



MAST @ FIU

Biscayne Bay Campus

STUDENT GUIDE TO COMMUNITY SERVICE

The purpose of this guide is to help you as you plan and implement your required community service project. If you have additional questions, see your counselor or the person in your school selected by the principal to coordinate community service activities.

What Is a Community Service Project?

Community service projects are planned, organized, and voluntary efforts designed to address a problem or need in the community. To be meaningful, community service projects must address a real need or problem found within the school or community. The community service project you choose to do should also reflect your personal interests and skills. In addition, worthwhile community service projects require an on-going commitment on your part.

What Are the Community Service Graduation Requirements for Dade County Public Schools?

To complete the community service graduation requirement for Dade County Public Schools, you must complete a community service project between 9th and 12th grade. No set number of service hours is required for the project unless you are working toward the Florida Academic Scholars' certificate or the Superintendent's Diploma of Distinction (A minimum of 75 hours of service is required for each.). For further information about these programs, see your counselor.

You can also meet the community service requirements for graduation by successfully completing one of the following elective courses.

- Voluntary School/Community Service (.5 credit; social studies elective)
- Voluntary Public Service (.5 credit)

What Types of Projects Meet the Requirement for Graduation?

You may do any of a variety of projects in order to meet the graduation requirement. You can spend time with senior citizens in convalescent homes, tutor elementary students, work in homeless shelter - and more! You may complete your project at a school or in the community. You may work as an individual and/or you may work in a group. Below is a brief description of the types of projects that are acceptable.

School-Site Service Projects

School-site service is an excellent way of meeting the requirement for community service while also helping meet the special needs of a school. If you choose to complete a school-site project, you should commit to providing on-going support and assistance to the school. Additionally, if

you work on a school-site service project, the project must not be completed as part of a regular school course in which you are receiving academic credit (with the exception of the elective courses in community service).

Examples of School-Site Projects include:

- Student plans, coordinates, and monitors a school-wide letter writing campaign in support of an issue of local importance.
- Student tutors other students in reading or math for a semester.
- Student serves as a Community Service aide to an appropriate teacher or counselor and assists with the efforts to implement and monitor community service experiences.

Group Community Service Projects

Group community service projects provide excellent opportunities for you to complete your community service requirement while also helping meet the special needs of an individual neighborhood or community. Group community service projects provide excellent service opportunities for organized student groups such as service clubs, honor societies, and athletic teams. Membership in a service club or organization does not in itself meet your community service responsibilities. However, you can work with others in the organization on community service projects in order to meet your responsibility.

Examples of Group Community Service Projects include:

- Students develop an "Adopt-A-Park" program that includes organizing and monitoring regular work details and beautification.
- Students work regularly at a senior citizens' center assisting with feeding and visitations.
- Students work regularly at a day care center and assist with child care or school work (e.g., reading stories or helping with homework).

Individual Community Service Projects

Individual community service projects allow you to complete the service requirement while addressing a community need which interests you. When working on an individual project, you should be committed to providing on-going assistance to the community.

Examples of Individual Community Service Projects include:

- Student hosts story hours for younger children at a community library or at a nearby elementary school.
- Student reads to or records for the blind.
- Student serves as a volunteer at a museum or cultural center.

How Do I Select a Meaningful Community Service Project?

You should think about the following questions before selecting a community service project:

- What need or problem exists in the community that interests you?
- What project can you develop in order to work on this need or problem?
- Will your project provide an important service?
- Does the project match your interests, talents, and abilities?
- Are there any special qualifications you need in order to work on the project?
- Will you be able to spend the necessary time on the project?

- What planning steps are needed before beginning the project?
- Who needs to be contacted before the project begins?

The organizations and agencies listed below typically welcome volunteers. This list should help you develop ideas for community service projects.

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| • Chambers of Commerce | • Hospitals |
| • Charities | • Libraries |
| • City governments | • Museums |
| • Civic organizations | • Parks |
| • Convalescent homes | • Political organizations |
| • County agencies | • Recreation centers |
| • Cultural centers | • Religious organizations |
| • Day care centers | • United Way agencies |
| • Elementary or middle schools | • Zoos |
| • Hospices | |

Additionally, you are strongly encouraged to involve your parents/guardians in the process of selecting your project. While this is your project, their support is also necessary.

