

**VOLUNTEERS**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**  
**Attachment for Policy No. 916**

**I. Purpose**

To provide procedures and general guidelines for collecting and maintaining volunteer clearances and documentation for adults volunteering in the School District of Philadelphia.

**II. Definitions**

Volunteer: An adult applying for or holding an unpaid position with a school, or with a program, activity or service, 1) as a person responsible for a child's welfare, or 2) having direct volunteer contact with children, as defined under these Administrative Procedures. A Volunteer is not a school employee. A Volunteer regularly interacts with children in the absence of a District employee. Volunteers need to provide the clearances and obtain the background checks listed in the "Certifications" section of this policy.

Visitor: A parent/guardian, adult resident, educator, official or other individual who is not a school employee or independent contractor, and who visits a school or attends or participates in an event or activity at a school, but whose role is less substantial than would be sufficient to meet the definition of Volunteer for purposes of this policy. Visitors do not need to provide any clearances or obtain any background checks.

Direct volunteer contact: the care, supervision, guidance or control of children and routine interaction with children.

Person responsible for a child's welfare: a person who provides permanent or temporary care, supervision, mental health diagnosis or treatment, training or control of a child in lieu of parental care, supervision and control.

Routine interaction: regular and repeated contact that is integral to a person's volunteer responsibilities.

Individual family member volunteer: Volunteers who are parents/family members of students at the school and who are not volunteering as a part of a partner organization.

Individual non-family member volunteer: Volunteers who are not parents/family members of students at the school, but who are also not affiliated with a partner organization. Individual non-family member volunteers may include individual community members or a group of community members who are not volunteering on

behalf of a partner organization.

School Partner: An organization that provides services, programming or both to schools at no cost to schools or the district.

School Partner Staff: Individuals engaged by the School Partner, including subcontractors or agents of the School Partner, paid or unpaid, who are responsible for a child's welfare or have direct volunteer contact with students.

Contractor: An individual employed by an organization who is receiving payment for services from the School District of Philadelphia and/or individual schools.

### **III. Responsibility:**

The principal or appropriate administrator shall be responsible for establishing volunteer opportunities, selecting and managing volunteers, ensuring compliance with, and enforcing, Board of Education policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures. The principal shall designate a designee to assist prospective volunteers as needed with uploading all files to the electronic volunteer clearance database. The Office of Talent shall review clearances submitted through the electronic volunteer clearance system to determine volunteer eligibility, with an additional review by the Deputy Chief of Student Rights and Responsibilities or his/her designee as deemed necessary. Central office staff members will maintain a current volunteer list in a centralized data system and audit clearances on an annual basis.

At the discretion of the principal or appropriate administrator, a volunteer's service may be discontinued at any time.

### **IV. Criteria:**

Board of Education Policy 916 ("Volunteers," adopted June 15, 2017) states that prior to volunteering in the school, all volunteers must have on file the PA Child Abuse History Clearance, PA State Police Criminal Record Information, and one of the following:

- Volunteer Affirmation statement that confirms the volunteer has lived in Pennsylvania consecutively for the past ten years and has not been convicted of a criminal offense or been listed as a perpetrator in a founded report of child abuse; or
- Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal History Report.

In addition, all individual family member and non-family member prospective volunteers must complete a mandatory volunteer orientation, after which they will be provided with a Certificate of Volunteer Orientation Completion indicating that they have received

information about volunteer expectations in the School District of Philadelphia and that they have general knowledge about child abuse recognition and reporting.

## **V. Process for Collecting and Maintaining Volunteer Clearances:**

There are different processes for submitting clearances for individual family member and individual non-family members and for school partner staff members.

### **A. Volunteer application submission and review process for individual family members and individual non-family members**

1. Prospective Volunteers must upload the following documents to the electronic volunteer clearance tracking system:
  - a. Signed Volunteer Code of Conduct Agreement
  - b. Child Abuse History Clearance
  - c. PA State Criminal Background Check
  - d. Notarized Volunteer Affidavit or otherwise FBI Background Check:

A notarized Volunteer Affidavit is appropriate only if 1) the prospective Volunteer has been a Commonwealth resident during the entirety of the previous ten (10) year period, or, if not a resident during the the entirety of the previous ten (10) year period, has received a Federal Criminal History Report certification at any time since establishing residency in the Commonwealth and provided a copy of the certification to the District; and 2) the that the prospective Volunteer is not disqualified from service due to any child abuse offense under Pennsylvania law, has not been listed as a perpetrator in a founded report of child abuse within the past five (5) years, and has not been convicted of any crime in another state or foreign nation similar to the offenses disqualifying a Volunteer from service under Pennsylvania law.
  - e. Volunteer Orientation Certificate of Completion
2. The Office of Employee Records will review clearances submitted through the electronic volunteer clearance system to determine volunteer eligibility.
3. The Deputy Chief of Student Rights and Responsibilities or his/her designee will conduct a secondary review of clearances as deemed necessary to do so, taking into consideration any additional information about the individual. He/she will direct the principal as to the context/capacity (if any) in which the individual may volunteer.
4. Prospective volunteers will be notified via email when their application has been reviewed and moved to a completed status. Principals, Assistant Principals and secretaries will be able to track volunteer applicant status and pull a list of approved volunteers in the electronic volunteer clearance system.
5. Central office staff members shall maintain an electronic current volunteer list in a centralized data system and audit clearances on an annual basis.

