



UpstreamPgh Engage & Advocate Volunteers FAQ

UpstreamPgh volunteers assist with our Engage and Advocate program areas. Our Engage program consists of youth environmental education and community outreach related to UpstreamPgh's projects. Our Advocate program involves community organizing for clean water and climate justice initiatives. These volunteer opportunities are great for people who enjoy working with the public and have a passion for their environment and community.

Where do I start?

We welcome everyone to be an Engage & Advocate Volunteer, even if you don't have a ton of experience in this field.

There is not a training required, although we recommend that everyone attends our volunteer orientation (held in Spring and Fall). After that, you can find out about our volunteer needs and how to sign up for them in our monthly volunteer newsletter. Once you indicate interest in one of our volunteer opportunities, we will schedule a time to talk to get to know each other and make sure we are matching you with the right fit.

What should I expect?

This depends on the activity you sign up for. Below are more details about what to expect depending on the event.

- Environmental Education: Our volunteers help UpstreamPgh staff lead educational programming. Sometimes that involves setting up supplies, passing out tools, and other behind-the-scenes work. Other times, our volunteers interact more directly with students.
- Community Outreach: Our volunteers help us table at events as well as host events to get the word out about our projects and connect residents with our work.
- Community Organizing: Our volunteers help canvass (door-knocking), distribute surveys or petitions, and organize rallies and panels around climate justice topics. Oftentimes this work is organized through the [Environmental Justice Table](#), a coalition headed by UpstreamPgh.

How often will I be expected to volunteer?

There is not a set frequency for Engage and Advocate volunteer opportunities. The needs are scattered throughout the year, and volunteers do not need to commit to a certain number of hours.



How do I find out about volunteer opportunities?

Our Engage and Advocate volunteer opportunities are sent in our monthly newsletter, which you can sign up for [here](#). We will also send out emails directly to people who have indicated interest in these types of volunteer opportunities on our [volunteer interest form](#).

Do I need a background clearance?

Adults applying for or holding an unpaid position as a volunteer with a child care service, school, program, activity, or service responsible for a child's welfare or having direct volunteer contact with children will need background clearances. These clearances expire after 5 years.

Volunteers must obtain the following clearances:

- 1) Report of criminal history from the [Pennsylvania State Police](#)
 - o Free for volunteers
 - o Completed online
- 2) [Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services](#)
 - o Free for volunteers
 - o Completed online

(and possibly)

- 3) A fingerprint based FBI check is required if the volunteer has lived outside of Pennsylvania in the last 10 years.
 - a. Go to [IdentoGO](#) and then enter the service code 1KG6ZJ at the top, it will then take you to the link to schedule an appointment.
 - b. Requires you to schedule an appointment for an in-person fingerprinting
 - c. Costs ~ \$23
 - d. UpstreamPgh will reimburse this cost after your first volunteer engagement

Can I volunteer if I'm under 18?

You may be able to volunteer if you're under 18 (with a parent or guardian's permission) depending on the activity. We will make a note of these opportunities in our volunteer newsletter.

What are the physical requirements?

Certain Engage and Advocate volunteer activities can be physically demanding. Many of our field trips in Frick Park include hiking, and canvassing involves a fair amount of walking. Other opportunities are less so, such as preparing supplies for an event or phone banking. Please let us know if you have questions about the requirements for a volunteering opportunity by contacting Erica Jackson at erica@upstreampgh.org or 412-371-8779 x116.