



## VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

The mission of DREAM Adaptive Recreation is to enhance the quality of life of individuals with disabilities by providing year-round outdoor adaptive recreational opportunities.

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# 1. Overview

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with DREAM Adaptive Recreation. Our programs come to life because of the dedication, compassion, and energy of volunteers like you. Each lesson taught, smile shared, and barrier removed helps us bring the joy and freedom of outdoor recreation to children, adults, and veterans with disabilities.

A volunteer is an individual who contributes their time and skills to an organization without expectation of compensation. Volunteers are not considered employees of DREAM Adaptive Recreation but are essential members of our team and community.

At DREAM, volunteers play a critical role in advancing our mission. You help create an environment where a person's disability does not define their life, but is simply one aspect of it. By reducing barriers, encouraging abilities, and fostering a safe, inclusive, and fun atmosphere, DREAM volunteers empower participants to build confidence and life skills that extend far beyond our programs.

This Volunteer Handbook is designed to help you understand DREAM's policies, procedures, and expectations for volunteers. It also highlights some of the responsibilities that come with your service. Please note that the information in this handbook does not constitute a contract or guarantee of volunteer placement or duration. DREAM may modify, amend, or update the contents of this handbook at any time without prior notice.

For details specific to each sport or program, please attend the volunteer training sessions provided by DREAM.

The personnel policies of DREAM Adaptive Recreation are established by our Board of Directors and administered by the Executive Director, who may delegate authority as appropriate. Volunteers are encouraged to contact the Executive Director or Program Manager with any questions about the policies, procedures, or responsibilities outlined here.

This handbook is available on the DREAM website under the Volunteer Summer or Winter webpages and within our volunteer management platform, MyImpact. All volunteers are expected to review and follow the guidelines provided.

DREAM volunteers uphold the highest standards of personal and professional ethics, judgment, and behavior. We ask that each volunteer demonstrate respect, integrity, and kindness in every interaction with participants and their families, fellow volunteers, staff, board members, donors, sponsors, community partner personnel, and the greater community. Together, we create a culture of inclusion, safety, and shared adventure.

## 2. Code of Conduct

DREAM Adaptive Recreation has adopted a Code of Conduct for all Volunteers and Staff to be completed annually. This is completed in the same step as signing the Liability Waiver and Media Release form as part of the computer based training requirements.

DREAM Adaptive Recreation requires that staff and volunteers conduct themselves in a safe and respectful manner to help maintain a safe, respectful, inclusive, and comfortable environment throughout DREAM programs or events. By fostering mutual respect and safety, we can ensure that everyone enjoys the full benefits of our programs.

All staff and volunteers are asked to read, sign, and follow this Code of Conduct prior to each season as part of their involvement in DREAM programming, which includes but is not limited to: Alpine Ski & Ride, Nordic Ski, Mountain Biking, Paved Path Cycling, Fishing, Paddle Boarding/Kayaking, Motorized Watersports, and Military/Veteran specific activities.

**To help ensure a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment, all staff and volunteers engaging in DREAM programming are expected to:**

- **Treat each other with respect and consideration.** All forms of harassment are prohibited. Harassment is any conduct where a person feels it interferes with work and learning, or creates an offensive environment. This includes but is not limited to the following: obscene gestures, physical contact, use of profanity, display or circulation of written materials or pictures derogatory to gender, race, color, religion, creed, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, political beliefs, appearance or ethnicity.
- **Honor confidentiality.** Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information of participants, volunteers, board members, and donors involved with DREAM Adaptive Recreation.
- **Uphold a zero-tolerance policy for abuse.** Physical, verbal, sexual, or mental abuse—or neglect of any kind—will not be tolerated and is grounds for immediate dismissal.
- **Adhere to the Sport Protection Policy.** All staff and volunteers are required to understand and adhere to DREAM's Sport Protection Policy to maintain a safe environment for all.
- **Respect personal boundaries.** Understand there is zero tolerance for touching participants inappropriately or in ways that may lead participants to misinterpret the intent due to their individual circumstances, cultural standards, or their developmental stage. In cases where the participant must be touched, ask the permission of the participant (e.g. loading into a mono ski or helping an individual get up after falling). If permission cannot be obtained, secure additional help and/or a witness. Appropriate

legal action will be taken to address any reports of inappropriate touching or misconduct.

