



Volunteer Handbook

The success of Brownsville Literacy Center depends on the assistance of community volunteers. Along with guidance of center employees, volunteers are to create a safe, hands-on learning environment for our adults and children.

Our Mission

Brownsville Literacy Center exists to promote literacy in the Brownsville area by providing appropriate and accessible educational programs designed to meet the needs of underserved adults and families.

Literacy Center Programs

The following programs are presently offered through the Center:

- **English-as-a-Second Language** (Volunteer Activity), generally designed to help adults in the community with low levels of formal education learn to speak, understand, read and write English for employment, citizenship, and personal enrichment reasons.
- **Family Literacy** (Volunteer Activity), a unique opportunity for parents and their preschool children to learn together.

Requirements:

- Adhere to the center's Volunteer Policies and Procedures attached hereto.
- Be 18 years of age or older and submit a health clearance letter from your doctor.
- 18 years or older require a mandatory Background Check and a TB Test (Permission for Background Check and Background Check forms attached hereto). Please allow 3-5 business days for Background Check to be completed by center.
- Willingness to learn new things and a desire to help adults and/or children.
- Represent the center in a thoughtful, friendly and positive manner.
- Maintain a neat appearance and adhere to the established Dress Code.
- Attend orientation and training sessions when available.
- Commit to volunteer 10 hours per school semester or summer session if you are a non-teaching volunteer; teaching instructors must commit to 67+ hours per school semester.
- Notify center as early as possible if unable to work.
- Arrive on time and complete required shift.
- Maintain a record of your volunteer time in the center Volunteer Sign-In folder.

Successful volunteers possess the following qualities:

- A positive attitude
- A sense of cooperation, responsibility, dependability, and stability
- The ability to be part of a team
- Personality traits such as patience, tolerance, and understanding
- A respect for confidentiality
- Compatibility with students
- Flexibility and friendliness
- A sense of humor
- Responsible citizenship qualities
- A willingness to accept BLC rules, procedures, and standards

Duties:

- BLC volunteers are valued and appreciated but are never considered a substitute for BLC staff and/or instructors. BLC personnel are responsible for everything that goes on the BLC site including student instruction, safety, and discipline.

Special Benefits:

- Receive community service credit for college course requirements.
- Make new friends throughout the Rio Grande Valley while working in a fun environment.
- Receive the self-satisfaction of having made a personal contribution to your community.

Shift and Scheduled Information:

- All volunteers must contact our Program Coordinator or BLC personnel to request a shift. (Must notify 2 days in advance of need for service hours).
- During regular business hours, no more than 4 volunteers will be needed. During center Special Events, the center may need up to 10 volunteers.
- Volunteers are expected to arrive ten minutes prior to the beginning of each shift.
- Center volunteers may be requested to return at a later time to provide assistance when it's needed most.

Policies and Procedures

Volunteers are expected to comply with all rules and regulations of Brownsville Literacy Center.

Prior to becoming a center volunteer, each individual will attend a Volunteer Orientation, when applicable. Potential Volunteers must read the center's Policies and Procedures Handbook and execute the same indicating they have received, read and understand the policies listed within. Volunteers may request a handbook at any time.

Code of Conduct:

- Greet students with a smile and treat them with warmth and dignity. In their eyes, you are the center and everything about you will be interpreted as representing the center.
- Be pro-active and friendly. Always make an attempt to interact with and assist the students.
- Be sure to offer your help or provide information. If you are unsure of a question or what to do seek assistance from your supervisor or center staff.
- Maintain a professional demeanor at all times. Personal conversation, complaints, and differences of opinion should not take place at the center in front of students.
- Refrain from using any type of profanity, vulgarity (curse words) or name calling.
- Never leave your assigned area or the building.
- Do not bring friends or family to the center during your shift.
- Treat fellow volunteers and staff with courtesy and respect.

Dress Code:

- No flip flops
- No tank tops
- Shorts must be knee length
- Center volunteer badge worn at all times

Unacceptable behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Using cell phones or other electronic devices while on duty
- Lack of attention to job duties
- Not remaining in your scheduled area
- Gum chewing while on duty
- Eating in classrooms or working area
- Inappropriate hand gestures
- Cursing
- Lying
- Stealing
- Smoking
- Alcohol and Drug/Substance Abuse
- Possession of firearms or other lethal weapons
- Physical violence (includes pushing & shoving)

Disciplinary Actions:

- Verbal Warning
- Dismissal by Education Coordinator. If problems persist, volunteer may be expelled from the volunteer program at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Arrival Procedures:

- Arrive at least 10 minutes before shift begins.
- Sign name in Volunteer Sign-In folder located at the front desk.
- Wear a volunteer badge at all times.
- Store personal belongings in Education Coordinator's office. Personal belongings are not allowed in classrooms or working area including but not limited to cell phones, purses and MP3 players or similar devices.

