

Buffalo Children's Center



Caring Hearts. Empowered Families. Learning Together.

VOLUNTEER ROLES

Summary

Volunteers in a Wyoming licensed Child Care Center (CCC) can play a valuable role in supporting the center's operations, enhancing the child care environment, and fostering community engagement, provided their involvement complies with the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS) Child Care Licensing Rules (effective February 2022), particularly Chapter 7 (Rules for Certification of a Child Care Center) and Chapter 4 (General Requirements). Below is a detailed overview of what volunteers can do in a Wyoming CCC serving children from birth to 5 years, ensuring alignment with licensing requirements, safety protocols, and the Wyoming Early Learning Standards (2022). All volunteer activities must be supervised by qualified staff to maintain staff-to-child ratios (e.g., 1:4 for infants, 1:10 for preschoolers) and adhere to health, safety, and program standards.

Volunteers cannot be counted in staff-to-child ratios or left alone with children (Chapter 4, Section 6), and they must meet specific background check and health requirements before participating. The activities below are designed to support the center's mission of providing high-quality, play-based, inclusive care while incorporating Wyoming's cultural and natural context (e.g., rural communities, Native American heritage).

Volunteer Roles and Activities in a Wyoming Licensed Child Care Center

Supporting Classroom Activities:

Volunteers can assist staff in delivering Montessori-inspired, play based activities that align with the Wyoming Early Learning Standards, under direct supervision.

- **Activity Assistance:** Help set up and facilitate activities such as art projects (e.g., painting Wyoming landscapes), sensory play (e.g., texture baskets with natural materials like wool), or storytime (e.g., reading Wyoming-themed books like those about Yellowstone wildlife). Volunteers can model engagement but cannot lead activities independently.
- **Material Preparation:** Prepare materials for lessons, such as cutting paper for crafts, organizing counting manipulatives (e.g., pinecone counters), or refreshing sensory bins with safe, sanitized items.
- **Observation Support:** Assist staff in observing children during play to note developmental milestones (e.g., social interactions, fine motor skills), providing input for portfolios without accessing confidential records.

- **Wyoming Connection:** Incorporate local elements, like helping children create a “Wyoming nature collage” with leaves or feathers (safety-checked), to connect activities to the state’s environment.
- **Compliance Notes:** Volunteers must avoid direct caregiving (e.g., diapering, feeding) unless they meet staff qualifications (Chapter 7, Section 6). All materials must be non-toxic and sanitized per Chapter 8.

Enhancing Outdoor Play

Volunteers can support outdoor activities, which are required for at least 60 minutes daily (weather permitting, Chapter 7, Section 12), to promote physical development and nature exploration.

- **Play Supervision Assistance:** Help monitor children during outdoor play (e.g., sandbox, climbing structures) under staff supervision, ensuring safety on resilient surfaces and encouraging gross motor activities like running or ball games.
- **Nature-Based Activities:** Lead guided nature walks to observe Wyoming plants or wildlife (e.g., birds, sagebrush), or assist with gardening projects like planting native flowers in a child-safe garden.
- **Equipment Setup:** Set up outdoor materials, such as balls, bubbles, or sensory tables with water and natural items, ensuring all are sanitized and age-appropriate.
- **Wyoming Connection:** Share stories about Wyoming’s outdoor heritage (e.g., ranching, national parks) during nature activities to build cultural awareness.
- **Compliance Notes:** Volunteers must stay within sight of staff and cannot supervise alone. Outdoor areas must be fenced and hazard-free (Chapter 10).

Supporting Family and Community Engagement

Volunteers can strengthen ties between the center, families, and the Wyoming community, fostering partnerships as encouraged by the Wyoming Early Learning Standards.

- **Event Assistance:** Help organize and run family events, such as “Wyoming Heritage Day” or parent workshops on child development, by setting up decorations, distributing materials, or greeting families.
- **Community Outreach:** Represent the center at local events (e.g., county fairs, library programs) to promote early childhood education or recruit families, with staff approval.
- **Newsletter Contributions:** Write articles or gather photos (with parent consent) for center newsletters, highlighting activities like a “Wyoming Wildlife Week” theme.
- **Wyoming Connection:** Incorporate local culture, such as inviting volunteers from Native American communities to share traditional stories (with cultural sensitivity training).
- **Compliance Notes:** Volunteers cannot access child records or share identifiable information (Chapter 7, Section 15). Events must comply with health protocols (Chapter 8).

Facility Maintenance and Organization

Volunteers can support the center's physical environment to ensure it meets DFS health and safety standards (Chapters 8 and 10).

- **Cleaning Support:** Assist with sanitizing non-child-contact areas (e.g., wiping shelves, organizing storage) using EPA-approved disinfectants, under staff direction.
- **Classroom Setup:** Arrange materials on low shelves, restock art supplies, or rotate toys to keep the environment inviting and compliant with Chapter 7, Section 13 (program equipment).
- **Outdoor Maintenance:** Help maintain outdoor play areas by raking leaves, checking for hazards, or planting child-safe plants, ensuring compliance with Chapter 7, Section 12.
- **Wyoming Connection:** Use local materials (e.g., river rocks for garden borders) to enhance the environment, ensuring they are sanitized and safe.
- **Compliance Notes:** Volunteers cannot handle hazardous cleaning agents or perform tasks requiring staff training (e.g., diapering area sanitation).

