



## The President's Volunteer Service Award Best Practices



The President's Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) was created to honor Americans whose demonstrated commitment to service inspires other to engage in volunteer service.

### What is the Purpose of the PVSA?

Students are encouraged to get out into their community, to benefit others less fortunate than themselves, to inspire others in the call to service, and to be not just leaders in their

### What counts as Community Service?

- Allowed service hours are for the benefit of the community with no direct or indirect benefit, financial reward, or teacher grade.
- Cannot be self-serving
- Cannot be paid hours
- Cannot be court ordered hours
- Cannot be more than 8 hours in a 24 hours period
- No in-kind or monetary charitable gifts (e.g. 3 cans of goods for 1 hour of service, \$100 for 1 hour)
- No bonus, extra, or inflated hours even if granted by your organization – back out these hours to get true hours volunteered
- Routine club/school service does not count – because it does not benefit the community at-large
- Can be club organized activity specifically to serve a function of the community or if it is integral to the mission of the club/requirement of the club (e.g. Plogging volunteer service)
- Can be with profit/nonprofit organizations benefitting the community
- Can be with national, international organizations
- Can be with religious affiliations but only if they benefit the community (e.g. summer camps)
- Individual hours only; no Group category awards

## What Does Not Count as Community Service?

### **Court-Ordered Service**

Volunteer service mandated by the court cannot be counted.

### **Unused/Rollover Hours**

Volunteer hours must be completed in the 12 months award period. Unused hours may not be “rolled over” to the next award period. The exception is the Lifetime Achievement Award which is cumulative across multiple years.

### **Paid Work**

Volunteers must not receive any compensation or stipend for the community service hours.

### **Monetary/In-Kind Donations**

Monetary or in-kind donations to an organization do not have a volunteer hour equivalency and cannot be counted.

### **Unpaid Student Work**

Not all unpaid student work can be counted as volunteer, community service work. Unpaid work in a for-profit place of business, such as an office or medical practice, is considered an internship experience and shall not count as volunteer work because the student’s effort would benefit a business rather than a charitable effort. Read below for exception for volunteer sports/dance teaching assistants.

### **Teaching Assistants/Junior Coaches/Counselor in Training (Dance, Martial Arts, Camps, etc)**

A student who serves as a junior or assistant instructor, coach, or camp counselor may be able to count time spent teaching classes to younger students, even if the studio/camp/sports organization is a for-profit business, if there is no in-kind compensation. The student coach/teaching assistant/counselor must not receive any benefits such as free or reduced tuition/class fees, belt testing, or other no-cost benefits. Any student who submits volunteer instructor/coach hours of this type as volunteer work must also submit a letter from the studio/camp signed by the owner or head coach stating that the volunteer did not receive any of the benefits list above or similar in exchange for his/her volunteer work.

### **Work for Family**

Unpaid work for family is usually not counted as volunteer work. Mowing the lawn for your parents, babysitting for a family member, or washing a car for your grandparents is considered a contribution to your own family and not volunteer work that benefits the community. Work in the family’s business is not usually considered volunteer work. If you believe that there should be an exception, contact the PVSA administrator through Compass.

### **Live-In Exchange Student**

Activities and interactions with an exchange student who is living in your home is generally not considered volunteer work. Eating, running errands, taking trips, going on outings, and doing ordinary activities of daily life when accompanied by an exchange student does not transform such activities into a volunteer role (since you would likely be doing these things anyway, without an exchange student.)

## **What Does Not Count as Volunteer Service?**

### **Fostering Animals**

Activities related to the direct care and keeping of foster animals, such as feeding, watering, bathing, exercising, grooming, accompanying to vet appointments, or cleaning up after the animal can count toward the PVSA award. Activities related to adoption services for foster animals, such as creating promotions or working at adoption events, can be counted. However, if the applicant is sheltering a foster animal(s) at home, he/she cannot count ALL hours that the animal is sheltered or housed as volunteer time. For example, fostering an animal for 7 days does not yield 168 hours of volunteer time because not all hours of the day are devoted to the care and keeping of the animal.

### **Marches, Rallies, Protests**

Participation in marches, rallies, or protests shall not count as volunteer hours.

### **Attendance/Participation in an Organization**

A student's attendance at regular meetings or participation in field trips, such as a Girl Scout meeting or Boy Scout field trip, do not count as volunteer hours. However, service projects or charitable work done through one of these organizations, such as a youth group visit to a nursing home, can be counted.

### **Fundraising**

Hours spent on fundraising activities for a member's own organization cannot be counted as service. For example, time spent earning money through the sale of Boy Scout popcorn, Girl scout cookies, honor society pizza day, etc., cannot be counted as community service. However, efforts expended to raise money for another charitable organization, such as a car wash or lemonade stand to raise funds for the animal shelter or cancer society, could be counted.

## **Signed Supervisor Logs**

Please keep in mind that you MUST have all hours signed by a supervisor, with printed name, telephone, email and/or other contact information. You should expect not only the supervisor to be contacted, but in selected cases, the organization itself may be contacted for verification of your hours and service description.

## No and Yes Examples

	No Example	Yes Example
1	Routine club activities	Club goes to food bank, cleanup beach and parks
	*School service is not the same as community service and not valid for PVSA hours – must be external, i.e – routine club activities such as building robot, yearbook layout/snapping pictures – these benefit your own club or only the school, not the community at large.	
2	Fundraising for your school/club	Fundraise/solicit donations for Goodwill
	*Cannot benefit itself	
3	Regular club meetings, competitions	Taking Robotics product to senior citizen center for demonstration
	*Cannot be school club only; must benefit or enrich the community/those less fortunate	
4	Helping a friend study	Tutoring as part of a sanctioned group (NHS, youth group)
	*Must benefit others; serve the community	
5	Helping a teacher during class or for a grade	Helping teacher during non-school time and APPROVED BY TEACHER specifically indicating these as COMMUNITY service hours.
6	Volunteer at a booth to recruit new members;	Volunteer at a booth to raise fund for a non-profit
	*No, because it only serves itself	
7	Preparing for or conducting religious worship, preaching, proselytizing;	Church based camp counselor volunteer, mission trips for the time performing service (not travel, eating, sleeping, worshipping)
	*Again, must benefit entire community, many church based programs benefit the community	
8	Meetings, fundraising, nonservice Scout activities	Scout service projects *Cannot count regular scouting activities, only those specific to community service
9	Helping able bodied dad mow the yard	Mow lawn for wheelchair bound elderly next door neighbor (for free)
	*Provide service to those less fortunate than yourself	