



Policy Revisions for School Volunteers and Field Trips

August 2010

The following information is provided to help school administrators, faculty, staff and parents understand changes in the policies affecting school volunteers and field trips. These policy revisions were made to address parent and community concerns regarding student safety during and after the school day.

What is a school volunteer?

Any individual not employed by the school system who performs services for the school without pay is a volunteer. Volunteers may be parents, business partners, community members or college students. The revisions to the School Volunteer policy specifically relate to volunteers working directly with students on school property or during a school-sponsored activity.

Are volunteers screened, and if so, how?

All volunteers who will be working directly with students of the school must complete a Volunteer Registration Form each year. School personnel then check the information on the form against the List of Registered Sex Offenders provided by the state of Georgia. System policy does not require a volunteer to undergo a background check unless they will be staying overnight with students as a field trip chaperone. In addition, at their own discretion the principal may require any volunteer to undergo a background check.

How frequently must the List of Registered Sex Offenders be checked?

The registry should be checked annually for each volunteer, ideally at the beginning of the year or as soon as they submit a Volunteer Registration Form. The form includes a check box to indicate that the List of Registered Sex Offenders is clear for the volunteer.

How can Volunteer Registration Forms be obtained?

All parents should be provided a Volunteer Registration Form at the start of each school year. Forms should also be available in the front office of each school.

Are there limitations on volunteers working directly with students?

Volunteers may work with small groups of students or an individual student in a tutoring or mentoring capacity or assist in other ways at the principal's discretion. A volunteer may be alone with a group of students. A volunteer may work with an individual student only in an open area such as a hallway or media center, or in an area where they are observed by another volunteer or staff member. At no time should a volunteer be left alone and unobserved with an individual student in a private or secluded area such as an office or classroom. However, persons operating in an official capacity such as a court-appointed advocate, who provide proper identification and have parental or guardian permission, may meet privately with students without being observed.

When volunteers serve as mentors, they strive to build individual relationships with children. How does the Volunteer Policy address this?

Mentors may meet with students in media centers or other open areas where school personnel are nearby. They may also use a quiet corner of the classroom so the teacher can supervise while still giving the mentor and mentee some privacy. Mentors must be either in an open area or be observed by another volunteer or school employee at all times.

May volunteers serve as substitute teachers?

No. Only individuals who have been trained by the school system and are on the approved substitute list may do this.

May volunteers help out with after school programs or activities?

Volunteers may assist students beyond the school day. The school volunteer policy applies beyond the regular school day during extra-curricular and school-sponsored activities. During such activities, volunteers should not be alone with a student unless specifically directed to do so by a staff person in charge, and then only under emergency or exceptional circumstances.

May volunteers help out on field trips?

Only parents of currently enrolled students may be approved to serve as chaperones by the principal. For day trips, the Volunteer Registration Form is sufficient to complete. However, any chaperone who will be participating in an overnight field trip must undergo a background check.

How does a volunteer chaperone obtain a background check?

The school principal will provide instructions to parents on how to obtain the background check once it is determined they will be used as an overnight field trip chaperone. Background checks will be arranged through the school system's office of School Police (contact person for scheduling is Felecia Goodwin as of August 2010) and must be completed by the volunteer chaperone no less than five days prior to the trip. This ensures results will be reported to the principal before the trip occurs.

Must parent chaperones pay the cost of the background check?

No. Costs for background checks should be incorporated into the field trip budget and covered through student fees and fund raising. (The cost as of August 2010 is \$40, which is the cost charged to the school system by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.)

Can parents drive students to field trips?

For field trips occurring during the school day or coordinated by school personnel, parents may drive students other than their own ONLY if they complete a Parent Driver Waiver form and provide a copy of a valid drivers license and automobile insurance. The Waiver Form states that the school system is not liable in the event of an automobile accident. Parents whose children will be transported by a parent driver must also sign a Parent Driver Waiver Statement indicating they acknowledge the school system has no liability in the event of an accident in a car driven by a parent.

Are parent field trip chaperones authorized to supervise individual students?

Parent chaperones should not be alone with an individual student unless specifically directed to do so by a staff person in charge, and then only under emergency or exceptional circumstances.