



**VOLUNTEER
HANDBOOK**

GIRLS INC. of CHATTANOOGA

Inspiring all girls to be strong, smart and bold.

**girls
inc.**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Girls Inc. of Chattanooga.....	3
About the Volunteer Handbook	4
Mission	4
History	4
Population Served.....	4
Why Volunteer?.....	4
1. Getting Started.....	5
2. Values & Goals	5
3. Programs.....	7
Elementary Programs	7
Middle School Programs.....	8
High School Programs	8
4. Volunteer Positions.....	10
Program Volunteers.....	10
Operational Volunteers	11
Corporate and Community Volunteers.....	11
5. Policies and Procedures.....	12
Time Commitment and Attendance.....	12
Confidentiality.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Boundaries	13
Mandatory Reporting	13
Program Site Policies.....	13
Social Media Policy	14
Contact	14

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga

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 girls 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 don't 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.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Toccora Petersen', enclosed within a blue oval scribble.

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 30,000 girls from across Hamilton 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 those girls who need us most. On average, we support 850 girls with semester-long programs and school break 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.

1. GETTING STARTED

1. Complete Online Volunteer Application

Complete our online application, at using <https://www.girlsincofchatt.org/get-involved/become-a-volunteer>. The application also includes our volunteer confidentiality agreement. By applying, you accept the volunteer terms of confidentiality.

2. Read the Volunteer Handbook

Please review the Volunteer Handbook. Volunteers are required to be familiar with the Handbook, it is your resource for everything you need, from choosing a relevant position to knowing the policies and procedures.

3. Volunteer Orientation

At the New Volunteer Orientation, you will be introduced to Girls Inc.'s vision, mission, values, and structure. Our Outreach & Engagement Specialist will discuss our programs, policies, and procedures for volunteers. Orientation sessions are hosted monthly or virtually. Visit our website <https://www.girlsincofchatt.org/> and our social media platforms to check the schedule for upcoming orientations. *Please be sure to complete your Volunteer Application before registering for orientation.*

4. Participate in Background Check

All volunteers are required to participate in a background check before interacting with Girls Inc. participants. Within one week of attending Volunteer Orientation, you will receive an invitation to complete a background check through Sterling Volunteers. This request will be sent to the e-mail you provided on the volunteer application.

Follow the instructions provided by the Sterling Volunteers system. Volunteers have the option to pay the fee of \$13 to complete the background check, although this is not required.

5. Sign up for Your Volunteer Shift

After Girls Inc. receives the results of your background check, the Outreach & Engagement Specialist will e-mail you about your background check and then will move forward with introducing you to your volunteer supervisor. Together you will schedule your shifts for the current program semester.

6. Arrive Promptly to Volunteer for Your Shift

Please arrive at your scheduled time and report to the Program Coordinator to sign in.

2. THE GIRLS INC. EXPERIENCE

The six essential elements of the Girls Inc. Experience:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

3. PROGRAMS

People from all vocational backgrounds are encouraged to volunteer as Girls Inc. mentors – there is something for everyone! The guide below is intended to help volunteers understand our annual programming available in-school, after-school, and outside-of-school in seasonal camps.

Elementary Programs

During Elementary Programs, Girls receive structured homework help and academic enrichment to support formal education; engage in community service, public speaking, art, and physical fitness; and develop life skills, such as critical thinking and conflict resolution, along with confidence, and character building.

- **The Bookworm Club** Strives to improve the literacy skills of girls in first through third grade in school and after school by promoting a love of reading and providing fun and engaging programming that supports the school-based instruction that girls receive. Girls build developmentally appropriate reading skills so that they are equipped to succeed in school and participate more effectively in the Girls Inc. experience.
- **Club LIT(eracy)** A locally developed afterschool literacy program for girls in fourth and fifth grade. Club LIT is designed to keep girls engaged in reading through individual and peer group literacy activities in comprehension and fluency, strengthen their communication skills; both verbal and written, and provide an environment that promotes a love for reading. This book club setting will allow girls to explore life and read as they navigate through life experiences.
- **Discovery Girl** A locally designed in-school and after-school program for third through fifth-grade participants. This program will equip girls to strengthen their character through conflict resolution, building healthy relationships, goal setting, and developing resiliency for the stages ahead.
- **TechKnow Girl Club** A locally designed after-school STEAM program for fourth and fifth grade. Through the use of research, hands-on exploration, and teamwork, girls look at science, technology, engineering, and math in a way that is relevant and engaging. TechKnow Girl empowers girls to enjoy subject matters they might not typically have time to enjoy in a traditional classroom setting and consider career paths they might not otherwise have considered.
- **Traditional After School** Is a Girls Inc. National curriculum-led program for fourth and fifth-grade participants. The curriculum changes each semester but is always focused on

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga

helping our girls be stronger, smarter, and bolder. Curriculums used are media literacy, financial literacy, healthy sexuality, sporting chances, and She Votes.

- **Tiny Techs** is a locally designed after-school STEAM program for first through third-grade students to introduce them to STEAM. This hands-on experiment and project-based program allows participants to grow their interest and understanding of the different types of careers there are in the STEAM fields.

Middle School Programs

During Middle School Programs, girls develop workplace readiness skills and explore career and college opportunities; learn skills needed to navigate social media, body image, bullying, and stereotyping; and explore the STEAM field through fun, project-based learning.

- **Chapter Chats** A brand new book club-style literacy program that will also help our middle school students with their reading confidence.
- **Girls Take Charge** A locally developed program for middle school teens, sixth through eighth grade. Girls will have the opportunity to learn about leadership, and character development, practice healthy relationships, develop goal-setting skills, receive job exposure, and ultimately grow in a better understanding of who they are.
- **Girl E3** Is an after-school entrepreneurship program for middle school girls. They will learn about how to lead and run a business, how to budget, and how to make and execute a business plan. They gain real-world experience by developing a real business by the end of the year.
- **Exploratory Girl** A project-based afterschool program for middle school girls designed to inspire and increase girls' interest in STEAM. Girls will explore a variety of scientific specializations to enrich their current learning and accelerate their future career goals. Through Exploratory Girl, girls will develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills, advance innovation, and expand leadership skills.