- **Use appropriate language.** There is zero tolerance for any communication—spoken or written—that could be considered inappropriate or misinterpreted by participants, families, volunteers, or staff based on their personal experiences, cultural standards, or developmental understanding.
- **Maintain healthy boundaries.** Foster supportive and positive connections with participants while respecting and being mindful of appropriate personal and professional boundaries during and outside of DREAM programming.
- **Avoid conflicts of interest.** Do not accept commission, gifts, payments, loans, promises of future benefits or other items of value from anyone who has or may seek some benefit from DREAM in return.
- **Report safety concerns promptly.** Any situation that may endanger the health, safety, or well-being of anyone involved—yourself, participants, staff, volunteers, or sponsors—must be reported to a DREAM Program Staff member or the Executive Director within 24 hours.
- **Maintain control of equipment and surroundings.** Be in control of your own body and equipment throughout activity. It is your responsibility to stop or avoid people or objects and obey posted signs and warnings for closed areas.
- **Act with professionalism.** Act in a positive and professional manner throughout the entire activity. Staff and volunteers should encourage, motivate, and provide positive feedback for participants to help improve their skills.
- **Be prepared for emergencies.** Have a means to communicate with emergency medical crew or DREAM staff in case of an emergency and make every attempt to communicate (i.e. cell-phone, radio, etc.).
- **Avoid impairment.** Staff and volunteers must not be under the influence of any substance that impairs their ability to safely and responsibly participate in program activities.
- **Drugs and alcohol are prohibited.** The use of drugs and/or alcohol while representing DREAM is forbidden. DREAM has the obligation and right to refuse to let someone volunteer or participate if they suspect that the individual is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- **Abstain from tobacco use.** Not smoke or use tobacco products of any type, including e-cigarettes at program/event activities.
- **Comply with all laws.** Not engage in any conduct that is criminal under any laws applicable to me, including, but not limited to laws governing the possession and use of drugs and alcohol and providing of drugs to any person and of alcohol to minors.

- **Use equipment responsibly.** Only use equipment you have been trained on and approved to use.
- **Be reliable and communicative.** Punctuality and attendance are expected of all staff and volunteers. If you will be absent for any reason or need to arrive late or leave early, you must notify a Program Staff member as far in advance as possible.
- **Secure your personal items.** Keep personal effects including valuables and medications secured. DREAM Adaptive Recreation is not responsible for the loss or damage of these items.
- **Keep shared spaces clean.** Keep all program and event areas neat and clean and be respectful of other people's property.
- **Speak up.** If you observe anyone not following the Code of Conduct, please let DREAM Adaptive Recreation staff know immediately.

### 3. Volunteer Requirements and Screening

To ensure the safety of all participants, staff, and volunteers, DREAM Adaptive Recreation follows a thorough screening and training process. These steps help us maintain the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, safety, and sport protection across all programs and seasons.

#### Background Checks

- All volunteers must complete a background check prior to participating in any DREAM program.
- Background checks are conducted through a secure, third-party provider and renewed every year.
- Background checks help ensure the safety of our participants and uphold DREAM's standards of trust and accountability.

#### Sport Protection Training

- Every volunteer must complete Sport Protection Training, which includes education on abuse prevention, appropriate boundaries, and recognizing and reporting misconduct.
- This training aligns with DREAM's *Sport Protection Policy* and national best practices for youth and vulnerable-adult programs.
- The training must be completed prior to active volunteering and renewed annually as part of your volunteer re-registration process.

