

VOLUNTEER BACKGROUND CHECKS

R 353.1

Volunteers serve in many different roles and provide a variety of different services within the District's schools, programs, and operations. A proposed volunteer's specific role and responsibilities generally determine the extent to which the District will evaluate a potential volunteer's background and qualifications.

No individual is entitled to volunteer. The district reserves the right to deny any individual volunteer or cancel a volunteer program or position at any time.

In some situations, a criminal background check of a proposed volunteer is a prudent measure that serves important safety-related interests. These guidelines specifically address criminal background checks for volunteers.

1. The District reserves the discretion to require a criminal background check in connection with any volunteer role, as well as the discretion to initiate a background check (or a re-check) at any time.
2. Staff members who have any question or uncertainty as to whether a criminal background check should be conducted for a particular volunteer role are expected to address and resolve the specific situation with the input and direction of a school principal or another appropriate administrator.
3. Staff members who are seeking and planning to use volunteers are expected, where applicable, to plan in advance for the time it takes to process and evaluate a criminal background check.
4. If the District decides to deny approval for an individual to serve as a volunteer, the individual will be advised of the decision by the building principal or program administrator. The individual may seek a review of the decision by the Director of Finance and Operations. Pending a review of the initial determination, the individual will not be permitted to volunteer in the role for which approval was denied, and the District may also restrict other volunteer roles at its discretion.
5. A criminal background check is not mandatory for a proposed volunteer role during which a District employee will retain primary supervision of the student(s) and be in the presence of the volunteer during the volunteer's interactions with students. To the extent applicable given the time and location of the activity, any such volunteer is expected to follow the District's

established procedures for visitors to the schools. Examples of these situations include:

- a. An approved guest speaker gives a presentation to a class, school, or other District-supervised group of students.
 - b. A parent or guardian who, with teacher approval, participates in a class activity (such as reading a book to a class in an elementary school) while the teacher remains present.
 - c. An approved volunteer assists with an athletic event that is open to the public (such as assisting as a timer at a track meet).
6. A criminal background check is not mandatory when a proposed volunteer role (1) is structured such that there is no intended direct interaction with students or such that any minimal interaction with students is likely to occur in a setting that is under direct District-provided supervision (other than the volunteer), and (2) in the District's judgment, there is no other significant risk to health, safety, or property that a background check would reasonably mitigate. To the extent applicable given the time and location of the activity, any such volunteer is expected to follow the District's established procedures for visitors to the schools. Examples of these situations include:
- a. A school authorizes a community volunteer to assist with landscaping, outdoor field preparation, etc. (e.g., planting annuals at a school entrance).
 - b. An authorized parent or community volunteer assists District staff with tasks such as the set-up for a special event or activity or preparing mailings, take-home information, or back-to-school/registration packets.
7. A criminal background check is required for an individual who volunteers in roles such as the following:
- a. A chaperone of an overnight travel activity that involves students.
 - b. A chaperone of a field trip or similar travel-related activity who will be assigned as the primary adult supervisor of any students other than the volunteer's own child(ren) (e.g., for field trips where students will be grouped and each group will participate in the activities in a manner that

is generally independent of the other groups and such that District staff cannot reasonably serve as direct supervisors of all students.).

- c. Individuals who are authorized in writing by the District to transport students in a private vehicle.
 - d. Volunteer tutors or classroom assistants who will be working with students in a one-on-one setting or with small groups of students in a setting where there is unlikely to be reasonably consistent direct co-supervision provided by District staff.
 - e. Volunteer coaches and volunteer activity advisors (including all regular assistant coaches and assistant advisors).
 - f. A volunteer whose role will involve substantial and/or recurring direct contact and interaction with students and for which, due to the nature of the activity, it can be expected that such interaction will occur without reasonably consistent direct co-supervision by District staff. An example would be a community volunteer who agrees to direct and supervise the design and building of the sets for a school musical, where students will be working under the direction of the volunteer, and where it is expected that the volunteer will often be the only adult present in the area(s) where the work is occurring.
8. In some instances, the District may have knowledge of specific information or allegations about an individual that cause the District to conduct a criminal background check regardless of the volunteer role(s) at issue.

Where the guidelines provided above indicate that a volunteer role does not require a mandatory background check, the mere possibility that a volunteer might inadvertently or unexpectedly be present or interact with students outside of other direct District-provided supervision for a brief period of time is not sufficient to make a background check mandatory.

A volunteer might be excluded from volunteering if any of the following are discovered in the background check. This list is to serve as examples and is not exhaustive.

1. A felony conviction
2. A conviction of assault or battery

3. A conviction of any crime against a child, including but not limited to neglect, assault, or abuse
4. A domestic violence or abuse conviction
5. A conviction of a sex-related crime (assault, abuse, soliciation etc...)
6. A conviction related to illegal possession of a weapon
7. A conviction for distribution of any controlled substance
8. Any prior conviction or behavior that causes the administrator or supervising staff member to reasonably believe the participation of the volunteer could negatively impact the health, safety, or welfare of the students, staff, or school.

The guidelines provided above do not attempt to address every possible volunteer scenario, and it is acknowledged that the decision to require or not require a criminal background check for a school volunteer can involve the exercise of judgment and discretion. The District expects all staff and administrators to exercise reasonable judgment in light of the above guidelines, and to apply the above guidelines without any unlawful discrimination.

The guidelines provided above regarding criminal background checks do not attempt to address other planning and procedures that may be associated with the creation, definition, and implementation of various volunteer roles. For certain roles, such other procedures may involve conducting personal interviews, assessing an individual's experience and qualifications, requiring the volunteer to participate in orientation and training activities, planning to evaluate the volunteer's performance, and/or obtaining feedback on the volunteer's experience. Such further assessments of a volunteer's qualifications and fit for a specific role can assist the District with its goals and obligations related to safety and the provision of high-quality programs and instruction.

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