

Tips for helping your teen prepare for and complete the volunteer requirement for a high school diploma



Did you know students must complete 40 hours of volunteer work to graduate?

Forty hours of volunteer work is a Ministry of Education requirement for completion of a high school diploma. Students must complete 40 hours of while they are enrolled in secondary school. The aim is to encourage students to become involved in their community and make positive contributions to society.

Students are encouraged to complete the 40 hours of community service as early as possible in high school—ideally by the end of grade 10. Ministry guidelines have established eligible and ineligible activities for the community involvement requirement—students and parents must follow these guidelines. With your help, your teen is responsible for completing the 40 hours of volunteer work, independent of the school.

Here are some ways to get started:

- help your teen identify his or her individual interests
- find ways to link your teen's interests with volunteer activities by researching with your teen the volunteer opportunities available in the community - make sure the activity is eligible
- visit Your Time Counts in the "Student Stuff" section at www.peelschools.org
- contact Volunteer MBC at 905-238-2622 or visit www.volunteermbc.org
- check out Charity Village's website at www.charityvillage.com
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- call community agencies serving youth to find out about volunteer opportunities
- search the internet for volunteer opportunities—some sites match volunteer positions with people who want to volunteer. Check out the list of web sites on this tip sheet before you start your search

What types of organizations have volunteer positions?

Voluntary sector organizations often work within one of these areas: environment, faith, social services, health, arts and culture, and sports and recreation. There are also community agencies that are dedicated to the advancement of equity-seeking organizations (e.g. Aboriginal people, women, the homeless and persons with disabilities).

Volunteer opportunities are also available in the public sector. Some examples include recreation programs (T-ball, hockey and swimming), federal parks, school-based but not course-related programs as well as activities, festivals and events.

Exploring volunteer opportunities

With so many opportunities to choose from, finding the right position may seem a little overwhelming. That's why it's a good idea to start with your teen's interests.

For example, if your teen likes working with children, a volunteer placement at a daycare or an elementary school might be a good choice. Or, if your teen likes the outdoors, look for opportunities at local parks and

historical sites. Here are some other places you might find interesting volunteer opportunities:

- amateur theatre groups
- local radio and cable stations
- community celebrations, fairs and festivals
- art galleries
- sports centres
- libraries
- animal shelters

How to select a volunteer placement

Volunteering can play an important role in your teen's personal growth. Given the chance, youth will flourish in the non-judgmental and supportive environments offered in community organizations.

Before selecting a volunteer placement, you and your teen should visit the organization to help ensure the experience will be rewarding. How? Make an appointment with the organization's volunteer coordinator to get your questions answered. To help you get started, here are some questions to ask staff:

- What is the organization's mission?
- What types of volunteer opportunities are available?
- Can I see a written job description for the volunteer position?
- What is the required time commitment for the position?
- What skills will my teen use and develop?
- Who is my teen's supervisor?
- How many volunteers work with the organization?
- Will my teen be screened for this position?
- Does your insurance policy cover young volunteers?
- Does the policy place age restrictions on certain assignments?

After meeting with staff at the organization, talk to your teen about his or her feelings about the position. You and your teen should discuss answers to the following questions:

- Will this position offer an interesting and rewarding experience?

- Are you comfortable with the people at the organization?
- Does the volunteer opportunity fit the amount of time my teen can give?
- Are there opportunities to learn new skills?
- Is the location of the volunteer position easy to get to?

Keep on track

Once you and your teen have selected the best placement, enter your choice on the **Activity Record** form in the first section entitled *Notification of Planned Community Involvement Activities*.

As your teen completes each volunteer activity, fill in the second section of the **Activity Record** form entitled *Completion of Community Involvement Activities*. This section is your teen's "work diary" and is a record of the completed 40 hours of volunteer service. Sign the completed form, make a photocopy for your records and return the completed form to the school. This information will be recorded on your teen's official school transcript.

Where can I get more information?

There are many web sites that will provide more information on volunteering. Here are some sites you can visit:

www.volunteer.ca

www.volunteermbs.org

www.charityvillage.com

www.voe-reb.org

www.idealists.org

For more information on completing the community involvement requirement, talk to the guidance and career education department at your teen's school.