#### Volunteer Registration Steps

To become an active DREAM volunteer, individuals must:

1. Complete the online volunteer application through MyImpact.
2. Sign the annual Code of Conduct, Liability Waiver, and Media Release.
3. Complete the required Sport Protection Training modules.
4. Pass a Background Check.
5. Attend any required program or sport-specific training sessions before participating.

Volunteers who have not completed all of the above requirements will not be permitted to participate in DREAM programs until they are current and cleared. If a requirement is not able to be met, the volunteer must proactively communicate with the Program Manager to determine available options.

## **4. Safety and Risk Management**

### **General Safety Standard**

Safety is DREAM's top priority. Always make choices that protect the participant, yourself, and others. Know your role, stay within your training, and speak up immediately if something feels unsafe. If any unsafe condition, conduct, or equipment is encountered, pause the activity until a safe environment is secured. Volunteers only use equipment they have been trained and approved to use. Be honest about your familiarity and comfort with different equipment. DREAM staff members are here to help.

### **Equipment Use & Care**

#### **DREAM Equipment**

DREAM Adaptive Recreation maintains a fleet of specialized adaptive equipment to support participants with disabilities.

- **Training First:** Volunteers must complete the required training before using or teaching with DREAM-owned adaptive equipment.
- **Safety Check:** Before each use, complete a quick safety inspection. If you notice damage or something doesn't look right, stop and notify DREAM staff.
- **Minor Fixes:** If a small adjustment or repair is needed and you are trained to perform it (e.g., tightening a screw), make the fix, note it in the equipment maintenance log, and inform staff.
- **Remove from Service:** If the issue is more complex or compromises safety, tag the equipment, record it in the maintenance log, and notify staff so it can be removed from the fleet until repaired.
- **Return of Property:** All DREAM equipment must be returned to its designated storage area at the end of each lesson or program.

#### **Volunteer Personal Equipment**

For most sport-specific volunteer roles (such as alpine skiing, snowboarding, Nordic skiing, and

mountain biking), volunteers are expected to provide their own personal gear in safe, functional, and well-maintained condition. Personal equipment must meet the safety standards required for that sport (e.g., properly adjusted bindings, functioning brakes, approved helmets, and appropriate clothing for conditions).

Volunteers are responsible for inspecting their own equipment prior to each use. DREAM staff may assist with guidance, but DREAM is not responsible for the inspection, maintenance, or repair of volunteers' personal equipment. Volunteers should avoid using equipment that is damaged, improperly fitted, or unsafe for the activity.

DREAM may occasionally provide loaner gear if available and appropriate, but volunteers should plan to arrive prepared with their own gear for their assigned activity.

### **Participant Personal Equipment**

Participants may bring their own adaptive or standard equipment to lessons. DREAM staff will review equipment compatibility and determine whether it is appropriate for use during programming. However, DREAM is not responsible for inspecting, maintaining, or assuming liability for personally owned participant equipment.

### **Emergency Response (Accident/Incident Procedure)**

It is the volunteer's responsibility to respond calmly and appropriately should an injury occur. *Do not panic—and never leave the participant.*

#### **1. Get Help**

- Send one or more responsible adults to summon a higher level of care (e.g., Ski Patrol, lifeguard, or emergency medical services).
- Provide the *exact location* of the injured person and the *time* the incident occurred.

#### **2. Protect the Accident Site**

- Use cones, equipment, or available materials to mark the scene and protect the injured participant.
- Ask a bystander to direct traffic away from the area or flag down emergency personnel.

#### **3. Protect the Injured Participant**

- Do not move the participant or their equipment unless necessary to prevent further harm.
- Stay calm and talk to the participant—tell them what is being done to help.
- Apply immediate first aid only to the level of your training and certification. Once a trained medical professional arrives, they take command of the scene.

#### 4. Notify DREAM Staff

- Contact a Program Manager or Coordinator as soon as possible once certified medical help arrives and the scene is secure.

