

SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

Background

The Board of School Directors of the Mt. Lebanon School District values the unique contributions made by parent and community volunteers to the educational programs of the District. Accordingly, the Board encourages the use of parent and community volunteers, subject to the requirements and procedures as set forth below.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to promote a safe and secure school environment by establishing requirements and procedures to be followed to confirm that school volunteers are in compliance with the provisions of Act 153 of 2014 which amended the Child Protective Services Law to require unpaid volunteers in the District's schools who will have direct contact with children to obtain background clearances prior to commencing services as a volunteer in the District's schools.

Definitions

Direct Contact with Children shall mean the possibility of care, supervision, guidance or control of children by a volunteer and/or routine interaction with children.

Volunteer shall include any individual who performs a service for the School District without compensation, remuneration or other consideration and who otherwise meets the requirements of this policy. A volunteer must be at least 18 years of age. A volunteer need not be a parent of a student enrolled in the School District. A School District student who serves as equipment manager or assistant athletic trainer or who provides other volunteer assistance in support of a curricular, co-curricular or extra-curricular activity is not considered to be a Volunteer for purposes of this policy. A volunteer is not a District employee.

Casual Volunteer shall mean a volunteer who comes to a school infrequently and works in the presence of a teacher/administrator when with students. A casual volunteer does not have direct volunteer contact with children and is not required to obtain criminal history reports or child abuse clearances. Examples include but are not limited to: individuals who volunteer to assist in classroom celebrations, school assemblies, or school concerts; reading to students; collecting tickets at sporting events; working concession stands; participating in "Career Day," etc.

Program Volunteer shall mean a volunteer who: (i) works under the general direction and supervision of a teacher or an administrator employed by the District; and (ii) provides direct services to students or may, from time to time, have or may be reasonably expected to have direct volunteer contact with children. Examples include but are not limited to: volunteer tutors; chaperones for student trips; chaperones for student dances; volunteers who assist on the coaching staff of an athletic team; volunteer athletic trainers or equipment managers (excluding School District students serving in those capacities); choreographers, musicians, and other individuals who provide instruction to students in the marching and or school musical and lunch clubs.

The final determination of a volunteer's status as a Casual Volunteer or a Program Volunteer shall be the responsibility of the principal or principal's designee.

Policy

All Volunteers in the schools of the District, whether Program Volunteers or Casual Volunteers, are subject to the following guidelines:

1. Under no circumstances shall a Volunteer be considered an employee or independent contractor of the School District. A Volunteer shall not receive wages, salary or other valuable consideration for the performance of their services. Holding the position of a Volunteer is not a right, but a privilege conferred upon the Volunteer by the Board, acting through the building principal of each school within the School District. The District reserves the right to terminate the services or status of any volunteer at its exclusive discretion.
2. The role of Volunteers is to assist, but not replace or assume the professional or paraprofessional responsibilities or authority of, the School District staff. Volunteers shall not provide regular instruction or educational training to students enrolled in the School District.
3. Except in the case of an emergency, Volunteers shall not administer first aid or other medical assistance to students.
4. Under no circumstances shall Volunteers be permitted to administer or enforce discipline upon students enrolled in the School District.
5. Volunteers shall follow all applicable administrative procedures established pursuant to this policy and shall follow all other rules, regulations and administrative guidelines concerning the conduct of the professional and paraprofessional staff of the School District, including all of the requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); provided, however, that such rules, regulations and administrative procedures and guidelines shall not be deemed to expand the responsibility, authority or scope of activity applicable to Volunteers under this policy.
6. Unless specifically authorized by the Board on a case by case basis, Volunteers are not permitted to operate any vehicles owned by or under the control of the District. Volunteers shall not be permitted to transport students by motor vehicle in support of any school program or activity.
7. No Volunteer shall be permitted to access, review, disclose, or use confidential student information or participate in conversations in which confidential student information is discussed unless the supervisor has determined that such access is necessary for the volunteer to fulfill their responsibilities. Volunteers with access to confidential student information shall maintain the confidentiality of that information in accordance with District policies and procedures and applicable law. If a volunteer has questions about confidentiality of student information, the volunteer should consult with the building principal. Examples of such information include, but are not limited to, the following: grades or other measures of academic performance; class standing; standardized or other test scores; attendance records; disciplinary history; intelligence test scores; personality and interest test scores; individualized education plans; health data; family background information; teacher or counselor ratings and observations;

and any other verified or unverified information contained in a student's file maintained by the teachers, administrators or schools within the School District,

