

VOLUNTEERS IN SCHOOLS

The Bristol Warren Regional School District (BWRSD) and the School Committee appreciates volunteer efforts in its schools. Parents, college students, senior citizens, elected officials, business representatives, and community members are important sources of support and expertise that enrich the instructional program, assist teachers, and connect the student body with the community. The purpose of this policy is to establish the terms and conditions by which individuals may volunteer in the BWRSD.

DEFINITIONS:

Volunteer: for purposes of this policy, “volunteer” includes individuals who work on an occasional or regular basis on school grounds, or at any off-site location while on a school-sponsored activity and who may have direct and unmonitored contact with children and/or students. Volunteers support the efforts of professional personnel and/or contribute to the enrichment of the school community. Volunteers serve without compensation or employee benefits of any type.

Disqualifying Information: for purposes of this policy, “disqualifying information” shall mean all offenses listed in [R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17-37](#), [§ 11-37-8.1](#), and [§ 11-37-8.3](#).

All volunteer opportunities are conditional upon the receipt of a criminal records/background check clear of disqualifying information.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Volunteers must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
- Volunteers are required to complete the School Volunteer Authority for Release of Information/Volunteer Background Check Request Form.
- Volunteers are required to complete the BWRSD Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

A. Criminal Records/Background Checks

In accordance with [§ 16-2-18.4](#) (Criminal records review for volunteers), all current volunteers or persons seeking to become volunteers in the BWRSD, who may have direct and unmonitored contact with children and/or students on school premises, shall produce a state criminal background check showing no disqualifying information prior to commencement of such volunteer work. The prospective volunteer shall be responsible for completing the state criminal background check and making payment for associated costs. All current volunteers’ criminal records/background checks are valid for two (2) years only in accordance with [§ 16-2-18.5](#) (Prior criminal records checks for school volunteers). Current and prospective volunteers are encouraged to proactively obtain up-to-date criminal records/background checks for as long as they plan to volunteer in the PSD. A

current volunteer whose most recent criminal records/background check expires in the middle of a scheduled volunteer period will be temporarily prohibited from participating in any further volunteer activities until they produce an updated criminal records/background check clear of disqualifying information.

In those situations where no disqualifying information has been found, the entity that performs the criminal background check shall inform the applicant and BWRSD, in writing, of this fact. A volunteer or volunteer applicant against whom disqualifying information has been found will be disqualified from volunteering in the BWRSD. In such cases, the individual may engage in the appeals process outlined below.

B. General Safety and Security

Volunteers should not be with a student/s unless in the presence of a classroom teacher, administrator, or appropriate school personnel. A volunteer shall not be in a one-on-one situation with a student, during or outside of a school day.

Volunteers must provide identification and sign in/out at the school's main office. Volunteers shall wear the "Visitor's" badge or other means of identification, as required by school policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Volunteers must adhere to the confidentiality of what is observed in their capacity as a school volunteer and not share their observations outside the classroom. Volunteers must maintain confidentiality at all times, and are not permitted to discuss student/school related issues in the outside community. Volunteers shall not have access to confidential information/files/records.

VOLUNTEER LIABILITY AND INDEMNIFICATION:

A volunteer shall at all times indemnify and save harmless the BWRSD and its officers, agents and employees on account of and from any and all claims, damages, losses, judgments, workers' compensation payments, litigation expenses and legal counsel fees arising out of injuries to persons (including death) or damage to property alleged to have been sustained by (a) officers, agents and employees of the BWRSD or (b) any other person, which injuries are alleged to have occurred on or near the work or to have been caused in whole or in part by the acts, omissions or neglect of the volunteer.

EXCLUSION:

This Policy may not apply to parent events, guest speakers, performers, student mentors who are enrolled in BWRSD, truancy court personnel, newspaper reporters, vendors for school related items such as rings, yearbooks, delivery vendors, and alike, provided they are accompanied by authorized school personnel.

RECORDS RETENTION:

The BWRSD shall maintain on file, subject to inspection by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, evidence that criminal records checks have been processed in accordance with RIGL on all volunteers, and the results of the criminal records/background checks will be maintained in the volunteer file.

APPEALS PROCESS:

Any volunteer or volunteer applicant against whom disqualifying information has been found may request that a copy of the criminal background report be sent to the Superintendent, who shall make a judgment regarding whether the individual may volunteer in the BWRSD.

Adopted: September 11, 2023

LEGAL REFERENCES:

RIGL [§ 16-2-18.4](#) (Criminal records review for volunteers)

RIGL [§ 16-2-18.5](#) (Prior criminal records checks for school volunteers) RIGL [§ 23-17-37](#)

Disqualifying information

RIGL [§ 11-37-8.1](#) First degree child molestation sexual assault RIGL [§ 11-37-8.3](#) Second degree child molestation sexual assault