

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 8, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee D. Colburn, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee D. Fleming, Planning and Policy Committee, Chair
Trustee S. Hansen, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee W. Keiver, Planning and Policy Committee

ORIGINATOR: B. Holt, Acting Executive Director

SUBJECT: Proposed Board Policy GBCE.BP - Volunteers – Registration and Records Checks

RESOURCE
STAFF: Veda Lastiwka

RECOMMENDATION

That proposed Board Policy GBCE.BP (Appendix I) be considered for the third time and approved.

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To demonstrate due diligence with regard to the safety of students, it is recommended that all volunteer coaches, volunteer chaperones of overnight field trips, and volunteer drivers that transport students be required to submit, to Personnel Recruitment and Staffing, an Edmonton Police Service records check relevant to working with the vulnerable sector. As well, at the discretion of the superintendent of schools, other volunteers could be required to submit records checks documents if, in the opinion of the superintendent, to do so would be in the best interest of students and staff. Any cost associated with a volunteer obtaining required records checks will be the responsibility of the district.

In developing this policy and accompanying administrative regulation (Appendix II), the following has been considered:

- Safety of students is paramount.
- Volunteers are valued for their contributions to the education and experience of district students.
- Principals are responsible for volunteers in their schools and are responsible for ensuring that students are not at risk.
- Principals are required by *EIBA.AR – Liability Insurance* to authorize volunteer drivers and ensure each has submitted a Volunteer Driver Declaration form when driving their own vehicle or a Driver Abstract Authorization form when driving a district vehicle.
- Volunteers work under the direction or supervision of district staff.

- A requirement for records checks should consider the potential for risk to students, depending on the situation.
- A committee of principals has expressed caution regarding records checks for volunteers and the possibility that such requirements could be viewed as a burden and result in decreased numbers of volunteers.
- District experience with records checks for employees informs us that protecting the privacy of personal information requires defined procedures, and the management of records checks documents requires staff resources.
- Edmonton Police Service currently charges a \$10.00 fee for a police records check for a volunteer, which is reduced from the regular fee of \$30.00. To qualify for the reduced fee, the requesting agency (Edmonton Public Schools) is required to follow certain procedures as defined by Edmonton Police Service.
- There is estimated to be more than 6,000 volunteers in Edmonton Public Schools. Potentially, 2,000 of these volunteers would be required to undergo records checks if the proposed policy is approved.
- Other school districts in Alberta have various requirements for records checks for volunteers (Appendix III).

Input from Stakeholders

On April 12, 2006, Key Communicators were provided with a presentation that included the above noted considerations as well as the information in Appendix III included in this report. The presentation was followed by facilitated breakout sessions where participants were asked to provide comments and opinions relative to the following questions:

- Which volunteers should be required to provide records checks?
- Which records checks documents should be required: Police Records Checks? Alberta Children's Services Intervention Record Checks? Self-disclosure Statements?
- Should records checks documents be managed at the school or district level?
- Should a volunteer pay for any cost related to securing a records check document or should the district pay?

While there was no consensus of opinion in the breakout groups, most participants acknowledged that the issue of requiring records checks documents from volunteers is complex. The proposed policy and administrative regulation reflect the majority of comments recorded.

- Only those volunteers in activities where students would be most vulnerable will be required to submit records checks. Participants expressed that schools are inherently safe and in the majority of volunteer situations, there is no risk to the safety of students.
- Police records checks will be required for volunteer coaches, volunteer chaperones of overnight field trips, and volunteer drivers that transport students. Alberta Children's Services Intervention Record Checks will not be required as the information they provide was seen to be inconclusive. Self-disclosure statements will not be required as they were seen to be an invasion of privacy and would not necessarily provide reliable information. All volunteers will, however, be required to complete a district volunteer registration form each school year (Appendix IV).

- Records checks documents for volunteers will be managed at the district level as participants expressed a concern that managing such documents at the school might jeopardize the privacy of volunteers and the relationship between the principal and parent volunteers.
- Any cost related to a volunteer securing a records check document will be the responsibility of the district, not the volunteer, as participants indicated that requiring volunteers to pay might reduce the number of volunteers.

Input was sought from the community at large via the district's web survey. Nine parents, eight principals/decision unit administrators, and eleven staff members responded and their comments are attached (Appendix V). Many questions raised by respondents are addressed in the proposed administrative regulation. Other questions are similar to those that have been considered, as outlined in this report, in the development of the proposed board policy and administrative regulation.

ES:bjs

APPENDIX I: Proposed Board Policy, GBCE.BP, Volunteers – Registration and Records Checks

APPENDIX II: Proposed Administrative Regulation, GBCE.AR, Volunteers – Registration and Records Checks

APPENDIX III: Alberta School Districts' Records Checks Requirements for Volunteers 2005-2006

APPENDIX IV: Volunteer Registration Form

APPENDIX V: Stakeholder Input via District Web Survey

Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: GBCE.BP
TOPIC: Volunteers – Registration and
Records Checks

EFFECTIVE DATE:
ISSUE DATE:
REVIEW DATE:

The board recognizes that the safety of the district's students and staff is paramount.

The superintendent will establish procedures, to be effective September 1, 2007, for registering all volunteers in district schools and for securing police records checks from all volunteer coaches, volunteer chaperones of overnight field trips, and volunteer drivers that transport students.

The superintendent shall have the authority to request a police records check of any volunteer where the superintendent is of the opinion that to do so would be in the best interest of students and staff.

