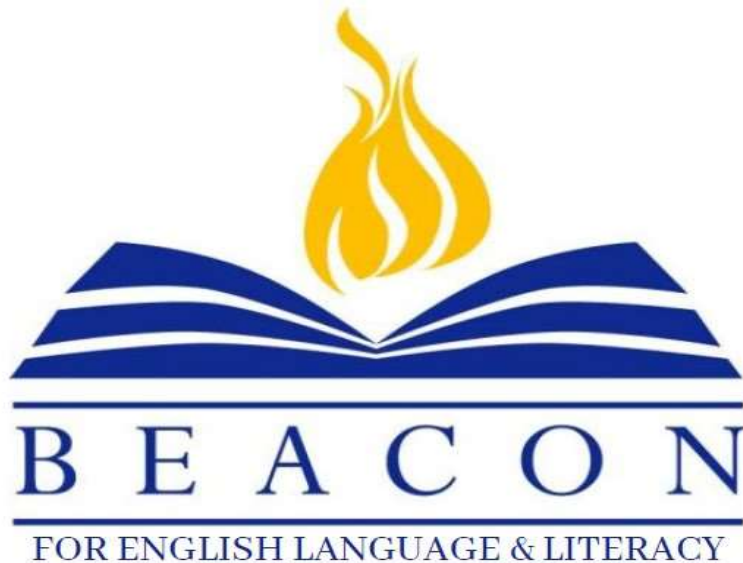


# BEACON for English Language and Literacy

## *Volunteer Handbook*



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Revision 2.2.2023



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## ***BEACON for English Language and Literacy***

### **Our Vision**

To be a transformational English language and literacy program, leading the way for residents of the greater Prince William County/Manassas area

### **Our Mission**

Inspired by the Benedictine love of learning, BEACON empowers its adult learners to enhance their quality of life by:

- Addressing their changing needs through English language classes, citizenship classes, employment and life skills training, and literacy education.
- Leveraging well-trained volunteers, technology, partnerships and alliances to provide an opportunity for local residents to give back to the community.
- Bringing people together from all walks of life through stewardship, service, and hospitality to achieve BEACON's vision.

### **Background**

BEACON stands for Benedictine Education Assistance Community Outreach to Neighbors. BEACON was founded in 1992 by Sister Eileen Heaps in response to the overwhelming adult literacy needs in Manassas City, Manassas Park, and Prince William County. She began tutoring a handful of illiterate adults in the only space available to her - a little kitchen in the wing of the Benedictine monastery. As more individuals came forward asking for help to read and write, Sister Eileen started to look for additional classrooms and teachers in Manassas. Volunteers from those early years attribute BEACON's growth to Sister Eileen's warm relationship with the community, recalling how nobody could ever say "no" to the Sister when she asked for help. Thanks to Sister Eileen, the owners of a local McDonald's and a furniture store allowed BEACON to come into their business and teach their employees. The Manassas Police Department even vacated one of the rooms at their station so that the Sister and her cadre of volunteers could tutor area residents.

As the organization expanded, BEACON discovered that many of the adults in Prince William County who needed literacy services came from the immigrant population. Sister Eileen then began partnering with local churches to offer instruction in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), which is now the core of BEACON's program. Tutors started instructing larger groups of students, usually ten to a class, and BEACON inaugurated regular semesters and registrations. By the time Sister Eileen retired in 2004, BEACON was operating out of several class sites, employing full-time staff, and initiating a partnership with AmeriCorps. Today, our class sizes have grown to as many as fifteen students. We offer in-person classes at several local sites, as well as providing online options for learning. BEACON now serves more than 400 students annually, and continues to expand its program to reach out to meet the needs of the immigrant population.

## **Education Programs**

BEACON's adult literacy programs include ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), and Citizenship preparation. Employment and life skills are integrated into classes. While classroom instruction is the primary focus of the program, some specialized tutoring is available in a limited capacity as needed. Tutoring includes Citizenship preparation, reading, and conversation.

### **ESOL Classes**

BEACON offers eight levels of ESOL classes held at local sites in Manassas and Manassas Park, as well as online. The classes are taught by volunteers, like you, with a passion for serving in the community and empowering others. These classes are designed to help students improve their language skills so that they can achieve their goals. Each class focuses on all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Classes are offered in the morning and evening to accommodate the demanding lives of students.

