



# **TECH CORPS<sup>®</sup> Illinois**

## **Technical Volunteer Handbook**

*Revision 2001.1*

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## Welcome

Dear Volunteers,

Thank you for your interest in volunteering. You are about to make a vital contribution to the success of **TECH CORPS Illinois**. The reason for your being here and our being here is to help enhance K-12 education by empowering educators and students to effectively use technology in schools. It will take all of us working together to accomplish our objectives.

This handbook is designed to assist you and give some general guidelines that will help you be a successful **TECH CORPS Illinois** volunteer. We hope this information is helpful to you and will enhance your work as a volunteer with us.

Thank you for serving as a **TECH CORPS Illinois** volunteer. Your work will help students improve their chances for finding quality employment after they finish their schooling. You will touch the lives of many through your willingness to give.

Thanks again and welcome!

**TECH CORPS Illinois**

## TECH CORPS Mission

**TECH CORPS** is a national non-profit organization that is funded through corporate contributions and implemented through state chapters. A national staff oversees the **TECH CORPS** mission and agenda, assists in the formation and maintenance of effective state chapters, provides a national media focus and ensures quality at all levels. The broader organization is based on a bottom-up philosophy and draws on the expertise and enthusiasm of technology-literate members of the local community.

It is our three-fold mission to:

- Recruit, place and support volunteers from the technology community who assist schools with the introduction and use of new technologies;
- Bring additional technology resources to schools and communities through local and national projects;
- Build partnerships in support of educational technology among educators, businesses and community members at the local, state and national levels.

# Real Time

## Your Role as Technical Missionary

You've gone through all of the preliminaries and now you're at the heart of the matter — offering direct technical support to the schools. Congratulations, and thank you for coming this far! You will have a lot of fun and what you are doing will hardly seem like work. People will be very grateful for your presence and support. You will be helping with a situation that has probably created a lot of anxiety until now. It is likely that you will be relieving a great deal of the discomfort that can surround technical issues.

While in the schools, some people may think you have the answers to all technical questions and may treat you as a technical guru. You are not required to know everything (that's almost impossible with today's technology), and it is best to stay relaxed and clearly state when a particular problem is beyond your scope. You can help guide the situation toward a positive conclusion, either by suggesting someone else who might be able to help, or by referring the problem to the School District Coordinator.

If, at any time, you feel at risk of becoming isolated, you are unsure about how to proceed with your project, or you have a situation that needs trouble-shooting, don't hesitate to tap into your support system: the School District Coordinator, the Adjunct Coordinator, the State Program Director and other Technical Volunteers. This is a group effort and you should not have to face any serious difficulties or uncomfortable situations alone. Remember to pick up the phone and network! You are part of a countrywide effort as well as belonging to a local grassroots team!

There are several things to keep in mind as you work on your project(s):

- Keep your project organized by maintaining and updating "to do" lists. Avoid having too many concurrent tasks;
- Follow up on promises (be careful about promising more than you can realistically accomplish within a designated time frame);
- Keep a calendar and avoid missing appointments (if you must miss one, call well in advance, and reschedule);
- Go through the School District Coordinator when you need anything (e.g. supplies, scheduling, workspace, etc.), unless otherwise instructed.

## Your Role as Guest in the School System

While you are offering valuable services and resources to the school, remember you are still a guest of the school system and a representative of **TECH CORPS Illinois**.

Please remember the following considerations:

### **Professionalism**

Think of your relationship with the school as a relationship between consultant and client. Your goal is to maximize satisfaction and value. Please conduct yourself professionally and observe general good manners.

Please be considerate of schedules and the fact that people will often be busy. It is also very important that you respect the roles of the teachers and school or district administrators. If you are providing teacher training, remember, you are there to help the teacher use the *tools for teaching*; you are not there to teach the teacher how to teach. If you are working directly with students, defer to the teacher and be careful not to undermine the teacher's authority. In dealing with the administrators, or the district as a whole, be sensitive to the fact that every institution has its own politics as well as its own culture. Newcomers are sometimes seen as potential enemies for often invisible agendas. If you sense that might be happening, try to focus on your role and task.

If there are issues that relate specifically to the **TECH CORPS Illinois** program, consult with the School District Coordinator or a member of your **TECH CORPS Illinois** support team. *It is essential that you read the “Professional and Ethical Standards for **TECH CORPS Illinois** Volunteers” section of this book, before you begin your project.*

Although you are responsible for adhering to all of the professional and ethical standards at all times, it is particularly important that you:

- Never be alone in a room/setting with a student.
- Never touch or have physical contact of any kind with a student.
- Never use language or actions that could be considered sexist, discriminatory or suggestive.
- Remember that discipline is the responsibility of the teacher.
- Both during and outside of your volunteer experience do not discuss students, staff or school business that is personal, negative or confidential.
- Never socialize with students outside of the classroom context.
- Respect the privacy of the student, teachers and administration with whom you work. Do not discuss private or confidential information.

