

Dear Parents:

There have been many changes to state policies as outlined in Act 153 that require the school districts to revise their policies on clearances for staff and volunteers. Penn-Trafford School District will now require all employees and volunteers of a school district to get their clearances every three years. The district will ensure that the staff requirements will be met. We have also updated our Volunteer Policy #916.1 to reflect the new requirements for all volunteers.

While we encourage parent participation in our schools, please be aware that to volunteer for the Penn-Trafford School District you must have current Act 34 (PA Criminal History) and Act 151 (Child Abuse). Current clearances are ones that you obtained within one year of the date that you would be volunteering in the school. Once you receive your clearances, they will remain in effect for three years per Act 153. At the end of the three years, you must obtain new clearances if you want to continue your role as a volunteer. If you have not lived in the State of Pennsylvania for ten consecutive years or more, you must also obtain Act 114 (Federal Criminal Background Check). If you have lived in Pennsylvania for ten or more consecutive years, you must sign Affidavit 153.1 (sample attached) stating that you have not been convicted of one or more of the crimes reportable under Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes or equivalent crime in another state, territory, commonwealth, or foreign nation. If you have received your clearances in the past two years, they will not expire until the third year from the date the clearances were issued. In other words, if you received your clearances this school year you should be good for two more school years.

Act 34 and Act 151 clearances take as long as six to eight weeks to process, so you are encouraged to apply for the clearances as soon as you decide to become a volunteer. Each form will be available online. We have links to this information on our school website. We also have the online copies of the forms on the website. The schools do not send the forms to the state. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to complete the forms and pay the fees. The forms are \$10.00 each and require a money order to complete. If you do the criminal record check online, you will pay online so no money order would be needed using that method. As soon as you receive your clearances from the state, please take them to the school office so the secretary can make a copy for their file. If you have a record, please make an appointment with your child's principal to discuss it. Minor incidents that do not hinder the welfare of a child do not prevent one from becoming a volunteer.

Act 114 clearances require the volunteer to get fingerprinted. These clearances cost approximately \$28.50. The forms and procedures for Act 114 will be available at your school's office and linked to our website.

If you volunteer for any overnight trip as a chaperone, you must have current clearances. This means you must submit the forms for Act 34, Act 114, and Act 151 that are less than one year old.

Also, all volunteer coaches are required to have current Act 34, 151, and 114 clearances instead the waiver mentioned in paragraph #2 even though they may have lived in Pennsylvania for ten consecutive years or more.

Definition of Volunteer: A volunteer is a person who services the district without compensation on a planned and approved basis.

Examples of Volunteering:

The following activities are samples of volunteering in our schools that occur on a regular or a one-time basis which require clearances: Wisdom Program, Accelerated Reader and Support Programs, Student Store, Basket Raffle, Box Top for Education Sponsor, Cameras for Classroom Sponsor, Historian/ Scrapbook, Recess Helper, Lunch Room Helper, Shop for Education, Weekly Readers, Bulletin Board Helper, Fitness Fridays, Campbell's Labels, Friends of Sunrise Library, Library Helpers, Public Relations, Book Fair Helper, Santa Shop Helper or Wrapper, Field Trip Chaperone, Fun Day Helper, After School Clubs and Special Events Sponsor or Assistant, Home Room Party Chaperone, Homeroom Parent, Accelerated Reader Store, Track and Field Day Helper, Picture Day Helper, After School PTO Events and any other role or duty designated by the principal.

If you have additional questions, please contact me or your child's principal. In addition, your child's school will be sending out information shortly regarding dates when we are bringing fingerprint services to your child's building.

Dr. Matthew Harris
Superintendent

Frequently Asked Questions:

Question: If a parent comes into the class to do a presentation, do they need to have clearances?

Answer: The parent will not need clearances because they are not working with a child. They are serving as the guest of the teacher and will not take a supervisory role or be alone with a child.

Question: If a parent or grandparent wants to attend a school play or Breakfast With Your Child Day, do they need to have their clearances?

Answer: The attendee will not need clearances because they were invited by the school to either watch their child perform or socialize with their child as they eat. The attendee in this case is not volunteering and there will be staff members in charge of supervision.

Question: If a parent is scheduled to be on recess duty once a month, do they need clearances?

Answer: They need their clearances because they are performing a service where they have direct access to children.

Question: If a parent volunteers for only the Fun Day event at the end of the year, do they need clearances?

Answer: They will still need their clearances because they are working with or supervising children.

Question: If a parent receives their clearances but can no longer volunteer to finish out the year because of family emergencies, do they need new clearances during the following year?

Answer: The parent will not need new clearances until the end of the three year time period expires. The clearances are good for three years from the time that the parent receives them.

Question: If a parent has a retail theft conviction, will they be able to volunteer?

Answer: The parent will still be able to volunteer as only records for items under PA Title 18 Consolidated Statutes or equivalent crime in another state, territory, commonwealth, or foreign nation prevent you from volunteering for an organization.

Question: Why do we have to obtain clearances to volunteer in our schools?

Answer: It is a requirement of the state mandated PA Act 153.

Question: When do the clearances expire?

Answer: The clearances expire three years from the date that is listed on their clearances.

Question: If I received my clearances on August 15, 2014 to start the school year, do I need to get them again?

Answer: The clearances expire three years from the date that is listed on the clearance so you will not need them until August 15, 2017.

Question: If one of my clearances has expired, will I be able to volunteer?

Answer: You will not be able to volunteer as the district's policy requires all 3 clearances, or 2 clearances and a waiver for the fingerprints if you are a ten year consecutive resident of the state of PA.