### **Citizenship Classes**

BEACON also offers Citizenship classes, with offerings for both morning and evening students. Citizenship classes are primarily focused on preparing students for the civic test required to become a U.S. Citizen. Students must be knowledgeable about the history and civics of the United States. The class reviews the 100 questions that the students may encounter during their Naturalization interview. During the interview, they must be able to correctly respond to six out of ten questions, as well as be able to read and write a sentence in English. It is important that BEACON staff and/or volunteers do not offer anything that could constitute legal advice or assist with filling out immigration documents or applications; students must fill out the form themselves or seek legal assistance.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

**There are lots of opportunities available for those who wish to support the program and volunteer their time. These opportunities may include serving in the following capacities:**

- ESOL Teacher \*
- Citizenship Teacher \*
- Teacher Assistant \*
- Substitute Teacher \*
- Site Manager
- Workshop Organizer / Presenter
- Volunteer Trainer \*
- Technology Facilitator \*
- One-on-one tutor \*
- Event planner for fund raising

## ***Volunteer Administration***

### **Volunteer Application, Onboarding, and Training**

All volunteers, regardless of previous experience, are required to submit a volunteer application, undergo a background check, sign a volunteer code of conduct, attend an initial volunteer orientation and observe a full class session. Volunteers must also attend at least one additional training session per year. Volunteer trainings are provided each trimester.

### **Attendance Tracking**

Volunteer teachers/tutors/substitutes are required to record attendance weekly via Google Spreadsheets. Student hours should be entered by rounding to the nearest quarter hour and represented as a decimal. Volunteers are also required to track and report their volunteer time. Time should be entered for teaching, lesson planning, and training. Tracking this data is imperative for grant requests and reporting. All other non-teaching volunteer hours for the duties listed above must also be reported for these purposes.

### **Planned Substitute Request**

A planned substitute request must be made at least one week in advance. A detailed lesson plan **MUST** be submitted to staff 2 to 3 days in advance for the substitute. This lesson plan should include information on the unit and lesson(s) to be covered, with the specific pages in the book. In an effort to encourage continued attendance, BEACON asks that volunteers do not inform students that they can expect a substitute in a future class. In our experience, when students are aware they may have an upcoming substitute, attendance can suffer.

### **Unplanned Substitute Request**

An unplanned, last minute emergency should be communicated as soon as possible to BEACON staff. BEACON asks that if the situation permits, the volunteer shares their lesson plan with staff, but at the very least where the class should start in the book (page number). If the unplanned substitute request falls **on the day of class, you must CALL staff** as soon as possible to make them aware of the situation.

### **Weather and Cancellations**

For classes that meet in person, BEACON follows Manassas City Public Schools\* for cancellations related to weather. When schools are closed all in-person BEACON classes will also be closed. When schools are operating on a one or two hour delay, morning classes are cancelled and evening classes will continue as scheduled. When Manassas City Schools (MCS) cancel after school activities, evening classes will be cancelled. Your safety is important to BEACON. If classes are being held yet you feel that it's unsafe for you to drive, please communicate with BEACON staff and do not go to class.

Students and teachers will receive text message alerts for class cancellations through the Remind system.

\*Please note that BEACON does not follow Manassas City Schools for cancellations other than weather. BEACON will still have classes on days MCS are closed due to other circumstances such as teacher workdays and in some cases on holidays.

### **Class Cancellations Due to Student Attendance**

On rare occasions, a teacher may find that their entire class is absent. Whether the class is in person, or online, BEACON asks that volunteers wait 20-25 minutes to give students the opportunity to arrive. If 20 minutes have passed, and no students are present, the volunteer may leave. Please let staff know (either by phone or email) if class is then cancelled due to student absence.

The volunteer should NOT cancel class due to limited students. Even if only one student is present for class, the class must be held. Cancelling when at least one student is present, would not be respectful of their time and payment for the class.

### **Classroom Policies**

Volunteers should strictly enforce BEACON classroom policies.