Providing a safe environment in which a student can have a trusting relationship with an adult mentor is a priceless gift. It may be valued for a lifetime. If you ever need help balancing caring with proper boundaries, consult with the school district coordinator.

## **Patience**

One tends to think of technology as a cerebral topic that does not involve much emotion. However, for people trying to learn technology, especially those who are slow to pick it up, it can be a very trying subject that elicits feelings of inadequacy or incompetence. This is even true with people who may be very intelligent and extremely accomplished in other areas. Therefore, it is important that you remain patient and work at an appropriate pace for your client(s).

If you are providing instruction and you are working with a person that continually tries your patience, discuss the problem with your School District Coordinator, or someone else in your network to see if the situation can be resolved. In some cases, it may mean you and your client are just not a good match. In others, it may mean even mean that you are not suited for working on this type of project and the school may need to find a replacement project or client for you. Likewise, if you encounter similar problems working with a lot of different people you may need to evaluate whether instruction or mentoring are the right type of volunteering situations for you. There may be other ways you can work with **TECH CORPS Illinois**. It should be fun for everyone, including you!

## **Responsibility**

Please arrive on time and avoid missing appointments. If you must miss one, notify the appropriate person(s) before the appointment and reschedule. Please maintain work areas and throw away refuse. Please leave any area that you use, including lunch or break areas, in the condition in which you find them.

*Adhering to high standards will leave you in a strong position should you eventually want to use your volunteer experience as a resource for employment references, to network for a job in the community, or to secure peer evaluations or recommendations from others on your team.*

<p>On the advice of <b>TECH CORPS'</b> legal counsel the wording in this document is precise. The intent is to set clear standards. This document is not a contract; if a volunteer signs it and then violates on or more of the tenets, the fact that it was signed will have no bearing on liability.</p>
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# **Volunteer Information**

## **Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities**

### **It is your right:**

- To be assigned a job that is worthwhile and challenging.
- To receive the orientation, training, and supervision necessary to do the job.
- To feel that your efforts have real purpose and contribute to the organization's mission.
- To receive feedback and evaluation on the work that you perform.
- To be treated with respect and as an equal partner within the organization.
- To be trusted with confidential information necessary to carry out your assignment.
- To be kept informed on relevant matters within the organization with which you work.
- To expect that your time will not be wasted by poor planning or coordination by the organization.

### **It is your responsibility:**

- Not to take on more responsibility than you can handle
- To meet time commitments or to provide notice so alternative arrangements can be made.
- To perform the tasks assigned to you to the best of your ability.
- To provide input on ways your tasks might be better performed.
- To follow organizational policies and procedures.
- To respect those confidences entrusted to you.
- To be open-minded and respectful towards opinions shared with you.
- To notify the organization in advance of absences or schedule changes that may affect them.

## **Professional and Ethical Standards for TECH CORPS Volunteers**

As **TECH CORPS Illinois** volunteers working with children, we must ensure that our behavior and conduct always conforms to the highest standards. To avoid situations that could be considered even remotely inappropriate, always exercise good judgment while working with students. It is critical that **TECH CORPS Illinois** volunteers abide by the following professional and ethical standards:

1. Schools are legally responsible for their volunteers. Volunteers should acknowledge and sign screening/liability and waivers if provided by the school.
2. Volunteers may not solicit business for their firm or promote their firm in any way.
3. Volunteer cannot accept remuneration in any form.
4. Follow school protocol — checking in, wearing a guest badge, having your arrival announced to the teacher — whatever the process may be.
5. Never be alone in a room/setting with a student.
6. Never touch or have physical contact of any kind with a student.
7. Do not use language or actions that could be considered sexist, suggestive, or discriminatory.
8. Discipline is the responsibility of the teacher.
9. Learn the rules for the safe use of the Internet and incorporate them into your program.
10. If you are volunteering with students who are home-schooled do not go to their homes. Work with them in a conventional setting or on-line.
11. Both during and outside of your volunteer experience, do not discuss students, staff or school business that is personal, negative or confidential.
12. Do not socialize with students outside of the classroom context.

## TECH CORPS Illinois Project Agreement

Name of School or District: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School District Coordinator or Contact Person(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

*(Briefly describe the project objective and what the volunteer will be doing):*

**PROJECT TIMELINE** *(When will it start? When is expected to be complete? How often will the volunteer be visiting the school?):*

**MARKERS OF SUCCESS** *(What will participants, such as students or teachers, have accomplished when the project is complete)?*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of School Representative*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Volunteer*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **TECH CORPS Volunteer Checklist**

Before you begin volunteering in a school, you must:

- Read the Technical Volunteer Handbook
- Read the TECH CORPS Volunteer Ethics Statement
- Identify Your Skills
- Attend Orientation
- Supply Any Requested Screening Information
- Meet With School or School District
- Complete Your Project Agreement
- Conduct Your Project

During and after your volunteer project, you should:

- Complete an Evaluation
- Consider Continuing Your Service with **TECH CORPS Illinois!**