8. All volunteers who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of child abuse shall make a report of suspected child abuse in accordance with applicable law, Board policy and administrative regulations.
9. Volunteers shall attend orientation and training sessions, as appropriate to the nature of their volunteer service. When training is provided for school employees relating to the legal obligations of employers and educational institutions, consideration shall be given to which volunteers should also receive that training.
10. The District shall provide liability insurance coverage for volunteers appropriate to the nature of their roles and the risk management needs of the District.
11. Prior to participating in student activities that are in duration for 10 hours or more, volunteers shall undergo a test for tuberculosis, when required by and in accordance with the regulations and guidance of the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The cost of obtaining the required tuberculosis screening shall be the sole responsibility of the volunteer or any sponsoring parent-teacher organization or booster group.

Program Volunteers

Program Volunteers are subject to the following rules and regulations:

1. A Program Volunteer, prior to commencing service as a Program Volunteer, shall be required to obtain and file in the Principal's office of a school building an Act 34 Criminal History Report from the Pennsylvania State Police, an Act 114 Federal Criminal History Report and an Act 151 Child Abuse Clearance Statement. Submission of paper work in any building will make the Program Volunteer eligible for service in all buildings.
2. The cost of obtaining the required reports and clearances shall be the sole responsibility of the volunteer or any sponsoring parent-teacher organization or booster group.
3. Program Volunteer shall not be required to obtain and provide an Act 114 Federal Criminal History Report if the individual has been a resident of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania during the entirety of the previous ten-year period and annually submits a 10 Year Resident of Pennsylvania Affidavit certifying that they have not perpetrated or been convicted of any offense that would preclude their employment by the School District under Act 34, Act 114, or Act 151 or Section 6344(C) of the Child Protection Services Law.
4. Program Volunteers whose reports and/or clearances are more than five (5) years old as of July 25, 2015, must obtain and provide new reports and clearances in order to continue as Program Volunteers thereafter. Effective July 25, 2015, Program Volunteers whose reports and clearances will become five-years old must obtain and provide new reports and clearances before the five-year anniversary date(s) of those reports or clearances in order to continue as Program Volunteers.
5. A student, eighteen (18) years of age or older, who is volunteering for an event or activity sponsored by the school in which the student is enrolled and occurring on the school's grounds, shall not be required to submit certifications except when the event or activity is for children in the care of a child-care service or the student will otherwise be responsible for the welfare of a child.

6. Program Volunteers shall report to the Superintendent or designee, in writing, within seventy-two (72) hours, an arrest or conviction required to be reported by law or notification that the volunteer has been named as a perpetrator in a founded or indicated report pursuant to the Child Protective Services Law. The Superintendent or designee shall immediately require a position volunteer to submit new certifications if the Superintendent or designee has a reasonable belief that the volunteer was arrested for or has been convicted of an offense required to be reported by law, was named as a perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, or has provided written notice of such occurrence. Failure to accurately report such occurrences may subject the position volunteer to disciplinary action up to and including denial of volunteer service and criminal prosecution.

Casual Volunteers

Casual Volunteers (i.e. a Volunteer who will not have “Direct Contact” with children) shall be required, on an annual basis, to sign the Casual Volunteer Affirmation form adopted by the District in the presence of the principal or principal’s designee.

Administration Responsibility

Each school within the School District shall adopt its own administrative procedures for the recruitment, selection and assignment of volunteers; provided, however, that the following minimal requirements shall apply to all such procedures:

1. Information submitted by volunteers in accordance with this policy shall be maintained centrally in a manner similar to that used for school employees.
2. The Superintendent or designee shall review the information and determine if information is disclosed that precludes service as a volunteer.
3. Each building principal or designee shall be responsible for training the volunteers to perform the specific duties associated with their assignments.
4. Each building principal or designee shall assume general authority and responsibility over the volunteers performing services of any kind at or on behalf of the school, including, without limitation, the responsibility for overseeing the filing of criminal history reports, child abuse clearances and Volunteer Affidavits.
5. No such procedures adopted by the schools within the School District shall be inconsistent with the terms and conditions of this policy.
6. All such procedures adopted by the schools within the School District shall be subject to the approval of the Superintendent, or their designee.
7. Each volunteer shall affirm in writing that they have been provided with a copy of, has read, understands and agrees to comply with this policy.

Communication

This policy shall be communicated to the public, to all persons interested in serving as a volunteer and to all School District personnel, students and parents.

Adopted: April 13, 2015
Revised October 19, 2015
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