#### 5. Do Not Discuss the Incident

- Do not discuss the incident with anyone other than DREAM staff.
- Provide only factual information—avoid opinions, blame, or statements such as “I’m sorry,” which could be misinterpreted as admitting liability.
- If multiple participants are under your supervision, transfer remaining participants to another volunteer before accompanying the injured individual.

#### 6. Document the Incident

- Complete an Incident Report Form with the Program Manager within 24 hours.
- Report *all* incidents, even minor ones, to ensure DREAM staff can follow up appropriately.

#### Seizure Response

Some participants may experience seizures related to a medical condition or injury. Any participant who reports having experienced a seizure within the last 12 months is required to have a seizure protocol on file which will outline details and procedures. Participants who experience seizures may be required to provide permission from a medical professional or show other documentation in order to participate in certain activities. DREAM staff will notify each volunteer if they are working with a participant who has had or regularly has seizures.

#### If a participant experiences a seizure during a lesson:

1. **Ensure safety.** Stay calm and check your surroundings. Make sure you and the participant are safe before assisting.
2. **Do not restrain the participant.** Allow the seizure to occur naturally. Protect the participant’s head and clear any nearby hazards.
3. **If on a chairlift:** Notify the lift attendant before reaching the top that a full stop is needed to unload. Do not unhook the seizure retention strap until the chair has come to a full stop. Ask the lift attendant to notify Ski Patrol.
4. **If on snow or at a program site:** Signal for medical support (Ski Patrol or designated emergency responder).
5. **After the seizure:** When the participant regains consciousness, speak calmly and allow them time to recover. Do not offer food or drink immediately afterward.
6. **Notify DREAM staff immediately.** Program staff will coordinate follow-up and complete necessary documentation.

## **Montana Good Samaritan Law**

Under Montana Code 27-1-714, any person who in good faith renders emergency care or assistance without compensation at the scene of an emergency is not liable for civil damages, except in cases of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

## **5. Liability and Insurance Acknowledgement**

Each volunteer is required to sign a General Liability Waiver and an optional Media Release annually as part of the registration process. These forms are included in the online training steps through MyImpact and must be completed before volunteering for any DREAM Adaptive Recreation program.

By registering to volunteer, I acknowledge that DREAM Adaptive Recreation's General Liability Insurance provides supplemental medical benefits to volunteers who may be injured while participating in a DREAM activity. This coverage is secondary to my personal health insurance and does not provide compensation for lost wages resulting from an injury.

I further agree to hold harmless and indemnify DREAM Adaptive Recreation, its staff, and volunteers from any claims, damages, or liabilities that may arise from my participation in DREAM activities, except in cases of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

## **6. Attendance & Scheduling**

Reliable attendance is vital for participant safety and lesson quality. DREAM sets volunteer-to-participant ratios to ensure personalized, safe instruction.

If you must cancel, arrive late, or leave early, notify the Program Manager on Duty as soon as possible. Unplanned absences can impact the participant's experience and program flow.

If issues arise on the day of your shift, contact program staff immediately via the preferred communication method (call, text, or radio).

## **7. Lift Tickets, Passes & Vouchers**

Tickets, passes, or vouchers issued by DREAM for volunteers or participants are non-transferable and may not be resold.

- Distribution is managed only by DREAM staff.
- Do not request lift tickets, trail passes, or vouchers from anyone other than DREAM staff for DREAM programs.
- Misuse may result in removal from the program.

## 8. Inclusive Culture, Disability Awareness & Participant Engagement

At DREAM, inclusion is not a slogan, it's a practice. Volunteers help create environments where participants can make choices, take healthy risks, and experience the joy and freedom of outdoor recreation on their own terms.

### Guiding Principles

- **Dignity & Autonomy:** Ask, don't assume. Offer choices and respect independence.
- **Strengths-Forward:** Focus on what participants *can* do and build from there.
- **Consent & Boundaries:** Ask permission before physical assistance or touching adaptive equipment.
- **Privacy:** Share participant information only with staff who need it for safety.
- **Follow the Participant's Lead:** Each person is the expert on their own experience.

