other threat to the children where staff deems it necessary to have them immediately stay still. If you hear a long loud blow on the whistle you should drop to the ground immediately and lie flat. When the staff member judges it safe, you will hear a second, long blow on the whistle. At this point you will get up and move to safety.

How should I handle behavior issues?

As a leadership staff, we have discussed and prayed about the issue of discipline. We have wrestled with how we can show the children the love of Christ while continuing to challenge them to be better.

Through this process, an age appropriate system of rewards and consequences was created. It allows multiple opportunities for the students to make better choices and continue to participate. However, if they are unable to turn their day around, students may be asked to leave.

Some things to keep in mind...

- A volunteer will never be asked to dismiss a child a child. That should be left to the paid staff. Please feel free to communicate with staff about both outstanding positive and negative behaviors.
- We want to focus on being pro-active instead of reactive. That means we interact with the children before they misbehave. We are actively involved at all times watching for any signs that we may need to intervene.

- We want to first focus on the positive – in one another and the children. Rather than acknowledging and identifying every minor negative behavior, we want to encourage and applaud the good behavior we see.
- We want the kids to know that God's grace is new every morning and so is WCMC's. Even if a child is dismissed one day, they will be welcomed back with open arms the next.
- Showing the children Christ's love requires a balance of firmness and mercy where we can applaud their successes of better behavior while consistently holding them to a higher standard.

How can I be an effective volunteer?

- **Take initiative.** Most of the time we will try to have a specific role/activity planned for you to participate in and we will try to be clear about our expectations. You should also feel free to take on obvious tasks such as engaging with a child who may be getting restless, helping to serve snack, or assisting a child with homework/crafts.
- **Be involved.** Plan to dive into activities and opportunities whenever they arise and help the children do the same. For instance, after snack, guide the children to where they need to be and sit with them, modeling good listening/participation skills.
- **Be patient.** There are children who need long-term academic, social and spiritual support; and there are usually no quick solutions to the difficulties they encounter and cause. We are in it for the long haul and there are many ups and downs along the way.
- **Support each other.** It is important to us that the children see a united, consistent "front" from the staff and volunteers. We need to work together to support each other's decisions (even if you have to ask for clarification later). If you are uncertain about what a child is asking to do or have, be sure to clarify with one of the staff.
- **Use specific praise.** Telling children they are doing a good job has a more positive response when you can tell them exactly how they are doing well.