- Student and teachers should speak only in English during class.
- Children are not permitted in class (or on site).
- Only registered students may attend class.
- All student enrollment changes must be made through the BEACON office.
- Volunteers are expected to conduct class for the entire scheduled time. BEACON expects volunteers to start and finish on time regardless of class attendance. This ensures students receive the expected amount of instruction for the semester. If an emergency arises please contact staff or the volunteer site manager.

### **Materials and Photocopying**

It is part of BEACON's budget to provide volunteers with printed materials. Volunteers should never use a site's photocopier. BEACON staff will be happy to make photocopies of lesson plan materials. Volunteers should give staff two days of advanced notice of photocopies needed for class. BEACON will make the copies and bring to teachers prior to the start of class. If you send a request for copies, please follow-up prior to class to confirm receipt.

### **Teacher Resources**

BEACON has several resources available upon request located in our offices. The following are available:

- Fake money
- Flash cards (alphabet, numbers, interviewing, states)
- Puzzles
- Short stories
- Picture stories
- Dictionaries

- Job skills resource books
- Worksheets
- Photos
- Magazines
- Projector
- Games (Bingo, Site words, Word family, Scrabble)
- CDs
- Videos
- Stationery supplies
- The Knowledge Network

If you are interested in checking out these items, call to schedule a time you can stop by the office or email us with your request and staff will bring the item(s) out to site.

### **Knowledge Network**

The BEACON Knowledge Network (KN) is an easy-to-use website containing hundreds of proven resources for use with the various BEACON English classes. Teachers can download any of the resources and use them immediately in the class. The website is organized by class level and by topic, making it easy to find material suitable for particular lessons. The topics range from specific English instruction items like grammar and idioms, to citizenship and community, to technology. There is also a Help and FAQ section to assist you in finding resources.

The KN was created by BEACON volunteers and staff using inputs from our own volunteers. If you have a resource to add, please submit to [knowledgenetwork@osbva.org](mailto:knowledgenetwork@osbva.org), so it can be shared with other teachers.

### **Leaving Volunteer Service**

If you find that for personal circumstances you are no longer able to volunteer with BEACON, we would find it helpful to have two weeks' notice so we can make proper arrangements to replace you.



## ***Volunteer Conduct***

### **Dress Code**

All volunteers serve as representatives of BEACON. Like staff, volunteers are expected to wear neat, clean and modest attire to present a good image to students and the community. Volunteers should not use clothing that is provocative, immodest or that uses inappropriate slogans.

### **Drugs, Alcohol, and Smoking**

Volunteers may not carry, consume, use or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while performing their volunteer duties. Volunteers may not provide drugs (including legal over the counter drugs), alcohol, or tobacco products to students or other volunteers.

### **Representing BEACON**

We ask that Volunteers refrain from speaking to the press on behalf of BEACON without permission from BEACON staff. While volunteers are passionate about their activities on behalf of BEACON, they may not presume to speak on behalf of the organization unless it has been approved in advance.

### **BEACON Volunteer Code of Conduct**

All BEACON Volunteers must sign the following Code of Conduct:

#### **Introduction**

As a secular ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia, BEACON for Adult Literacy condemns sexual misconduct and we do not condone or permit it in any way, under any circumstances. BEACON is committed to taking the necessary steps to prevent sexual misconduct.

The purpose of this code of conduct is the safety of Adult Language Learners served by BEACON for Adult Literacy. Adult Language Learners fall under the category of vulnerable adults based on limited communications skills as outlined by the State of Virginia: The State of Virginia refers to such a person as an “incapacitated” adult with the following definition. “‘Incapacitated adult’ means any person eighteen years or older who is impaired by reason of mental illness, mental retardation, physical illness or disability, advanced age or other causes to the extent the adult lacks sufficient understanding or capacity to make, communicate or carry out reasonable decisions concerning his [her] well-being.” *State of Virginia Criminal Code 18.2-369.*

#### **Code of Conduct**

As someone who works with vulnerable adults, I will:

1. Maintain a professional role and be aware of the trust and power I possess as a volunteer (teacher).
2. Ensure that staff have approved, in advance, all meetings with vulnerable adults outside of the classroom (such as individual tutoring or class field trips).

