

GIRLS INC. OF CHATTANOOGA

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



Inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to Girls Inc. of Chattanooga! We are thrilled to have you join our team of dedicated volunteers who are committed to inspiring and empowering girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Your willingness to share your time, energy, and talents makes a tremendous impact on our ability to serve and uplift the families in our community.

As a volunteer, you are an essential part of our mission. At Girls Inc., we believe that every girl deserves the opportunity to grow up healthy, educated, and independent. Through your support, whether as a mentor, program assistant, or event volunteer, you are helping to create a safe, nurturing environment where girls can explore new possibilities, develop leadership skills, and build the confidence they need to achieve their goals.

In this handbook, you will find all the information you need to get started. It outlines our policies, procedures, and expectations to ensure a positive experience for both you and the girls we serve. If you ever have questions, need support, or simply want to share feedback, please do not hesitate to reach out. Our team is here to support you every step of the way.

We value and appreciate your contributions to Girls Inc. of Chattanooga and look forward to seeing the positive impact you will make. Thank you for choosing to be part of our mission to inspire and equip all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.

Boldly Yours,



Toccora Petersen, MPH
CEO, Girls Inc. of Chattanooga



ABOUT GIRLS INC. OF CHATTANOOGA

About the Volunteer Handbook

This handbook contains everything you need to know about Girls Inc. of Chattanooga's volunteer experience! It is a required reading for all our volunteers and is intended to ensure that you and the Girls Inc. participants have a great experience. It will guide you through signing up, as well as introduce you to our policies and procedures. Use the volunteer opportunity descriptions to determine what type of position best suits your interests and availability.

Mission & Vision

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga inspires and equips all girls to be strong, smart, and bold through intentional opportunities and experiences. We provide every girl with the tools to be her whole self today and tomorrow.

History

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga was founded in 1961 and has served more than 40,000 girls from across Hamilton and Marion County with programs available to in-school, after-school, and outside-of-school in seasonal camps. Together with donors, the collective commitment of Girls Inc. supporters has prepared hundreds of girls to grow into inspirational leaders at home and across the country.

Population Served

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga provides programming to all girls, ages 5-21, with a focus on the girls who need us most. On average, we support 900 girls with semester-long programs and seasonal camps. Each year, we make intentional efforts to serve more girls in more areas. Many of those girls return repeatedly to participate in multiple programs, semester after semester.

Why Volunteer?

Whether volunteering in the classroom or aiding operations, Girls Inc. volunteers are essential in making a difference in our girls' lives. Program volunteers serve as positive role models for the girls by listening, guiding, and encouraging them. Operational volunteers donate their time to the organization so that we can continue to deliver high-quality programming. Corporate and group volunteer opportunities can be tailored to meet the skills and interests of your organization and can range from painting classrooms, guest speaker opportunities, or providing one-on-one reading support.

GETTING STARTED

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Girls Inc. of Chattanooga. We are grateful for your commitment to making a difference in the lives of those we serve. To ensure a safe, positive, and meaningful volunteer experience, please complete the following onboarding steps.

BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

Complete the Online Volunteer Application

Submit the online volunteer application by visiting [Be a Volunteer](#). Please allow approximately 30 minutes to complete the application.

The application collects the information needed to match you with appropriate volunteer opportunities and includes the Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement. By submitting your application, you acknowledge that you have read, understood, and agree to abide by the confidentiality requirements and volunteer expectations of Girls Inc. of Chattanooga

Review the Volunteer Handbook

All volunteers are expected to become familiar with its contents, as it outlines our mission, volunteer expectations, policies, procedures, safety guidelines, and available volunteer opportunities. The handbook serves as your primary reference throughout your volunteer experience.

Attend Volunteer Orientation

Volunteer Orientation introduces you to Girls Inc. of Chattanooga 's mission, vision, values, programs, and organizational structure. During the session, our staff will review volunteer roles, expectations, policies, procedures, and best practices to help prepare you for a successful volunteer experience.

Orientation sessions are offered monthly in person or virtually. After completing your volunteer application, our staff will reach out to schedule your orientation.

