



pause

Volunteer Handbook



2025-2026

From the Director

My journey as a special needs mom started 17 years ago when my husband and I found ourselves as caregivers of a special kiddo who dealt with medical issues and a childhood that looked different. Through those years, we saw our other 3 boys struggle with mental health issues likely related to the secondary trauma of having a brother who required out-of-state medical providers, long hospital stays, and too many surgeries and procedures to count. Along the journey, our youngest son was identified with needs requiring daily intervention. Our life is full of joy. And it can also be hard.

After accepting the role of Pause Program Coordinator in 2015, I was able to see Pause through two lenses - one of a parent and one of a program leader and innovator. I realized then our story was the story of so many just like us. Our journey may have looked slightly different, but our family found a tribe, and my kids found acceptance. My passion to find ways to support families found new life, and my greatest hope is that you have seen that translate into everything the Pause team has developed over the past 10 years.

Thanks to purposeful planning by our exploratory team and the hundreds of conversations we were privileged to have with you - our community partners, volunteers, families, and funders who believe in the mission and vision of Pause - we are proud to say in 2021, Pause for Parents, Play for Kids, Inc. launched as an independent non-profit. Because of this exciting new journey, we are able to expand what rest, support, connection, and fun look like for families and open additional doors for funding, community support, and brand expansion.

I am proud of my team who says yes every day with passion, excellence and a heart to serve, and humbled by each of you exploring this update of the work we have done over the past year.

To our amazing volunteers, THANK YOU. Because you have said yes, families will be stronger and more resilient.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa McCoon".

Lisa McCoon

Pause Executive
Director



Why You Matter

Our parents are often exhausted, isolated, and at the end of their ropes. When you serve at Pause, you are helping open our space to families in need of respite. With you, we can open rooms for numerous kiddos who need a safe and fun space to foster confidence and connection, all while giving their caregivers a breather.

You are **building resilience** and **increasing hope** for entire families that will last days and even weeks past the event. Respite care **strengthens** families, **protects** family health and wellbeing, **decreases feelings of isolation**, and improves the family's ability to **cope** with daily responsibilities.



Our Team



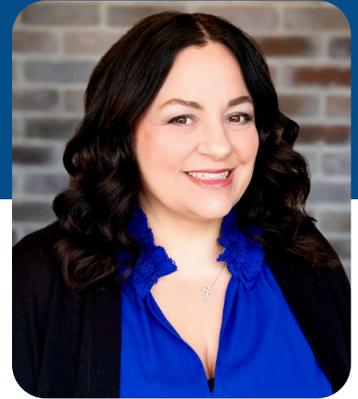
Lisa McCoon
Executive Director



Melody Schurgast
Director of Family
Strategy



Jaclin Gomez
Director of Marketing &
Communications



Jen Wilkinson
Director of Business
Systems



Amanda Nolasco
Event Coordinator



Nicole Ziegler
Event Administrator



Emily Denlinger
Sr. Volunteer Coordinator



Allie Manfreda
Volunteer Coordinator



Kaylann Yankie
Sr. Curriculum Developer



Stephanie Herald
Director of Unlimited



Betsy Robbins
Unlimited Coordinator



Eden Dull
Digital Media Intern



NEW Volunteer Portal



Scan to log
into your
account and
sign up for
events!



**Download the
Causer App!**

PRO TIP: Get the Causer App to track your volunteer progress, sign up for events and more!



Scan here to get the app!

The Benefits

Mobile App Access

Track Your Impact

Sign Up for Events

Milestone Achievements &
Recognition Badges

Automated Reminders

Easy to Use

Real-Time Updates & Enhanced
Communication

Everything in One Place

Resilience Support Team

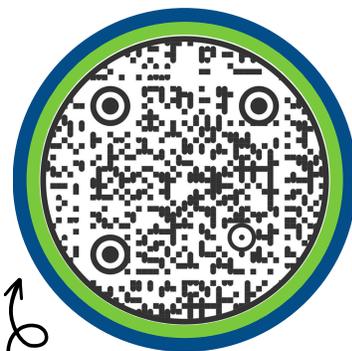
Or RST for short!

What is RST?

A team of staff, interns, and volunteers who are here to coach you when you aren't sure what to do to help a child who is having BIG feelings.

Before you contact RST try...

- Using the Reflect, Honor, Connect script hanging at the RST station, then try a Pause Kit.
- Offering a sensory break to the child, they can use a tent in the room, or they can try one of the Reflection Rooms or the Backyard. Remember to set a timer and encourage them to return to their group.
- Using a visual schedule and choice boards to help the child find a way to regulate their body.



Learn more about RST tools on our Volunteer Hub!

If the child is still having a tough time, contact RST for support. And remember, anytime there is an immediate health or safety concern, contact RST right away.