Supporting Special Projects

Volunteers can contribute to enrichment activities or fundraising efforts that enhance the center's programs.

- **Cultural Enrichment:** Share skills like music, storytelling, or art (e.g., teaching a Wyoming folk song or creating murals of local landscapes), supervised by staff.
- **Fundraising Support:** Assist with grant applications, community fundraisers, or Wyoming STARS program initiatives to secure resources for supplies or staff training.
- **Special Events:** Help plan seasonal activities, like a "Winter in Wyoming" celebration with safe, indoor snow sensory play, ensuring alignment with developmental goals.
- **Wyoming Connection:** Focus projects on local themes, such as a "Yellowstone Exploration" display with safe fossils or photos.
- **Compliance Notes:** Activities must be pre-approved by the Director to ensure they meet licensing standards and child safety.

Administrative Support

Volunteers with clerical skills can assist with non-confidential tasks to support center operations.

- **Office Tasks:** Organize supply inventories, prepare non-sensitive documents (e.g., blank permission slips), or assemble parent handbooks under staff supervision.
- **Communication Support:** Help distribute flyers or post updates on bulletin boards (e.g., upcoming Wyoming-themed events), ensuring no access to child data.
- **Wyoming Connection:** Create displays showcasing Wyoming culture (e.g., Native American art, ranching history) for the center's lobby.

- **Compliance Notes:** Volunteers cannot access enrollment records, health forms, or other confidential information (Chapter 7, Section 15).

Volunteer Requirements and Restrictions

To ensure compliance with Wyoming DFS Child Care Licensing Rules, volunteers must meet the following criteria and adhere to restrictions:

- **Background Checks (Chapter 4, Section 6):** Volunteers who interact with children must pass:
 - A national fingerprint-based criminal background check.
 - Wyoming Central Registry of Abuse and Neglect check.
 - Sex offender registry screening with no disqualifying offenses.
 - Checks must be completed before starting; results must be documented.
- **Health Requirements (Chapter 8):** Provide proof of a negative tuberculosis (TB) risk assessment or clear chest X-ray.
- **Training:** Complete facility orientation (within 3 months) and basic safety training (e.g., emergency procedures) as required by the center. STARS-approved child development training is recommended but not mandatory for volunteers.
- **Supervision:** Volunteers cannot be left alone with children or counted in staff-to-child ratios (Chapter 7, Section 6). A qualified staff member must always supervise.

Restrictions:

- Cannot perform direct caregiving tasks (e.g., diapering, feeding, toileting) unless they meet full staff qualifications (e.g., CPR/first aid certification).
- Cannot handle confidential records or sensitive information.
- Must follow health and sanitation protocols (e.g., handwashing, no personal food in child areas, Chapter 8).
- **Age:** Must be at least 16 years old (Chapter 4)
 - Younger volunteers may assist with non-child-contact tasks (e.g., office work) with Director approval.

Implementation Guidelines

- **Coordination:** The Center Director assigns and supervises volunteer tasks, ensuring alignment with the center's curriculum and Wyoming Early Learning Standards.
- **Scheduling:** Volunteers work during operational hours (e.g., 7:00 AM–6:00 PM), with schedules coordinated to avoid disrupting routines or ratios.
- **Training and Orientation:** Provide a brief orientation on DFS rules, emergency procedures (e.g., fire drills, Chapter 10), and Montessori-inspired practices to ensure consistency.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Train volunteers on Wyoming's diverse communities (e.g., Native American, rural families) to ensure respectful, inclusive interactions.
- **Documentation:** Maintain a volunteer log for licensing inspections, noting hours, tasks, and background check status.

- **Safety:** Ensure volunteers are aware of emergency exits, first aid kit locations, and protocols for reporting incidents immediately to staff (Chapter 7, Section 16).

Benefits of Volunteer Involvement

- **Program Enrichment:** Volunteers bring diverse skills (e.g., storytelling, art) to enhance activities, supporting developmental goals like language and social skills.
- **Community Connection:** Strengthen ties with Wyoming families and organizations, fostering a sense of belonging (Wyoming Standard: Relationships, R3.1).
- **Resource Support:** Free up staff time for direct child care by handling supplementary tasks, improving program quality.
- **Child Benefit:** Provide additional adult interaction, modeling positive behaviors and cultural awareness.

Sample Volunteer Tasks by Event

Wyoming Nature Day: Help set up a nature table with safe local items (e.g., sanitized pinecones, feathers); assist children in exploring under staff supervision.

Parent Night: Greet families, distribute materials, or manage a craft station (e.g., making Wyoming-themed bookmarks).

Outdoor Cleanup: Rake leaves or plant native flowers in the play area, ensuring compliance with safety standards.