### Respectful Communication

- Speak directly to the participant, not through others.
- Ask about preferences ("How do you prefer to communicate?").
- Allow time for responses and use visual or verbal cues.
- Use person-centered language and avoid outdated terms.

### Mobility Aids, Equipment & Service Animals

- Treat mobility devices as part of personal space.
- Service animals are working; do not distract them.

### Sensory & Communication Considerations

- Be aware of sensory overload; provide quieter or alternate spaces when needed.
- Offer predictability: outline steps of each activity.
- Support non-speaking participants by learning their communication methods.

### Participation & Risk

- **Dignity of Risk:** Empower participants to challenge themselves safely.
- **Right to Decline:** Participants may opt out or pause activities at any time.

**Do:** Ask, adapt, give time, celebrate effort.

**Don't:** Assume, touch without permission, speak for others, or share private details.

### Participant Evaluation

Every lesson begins with understanding the participant's unique goals, abilities, and comfort level. A thoughtful evaluation ensures safety, promotes independence, and helps volunteers

tailor each experience for success.

Participant evaluation starts with their registration form. DREAM staff will often place a phone call after registration forms have been received to learn more about the participant. This information will be shared with volunteers either through a participant folder or through a direct conversation. Only so much can be determined on paper and over the phone, and there is much to learn when the participant arrives for their first lesson. Our goal at DREAM is to set the participant up for success and give them as much independence and choice in the lesson as possible.

### Before the Lesson

#### **1. Review Information**

- Read the participant's registration form/informational folder, medical notes, and staff comments to learn about strengths, challenges, and goals.
- DREAM staff often make pre-lesson calls to gather more details; refer to these notes for additional context.

#### **2. Observe on Arrival**

- Note how the participant moves (walking, wheeling, using mobility aids, or with assistance).
- Observe their communication style—verbal, gestural, visual, or through a caregiver.
- Pay attention to comfort levels, energy, and social engagement.

#### **3. Ask Questions**

- Greet the participant warmly and introduce yourself.
- Ask about their goals: "What would you like to accomplish today?"
- Inquire about relevant comfort or safety factors: "Are there any areas we should be mindful of today?"

#### **4. Initial Assessment**

- With staff support, check range of motion, grip strength, balance, and control—always within the participant's comfort level.
- Test mobility safely: have the participant squeeze your hands, lift one leg at a time, or lean side to side if seated.
- Ask about adaptive devices (catheters, shunts, braces) to ensure proper accommodation during activity.

### During the Lesson

- **Collaborate:** Treat it as a team effort between participant, volunteer, and DREAM staff.
- **Encourage & Empower:** Offer frequent, specific praise—“You kept great balance that time!”—to reinforce success.
- **Adapt Continuously:** Adjust equipment, pacing, or teaching style as needed. Safety and comfort always come first.
- **Communicate Clearly:** Give simple, one-step instructions and confirm understanding.
- **Monitor for Fatigue or Distress:** Watch for signs such as shortness of breath, frustration, or disorientation. Pause and check in.

### After the Lesson

- **Debrief with the Participant:** Celebrate what went well and ask for feedback—“What did you enjoy most?” or “Is there something you’d like to try next time?”
- **Share Observations:** Relay any notes about equipment, safety, or progress to DREAM staff.
- **Document as Needed:** Help staff capture important follow-up items or adaptations in the participant record.
- **Stay Positive:** Reinforce confidence by focusing on effort, enjoyment, and growth rather than comparison or performance.

### Important Reminders

- Volunteers should **never administer medication** or attempt medical treatment.
- Volunteers may **remind participants** about medication timing if noted in the record, but only staff may assist with related decisions.
- When in doubt about a participant’s needs, stop and consult a **Program Manager or Coordinator**.