Big feelings may look like...

- Crying, becoming emotional, refusing to leave or share
- Yelling, arguing, name, or making threats
- Ignoring safety rules and important instructions
- Throwing things, hitting others, or refusing to go with the group

The Terms:

Regulation: a state of calm where thinking is accessible and choice is possible

Dysregulation: a state of unrest where thinking is difficult or impossible, and choices are restricted because responses are automatic reactions

Co-regulation: a regulation effect that results in another person regulating themselves

Self-regulation: the ability to maintain a regulated state of mind/body through various sensory and emotional experiences

Pause Kits

Pause Kits are located in each room at the RST station and have supports to help kids! Each kit contains items that use the 5 senses to help kids ground and regulate their bodies through a variety of mindfulness activities. At the beginning of each event, RST volunteers will lead a 5-minute group activity to help kids know how to use the “item of the month.”



Why is resilience so important?

Life is hard, and we all have tough experiences. While we can't stop all hard moments, we can grow our ability to navigate through those dark times. The ability to bounce back after a difficult life experience is called resilience. Helping kids and families grow their resilience muscles is what Resilience Coordinators do with the support of the RST!



Become an RST Volunteer!

Help our kids regulate and feel safe when they are experiencing big emotions, alongside our RST. You will float around as needed during the event. Must have relevant training or volunteer experience. Desired skills: adaptable, open to training, patient, able to move around, and creative problem-solving.

Volunteering Benefits

1

Meet a major need in our community! Make an immediate difference with Pause by helping us fill the vast gap in our human services field by providing care, respite, and hope to our families.

2

Personal and professional development! Volunteering can help develop leadership skills, improve communication, and enhance problem-solving capabilities through hands-on experiences. All while allowing you to gain knowledge and valuable experience in areas that are of interest to you!

3

Community building! Volunteering with us creates stronger relationships, better outcomes, and more inclusive communities.

4

Networking opportunities and chances to build relationships!

Volunteering with Pause allows you to connect with like-minded individuals or people you may not meet otherwise.

5

Increased empathy and compassion! When you serve with us, you are saying “yes” to being curious and allowing yourself to be stretched and challenged. You are promoting an appreciation for diversity and inclusion.

6

Health and well-being! Research shows that volunteering releases dopamine, AKA the “feel good” chemical, and reduces the feeling of stress and isolation.



The FAQs

1 What happens when I have to unexpectedly cancel?

We're counting on YOU to show up for our kiddos and fulfill your commitment. We understand that illness or emergencies happen. In that case:

- You will contact us at **volunteer@pauseforparents.org** at least 48 hours in advance, when possible.
- If you do not cancel before the event, you are a **"no-show,"** and you will not be permitted to volunteer at the next 2 events.
- **Please understand that 2 "no-shows" or cancellations with less than 48 hours** notice will result in termination from the program. Thanks for helping us plan the best way we can for our kiddos!

2 What does it mean to be fully present at events?

- **Keeping my cell phone on silent** or vibrate and using my phone only in case of emergency.
- **Keeping my kiddos as my number one focus** and center of my attention during the event.
- **Keeping sidebar conversations with other friends/family who may be volunteers at a minimum** so as to not compromise the safety of the kiddos I am responsible for.
- **Staying with my kiddos for the entire event,** never leaving them unless they are under the care of another volunteer for personal reasons such as using the restroom, taking a break or needing to make/receive an emergency phone call.

3 Who do I go to when I have a question? Please share any questions or concerns about the kiddos you are working with or the event in general with the **Pause Leadership Team.**

4 **Am I allowed to take a break during the event?** Absolutely! Notify our Pause Leadership Team if you **anticipate needing a break throughout the event**. It is appropriate and encouraged to ask for a break when you need one!

5 **Am I allowed to leave early or come late? We need you there for the entire event**, for the safety of our kids and volunteers. We accept the number of kids based on volunteer ratios. If you leave early or come late, that impacts our ratios. We ask volunteers to stay for the duration of the events and assist with clean-up as necessary.

6 **Am I allowed to use my phone at Pause? The safety and well-being of the children under our care are our utmost priority.** In order to maintain a focused and secure environment, it is imperative that volunteers refrain from using their cell phones while in the presence of the children.

Official Cell Phone Policy:

- **No Cell Phone Use:** Volunteers are to refrain from using their cell phones while actively engaged with the children during any event or program.
- **Distraction-Free Environment:** Volunteers must keep their phones silenced and out of sight to prevent any distractions or disruptions.
- **Immediate Action:** If a volunteer is observed using their phone or causing a distraction, they will be given the choice to either leave or surrender their phone until the end of the event.
- **Emergency Exception:** In case of an emergency situation where the volunteer needs to use their phone, they must inform a designated supervisor and step away from the children's area to attend to the matter.