Departure Procedures:

- Make sure work area is clean and in order for the next shift.
- Notify center staff that you are leaving.
- Sign out on Volunteer folder located at the front desk.
- Return volunteer badge.
- Collect personal belongings.

Brownsville Literacy Center reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer if at any time policies or duties are disregarded.

Volunteer Opportunities

Office Volunteer:

You will have the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of daily operations of the center as you interact with our staff. Office Volunteers are responsible for ensuring our daily office related activities are met on a timely fashion.

Office Duties include, but are not limited to:

- Copy requests
- Preparing student books
- Assisting with fundraising/concessions
- Assisting with student registrations

Additional Office related Responsibilities include:

- Interact with visitors.
- Greet, orient and assist potential clients and provide them general program information.
- Participate or lead special activities.

Adult Literacy Instructor (ESL Program):

Adult Literacy Instructors are responsible for ensuring our students have the best learning experience possible.

Responsibilities include:

Provide classroom instruction to assigned group(s) of students which include, but are not limited to:

- Preparing lessons prior to the classes.
- Using instructional materials approved by the Education Coordinator.
- Evaluating student progress using prescribed methods.
- Maintaining records relating to student progress and attendance.

Minimum Qualifications:

- High school diploma
- Successful completion of the instructor orientation/training program
- Successfully completed at least 30 hours of classroom instruction and/or observations

Instructor Assistant (ESL Program):

You will have the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of classroom instruction of the center as you interact with the lead instructor. Instructor Assistants are responsible for ensuring our students have the best experience possible.

Responsibilities include:

- Interact with students from ages 3 to 4 in our Family Literacy Program or students ages 18 and up in our ESL Program; engage them with instructor assigned activities and simple demonstrations.
- Enrich the classroom experience for our students by answering questions and providing other general information.
- Participate or lead special classroom activities.

Fieldtrip Assistant (Family Literacy Program):

- Interact with students and help with activities.
- Assist staff to prepare, distribute or present craft activity.

Story Time Reader (Family Literacy Program):

- Read stories to large and small groups of students.
- Use props or puppets and make story time come alive!

Special Event Volunteer:

- Set-up/decorate area.
- Greet and orient guests.
- Serve refreshments.
- Be an enthusiastic host/hostess.
- Assist with clean-up.

Outreach Assistant:

(Outreach consists of events, activities or programs that do not take place at the Brownsville Literacy Center.)

- Contact Program Coordinator no later than 24 hours prior to confirm Outreach location and time as all Outreach is tentative and scheduled to change.
- Confirm the need of any supplies such as program literature and materials.
- Confirm any personal supplies that may be necessary, i.e. water, snack or meal.

Maintenance Assistant:

Under the supervision of the maintenance technician, duties include, but are not limited to:

- Sweeping and mopping classrooms
- Washing windows
- Rearranging desks and chairs
- Cleaning restrooms
- Assisting with special projects/events

Schedule changes:

- If you cannot complete your activity, please treat your volunteer activity as you would a paid position and notify BLC personnel in advance when possible at (956) 542-8080.

I have read and understand the policies and procedures for serving as a volunteer for Brownsville Literacy Center.

Name of Volunteer

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Executive Director

Signature

Date

**BROWNSVILLE LITERACY CENTER
GENERAL
and
CRIMINAL HISTORY RELEASE FORM**

Date: _____

I hereby give the Brownsville Adult Literacy Council, Inc., dba Brownsville Literacy Center permission to make inquiries on references of former employers concerning my performance in the past. This permission form may be attached to request information, and I hereby authorize the party receiving this form to give full and complete information of any and all police records, criminal history records, etc., as may be requested by the Brownsville Literacy Center. I further agree that the information requested will not become a part of my personnel file if I am employed by the Brownsville Literacy Center. I agree that the information requested will not be disclosed to me but will be treated as confidential by the Brownsville Literacy Center, and I waive all rights to see this information.

I further agree that the Brownsville Adult Literacy Council, Inc. may request information as deemed necessary during my employment with the Brownsville Literacy Center using this release form.

This information requested below is necessary to obtain criminal history record information as required by state law. I understand that the age, sex and ethnic information is by the Texas Department of Public Safety solely for the purpose of obtaining criminal history records information.

Please include your **full complete legal name**. No middle initials allowed. All fields are required.

Full Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Place of Birth: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Race: _____
Gender: Male Female
Unexpired Driver's License # or State issued ID: _____ State: _____
Any other names used: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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