6. Volunteers will be required to submit volunteer clearances every 60 months (5 years).

**B. Volunteer application and review process for school partner staff members**

1. School partner staff members must compile the following documents in their application to volunteer in the District.
  - a. Signed Volunteer Code of Conduct Agreement
  - b. Child Abuse History Clearance
  - c. PA State Criminal Background Check
  - d. Signed Volunteer Affirmation Sheet (for volunteers who have lived in Pennsylvania for the past ten years consecutively), or FBI Background Check (for volunteers who have not lived in Pennsylvania for the past ten years consecutively)
  - e. Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training Certificate: Program staff of partner organizations working in District schools are considered to be mandated reporters and must provide a Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training Certificate substantiating that they have been trained on recognizing and reporting child abuse. There are two sources of training that will satisfy the mandated reporter training requirement:
    - i. Safe Schools Mandated Reporter Training (certificate automatically accessible to the District's Office of Records); or
    - ii. University of Pittsburgh Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Mandated and Permissive Reporting in Pennsylvania Training (partner staff will need to scan and upload a copy of the certificate of completion to the electronic volunteer clearance system)
2. There are two options for school partner staff members to apply to volunteer in the District:
  - a. Prospective volunteers can upload the documents above to the electronic volunteer clearance tracking system; or
  - b. If an organization has already collected the requisite clearances for staff members and has permission from staff members to share those documents on their behalf, clearances for all eligible program staff members can be submitted to the Office of Records by following the steps below:
    - i. Download and complete the Partner Staff Clearance Datasheet
    - ii. Organize and scan all of the required clearance documentation
    - iii. E-mail attachments of the Partner Staff Clearance Datasheet and the scanned packet of partner staff member clearances to [volunteerclearances@philasd.org](mailto:volunteerclearances@philasd.org).
3. The Office of Employee Records will review clearances submitted through the electronic volunteer clearance system to determine volunteer eligibility.
4. The Deputy Chief of Student Rights and Responsibilities will conduct a secondary review of clearances as deemed necessary to do so, taking into consideration any additional information about the individual. He/she will direct the principal as to the

context/capacity (if any) in which the individual may volunteer.

5. Prospective volunteers will be notified via email when their application has been reviewed and moved to a completed status. Principals, Assistant Principals and secretaries will be able to track volunteer applicant status and pull a list of approved volunteers in the electronic volunteer clearance system.

6. Central office staff members shall maintain an electronic current volunteer list in a centralized data system and audit clearances on an annual basis.

7. Volunteers will be required to submit volunteer clearances every 60 months (5 years).

### C. Appealing a clearance decision

Any volunteer who is barred from volunteering in a school as a result of a clearance may appeal that school-based decision to [parentappeals@philasd.org](mailto:parentappeals@philasd.org).

The School District of Philadelphia recognizes that a background check alone is not an indication of the value that volunteers offer to our students.

When reviewing background clearances, the School District of Philadelphia also considers:

- The safety of our students and staff.
- The nature and gravity of the offense(s)
- The time that has passed since the conviction and/or sentence
- The nature of the volunteer work for which the prospective volunteer is requesting to volunteer. The positive impact the individual has had within the community since

### D. Principal discretion

Individuals are able to volunteer in the school at the principal's discretion. The principal has the right to revoke an individual's volunteer privileges at any time.

## VI. **Policy on Distinguishing Between Volunteers and Visitors:**

The School District of Philadelphia distinguishes between "volunteers" and "visitors." Visitors are individuals who are attending and/or observing an event or activity without providing a service to the students, staff, or school/district operations and who would not be responsible for the care, supervision, guidance, or control of children. Some examples of these events would include but are not limited to: Back-to-School nights, parent/teacher conferences, school assemblies, school concerts, Halloween parades, etc. Visitors are not required to submit clearances/background checks nor attend child abuse training.

Per School District of Philadelphia Policy 907 ("School Visitors"), visits to classrooms

must be scheduled in advance unless authorized by the principal/designee and all visitors must report immediately to the school's front office upon entering the school and identify themselves as well as their purposes for visiting.

**For Questions or Concerns:**

Please reach out to 215-400-4180, Option #6 or email [volunteer@philasd.org](mailto:volunteer@philasd.org) with any further questions or concerns. For any questions related to partner organizations or their staff, please contact the Office of Strategic Partnerships at [partnerships@philasd.org](mailto:partnerships@philasd.org) or 215-400-4160.

**VIII. Related Policies:**

806: Child Abuse

907: School Visitors

916: Volunteers