3. Ensure that private meetings (such as individual tutoring) with vulnerable adults take place in a public setting.
4. Keep doors open in any location in which a private meeting occurs with a vulnerable adult where there is no window.
5. Avoid direct communication with vulnerable adults outside of the classroom, when possible. Exercise caution in communicating with vulnerable adults through email, social media, or the internet.
6. Never touch a vulnerable adult in a sexual way or other inappropriate manner.
7. Never drive a vulnerable adult.
8. Never introduce sexually explicit or pornographic topics, vocabulary, music, recordings, films, games, website, computer software, or entertainment.
9. Never provide alcohol when working with a vulnerable adult.
10. Never use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs.
11. Refrain from giving/receiving inappropriate or expensive gifts to vulnerable adults.

I have read and concur with the content of the Code of Conduct.

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Volunteer Signature

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Date

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Volunteer Printed Name

## ***Policy for Volunteer Interaction with Students***

### **The Importance of Boundaries**

BEACON has established certain boundaries for volunteers to abide by when interacting with students and site staff. We expect all volunteers to abide by these boundaries.

### **Non-Sexual Harassment**

BEACON prohibits harassment of any volunteer, employee, site employee or guest, or student by another volunteer, employee, site employee or guest student, or third party for any reason based on a “protected class” including, but not limited to, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, or any other protected class under federal, state, or local law.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that in the workplace, or at any site, no person harasses another for any reason or in any manner. The conduct prohibited by this policy includes conduct in any form including, but not limited to conversation, e-mail, voice mail, chat rooms, Internet use or history, text messages, pictures, images, writings, words or gestures. While it is not easy to define precisely what harassment is, it can include, but is not limited to, slurs, epithets, threats, derogatory comments or visual depictions, unwelcome jokes and teasing.

Any employee, volunteer, site employee or guest, or student who believes that (s)he has been harassed should report the situation immediately to the BEACON Program Executive Director, Jennifer Katac at 703-331-5513, [jkatac@osbva.org](mailto:jkatac@osbva.org) or to the Benedictine Sisters of VA Chief Operating Officer, Mary Finnigan at (571) 428-2502, [mfinnigan@osbva.org](mailto:mfinnigan@osbva.org). While reporting such problems may be a difficult personal experience, allowing harassment activities to continue will most certainly lead to a less desirable outcome. BEACON will investigate all such reports as confidentially as possible. Adverse action will not be taken against an individual because (s)he, in good faith, reports or participates in the investigation of a violation of this policy. Violations of this policy are not permitted and may result in removal from the program.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Any type of sexual harassment is against BEACON’S policy and may be unlawful. BEACON firmly prohibits sexual harassment of any employee, volunteer, student, or site employee or guest by another employee, volunteer, student, site employee or guest, or third party. The purpose of this policy is not to regulate the morality of volunteers. It is to ensure that at BEACON, no one is subject to sexual harassment. While it is not easy to define precisely what sexual harassment is, it may include: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature including, but not limited to, sexually-related drawings, pictures, jokes, teasing, e-mails, text messages, uninvited touching or other sexually-related comments. The conduct prohibited by this policy includes conduct in any form including but not limited to conversations, e-mail, voice mail, chat rooms, Internet use or history, text messages, pictures, images, writings, words or gestures.

Sexual harassment in any form will not be tolerated. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge from the program. There will be no adverse action taken against an individual who reports violations of this policy in good faith, or participates in the investigation of such violations.

Any volunteer who believes that (s)he is a victim of sexual harassment should immediately report such actions in accordance with the following procedure. All complaints will be promptly and thoroughly investigated as follows:

1. Any volunteer, student, employee who believes that (s)he is a victim of sexual harassment or has been retaliated against for complaining of sexual harassment, should report the situation immediately to the Executive Director, Jennifer Katak at 703-331-5513 or [jkatak@osbva.org](mailto:jkatak@osbva.org). If an employee is dissatisfied with the attention the report receives, (s)he should contact Benedictine Sisters of VA Chief Operating Officer, Mary Finnigan at (571) 428-2502, [mfinnigan@osbva.org](mailto:mfinnigan@osbva.org).
2. BEACON for Adult Literacy will investigate every reported incident immediately. Any volunteer, employee, or student who has been found to have violated this policy may be subject to dismissal from the program.
3. BEACON will conduct all investigations in a discreet manner. BEACON recognizes that every investigation requires a determination based on all the facts in the matter. It also recognizes the serious impact a false accusation can have.
4. The reporting individual participating in any investigation under this policy has BEACON'S assurance that no reprisals will be taken as a result of a sexual harassment complaint. It is the policy to encourage discussion of the matter to help protect others from being subjected to similar inappropriate behavior.

