



Volunteers: Safety and Liability

➤ **Where should I work with a student?**

Locations will vary depending upon space availability and the preference of the supervising staff member. Try to find a quiet space with as few distractions as possible.

If you are asked to work in an empty classroom, be sure that the door remains open and you are seated in desks that are visible to those passing by. **Always work in a public area, on site.**

At times, it may be tempting to offer a child a ride home after school. **Never go off school grounds with a student, and never give them a ride in your car.**

➤ **What are my confidentiality responsibilities?**

As your relationship with a student develops he or she may begin to trust and confide in you. It is appropriate to take the time to listen to them and show that you care.

However, do not make promises you cannot keep. If a student shares sensitive information relating to potentially abusive situations, let the student know that you are required to pass the information on to a teacher, supervisor, or principal who can offer them help.

Personal information about yourself should be shared only when it is relevant to work you are doing with the student. Avoid giving personal contact information such as your address, phone number, or e-mail.

➤ **Can I hug a student?**

Some students, particularly younger children, may express affection toward you. While many students crave affection and attention, it is important that you handle such situations with sensitivity and care.

Children should never sit on your lap. Side hugs are preferable to front hugs. Use other signs of affection, such as “high fives” or handshakes.

➤ **What are some safer touch areas?***

Areas that are safest to touch are:

- Shoulders
- Upper back
- Arms
- Hands

Remember to be aware of cultural perspectives and personal contexts for touch **from the student’s point of view**. There are many factors that can affect a student’s comfort level regarding personal physical boundaries. Some children are not inviting of touch and may desire more personal space. Respect their wishes.

**Be clear to yourself and students about when, where, why and how you are touching the student, and be consistent in your approach.*

➤ **What is the purpose of these rules?**

Davenport Community Schools wants you to carry out your volunteer responsibilities in a caring and appropriate manner.

We want you to feel comfortable in your interactions with children, even when they include hugging and touching kids. **We also want you and the students to feel safe.**

These guidelines will assist you in creating and maintaining safe working environments for you and the students.