



POTTSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING • 230 Beech Street • Pottstown PA 19464 • (610)323-8200 • FAX (610)326-6540

Building a Better Tomorrow

www.pottstownschooldistrict.com

April 20, 2015

Dear Volunteer,

Changes to the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) impact the requirements for individuals permitted to serve as a school volunteer, effective immediately. A Pottstown School District Volunteer is defined as an individual who provides a service to students, staff, or school/district operations without compensation. Please note that Pottstown School District distinguishes between volunteers and visitors in that visitors are viewed as individuals who are attending and/or observing an event or activity without providing a service to the students, staff, or school/district operations. Some examples of these events would include but are not limited to: Back to School Nights, Parent/Teacher Conferences, School Assemblies, American Education Week, Band Concerts, etc. In this capacity, school visitors do not need the clearances as described below.

Whether you are interested in volunteering at a single event or over a period of time, all Pottstown School District volunteers require background clearances. This includes, but is not limited to, chaperoning field trips, assisting at classroom or school events, reading to a class, shelving books in the library, office support with photocopying, etc.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What clearances are volunteers required to obtain?

All Pottstown School District volunteers must obtain the following clearances:

- PA Child Abuse History Clearance: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>
- PA State Police Criminal Background Check: <https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp>
- FBI Report of Federal Criminal History Record
https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_pde.htm
- The FBI Report of Federal Criminal History Record (fingerprinting) *may* be required. Pottstown School District volunteers are exempt from this requirement if:
 - They have resided within Pennsylvania consecutively during the prior 10-year period; AND
 - They swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from serving as a volunteer under the CPSL.
 - In other words, to be excused from this requirement, parents must swear and affirm that if the Federal Criminal History Record were completed, it would not reveal anything that would prohibit them from providing services.
 - Pottstown School District has developed a Volunteer Affirmation Form on page 5 to assist you in meeting this requirement.
 - If you have not resided within Pennsylvania consecutively for the prior ten years, or you do not swear and affirm in writing that you meet the criteria for volunteering, you must also submit a completed Report of Federal Criminal History. Directions for completion may be found at: https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_pde.htm

If I intend to volunteer, when do I need to submit clearances to the school district?

- If you have volunteered within Pottstown School District at any point between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2014, you may continue to volunteer without providing clearances/certifications up until July 1, 2015.

- If you have not volunteered in Pottstown School District during this period of time, volunteering may not occur until the required clearances/certifications are received and reviewed.
- After July 1, 2015, all Pottstown School District volunteers will need to submit completed clearances/certifications prior to serving as a volunteer in accordance to the following deadlines, which will apply to all volunteers at all levels (pre-k to high school). All clearances must be handed in to the Human Resources Office **before** the below due dates.
- No volunteers will be considered in between the due dates. *For example, a volunteer hands in clearances on September 1, 2015. The volunteer would be eligible to participate in PSD events as a volunteer on October 1, 2015.*

Due Dates
July 1, 2015
October 1, 2015
January 1, 2016
April 1, 2016

- Please keep the originals and forward a copy for our records. *We reserve the right to examine the originals as requested.*

How do I obtain my clearances?

- Information regarding how to obtain clearances is hyperlinked on page one of this document. The information may also be found on the Pottstown School District website on the Human Resources Tab.

How recent do the clearances that I submit need to be?

- Clearances obtained within the calendar year to the date of submission will be considered valid.

Is there a cost associated with obtaining clearances?

- Yes. Detailed information may be found on the hyperlinks. The following costs are associated with each clearance:
 - o PA Child Abuse History Clearance - \$10
 - o PA State Police Criminal Background Check - \$10
 - o Report of Federal Criminal History Record - \$28.75 and fingerprinting at an approved location- see website for more information.
 - *Remember, the Federal Criminal History Record is not required if the volunteer has resided in Pennsylvania consecutively for the prior ten years and swear/affirm in writing that he/she meets the requirements for volunteering. The Volunteer Affirmation may be found as the last page of this document.*

What if I can't afford to obtain clearances but still want to volunteer?

- The CPSL makes it a criminal offense to knowingly allow any adult to volunteer without proper clearances. Therefore no exceptions can be made for those who wish to volunteer in the Pottstown School District.

Once I receive clearances, to whom do I submit them?

- Original documents may be submitted to the Office of Human Resources in the School District Office for inspection and copying. Copies of the original may also be sent, but we reserve the right to inspect the original at any time. Failure to produce the original document would necessitate removal of any volunteer privileges immediately.