Complete the Required Background Check

To help ensure the safety and well-being of our participants, all volunteers must successfully complete a background screening before serving in any volunteer capacity that involves interaction with program participants.

Within one week of attending Volunteer Orientation, you will receive an email invitation from Sterling Volunteers at the email address provided on your application. Please follow the instructions in the email to complete your background screening.

Volunteers are responsible for the \$13 background screening fee. A copy of Girls Inc. of Chattanooga's Volunteer Background Screening Policy is available upon request.

Schedule Your Volunteer Assignment

After your background screening has been successfully completed and reviewed, Girls Inc. of Chattanooga will contact you regarding your volunteer status and upcoming volunteer opportunities. Current volunteer opportunities can be found on [ihelp Chattanooga](#). We ask that volunteer also utilize this site to sign up for volunteer shifts, after signing up you will receive a calendar invite with day of point of contact and any additional needed information.

Begin Your Volunteer Service

Please arrive on time for each scheduled volunteer shift. Upon arrival, report to the designated point of contact to sign in before beginning your volunteer responsibilities.

We appreciate your commitment to Girls Inc. of Chattanooga and look forward to partnering with you to make a lasting impact in our community.



THE GIRLS INC. EXPERIENCE

Mentoring Relationships

Trusting, and mentoring relationships with trained staff and volunteers are essential in helping young people attain skills that lead to success, especially for girls growing up in low-income communities. Girls Inc. volunteer mentors are expected to uphold an environment in which girls feel that adults can help them, respect them, and listen to them.

Intentional Programming

Holistic, compensatory, and intentional programming exposes girls to a variety of experiences and options they might otherwise not have had access to. Girls Inc. programs are delivered in an organized setting where girls get a chance to create and build. Volunteer mentors are expected to help ensure this organized and stimulating environment is maintained.

Interactive Activities

Interactive activities develop and promote girls' critical thinking skills. Activities at Girls Inc. are designed to put girls in charge of their learning and allow them to constantly try new activities and reflect upon their learnings.

Research-Based Curricula

Girls Inc. is committed to providing girls with a relevant, field-tested, and research-based curriculum. Girls Inc. program leaders utilize both informal and formal program quality assessment methods, including the facilitation of feedback from girls, families, staff, and volunteers.

Sustained Exposure

Young people with regular, sustained exposure to development programs exhibit better civic engagement, social competencies, and academic performance, among other things. Volunteer mentors are encouraged to create mentoring relationships with girls that will encourage them to stay in programming.



PROGRAMS

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga offers **in-school and after school programs** centered around academic enrichment, healthy living, and life skills. Our research-based programs are intended to change the statistics, providing girls the opportunity to explore, grow, and succeed.

LITERACY

The Bookworm Club: 1st-3rd Grades

An **after school program** focused on the five fundamental building blocks of literacy. The program aims to inspire confidence, proficiency, and a love for reading and writing.

Club LIT(eracy): 4th-5th Grades

An **after school program** advancing literacy comprehension and fluency by fostering a love for literature and providing personalized support. Girls will build confidence in their reading abilities, laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning.



STEAM

Tiny Techs: 1st-3rd Grades

An **after school program** introducing the fascinating world of STEAM careers. Through hands-on activities and interactive projects, girls will envision themselves as future leaders and innovators.

TechKnow Girl: 4th-5th Grades

An **after school program** igniting a passion for science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Participants collaborate on practical challenges and experiments, develop problem-solving skills, and enhance their creativity.

LEADERSHIP

IMPACT: 9th- 12th Grades

An **after school** program equipping participants with the confidence and expertise to advocate strongly, conduct impactful research, and deliver compelling presentations, preparing them for future academic and professional success.

Teen Leadership Institute: 10th-12th Grades

A program focusing on job and career readiness through career assessments, job shadowing, resume building, volunteer opportunities, and the goal of placing them in a paid summer internship.

Girls Take Charge: 6th-8th Grades

An **in-school** program inspiring young girls to cultivate their strengths, embrace positive values, and acquire essential skills that will empower them to excel both inside and outside the classroom.

S.H.E: She Can, She Will: 8th-12th Grades

An **after school** program celebrating the legacies of remarkable women throughout history and their profound community impact, providing participants the opportunity to combine engaging discussions and creative projects.