High School Programs

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga

During high school programs, girls develop the strong foundation necessary for success in high school, college, and future careers; focus on healthy relationships and behaviors that affect teenagers and learn from positive role models, mentors, and women who have changed history.

- **SHE: She Can, She Will** Teens learn about women who have made an impact throughout history and in their communities. Teens are the selection committee for the annual UnBought & UnBossed Awards. They will select an honored woman from the community to be their mentor, many of the mentor/mentee relationships continue beyond the program.
- **IMPACT** A peer-to-peer education program that focuses on healthy relationships and behaviors that affect teenagers (both girls and boys).
- **Project Accelerate** Empowers high school girls with advanced leadership skills, college and career readiness, and real-world experiences through mentorship, internships, and hands-on projects. Participants build confidence, expand their networks, and prepare for success in higher education and future careers.
- **Teen Leadership Institute** Helps girls develop the strong foundation necessary for success in high school and college. Provides high school girls after school with career readiness, self-reliance, time management, and leadership development skills. Participants attend career exploration field trips and meet local business and organization leaders throughout Chattanooga and receive hands-on volunteer, paid internship, and workplace experiences at Girls Inc. Thus, preparing them for the next stage in their lives, economic independence.

4. VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Please note that all opportunities listed below will be uncompensated.

Program Volunteers

Program volunteers, in contrast to operational volunteers, engage directly with participants in a classroom setting. They can fill a variety of roles such as volunteer mentors, program interns, and various in-school, after-school, and outside-of-school in seasonal camps.

1. Program Volunteers

Volunteer mentors are an integral part of Girls Inc. programming and serve as important positive role models in a girls-only environment. Volunteer mentors attend a minimum of 8 sessions per school year, each session lasting around 1.5 to 2 hours. During the sessions, volunteer mentors will assist the Program Coordinator in delivering Girls Inc. programming and work directly with participants (volunteer mentors do not maintain contact with the girls outside of the afterschool program).

Key responsibilities include:

- Serve as adult mentor
- Engage in educational activities with girl participants
- Provide support and guidance to help girls identify their own strengths and resources
- Build a trusting relationship with girls by sharing experience and giving advice
- Assist with coordinating and troubleshooting in a classroom setting
- Contribute specific professional skillsets to activities i.e., coding expertise, job and college counseling
- Provide occasional tutoring and homework help

Requirements:

- Punctual and reliable attendance
- Attend volunteer orientation
- Read and sign volunteer agreement
- Verified Volunteers background check (if 18+ years of age)

2. Guest Speaker

One-time volunteers, specifically professionals from the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, are invited as guest speakers. Here, they may talk about the

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga

company they work for and their specific role. More importantly, they answer questions from the girls and provide them with valuable professional insight into fields that have to date been non-traditional for women.

Operational Volunteers

Operational volunteers are involved in the organizational side of Girls Inc. of Chattanooga. The operation volunteer responsibilities include support the organization's mission and purpose; provide administrative support to main office or program office; support the Manager of Program Quality with administrative support at our program facility; and responsibilities may include data entry, copy, editing, and other administrative tasks as assigned.

1. Office Volunteers

Office volunteers are volunteers who assist in the administrative operations of the organization. Responsibilities can be tailored to the volunteer's skills and interests. Responsibilities may include data entry, copy editing, social media and other administrative tasks as assigned.

2. Event Volunteers

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga holds several community events throughout the year, from our Annual UnBought and UnBossed Awards to smaller "friendraisers" and donor appreciation events. There are day-of volunteer opportunities for:

- Event set up
- Registration tables
- Ushers

Those interested in a more long-term commitment to events are welcome to apply to join the Advancement committee or UnBought and UnBossed committee.

Corporate and Community Volunteers

Corporate and community groups can participate in one-time or ongoing volunteer opportunities. We work with businesses, church groups, sororities, athletic teams and more to develop specific volunteer programs for each organization. For more information on developing a volunteer program for your group, contact Outreach and Engagement Specialist.

5. POLICIES AND 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 and 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 UnBought and UnBossed 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 UnBought and UnBossed mentors.
- Volunteer mentors are expected to assist the Program Coordinator as directed. The Program Coordinator maintains the authority to direct volunteers' actions.

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga

- 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 and Anti-Discrimination Policy

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 Outreach and Engagement Specialist and the Chief Development Officer. 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 <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect.htm>
- 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

In compliance with confidentiality guidelines, we ask volunteer mentors to adhere by the following rules:

- If you want to take a picture of a girl participant, please ask the Program Coordinator whether she has a signed photo release form beforehand.
- Please do not post any photos to your personal social media pages, and do not share them with individuals outside of Girls Inc. of Chattanooga
- Please do not share any personal information about the girls, or about other volunteers, on your personal social media pages and/or chats. This includes names, addresses, emails, phone numbers, etc.
- Please do not identify the locations of the school sites nor geo-tag your location in real time as this is a safety hazard.

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.



of Chattanooga

Contact

For questions about volunteering, please contact:

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga

For questions about corporate or group volunteer projects, please contact:

Jocelyn Loza

Chief Development Officer
Girls Inc. of Chattanooga
jloza@girlsincofchatt.org

Kendrea Bryant

Outreach & Engagement
Specialist
Girls Inc. of Chattanooga
Kbryant@girlsincofchatt.org

This handbook was edited
December 2024.