FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Volunteers and Mandatory Checks

Policy: IJOC-R School Volunteers 2004-11-02

Question: Why do we have a volunteer guideline?

The River East Transcona School Division (RETSD) recognizes the valuable contributions that volunteers make to schools and student learning. To ensure consistency, safety, and clarity across all schools, the division has established guidelines outlining the expectations and requirements for individuals who wish to volunteer within RETSD. These guidelines are intended to support a positive volunteer experience while maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for students and staff. IJOC-R Policy Link: 2004-11-02

Question: What is the definition of a volunteer?

A volunteer is any individual who freely offers their time, knowledge, or skills to support school activities, programs, or events without receiving financial compensation. Volunteers may include parents, guardians, grandparents, community members, and representatives from community organizations.

Question: What are the eligibility requirements?

Individuals wishing to volunteer within RETSD schools must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be at least 16 years of age, unless otherwise approved by the school administration.
- Demonstrate an interest in supporting students and school programs.
- Be willing to follow the direction and supervision of school staff at all times.
- Comply with all school division policies and procedures.

Volunteers work under the supervision of school staff and may not replace or perform duties assigned to employees.

Question: What is the screening requirements?

To ensure the safety and well-being of students, volunteers may be required to complete the following screening processes prior to beginning their volunteer activities:

- A Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Search
- A Child Abuse Registry Check

- Mandatory Training: Commit to Kids, Accessibility Training, and Respect in Sport if coaching.

Volunteers must have both checks cleared before participating in school activities where screening is required. These checks are typically valid for a defined period in accordance with division guidelines.

Question: What are the confidentiality expectations?

Volunteers may have access to sensitive or personal information about students, staff, or school operations. Volunteers are required to maintain strict confidentiality and must not share information about students or school matters outside of the school setting. Any concerns regarding student well-being must be reported directly to school staff.

Question: What is the code of conduct?

Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner at all times. This includes:

- Treating students, staff, and other volunteers with respect and dignity
- Following school rules and procedures
- Maintaining appropriate boundaries with students
- Supporting a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all members of the school community

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in the termination of volunteer privileges.

Question: What is volunteer supervision?

Volunteers work under the guidance and supervision of school staff or administration. School staff are responsible for providing direction regarding volunteer roles and responsibilities, ensuring volunteers understand expectations, and addressing any concerns that arise during volunteer activities.

Question: Can a volunteer be removed from the division or school?

School administrators reserve the right to discontinue a volunteer's participation if concerns arise regarding safety, conduct, confidentiality, or adherence to division policies. Volunteers may also be removed if their role is no longer required or if their actions are inconsistent with the values and expectations of the school division.

These guidelines are designed to ensure that volunteer involvement supports student success while maintaining safe, respectful, and well-managed school environments. The RETSD Volunteer Program operates in alignment with student safety policies, workplace safety requirements, and all applicable division procedures.

Question: What are the defined categories or tiers of volunteers?

- **Short-term supervised**: Volunteers who assist occasionally and are always directly supervised by school staff (e.g., helping at an event or in a classroom for a single day). These roles are low risk and typically do not involve a position of trust or authority.
- **Authority roles** (e.g., coaching): Volunteers who lead, instruct, or supervise students and have decision-making responsibility (e.g., coaches, club leaders). These are considered positions of trust or authority.
- **Day trips**: Volunteers supporting off-site activities where supervision may vary. Risk level depends on whether the volunteer is alone with students or responsible for a group.
- **Overnight trips**: Volunteers responsible for students during extended, unsupervised periods (e.g., overnight supervision). These are high-risk roles and clearly meet the definition of trust or authority, requiring full screening including a VSC.
- **Guest speakers** (e.g., Indigenous Elders or cultural presenters) do not require a Child Abuse Registry or Criminal Records check if they are always supervised by a division employee.

Question: It has been a tradition for teachers to bring their own children and sometimes their own parents to school to act as 'volunteers' to help out in their classrooms. Do they need a CAR and CRC?

All volunteers are required to complete a background check unless they fall under one of the following exceptions:

- Classroom Presenters: Individuals who are visiting a classroom solely to give a presentation *while the teacher is present* and who will not be working directly with students or left alone with them.
- Event Helpers Under Supervision: Volunteers assisting at events such as handing out pizza or helping with materials *as long as they are working alongside other volunteers and staff with proper supervision*, do not need a background check.