Girls Inc. Project Accelerate

A program to fast-track the advancement of young women into leadership and influential roles. By collaborating with leaders in the corporate and social impact sectors, we will champion cultural change in the workplace, reimagining practices around hiring, development, promotion, and retention.

Our focus is ensuring that young women achieve educational success and develop the skills needed to excel in professional leadership roles. Project Accelerate will propel women into positions of leadership and influence, enabling them to uplift not only their status but also that of their families, neighborhoods, organizations, and communities.



DEVELOPMENT

Discovery Girl: 4th-5th Grades

An **in-school and after school** program empowering participants to build confidence, cultivate healthy relationships, and develop the tools they need to thrive academically and personally.

Traditional: 4th-5th Grades

An **after school** program utilizing the comprehensive Girls Inc. Headquarters Curricula, covering important topics such as financial literacy and healthy sexuality.

Girl Start Academy: Rising Kindergarteners

An **after school** program introducing the fascinating world of STEAM careers. Through hands-on activities and interactive projects, girls will envision themselves as future leaders and innovators.

Girl E3: 6th-8th Grades

An **after school** program offering interactive learning experiences. Girls will develop valuable skills in financial literacy, business management, and entrepreneurship.

SEASONAL CAMPS

Fall, Spring, & Summer Camp

Our seasonal camps provide hands-on experiences, spark curiosity, and simulate a sense of adventure, empowering participants to build confidence, gain exposure to a variety of cultures and careers, and leave with meaningful connections and experiences that support their long-term development.



FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Our Family Resource Center serves as a support hub that provides compassionate care, creative services, and transformative experiences for families, participants, and our community. It's designed to help Girls Inc. families build on their strengths and stay equipped for everyday life.

BOUTIQUE



CARE CLOSETS



WORKSHOPS



VOLUNTEER ROLES

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Whether volunteering in the classroom or aiding operations, Girls Inc. volunteers are essential in making a difference in our participants' lives.

- **Program volunteers** serve as positive role models for participants - by listening, guiding, and encouraging them. This includes seasonal camps.
- **Operational volunteers** donate time to the organization so that we can continue to deliver high-quality programming.
- **Corporate and group volunteer** opportunities can be tailored to meet the skills and interests of your organization and can range from painting classrooms, guest speaker opportunities, or providing one-on-one reading support.

PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS

Program volunteers responsibilities:

- Engage in education activities with our participants.
- Provide support and guidance to help our participants.
- Assist the program coordinator with guiding the participants.
- Provide occasional tutoring and homework assistance in the the classroom.

Requirements:

- Punctual and reliable attendance
- Attend volunteer orientation
- Read and sign volunteer agreement
- Verify volunteer background check

OPERATIONAL VOLUNTEERS

Operational volunteers responsibilities:

- Provide administrative support to main office or program office.
- Using your skills and talents to provide financial, legal or other professional consultation.
- Responsibilities may include data entry, copy, editing, and other administrative tasks as assigned.

Requirements:

- Ability to use a computer
- Microsoft Office skills
- Office operations experience



POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Confidentiality

Girls Inc. is committed to keeping staff, volunteers and participants' information confidential. Therefore, we ask volunteers NOT to share any of the following under any circumstances:

- Names
- Phone numbers, e-mail addresses, addresses
- Sign-up forms
- All other confidential personal information
- Curriculum material (this is protected by copyright)

No Volunteer will be permitted to take photos of participants, please refer to Social Media Policy in the handbook.

Time Commitment & Attendance

At Girls Inc., we build trusting relationships with participants through punctuality and consistency. Therefore, program volunteers are expected to:

- Attend a minimum of 8 sessions per academic year
- Arrive in a timely fashion
- Cancel attendance at least one day in advance of the session
- Read all communications by email or text

Volunteer Expectations

It is important that volunteers maintain professional boundaries in order to ensure a trusting relationship.