How Do I Evaluate the Effectiveness of My Project? - The Community Service Journal

How can you determine if you are accomplishing the plans you outlined in your Community Service Project Proposal? How can you evaluate the effectiveness of your project? Feedback from the people you are working with on your project can help you answer this question. Your own feelings, however, about what you have accomplished are also very important. To help you evaluate your progress toward meeting your project goals, it is suggested that you keep a journal of your progress. Journal entries could be made each time you work on your project, much like a diary, or they could be made periodically, much like a progress report. It is suggested that you attach the journal entries to your Project Summary Report to support what you say in your report.

Below are some questions you might consider for your journal.

- What compliments or positive input have you receive about your project?
- What criticisms, if any, have you received?
- Has the criticism caused you to change your project in any way? Describe the changes.
- What do you feel is the main contribution you have made to the project?
- Have you been able to spend the time needed to make the project a success?
- What other assistance from students or the community is needed to improve the project?
- How does volunteering make you feel? Why do you feel this way?
- Overall, how do you feel the project is progressing?
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How Do I Receive Credit for the Community Service Project When It Is Completed?

You may complete the required community service project anytime between 9th and 12th grade; however, it is strongly suggested that you not wait until your senior year to begin work on this graduation requirement. (If you are a ninth grader at a middle school, you are encouraged to wait until tenth grade before beginning your project.) To receive credit for the project, follow the procedures outlined below.

Required Student Forms

- You are required to complete the Project Proposal, Project Summary Report, and Activity Log to receive credit for the community service project.
- If you are also working to meet the requirements for Florida Academic Scholars or to Superintendent's Diploma of Distinction, you must complete the "Hours Completed" section of the Activity Log form. Each of these programs requires that a minimum of 75 hours of community service be completed.
- Copies of the three forms are available at your school.

Receiving Credit for Projects Finished Before 12th Grade:

- You must complete the Project Proposal form before beginning your project.
- Turn in the completed Project Proposal form to the appropriate counselor or the principal's designee for approval and signature. One copy of the form shall be kept by the counselor or principal's designee and one copy shall be kept by you.
- After you have completed your community service project, you must complete the Project Summary Report and the Activity Log and have them signed by your parent or guardian. (If you are working toward the requirements for Florida Academic Scholars or the Superintendent's Diploma of Distinction, you must complete the "Hours Completed" section of the Activity Log form. Each of these programs requires that a minimum of 75 hours of community service be completed.)
- Turn in the completed Project Summary Report and the Activity Log to the appropriate counselor or principal's designee who will approve and sign each and record the project in the school system's computer file as finished. You should also keep a copy of each form.
- The final authority in matters related to a student's Project Proposal, Project Summary Report, or Activity Log rests with the school's principal.

Receiving Credit for Projects Begun or Completed During 12th Grade

- If you have not begun or completed the community service project before 12th grade, you must begin the project promptly at the beginning of your senior year.
- You must complete the required Project Proposal form before beginning your project.
- Turn in the completed Project Proposal form to your government or economics teacher for approval and signature. One copy of the form shall be kept by the teacher and one copy shall be kept by you.
- After you have completed your community service project, you must complete the Project Summary Report and the Activity Log and have them signed by a parent or guardian. (If you are working toward Florida Academic Scholars or the Superintendent's Diploma of Distinction, you must also complete the "Hours Completed" section of the Activity Log form. Each of these programs requires that a minimum of 75 hours of community service be completed.)
- Turn in the completed Project Summary Report and the Activity Log to your government or economics teacher who will approve and sign them. A copy of the Project Summary Report and the Activity Log will be kept by the teacher and another copy should be kept by you.
- Your government or economics teacher is responsible for seeing that the project is entered into the school system's computer file as completed. This will be done by the teacher entering a comment on the report card.
- The final authority in matters related to a student's Project Proposal, Project Summary Report, or Activity Log rests with the school's principal.