This thoughtful, team-based approach ensures that every participant is set up for success—feeling respected, supported, and empowered to reach their goals on the mountain, water, or trail.

### **Disability Awareness Continued**

The following overview of different disabilities and disability awareness is adapted from the United Spinal Associations document: “Disability Etiquette: Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities.”

The United States Census Bureau reports that approximately 56.7 million Americans have a disability. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 was conceived with the goal of integrating people with disabilities into all aspects of life, particularly in the workplace and the marketplace. Sensitivity toward people with disabilities is not only in the spirit of the ADA, but it can help businesses and organizations expand into new markets and better serve their customers. Practicing disability etiquette is an easy way to make people with disabilities feel welcome.

## **The Basics**

### **ENABLE ABILITY**

First and foremost, appreciate and focus on what people can do; use the individual's strengths to compensate or adapt.

### **ASK BEFORE YOU HELP**

Just because someone has a disability, don't assume they need help. Simply asking if you may help opens up communication. People with disabilities want to be treated as independent people. A person with a disability will oftentimes communicate when they need help, be sure to ask how you may help.

### **BE SENSITIVE ABOUT PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Some people with disabilities depend on their arms for balance. Even if your intention is to assist, unexpectedly grabbing them, their arms, or their mobility aides without permission could knock them off balance. Avoid touching a person with a disability or their mobility aides unless given permission from that person. Mobility aides and equipment are part of a person's personal space.

### **THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK**

Always speak directly to the person with a disability, not to their companion, aide, or sign language interpreter. Talk to them as you would anyone else. Respect their privacy. If it comes up naturally, or if you need to know something specific it is appropriate to ask about the participant's disability. Be respectful, sensitive, and focus your questions on information that is pertinent to the activity. For example, "Can you describe your vision to me?" instead of "How did you lose your eyesight?" A simple, "I don't feel comfortable sharing that" by the person with a disability can set the tone if it is not something that they are willing to share.

### **DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS**

People with disabilities are the best judge of what they can or cannot do. Always allow the person to experience as much independence as possible. Don't make decisions for them about participating in any activity, unless the individual is a minor and/or there are overall safety concerns.

### **PUT THE PERSON FIRST.**

Say "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person." Say "people with disabilities" rather than "the disabled." For specific disabilities, saying, "person who has cerebral palsy" is appropriate. Still, individuals do have their own preferences. If you are not sure what words to use, ask. Avoid outdated terms like "handicapped, crippled or retarded." Say, "person who uses a wheelchair" rather than, "confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair bound." The wheelchair is what enables the person to get around and participate in society; it's liberating, not confining.

With any disability, avoid negative, dis-empowering words like “victim” or “sufferer.” It is okay to use idiomatic expressions when talking to people with disabilities. For example, saying, “It was good to see you,” and “See you later,” to a person who is blind is completely acceptable.

## 9. Equal Opportunity & Non-Discrimination

DREAM Adaptive Recreation provides equal opportunity to all volunteers and participants. We do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status, or any other protected category under federal, state, or local law.

Concerns may be reported to the **Executive Director** for prompt review.

## 10. Anti-Harassment & Reporting

DREAM prohibits harassment, bullying, and discrimination of any kind. Volunteers and staff must conduct themselves respectfully in all program settings, on or off site.

If you experience or witness harassment by anyone (volunteer, participant, staff, or partner), promptly report it to the **Executive Director or Program Manager**. DREAM will respond quickly and confidentially to address the concern.

## 11. Where to Find Additional Information

- **Training Manuals (Sport-Specific)** – Technical, safety, and progression details provided by program staff for various programs.
- **MyImpact Platform** – Scheduling, updates, and policy acknowledgment.

## 12. Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read the Volunteer Handbook and become familiar with our organization and the individuals we serve.

The DREAM staff is always available for questions and feedback. Together, we are creating opportunities that inspire confidence, foster connection, and make outdoor recreation accessible for all.