

Volunteer Policy Review

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BOE Study Session 9/1/2015

Volunteer Best Practices

Strategies for Reducing Risk

Adapted from Risk Management for Mentoring Programs

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USDOE Mentoring Program Training

All quality programs must develop:

- A clear statement, long range plan and operational manual
- Recruitment plan targeting appropriate volunteers for population served
- Careful screening of all volunteers
- Orientation and training for volunteers
- Thoughtful volunteer placement
- Vigilant monitoring and supervision
- Recognition, retention and support of participants
- Appropriate closure
- Formal evaluation of program

Current USD #116 Volunteer Policy & Practice

All volunteers considered to be 'regular/consistent' volunteers (more than 3X/Year) are required to:

- Fill out a volunteer application
- Undergo personal screening (currently this includes an interview and a fingerprint based check)
- Sign in and wear a nametag when they're in the building
- Attend an orientation/training session at the school site
- Read and sign the district volunteer policy
- Be under the direct supervision of a District #116 staff

Content of the orientation/training session includes:

- District and building policies (including sexual harassment policy)
- Confidentiality
- Risk management/reporting guidelines
- Volunteer procedures

Community Involvement Coordinators at each school:

- Recruit volunteers and assign them to appropriate placements
- Conduct personal interviews and do reference checks on all mentors
- Conduct school-based orientation/training session
- Monitor and track volunteer time
- Provide recognition and ongoing support to all volunteers
- Conduct yearly program evaluations

Attached:

- Volunteer handbook (which includes all district volunteer policies & procedures)
- Volunteer verification form

Current Issues/Concerns:

- USD116 has current practices that are more stringent and exclusionary than state law and neighboring district policies.
- Currently approximately 10% of tutors who we fingerprint volunteer only once, twice or not at all
- ISBE does not require fingerprint background checks for school volunteers who will be in supervised settings
- Delayed notification delays starts and causes some tutors to lose interest

Proposed change to District Volunteer Policy

We are suggesting replacing the fingerprint based background check with an online name-based background for University of Illinois and Parkland tutors only. CU One to One mentors and any volunteers who are regularly in the schools or who chaperone overnight trips would continue to complete the fingerprint based check.

Online background checks are more accurate and more efficient and effective than our current practice:

- Volunteers complete a background check form, which is faxed or emailed to an online agency.
- No scheduling and getting to an appointment
- 24 hour turnaround
- Few false positives
- Nationwide (not just Illinois) check
- Searches 6-8 databases including Champaign County Courts, Sex Offender Registry, Social Security trace and more
- For an additional price they track the volunteer 1/month for 12 months

Potential Cost savings:

- 400 tutors @ \$50 each vs \$10 each = \$16,000 savings
- A portion of these savings could be applied to strengthen best practices