### **Speech, Political and/or Religious Statements**

Volunteers should be conscious and careful about their speech during their volunteer time. Volunteers should avoid any comments that might make students, or site employees and guests feel uncomfortable, disrespected or threatened.

Volunteers must remain apolitical while representing the BEACON Program. While volunteering, individuals should never endorse, or criticize a political party or politician, or discuss sensitive social issues that may be partisan by nature. This includes endorsing or criticizing specific political issues or opinions.

While BEACON is a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia, our program is secular and our students represent a wide range of faiths. In order to ensure that all feel welcome and to abide by funding requirements, class instruction must remain secular.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Volunteers are not to solicit students for other activities, including participation in business activities, political organizations, religious activities, clubs or other social activities. Volunteers are not permitted to promote any personal, professional, or family business. Examples include inviting students to join your personal bible study or sharing a website for your personal business.

Volunteers are strictly prohibited from selling/promoting goods or services to students. Examples include: selling personal items to students, offering paid tutoring, or selling professional services to students.

### **Referrals**

In addition to offering educational services, BEACON strives to connect students to resources outside of the scope of our services. In order to continually provide appropriate connections, it's important for BEACON to be aware of student needs. Usually students will approach volunteers for referrals. All referrals must be pre-approved by BEACON staff. Examples include legal or financial services (such as filling out the Citizenship application), low cost health care, and housing.

### **Student Contact Outside of the Program**

Volunteers are to maintain a professional relationship with students. Volunteers may exchange contact information with students including phone numbers or emails for educational purposes, but volunteers should ensure that students understand that this is optional. Volunteers should use extreme care when communicating with students. Volunteers are encouraged to use the Remind system to communicate with students.

Volunteers should never be alone with a student. BEACON prohibits volunteers from meeting individually with students outside of scheduled classes or tutoring. All one-on-one tutoring must be approved by BEACON staff. Tutoring may only be provided in a public location (never in a private home or secluded area).

### **Driving Students**

Volunteers are strictly prohibited from transporting students in their personal vehicles. Under no circumstances should volunteers offer rides to students including during inclement weather conditions.

### **Advocating on Behalf of Students**

Volunteers are not to approach outside organizations, government agencies, nonprofits, or businesses to advocate on behalf of a student. If a student is in need of an advocate, please inform BEACON staff to review the need and help get the student the appropriate assistance needed.

### **Providing a Reference for Students**

BEACON realizes that volunteers may be approached by students requesting a reference for employment, housing, education, etc. Due to the limited scope of interaction that volunteers

have with students, references may be permitted on a case-by-case basis with limited and very specific language. In the event the student is asking for a reference or seeking confirmation on attendance in English classes, please reach out to a BEACON staff member for assistance.

### **Confidentiality**

Volunteers may have access to personal information of students at the time of registration, or a student share personal information during the course of the session. This personal information may include address, phone number, etc. Volunteers should never release a student's personal information to other students, site employees or guests, third parties, or other volunteers.

### **Legal Advice Requests**

Volunteers may be asked legal questions by students regarding immigration issues or other issues. Volunteers are prohibited from giving students legal advice. Volunteers should never offer to help a student determine Citizenship eligibility or assist a student in filling out the citizenship application.