- Please submit the required copies or original documents and a self-addressed envelope in one packet to the address as listed below. Original documents will be returned to individuals via the self-addressed envelope. Original documents may also be personally presented for copying in the Human Resources office for immediate return as well.

Human Resources Department- Volunteer List
Pottstown School District
230 Beech Street
Pottstown, PA 19464

How often must I update my clearances?

- Clearances must be updated within 36 months of the date on the document. When updating clearances, the District requests that all clearances and the Volunteer Affirmation be completed and submitted at the same time.

Are volunteers required to report suspected child abuse?

- Changes in the law suggest that parent volunteers may now be considered “mandated reporters” who are required to report suspicion of child abuse to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

What does the term “mandated reporter” mean?

- A mandated reporter is someone who is required by law to make a report of child abuse if they have “reasonable cause to suspect a child is a victim of abuse.”
- All school district employees are mandatory reporters.
- Volunteers, including parent volunteers, are now likely also considered mandatory reporters based upon recent changes to the law.

What do I do if I suspect child abuse while in my volunteer capacity?

- Legislative changes require that the individual who suspects abuse, must directly and immediately report the abuse.
- The following steps should be followed if you suspect abuse while in your volunteer capacity:
 - o Mandated reporters must **immediately** either (1) make an oral report to the state-wide child abuse phone hotline when they have reasonable cause to suspect a child is the victim of child abuse at **1-800-932-0313** or (2) **file an electronic report with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis>**
 - o If the report is made verbally over the phone, within 48 hours of the oral report, a [written report](#) must be submitted to Children and Youth. Written report forms may be found in each school building or accessed electronically at: <https://www.reportsuspectedabuse.com/>
 - o Parent volunteers who report suspected child abuse must also immediately report that suspected abuse to their student’s building principal or assistant principal and provide her/him with a copy of any written reports that are filed.

Is training for mandatory reporting available?

- Yes. A free three-hour training is available online at www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu.

Pottstown School District remains committed to the health, well-being, and safety of our students. We thank you for your cooperation with us in implementing requirements resulting from changes to the Child Protective Services Law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Rodriguez". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "S" and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Stephen Rodriguez
Director of Human Resources
Pottstown School District



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Act 24: Volunteer Affirmation

I, (print name) _____, would like to serve in the position of an unpaid volunteer for the Pottstown School District. Under penalty of law, I affirm that I have been a Pennsylvania resident during the entirety of the ten-year period prior to my signing this Volunteer Affirmation. I am aware that the Pottstown School District will be relying upon this Volunteer Affirmation for the purpose of complying with Pennsylvania’s Child Protective Services Law (“CPSL”). I further affirm that I am not disqualified from service as a school volunteer by reason of having been convicted of any of the following offenses under Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code or of an offense similar in nature under the laws or former laws of the United States or one of its territories or possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation, or under a former law of Pennsylvania:

- Chapter 25 (relating to criminal homicide)
- Section 2702 (relating to aggravated assault)
- Section 2709.1 (relating to stalking)
- Section 2901 (relating to kidnapping)
- Section 2902 (relating to unlawful restraint)
- Section 3121 (relating to rape)
- Section 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault)
- Section 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse)
- Section 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault)
- Section 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault)
- Section 3126 (relating to indecent assault)
- Section 3127 (relating to indecent exposure)
- Section 4302 (relating to incest)
- Section 4303 (relating to concealing death of child)
 - Section 4304 (relating to endangering welfare of children)
- Section 4305 (relating to dealing in infant children)
- A felony offense under section 5902(b) (relating to prostitution and related offenses)
- Section 5903(c) or (d) (relating to obscene and other sexual materials and performances)
- Section 6301 (relating to corruption of minors)
- Section 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children)
- A felony offense under the act of April 14, 1972 (P.L. 233, No. 64), known as The Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act, committed within the five-year period immediately preceding today’s date
- The attempt, solicitation or conspiracy to commit any of the above offenses

A Pottstown School District volunteer who has been a resident of Pennsylvania during the entirety of the previous ten-year period does not need to submit an FBI Report of Federal Criminal History Record (fingerprinting) if this Volunteer Affirmation is completed.

I hereby affirm that the information contained in this Volunteer Affirmation is correct. I further affirm that in the event that I am arrested for, or convicted of, an offense that would constitute grounds for denying my further participation as a school volunteer, or if I am named as a perpetrator of child abuse, I will provide the Pottstown School District with written notice not later than 72 hours after the arrest, conviction or notification that I have been listed as a perpetrator of child abuse in the statewide database.

Signature of Volunteer

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

Student Name (if applicable)

2nd Student Name (if applicable)