- We ask that volunteers do not allow girls to use their cell phones.
- Except for SHE mentors, volunteers are not permitted to exchange phone numbers and social media information with girls, and are not permitted to communicate by text, calls or social media before, during or after the program.
- Volunteers are expected to discuss only age-appropriate topics with the girls: follow the lead of the curriculum. If in doubt, ask.
- Maintain physical boundaries with participants. Do not have girls sit on your lap, do not pick up the girls or carry them on your back. Avoid excessive hugging or holding hands.
- Volunteers are not permitted to spend personal time with participants outside of structured programs and events, except for SHE mentors.
- Volunteer are expected to assist the Program Coordinator as directed. The Program Coordinator maintains the authority to direct volunteers' actions.
- If at any time a volunteer feels uncomfortable—hears or sees information that makes them uneasy—they should speak to program staff immediately.

Anti-Harassment & Anti-Discrimination

Girls Inc. maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy for harassment and discrimination in any form. This policy aims to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all volunteers, staff, and participants.

- Any unwanted or inappropriate behavior that creates a hostile environment, including but not limited to verbal, physical, or sexual harassment, is strictly prohibited.
- All forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or any other characteristic are not tolerated.
- Any volunteer who witnesses or experiences harassment or discrimination should report the incident immediately to the Program Coordinator or Program staff. All reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.

Mandatory Reporting

Our Program Coordinators and Program Interns are mandatory reporters and have been trained as such. If a volunteer suspects child abuse, he/she must report the suspicion to the Program Coordinator immediately.

- The main types of abuse are physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.
- Warning signs include the following: seeming excessively withdrawn or anxious, extreme behavior (extremely compliant, demanding, passive aggressive), frequent and unexplained injuries. Visit [Child Abuse & Neglect](#) for additional resources.
- If a child confides in you, it is best to remain calm and not show shock or disgust and then report the incident immediately. Do not attempt to make any promises or say that you won't tell anyone. Please report to a site supervisor immediately!

Program Site Policies

Volunteers are expected to arrange their own transportation to the program sites. If you are unable to attend your scheduled volunteering session, you must cancel your shift, preferably twenty-four hours before your session and at least four hours before your scheduled session if possible.

- Please bring a driver's license/other valid photo identification to the site.
- Personal belongings: Volunteer mentors are asked not to bring personal belongings to the school site. Girls Inc. of Chattanooga will not be held responsible for any belongings lost or stolen during the volunteering session.
- Drugs and Alcohol: Illegal drugs, alcohol and smoking are strictly prohibited in and around volunteering sites.
- Volunteers are not allowed to bring food items to the session.
- To maintain full attention and focus on the girls, volunteers are asked not to use their phones to call or text at any time during the session.
- Injuries: If an injury occurs, you must immediately notify the Program Coordinator and Manager of Outreach & Engagement

Social Media Policy

The Social Media Policy establishes clear rules for volunteers regarding discussions or posts about Girls Inc. and its participants on social media platforms.

- Volunteers must not represent Girls Inc. or speak on behalf of the organization on social media without prior approval from the Director of Operations and the Manager of Program Quality.
- Volunteers are strictly prohibited from posting any identifying information, photos, or videos of participants. This is essential for maintaining the privacy and safety of our youth. We ask volunteers do not allow girls to use their cell phones.
- Any discussions about Girls Inc. of Chattanooga on personal social media platforms should be conducted with respect and professionalism, keeping in mind the values and mission of the organization.

Mandatory Youth Protection Policy

The Youth Protection Policy outlines guidelines for volunteers on how to interact with youth, emphasizing the importance of maintaining professional boundaries and the necessity of mandatory reporting.

- Volunteers must always maintain appropriate boundaries with participants, avoiding any behavior that could be misinterpreted as favoritism or personal relationships.
- All interactions with youth should be positive, respectful, and supportive. Volunteers should engage in activities that promote healthy development and learning.
- Volunteers are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect immediately. This includes any signs of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, which must be reported to the designated authorities as well as to Girls Inc. staff.

Dress Code Policy

- Clothing should cover the necessary areas.
- Tops should cover the shoulders and midriff.
- Clothing should not display inappropriate or offensive messages, images, or graphics.
- No halter or crop tops.
- No spaghetti strap shirts.
- Dress appropriately and comfortable.

Sara Butler

Director of Operations

volunteers@girlsincofchatt.org