If your planned volunteer activity does not fall into one of the exceptions above, please ensure that your volunteer background check is completed prior to participating.

Question: **Our students go every year to the Japanese Cultural Center where the group is split into 4-5 groups and rotate through stations, some in different rooms. Usually the teacher is with one group and parent volunteers with the others. I am going to assume that unless we have parent volunteers with CRC and CAR, the students would not be able to attend this field trip as they would be in groups with Japanese Cultural Center staff who we're unable to confirm have cleared checks?**

The key principle is that any volunteer or adult who may be alone with students must have a cleared Criminal Record Check (CRC) and Child Abuse Registry (CAR) check on file.

In the situation you've described with the Japanese Cultural Center:

- If parent volunteers are supervising student groups independently (i.e., without a school staff member present), they must have cleared CRC and CAR checks.
- If students are placed in groups with external staff (e.g., Cultural Center staff) and no school staff are present, the same standard applies as there must be assurance that those individuals have appropriate screening. If this cannot be confirmed, students should not be left alone in those groups.

This does not necessarily mean the field trip cannot proceed, but it does require adjustments to ensure compliance and student safety. For example:

- Ensuring each group is supervised by a school staff member, or
- Limiting independent supervision to cleared volunteers only, or
- Structuring activities so students are not left alone with unscreened individuals

Ultimately, the expectation is that students are never left unsupervised with adults who have not been appropriately screened.

Question: Once a parent volunteer has obtained their criminal record check what are the next steps? Is the school supposed to keep a copy on file? How do the parents receive their checks, is it a PDF or a link. Many of my parents do not have access to a printer so they will have to email me their checks. We had some lunch supervisors try and send us their completed checks digitally and it appears that I need to input their username and password to see the completed check?

Once the package is complete and you have confirmed by using the check list, you submit the full package to HR.

Schools should not be collecting or retaining copies directly at the school level. All checks are to be reviewed and tracked centrally to ensure consistency, privacy, and compliance.

Question: Do volunteers need training with the mandatory check requirement?

Answer: Volunteer training requirements under The Public Schools Act

The Public Schools Act requires each school board to ensure that at least once every four years (a) every staff member and every school volunteer completes a minister-approved sexual abuse prevention program (Commit to Kids), and (b) every coach and school sport volunteer completes a minister-approved school sport abuse prevention program. (This is a direct statutory requirement; it is not optional policy.)

The Act also provides that, subject to regulation, a school division/district may authorize a principal to leave pupils in the care and charge of specified non-teacher roles (including “other designated responsible persons”) without a certified teacher in attendance. This statutory “care and charge”

construct is one reason Manitoba division policies often emphasize supervision rules and restrictions on leaving students solely with volunteers.

Question: Do the volunteers pay for their own criminal record check or does the Division?

Answer: Discretion will remain at the school level on whether it will be reimbursed from the school budget.

Question: What is the review or escalation process of the results?

- Clear results: will be approved and document clearance state in the spreadsheet in Admin Connect.
- Non-clear/questionable results: escalate to Assistant Superintendent of HR/designate; do not approve until reviewed.

Note: Where any check result is unclear or raises concern, the principal will not approve the volunteer for duties until the matter has been reviewed by the Assistant Superintendent of HR or designate, and the decision and rationale are documented.

- Inconclusive results requiring fingerprints: disallow high-trust roles until cleared.

Question: What is the cost for the volunteer for a Child Abuse Check?

- Please note that volunteer Child Abuse Registry Checks are exempt from **fees** under *Manitoba Regulation 16/99, subsection 11.1(2),* therefore the cost is covered for all Child Abuse Registry checks for volunteers.

Question: How often do the checks need to be reviewed?

Child Abuse Registry (CAR) – Every year

Criminal Record Checks (CRC) Every second year

Volunteers are required to maintain up-to-date screening requirements to support student safety. The Child Abuse Registry (CAR) Check must be reviewed annually, and all volunteers are expected to complete and submit a new CAR form each June. This timeline is essential to ensure clearance is received prior to the start of the upcoming school year. In addition, Criminal Record Checks (CRC), including the Vulnerable Sector Search where applicable, must be renewed every two years. Volunteers who do not have current and valid clearances on file will not be permitted to participate in volunteer activities until all requirements are met.