



Capitol Squash Volunteer Handbook

General Information

Address:

Ferris Athletic Center at Trinity College

1685 Broad St.

Hartford Ct, 06106

Volunteers should meet at the Squash Courts on the 3rd floor of the gym.

Classroom space will be announced each week.

Contact Info:

Brendan McClintick- Primary volunteer contact

Squash Coordinator

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Maman Cooper

Academic Coordinator

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Emily Chernick

Academic Director

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Meg Taylor

Executive Director

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Mission, Goals, and Program Overview

Capitol Squash is an after-school youth development program which uses the sport of squash, in combination with fitness, academic tutoring, community service, college exposure, summer opportunities, and mentoring to make a difference in the lives of Hartford youth. There are 45 students currently enrolled in our program, coming from 6 different schools in the Hartford area.

Mission

The mission of Capitol Squash is to empower youth of Hartford to reach their potential as athletes, students, and engaged citizens.

Capitol Squash strives to provide urban youth with life-changing opportunities through the sport of squash, intensive educational support, mentoring, and community service activities.

REP

“REP” points is our system for tracking student performance. Students are awarded 1 point if they meet the expectations set for the 3 parts of REP. Students can earn 3 points each day, and this is used to determine which students are eligible for trips and tournaments. If a volunteer notices a student not meeting these expectations, please inform a staff member so we can speak to the student and dock points if necessary.

Respect-Are students respectful to each other and to volunteers and staff? Are they treating the facility and our equipment respectfully and with great care?

Effort- Are students working hard towards accomplishing their goals, whether it be in squash or academics? Students are making a significant effort to work through a problem, or pushing their physical limits in fitness.

Preparation- Students come prepared with all of their needed materials; agenda, homework, and jersey.

Capitol Squash – Our Culture:

Capitol Squash strives to build a culture of excellence, while promoting a positive, inclusive atmosphere. Absolutely no bullying, insults, or negativity are allowed. Any discriminatory language or sentiment will not be tolerated. We focus on our strengths while working on our challenges, and hold an optimistic view of the future. Our guiding mantra is to build strong relationships, develop a strong organization, and be mission-focused. This means that everything we do drives toward clear, concise goals and fosters good will from our community.

Program Goals

Building on the established Squash and Education model, Capitol Squash aims to promote participants':

- Well-being, including physical fitness, nutrition, and self-esteem
- Literacy levels
- Strength of character
- Educational attainment

Long-Term Goals

Students will:

- 1) Graduate from high school and college
- 2) Develop an appreciation for learning and a global perspective
- 3) Cultivate healthy lifestyles, eating habits, and body image
- 4) Employ life skills to achieve goals and overcome adversity

Program Structure

School Year

Capitol Squash has programming from 3:40-6pm, 5 days a week, including both squash and academic sessions. There are two sessions of academics and squash a day, with the students split into two groups flipping between the two. The first session runs from 3:45-4:30, and the second session from 4:45-5:30. Volunteers are welcome to switch between academics and squash, we ask that you let us know ahead of time so we can plan accordingly. Some students arrive early to play open squash at 3:30, if you would like to you are welcome to come early and hit with the kids.

Summer

Summer Programming is run at the Miss Porters school in Farmington CT. We have practice 5 days a week with programming running from 9:30am-2:30pm. Summer programming is much more flexible for extracurricular activities, if you are interested in running something for the kids feel free to reach out to Brendan or Emily. Normal volunteering for Squash and academics will take place mostly in the mornings from 9:30-11:40am.

Communication

Great communication is the key to success within every organization, and it is essential to ensuring the success of our students. As far as communication from Capitol Squash goes, you can expect to receive communication from staff on a regular basis either through text, phone call, email or in person. Electronic communication is our preferred method of contact and may be comprised of email updates, Google calendar invites and e-newsletters. Please make sure you check your email regularly to ensure that you do not miss any important information regarding the program, such as schedule changes or practice cancellations. *Please let us know if email is not the best way to reach you.*

Professionalism

Volunteers are important role models for Capitol Squash students. Being aware of our words, actions, and appearance is crucial because each of these sends messages to those around us.

- Profanity is unacceptable in any context at Capitol Squash.
- Please do your best to avoid playing favorites
 - Gift giving or any activities that may intentionally exclude students are ways favoritism can be shown
- Please refrain from using any language or communicating any sentiment which is discriminatory or exclusionary with regard to age, race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status.
- Drugs, alcohol and tobacco use at Capitol Squash is prohibited.
- Please refrain from using cell phones during practice, including text messaging. We expect this of our students. You will notice staff using cell phones for communicating with parents, however.
- We encourage feedback about practices and our programming, but please save the feedback for after practice has ended and the students are not around.
- Volunteers should be cautious about the language they use in speaking or writing about students. Respecting students and honoring confidentiality means never speaking about students when we may be overheard.
- We encourage volunteers to dress comfortably but appropriately. The following kinds of clothing or accessories are not acceptable:
 - items that advertise drugs, alcohol, tobacco, sex, or otherwise inappropriate things
 - items that do not appropriately cover the wearer's body (ex: cropped shirts, low cut shirts, muscle shirts, short shorts and skirts)
 - items with messages that are offensive or inappropriate

Expectations of Capitol Squash Volunteers

Commitment – The Capitol Squash model only succeeds if volunteers honor their regular weekly commitments. We write our lesson plans with you in mind, and the students will come to expect seeing you on a regular basis. If you are scheduled for a day and can't make it, please try to give at least 24 hour notice to the appropriate staff so we can plan accordingly.

Participation – Participation is essential. No matter what we are doing, you and the students will both feel that you are a more integral part of the program if you participate fully with the students in each activity.

You may be assisting in the following activities during the year:

- Homework help
- Assisting and tutoring during literacy time

- Coaching squash and supervising/leading fitness activities
- Participating in team building activities
- Chaperoning community service projects and other special events

Expect excellence from our students at all times—on the squash courts, in the classroom, and in all interactions with others. Students will adapt to our expectations, so let's set the bar as high as possible.

Handling behavioral issues—From time to time, you may encounter a student who is disruptive or disrespectful. Volunteers should feel **empowered to redirect students so that they will focus on their work**. Remember, you are primarily a tutor/coach, not a peer, and students need structure and direction from you in order to be successful. If a student is **disrespectful, disruptive, or continually resists engaging in her/his work**, please let us know. You are here to tutor students who are eager to learn, and you shouldn't spend your time trying to convince a student to do her/his work.

Boundaries

Establishing the right kind of mentoring/tutoring relationship with young people can be a challenge because the boundaries can get blurry. There is a general guideline characterizing the ideal relationship between teacher and student: "friendly, but not a friend." It is your challenge to make the boundaries between you and the student clear from the start, while still managing to be flexible, fun, caring, and trustworthy. In order to keep a professional relationship with the students we ask volunteers to refrain from interacting with students over social media platforms. Remember that one of your primary roles is to mentor and challenge the students—this requires a healthy distance at times, which can be difficult to maintain if you are "buddies" with your student. If you ever have questions about student-mentor relationship boundaries, please speak to a Capitol Squash staff member.

Background Checks

Capitol Squash is committed to creating a safe environment for all of our students. We will conduct background checks on volunteers who plan on volunteering more than twice a month, or any volunteers aiding in travel and special events. Any volunteers who refuse a background check will not be allowed to volunteer for Capitol Squash. If you are aware of any offenses or convictions that may be discovered, but would still like to volunteer for Capitol Squash, please set up a meeting with Meg Taylor and Brendan to discuss your involvement in the program. All information provided and gathered will remain confidential.