## Teacher/Tutor Volunteer Description

BEACON's goal is to serve the needs of adult English Language Learners in Greater Prince William by empowering them to achieve their education and employment goals. We focus on assisting our students with:

- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Entering or improving employment
- Obtaining citizenship

### **Time**

- 2 to 4 hours per week of teaching.
- Minimum 1 semester (12 weeks) commitment, 1 school year preferred.
- Must attend a minimum of one training session per year.
- Approximately 1-2 hours of lesson planning per week.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Prepare a written lesson plan including supplemental materials.
- Teach 1-2 sessions per week.
- Uphold BEACON policies and procedures.
- Ensure that classrooms are left clean, and in the condition they were in at the beginning of class.
- Do not provide transportation to students before and/or after class.
- Be on time and prepared for class.
- Take attendance during class.
- Enter your volunteer hours and student attendance into Google Docs by the end of each month.
- Notify the BEACON staff in case of absence so they can obtain a substitute. If you co teach, please check first with your co teacher then contact the BEACON staff.
- Respect students, BEACON staff and fellow volunteers.
- Maintain confidentiality of student and program information at all times.
- Communicate with BEACON staff as needed.
- Return any materials to BEACON if you decide to terminate your relationship with the organization.

### **Rights**

- Receive training in the area in which you volunteer
- Be treated with respect from BEACON staff, students, and fellow volunteers
- Have access to support materials
- Voice your comments or concerns about aspects of the program
- Terminate your volunteer obligation with 2 weeks' notice

### **Qualifications**

- Be willing to commit to teaching/tutoring one-two times per week for one semester or as agreed upon with BEACON staff (seasonal and project opportunities available).
- Be fluent in English.
- Have a strong desire to help others.

## Teacher Assistant Volunteer Description

BEACON's goal is serve the needs of adult English Language Learners in Greater Prince William by empowering them to achieve their education and employment goals. We focus on assisting our students with:

- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Entering or improving employment
- Obtaining citizenship

### **Time**

- 2 to 4 hours per week of supporting teacher during class
- Minimum 1 semester commitment, 1 school year preferred.
- Must attend a minimum of one training session per year.
- May be asked to assist with lesson planning

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Support main teacher 1-2 sessions per week.
- Uphold BEACON policies and procedures.
- Ensure that classrooms are left clean and, in the condition, they were in at the beginning of class.
- Do not provide transportation to students before and/or after class.
- Be on time and prepared for class.
- Take attendance during class.
- Notify the BEACON staff in case of absence so they can obtain a substitute if the teacher needs one.
- Respect students, BEACON staff and fellow volunteers.
- Maintain confidentiality of student and program information at all times.
- Communicate with BEACON staff as needed.
- Return any materials to BEACON if you decide to terminate your relationship with the organization.

### **Rights**

- Receive training in the area in which you volunteer
- Be treated with respect from BEACON staff, students, and fellow volunteers
- Have access to support materials
- Voice your comments or concerns about aspects of the program
- Terminate your volunteer obligation with 2 weeks' notice

### **Qualifications**

- Be willing to commit to assisting one-two times per week for one semester or as agreed upon with BEACON staff (seasonal and project opportunities available).
- Be fluent in English.
- Have a strong desire to help others.



### **Site Manager Volunteer Description**

BEACON's goal is serve the needs of adult English Language Learners in Greater Prince William by empowering them to achieve their education and employment goals. We focus on assisting our students with:

- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Entering or improving employment
- Obtaining citizenship

#### **Time Commitment**

- 2 days a week, 2.5 hours each
- Minimum 1 semester (12 weeks) commitment.

#### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Open and close site (as needed)
- Ensure that students and teachers stay within the areas allocated to BEACON
- Uphold and enforce BEACON policies and procedures
- Ensure that classrooms are left clean and in the condition they were in at the beginning of class
- Contact BEACON staff when teacher does not arrive for class
- Assist teachers in entering volunteer hours and student attendance into Google Docs as needed
- Respect students, BEACON staff and fellow volunteers
- Maintain confidentiality of student and program information at all times
- Communicate with BEACON staff as needed
- Ensure only BEACON teachers, students and staff enter assigned area

#### **Rights**

- Receive training in the area in which you volunteer
- Be treated with respect from BEACON staff, students, and fellow volunteers
- Have access to support materials
- Voice your comments or concerns about aspects of the program
- Terminate your volunteer obligation with 2 weeks' notice

#### **Qualifications**

- Be fluent in English.
- Have a strong desire to help others.
- Be organized and vigilant.