[Insert school district logo]

**Food Services**

**Volunteer Guide**

[20## - 20##]

Thank you for contributing your time to help us improve the way that our kids eat. You are playing a vital role in helping our school lunch program grow by instilling our students with healthy eating habits that will sustain them throughout their lifetime.

Our Vision:

[Insert your district’s vision statement]

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**ABOUT OUR PROGRAM**

[Insert a brief introduction about your district’s school lunch program. It may include the mission and vision of your department and other interesting facts about how your food service department operates such as:

* + The number of team members who make up your department
  + The number of meals that your team prepares daily
  + The percentage of food that is scratch-cooked
  + If you procure local or organic produce
  + Which local farms supply what ingredients
  + Anything else the food service team does to ensure that healthy food is served]

**VOLUNTEER POLICIES**

Insert introduction on your district’s volunteer policies and then edit the following policies as needed.]

**Background Checks**

Background checks and fingerprinting are required of volunteers to ensure safety of the students, employees, and other community members.

**Check-In Procedures**

All volunteers must sign in at the front desk of the school each time they volunteer. This is vital for student, employee, and volunteer safety.

**Uniform and Hygiene Policies**

All volunteers must abide by the following uniform and hygiene policies. Please review the rules for both dress code and hygiene and come physically prepared to your volunteer sessions. [Insert specific district dress code if applicable]

* Wear full-length pants in the style of slacks (sweat pants, leggings, or other tights-style pants are not acceptable).
* Wear closed-toe shoes and socks. Shoes should have composition soles and heels to prevent slips and falls. Canvas sneakers, open toes, open heels, sandals, or high-heels are not permissible.
* Hair must be pulled up from the shoulders and tied back.
* Volunteers should keep their fingernails clean, trimmed, and maintained so that the edges and surfaces are not rough and are easy to clean.
* A food service volunteer may not wear fingernail polish or artificial nails when working with exposed food.
* Proper use of gloves is essential in preventing cross-contamination and keeping children safe from food-borne illness. Always use gloves when directly handling ready-to-eat food.
* Always wash hands before and after putting on gloves.

**Proper Conduct and Interactions with Students**

When volunteering with students there are certain codes of conduct to follow including interactions to avoid:

* Avoid touching students.
* Do not hug a student. If a student approaches you for a hug, make every effort so that the hug does not take place. You can put your hands up in the air, turn to the side, or verbally explain to the student that you cannot hug them.

\*If you have any questions concerning appropriate interactions with students please ask [contact name and number of human resources, food service coordinator, etc.]

**VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES & EVENTS**

[Edit the following selections to reflect your volunteer opportunities]

There are various ways in which volunteers can help out in the cafeteria. See below for descriptions of each type activity or event and related volunteer roles.

**Salad Bar Supervision**

Salad bars offer a wide variety of fruits and vegetables in addition to at least one protein and grain option if recognized as a full reimbursable meal. Younger students benefit from adult direction when using the salad bar; this includes guidance in trying new foods, making a colorful plate, choosing appropriately sized portions, following proper etiquette, etc. Supervising the salad bar involves standing by the bar and directing students as well as following up to make sure that they have finished their salads. This volunteer opportunity is available on a regular basis.

**Tastings**

Tasting events not only provide a special free sample to students, but also an educational opportunity for each type of tasting. The various types of tastings include:

* **Menu Item Tasting**: This tasting is hosted the day before the sample is being served for lunch, which allows kids to try food from the menu without paying for a full meal. Volunteers help with portioning and handing out samples and collecting student surveys about the tastings. When handing out the samples, tell the students the meal will be on the menu tomorrow. Although allergens will be announced to the entire cafeteria, please be aware of the allergens present in the sample and alert every student. All students, whether they have brought lunch from home or not, are offered a sample.
* **Fresh Produce Tastings:** Kids are given samples of fresh, raw produce to experience a food in its unprocessed state. These tastings include side-by-side comparisons, sensory engagement, and sometimes a visit from a local farmer who will speak about growing the food.
* **Recipe Development Tastings**: Kids are given samples of new recipes to help fine-tune and further development. This tasting gives students decision-making power and pride in their involvement.

