

Background Checks for Norwalk Public Schools' Volunteers *Frequently Asked Questions*

On June 26, 2007 the Board of Education adopted a policy requiring that adults who volunteer to assist Norwalk Public Schools in certain situations must submit to a background check that includes fingerprinting and reviews of national databases checking for criminal records or involvement with Child Protective Services.

Our volunteers fall into one of two categories: ***Monitored and Unmonitored.***

- ***Monitored Volunteers*** – means that you, the volunteer, will be with a NPS employee whenever you are with students.

The following are examples of *monitored* volunteering where a background check is not required:

- Assisting in your child's classroom when the teacher is present
 - Driving on a field trip during the school day with the class
 - Helping in the school office during school hours
 - Assisting in the cafeteria or library
- ***Unmonitored Volunteers*** – means that there will be times that you will provide service to students and there will be no NPS employee with you.

Under what circumstances must I submit to a background check?

You must submit to a background check if, and only if, any of the following *unmonitored* situations pertain to you:

- You will work with students in any type of out of school time activities, including those that occur before and after school and during all school vacation time, including the summer.
- You will chaperone an overnight field trip.
- You will work in direct contact with students without the presence of a teacher, aide, or administrator.
- You have reason to communicate with students in person during out of school time, or by phone, or any electronic means during school or non-school hours.

How do I complete the process for volunteering?

You will notify the school secretary or school administrator how you wish to volunteer. The school will determine if it is in a monitored or unmonitored role.

1. If your role is *monitored*, then you can begin immediately as the school administration directs you.
2. If your intended service fits *unmonitored* criteria, school administration will provide the Human Resources Office with your name, address and telephone along with a brief description of how you will serve the district or what role you will be filling.
 - A. You will be given a set of two fingerprint cards from the school secretary.
 - B. You may also obtain the cards from the Human Resources Office on the third floor of City Hall when the Human Resources Office is in receipt of the form from school administration. Prospective Mentors may obtain the cards from the District's Public Relations Office.
 - C. You may also request that cards be sent to your home address.

- D. Once you receive the cards you are required to take the cards to the police station where you will be fingerprinted. The Norwalk Police Station will charge you a \$5.00 fee to take your fingerprints. The fee is your responsibility.
- E. You must return the cards with your fingerprints to the Human Resources Office along with a *money order or bank check* (no personal checks) in the amount of \$18.00 (After October 1, 2007, the fee will be reduced to \$15.25.) payable to the Commissioner of Public Safety. This may be done in person or through the mail. The fee is your responsibility.
- F. You and your school administrator will receive written confirmation that you have completed the process successfully. Only after written confirmation may you begin to serve in an unmonitored capacity.

May I volunteer in a "monitored" capacity before the background check is completed?

Yes, you may serve in any monitored capacity.

Must I complete this process every year?

Not under the present rules. However, we review our procedures annually. If there are any changes, we will notify you.

What are the circumstances under which I would not be approved for volunteering?

You will not be approved for volunteering if you have a criminal record that suggests you might be a threat or a hazard to our children or if you have had an involvement with Child Protective Services where it has been determined that you have had an inappropriate contact with children.

How long should this process take?

We are notified in approximately four to six weeks from the time we send your fingerprints to the Department of Public Safety about the results of the background check. Please leave sufficient time for the process to be complete if you intend to volunteer for those activities where a background check is necessary.

What is reported to the school district?

We are notified of any case involving an arrest and its disposition.

Does the District or the police retain the fingerprints?

No, we do not retain copies of fingerprint cards. We do retain the response from the State on the fingerprint check. The police department does not retain any copies of the fingerprints.

Where can I have my fingerprints taken?

You may have your fingerprints taken at the Norwalk Police Station (1 Monroe Street) on Wednesdays from 9:30 – 11:30AM and from 1:30 – 3:30PM. We are trying to arrange for other times if there are a sufficient number of people to warrant a special session.

Some police stations in other communities may take your fingerprints even though you do not live in that community. If it is more convenient for you to have your fingerprints taken close to a place where you work, call the local police station and ask if they can accommodate you.

