

Background Checks for Volunteers

Policy/Procedure

A. Purpose

To provide guidelines for conducting mandatory background checks for volunteers participating in College activities.

B. General Policy

1. **Scope.** All current or prospective volunteers who serve or will serve in a position that is responsible for the welfare of a child or that involves direct contact with children, including routine interaction with children, are required to obtain a background check mandated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (the “State Background Check”). The College requires volunteers who have routine interaction with other vulnerable populations (elderly, persons with disabilities, etc.) to undergo the State Background Check. A Financial Background check also may be required for current or prospective volunteers who will have authority or responsibility over College funds.
2. **State Background Check** The State Background Check shall consist of the following information:
 - Pennsylvania Criminal History Record Information Check
 - Pennsylvania Child Abuse Certification
 - Federal Criminal History Record Information Check

The volunteer or prospective volunteer must submit the information to the head of the College division that is coordinating or using the volunteers’ services, who shall maintain the information as required by law.

The State Background Check shall be completed by each volunteer every 60 months.

Exception for Volunteers at College-Sponsored, On-Campus Events

The State Background Check will not be required where the volunteer is enrolled with the College and is volunteering for an event that occurs on College property and is sponsored by the College. This exception, however, does not apply if either (a) the person is volunteering for a position that is responsible for a child’s welfare or (b) the event is provided for children who are in the care of a child-care service.

Partial Exception for 10-Year Pennsylvania Residents:

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a volunteer or prospective volunteer who is applying for an unpaid position and has been a resident of Pennsylvania during the entirety of the previous ten-year period, may, in lieu of submitting the Federal Criminal History Information Check, submit a sworn statement affirming that he or she has not been convicted of any of

the crimes listed as disqualifying crimes under the Child Protective Services Law, or a similar crime under another state's law. A form of the sworn statement is available from the Advancement Office.

3. **Financial Background Check.** A Financial Background Check shall include a Credit check.
4. **Use of Criminal Background Information.** The existence of a criminal conviction or a pending criminal charge does not preclude service as a volunteer in all cases. However, certain criminal convictions and child abuse reports, by law, disqualify a person from volunteer service in positions involving direct contact with children or responsibility for the welfare of children.¹ Dickinson will consider the relevance of the criminal history of the individual applying to serve as a volunteer, the activities of the volunteer position, and the requirements of Pennsylvania law in determining whether a volunteer should be prohibited for service. The nature and seriousness of the offense, the circumstances surrounding it, the nature of the position, and the length of time since the conviction will be considered on a case-by-case basis. When a background check yields unsatisfactory results, volunteer service must be approved in writing by the Provost or Vice President of the division coordinating or using the volunteer services.

Information obtained in a background check will be compared with information provided by the applicant. An applicant who provides false, incomplete, or misleading information on a profile, resume, application form or in an interview will be immediately eliminated from further consideration for volunteer service.

5. **Assistance with Completing Background Checks.** The College's Advancement Office will assist volunteers and prospective volunteers in obtaining the required background checks, but each volunteer and prospective volunteer shall bear ultimate responsibility for obtaining all required checks. The College will bear the costs of any background checks that it requires, either by paying the fees required to obtain the checks or by reimbursing the volunteer or prospective volunteer for the fees paid to obtain the checks.

C. Definitions

1. "Credit Check" is a check of a person's consumer credit history and typically includes the credit score, current level of indebtedness, previous credit performance and payment history, and types of credit available. This information may be obtained from Public Records, Collections, Trade Accounts,

¹ Under the Child Protective Services Law, 23 Pa. C.S. § 6301 et seq., a person may be disqualified from volunteering in a position that is responsible for the welfare of a child or involves direct contact with children, if the person: (a) is identified as a perpetrator on a founded child abuse report that is dated within the last five years; (b) has been convicted, at any time, of certain crimes, including but not limited to homicide, assault, stalking, kidnapping, rape, endangering the welfare of a child, corruption of minors, sexual abuse of a child, prostitution, and indecent exposure; or (c) has been convicted of a felony offense of The Controlled Substance, Drug, Device, and Cosmetic Act within the last five years. The full text of the Child Protective Services Law is available online.

Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory Accounts and inquiries. (Federal laws prohibit discrimination against an applicant or employee as a result of bankruptcy.)

2. “Direct contact with children” means the care, supervision, guidance or control of persons under the age of 18 or routine interaction with persons under the age of 18.
3. “Federal Criminal History Record Information Check” is a check of federal criminal history information obtained by the submission of a full set of fingerprints to the State Police or its authorized agent.
4. “Pennsylvania Child Abuse Certification” is a check that includes a certification from the Department of Human Services as to whether the applicant is named in the statewide database as an alleged perpetrator in a pending, indicated, or founded child abuse investigation in Pennsylvania.
5. "Pennsylvania Criminal History Record Information Check" is a check of criminal history information obtained from the Pennsylvania State Police that is maintained in the Pennsylvania State Police Central Repository.
6. “Routine interaction with children” means regular, ongoing contact with persons under the age of 18 that is integral to a person’s volunteer responsibilities. The definition does not include contact that is infrequent or occasional, including contact that occurs on less than twelve non-consecutive days per year. Any volunteer activity involving children that includes overnight stays or more than two consecutive days of volunteer service with children is not included in the definition of infrequent or occasional interactions.
7. “Routine interaction with other vulnerable populations” means regular, ongoing contact with one or more adults who may be more vulnerable to undue influence or coercion such as the elderly or disabled and that is integral to a person’s volunteer responsibilities. The definition does not include contact that is infrequent or occasional, including contacts that occur on less than twelve days per year.

Related Information

Statement Regarding Qualification for Volunteer Service
Background Checks for College Employees
Background Checks: FAQs

History/Revision Dates

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Also Found In: Campus Wide Policies and Human Resource Services