**Note:** For all tasting events, we ask that volunteers talk to the students, get feedback on their likes and dislikes, and sometimes conduct surveys for more formal data gathering.

**Chef Demos**

Chef Demos are similar to tastings, but have the added appeal of watching a chef cook. Either a district chef or local, guest chef does the demo cooking. Volunteers will help set up the cooking station, keep the station organized and stocked with freshly cooked samples, as well as assist the chef with any other tasks as needed.

**Rainbow Days**

Rainbow Days are a special event geared around the salad bar. On Rainbow Days every student in the school is offered a free salad from the salad bar. The students are challenged to “Make a rainbow” on their tray by taking and eating at least 3 colors.

Volunteers are stationed at the salad bar to encourage students to try new foods and remind them about proper salad bar etiquette. Additional volunteers walk around the cafeteria handing out stickers to the students who have eaten their salads; it’s important to make sure that kids eat what they take. This is a valuable lesson in not being wasteful.

**CAFETERIA VOLUNTEER HOW-TOS**

**How to Properly Sample Food**

First, introduce yourself to everyone in the kitchen and ask about best practice procedures. Open communication with cafeteria staff is always helpful. Don’t be shy. Here are next steps for properly sampling food:

* Volunteers should have their hair pulled back. Food services will provide you with a hairnet that must be worn in the cafeteria.
* Wash your hands and wear the gloves provided by the food service team before handling any food. If surfaces such as door handles, body appendages, etc. are touched while wearing gloves, you must discard them and put on a new pair.
* Samples may or may not ready for handing out when you arrive. If you are asked to help portion samples, be mindful of the cafeteria staff and the space they need to perform their operational duties. If not indicated, ask where you should set up. Portion cups, boats, and/or plates will be provided.
* Volunteers must know if the sample contains allergens and alert every student. Good questions to ask the cafeteria staff in advance are: “*What allergens does this contain?”* and “*Is the sample vegetarian?”*
* In some cases you will be responsible for handing out surveys and writing utensils as well as assisting students in filling them out.

**How to Speak to Students About Food**

The following list of conversation topics will be helpful when engaging students about food and healthy eating habits:

* Talk about how eating a good, balanced, and healthy meal makes them feel. Tell them that eating this way not only makes them feel better, run faster, jump higher, play harder, but also makes your eyes sharper, your skin glow, your bodies feel strong, etc.
* Talk about what it feels like to be full. How do they know when they are full? Talk about the difference between being sufficiently full and stuffed.
* Start a conversation about the difference between organic and non-organic food, or about why it is important to eat foods that are considered local. Call attention to any local or organic products on the menu or salad bar.
* Talk to students about each ingredient in their lunch. Show how a school meal satisfies each of the food groups. Reference the USDA’s MyPlate poster or Chef Ann’s Meal Wheel if either one is hanging in the cafeteria.
* Ask students who are going through the salad bar line to try one new item. After they have, talk to them about what they tried.
* Challenge students to get one item from every food group on their plate. You can help them in this process.
* Talk about some of their favorite recipes from home. Ask the student if they have ever helped to prepare the recipe and if they know how their family got it.
* Look at each food item on the plate and try to identify where it came from. Is it too cold in your state to grow a particular type of produce? How far away do you think it came from then?
* Discuss the differences between unprocessed and processed food. Ask students to engage their five senses—sight, smell, touch, taste, and even hearing in the case of a chef demo. Can they note differences between fresh, raw produce and cooked?

**FOOD SERVICE CONTACTS**

[name of volunteer coordinator]

Volunteer Coordinator

Email: [email of volunteer coordinator]

Office: [phone # of volunteer coordinator]

[name of food service director]

Food Services Director

Email: [email of food service director]

Office: [phone # of food service director]

Food Services Office Number: [main phone # of food services]

Please visit out our website at [food services website] for more information about our food program.