Enforcement:

- Volunteers will be briefed and reminded of this policy during their orientation and training sessions. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or termination from volunteer duties.
- By adhering to this policy, volunteers contribute to creating a safe and nurturing environment for the children we serve. Thank you for your commitment to their well-being.

Training & Support

Blended training

- In-person and online training
- Facility tours (virtually and in-person)
- Tools and resources via our Volunteer HUB to help equip you
- Opportunities to shadow a veteran volunteer

Buddies will receive individual support from our RST team to provide them with the necessary information, along with tips and tricks on how to best help their buddy.



Commitment:

Consistency is hugely important. The more you get to know the kids, the **more of an impact you can make** in their lives. Consistency creates a sense of **community, safety, momentum, and long-term impact!**

As a Pause volunteer, we ask that you commit to helping us every other month at one of our many events. **We are asking for roughly 4 hours every other month.** This will ensure all our volunteers also receive respite, while also staffing our events well. If you want more Pause in your life, **feel free to come to as many events as you like!**



Safety Reminders

Bathroom

- Do not leave children unattended to go to the bathroom.
- Volunteers can take a group of kids to the bathroom.
- Volunteers wait outside the bathroom until the children are done.
- If assisting a child in diapers or other toileting needs, ask a staff member, and 2 people will assist.

General Safety

- Understand confidentiality regarding children's medical conditions and challenges.
- Use children's name tags and rosters to help you identify kids with a food allergy and children who cannot have their photo taken.
- Take note of specific children in your care with allergy and/or emergency medical plans, and get familiar with what your role is in an emergency.
- DO NOT TAKE PHOTOS OF CHILDREN - Once we post to social media, you may share!
- No one alone with a child AND no child left alone - for your safety and the child's!
- Get to know Backyard safety rules (page 13).
- Our RST staff will be on-site to assist with big emotions. Be sure to ask them for additional assistance with a child if necessary.

Arrival & Dismissal of Children

- Each child is walked to the front Welcome Center by Pause volunteers or staff to greet their caregiver, and will be called utilizing a security system/process.
- No children left unattended. Please do not let children meet caregivers alone.

Fire & Tornado Safety

- 1 Review the escape routes** posted in each room for the nearest exit.
- 2 Bring the roster** for your group.
- 3 Keep all children together** in a grassy area away from the street, in a distance far enough away from the fire as determined by the fire department instructions.
- 4 Take attendance** immediately once evacuating outside or to the tornado shelter area.
- 5** If caregivers or others come to assist, **keep the group of children together in the same location.** Children need to remain in the supervision of Pause staff and should not be dismissed to a caregiver until our process is complete.
- 6 Keep sounds to a minimum** in order to hear directions from emergency personnel.
 - If appropriate, distract children by singing softly, story telling, hand games, etc.
 - Use positive language, affirmations, and de-escalation techniques.
 - Avoid divulging too many details to children to decrease anxiety.

Backyard Safety

AKA the gross motor room!

Reminders

- This room is to help get energy out, not to hype the children up so that they become dysregulated.
- If you need any help, please radio a staff member or RST.
- At the end of each session, please have the children help clean up and reset the room.

Guidelines

- **Shoes/Socks:** Kiddos are allowed to take them off. If they do, put them in the white cubby.
- **Bathroom:** If a kiddo needs to use the bathroom, escort them to the bathroom. Do not leave the Backyard unattended. If needed, radio staff or RST.
- **Trampoline:** 1-2 people at one time. No shoes!
- **Zipline:** Adult supervision required. One adult at the top and one at the bottom (no spinning or hard pushes).
- **Flat Swing:** Push slow and steady.
- **Cones:** These are in place so children do not walk in front of the zip line. Please redirect children from playing with the cones so they remain in place for safety around the zip line.
- **Engage** children in activities (discourage tag, running, and chasing).

Ideas to Redirect

- Use a parachute! Parachute is available in the silver ball rack.
- Build an obstacle course together in the smaller section of the Backyard.
- Swing a child to help them settle down and regulate.
- Use miscellaneous activities in the white cubbies for a calmer activity to do together.

Unlimited

Volunteer Roles



Unlimited is a Sunday morning learning experience to help children with extra needs find and follow Jesus.

Just like schools have a variety of **learning accommodations, environments, and methods**, Unlimited was designed to meet the **faith development needs** of a variety of children on Sunday mornings.

We facilitate small groups of children with dedicated volunteers inside Center Pointe Christian Church in Liberty Twp, Ohio.



Volunteer Roles Include

1:1 Buddy: Partner with a child who has more complex needs.

Small Group Leader: Lead the same small group of kids through a 1-hour program schedule.

