



Avella Area School District

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
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Dear Volunteer,

The Avella Area School District supports the involvement of parents and guardians as volunteers in our school. Pennsylvania State Law (Act 15) requires every volunteer who has *direct contact* with students to have the necessary clearances on file with the School District.

Direct Contact with Children is defined by State Law as the "*care, supervision, guidance or control of children or routine interaction with children.*" In keeping with the legislation and the legislative definition of Direct Contact, the District has developed the following guidelines to exemplify what does and does not constitute Direct Contact.

1. Field trips, classroom parties, book fairs, band trips and chaperoning scholastic club competitions/music trips are some examples of events where parents/guardians are *supervising, guiding, controlling and interacting directly with students*. **These individuals MUST have clearances.**
2. School-related events where parents/guardians are attending as an audience member with their own child and they are **NOT** *supervising, guiding or controlling other children*, these individuals are **NOT** required to have clearances. Examples include the Talent Show, Special Person's Breakfast, Dismissal Time, Open House and attending events and performances as spectators.

The Volunteer Policy and links to all required forms/clearances are located on our District's website at www.avellasd.org. To review the documents, please select the "District" link on the District's home page, and then the "School Volunteer" section.

What Clearances are required to volunteer?

The Avella Area School District requires Volunteers to complete the following clearances:

- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 151)
 - Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check (Act 34)
 - FBI Federal Criminal History Record (Act 114), if applicable
- You do not need the FBI Clearance if you meet the following TWO criteria:
1. You have been a resident of Pennsylvania for the ENTIRETY of the past 10 years AND
 2. You have NEVER been convicted of a Disqualifying Offense listed on the Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers.

Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers

If you answer "yes" to #1 and #2 above, you are eligible to waive the Federal Criminal History Record Check (FBI Fingerprint) by signing the Disclosure Statement Application, which is located on our website. The new State Law also requires volunteers to notify the District within 72 hours if arrested or convicted of a Disqualifying Offense as stated on the Disclosure Statement.

What are the costs of the clearances?

Costs of the clearances from the state are waived for volunteers. If the federal clearance is required, the cost is \$22.60. (Cost of the FBI clearance is the responsibility of the volunteer.)

How do I obtain my clearances?

Links to obtain each of the clearances are located under the Volunteer section of our District's website.

How often must I update my clearances?

Clearances must be updated every 60 months. For District tracking purposes, clearances must be dated on or after July 1, 2015.

How do I complete the process to be a Volunteer?

1. Complete the Volunteer Application
2. Only after you get **all three** clearances back (or two, plus Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers), take the originals to the Central Administration Office during office hours, **along with your completed Volunteer Application**.
3. The administrative staff will review your clearances and copy for District files. The originals will be returned to you.
4. Your name will then be submitted to the School Board for approval to volunteer in the Avella Area School District.

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 Avella Area School District.

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:
 - 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>**
 - 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/>
 - 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.

Avella Area School District remains committed to the health, well-being, and safety of our students. We thank you for your interest in volunteering for the Avella Area School District.

Sincerely,



Mr. Cyril Walther, Superintendent