Small Group Helper: Assist the Small Group Leader - help children complete crafts, games, and activities.

Coach: Lead, support, and connect with other volunteers.

Resilience Support Team (RST): Support children navigating big feelings.

Gross Motor Rally Room: Oversee fun activities for our kids staying for two hours.

Check-In Operations Host: Greet and check-in/out families. Assist with program operations throughout the program session.

Unlimited Event Prep: Help prep curriculum and activities.

Pause Events

Volunteer Roles



Volunteer Roles

Small Group Leader

- **Role & Responsibilities**

- Lead a small group of kids in a similar age range through various pre-planned activities and crafts.
- Ensure your group is staying on schedule for the event.
- Ensure group safety with the help of your small group helpers.
- Oversee the other small group helpers to make sure they are engaged and staying on task.
- Check kids in and out of your group at the end of the event.

- **Desired Skills**

- Experience working with kids (ex: consistent Pause volunteer, teacher, parent, SLP, therapist, nurse, etc.)
- Ability to lead and take ownership
- Organized
- Reliable
- Flexible
- Engaging
- Able to redirect

Small Group Helper

- **Role & Responsibilities**

- Assist a small group of kids in a similar age range through various activities and crafts.
- Support the room's group leader in ensuring group safety and punctuality throughout the event.

- **Desired Skills**

- Fun and engaging
- Enjoy kids
- Team player
- Great role for someone with minimal to no experience with kids

Volunteer Roles

1:1 Buddy

- **Role & Responsibilities**

- Partner with a child who has more complex needs and work one-on-one with them.
- Engage and have fun with your buddy throughout a variety of pre-planned activities.
- Visit the quiet Reflections room or take sensory breaks as needed with the child.
- Utilize support and assistance from our Resilience Support Team and staff.

- **Desired Skills**

- Experience with kids, specifically kids with special needs
- Open to learning
- Flexible
- Leadership skills
- Engaging
- Patient
- Ability to keep up with an active child

Room Host

- **Role & Responsibilities**

- Help different groups of kids through your room's pre-planned activity.
- Stay in the room while the groups of kids rotate through.
- Be a pro at walking the kids and their leaders through the craft or activity that is in your room.

- **Desired Skills**

- Energetic
- Engaging
- Clear communicator
- Good at following written instructions
- Detail oriented

Volunteer Roles

Event Support Team Member

- **Role & Responsibilities**
 - Rather than work directly with the kids, these volunteers reinforce the foundation of our events!
 - Assist with volunteer breakouts before events
 - Create a warm environment for families during check-in and check-out.
 - Aiding operations staff with event prep and administrative tasks during events
 - Provide an extra layer of support and safety to events
- **Desired Skills**
 - Natural leader
 - Enjoys responsibility
 - Keeps people on schedule and on task
 - Enjoys taking ownership
 - Experience with Pause and our events. This role is great for returning volunteers or those who may not want to work directly with the kids.

Food Team

- **Role & Responsibilities**
 - Prep and serve food to the kids during the event.
 - Deliver snacks to the rooms as the event winds down.
 - Serve as a “runner” before and after the event. This is where you take the child to their appropriate room at the start. At the end of the event, you notify the small group leader when the caretaker has arrived for pickup.
 - This role is great for someone wanting to try out Pause for the first time or not fully comfortable working with kids yet!
- **Desired Skills**
 - Ability to follow directions (verbal & written)
 - Work well in a fast-paced environment
 - Attention to detail and cleanliness
 - Work well with others

Volunteer Roles

Safety Support

- **Role & Responsibilities**
 - We have some curious friends who like to explore our space sometimes! Hang out in the lobby or by our exits.
 - Be an extra set of eyes who can radio the Pause team if the need arises.
 - Receive extra training on how to use a Pause Kit from our RST Team.
- **Desired Skills**
 - Engaging
 - Attention to detail
 - Good communicator
- **Must be 18 years or older.**

Admin Support

- **Role & Responsibilities**
 - Help clean the Pause space during the weekdays.
 - Help with event prep during the weekdays (material prep, bin prep, appreciation gift prep, setting up the Pause space, etc).
 - Help with any administrative tasks (thank you cards, birthday cards, cutting, laminating, etc).
 - Great opportunity for those looking for flexibility or who only have weekday availability.
- **Desired Skills**
 - Ability to work independently
 - Ability to follow written or verbal instructions
 - Organized

Website

Did you know...

You can sign up for events right from the website?

You can start the Pause volunteer enrollment process from the Volunteer tab? Share it with your friends!

You can get to know your Pause team and share Pause with others!

Scan to explore!
pauseforparents.org





[@PauseForParents](#)

513.885.7786 | pauseforparents.org | volunteer@pauseforparents.org

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