At the discretion of the superintendent, or designate, where information contained in a police certificate suggests conduct that brings into question the suitability of the individual to volunteer in a school, the individual may not be allowed to volunteer.

Reference(s):

EIBA.AR – Liability Insurance

[GBCE.AR](#) – Volunteers – Registration and Records Checks

HICA.BP – Field Trips

HICA.AR – Field Trips

Edmonton Public Schools

Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: GBCE.AR
TOPIC: Volunteers – Registration and
Records Checks

EFFECTIVE DATE:
ISSUE DATE:
REVIEW DATE:

A. GENERAL

This Regulation applies to all volunteers on or after September 1, 2007.

1. In this Regulation:
 - a. “Director” means the Director of Personnel Recruitment and Staffing; and
 - b. “volunteer” means any individual who, without compensation, assists in the school or helps students during a school-related activity, including a field trip, either in groups or on a one-on-one basis, and includes a volunteer driver that transports students, but does not include a guest speaker, a guest presenter, a visitor to the school, a parent assisting his/her own child, a post-secondary institution practicum student, a school council member or member of a parent fund-raising group acting solely in either capacity, nor any district student or employee.
2. Principals are responsible for volunteers in their schools and are responsible for ensuring that volunteers work under the direction or supervision of district staff.
3. Effective September 1, 2007, all volunteers in district schools shall submit to the principal, each school year, a district Volunteer Registration Form.
4. Effective September 1, 2007, all volunteer coaches, volunteer chaperones of overnight field trips, and volunteer drivers that transport students shall submit an application for a police records check in accordance with this Regulation.
5. The nature and date of any charges or convictions revealed in a police report shall be considered relative to the current date and the individual’s responsibilities as a volunteer.
6. Principals are responsible for informing volunteer coaches, chaperones of overnight field trips, and drivers that transport students of the requirement for police records check results prior to performing these volunteer duties.
7. Where exceptional circumstances prevail, a principal may waive the requirements of this regulation and shall, as soon as practicable, inform the superintendent of schools, in writing, of this action.

8. At the discretion of the superintendent of schools, any volunteer may be required to undergo a police records check.
9. Costs associated with securing required police records checks shall be the responsibility of the district.

B. REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEER COACHES, CHAPERONES OF OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIPS, AND DRIVERS

1. Each volunteer coach, volunteer chaperone of an overnight field trip, and volunteer driver that transports students shall, within a time period sufficient to ensure the submission of results prior to engaging in such volunteer activity, and every year thereafter if engaged in the same volunteer activity, submit an application for a *Police Information Check* or an original *Police Information Check* indicating no charges or convictions and dated within the past six months.
2. If the result of a *Police Information Check* discloses charges or convictions, the volunteer shall submit, to the Director, an original of the volunteer's *Police Information Certificate*.
3. If a volunteer specified in B.1 fails to submit the documentation specified in section B.1 or B.2 prior to engaging in the volunteer activity, or if the contents of the volunteer's *Police Information Certificate* are considered by the Director to be incompatible with volunteering with the district, the volunteer shall not be allowed to volunteer.

C. COLLECTION, USE, AND STORAGE OF INFORMATION

1. Volunteer Registration forms shall be retained by the school for the current and subsequent school year.
2. The collection and use of personal information related to a required police records check shall be for the stated purpose of determining the suitability of an individual to volunteer for a school as a coach, chaperone of an overnight field trip or driver that transports students, and will be in accordance with the requirements of the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) of Alberta.
3. All police records check documents shall be securely stored within Personnel Services and retained indefinitely, and the results shall be recorded, stored, and retained electronically by Personnel Services.

Reference(s):

EIBA.AR – Liability Insurance

[GBCE.BP](#) – Volunteers – Registration and Records Checks

HICA.BP – Field Trips

HICA.AR – Field Trips

[Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

**ALBERTA SCHOOL DISTRICTS'
RECORDS CHECKS REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS
2005-2006**

RECORDS CHECKS REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS	NUMBER DISTRICTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – all volunteers 	21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – all volunteers • Child Welfare Intervention Record Check – all volunteers 	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – all volunteers • Self-disclosure Statement – all volunteers 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-disclosure Statement – all volunteers 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Welfare Intervention Record Check – all volunteers • Self-disclosure Statement – all volunteers 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Welfare Intervention Record Check – all volunteers 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – coaches and chaperones of extended field trips 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – chaperones of extended field trips • Child Welfare Intervention Record Check - chaperones of extended field trips 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – chaperones of extended field trips 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – coaches and chaperones of extended field trips • Child Welfare Intervention Record Check - coaches and chaperones of extended field trips • Self-disclosure Statement – all volunteers 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – coaches and chaperones of extended field trips • Self-disclosure Statement – coaches and chaperones of extended field trips 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – coaches, chaperones of extended field trips, and drivers 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Records Check – coaches • Child Welfare Intervention Record Check – coaches • Self-disclosure Statement – coaches 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No requirements regarding records checks for volunteers 	10
TOTAL DISTRICTS	59



VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION

Edmonton Public Schools values the partnership of staff, students, parents and community in supporting teaching and learning. Volunteers provide much needed support to our schools by working positively and cooperatively with the school team. Volunteer activities are site managed in a way that best fits the needs and interests of the local school community.

SCHOOL YEAR _____ SCHOOL _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE NO. _____

PARENT, LEGAL GUARDIAN, OR RELATIVE OF STUDENT REGISTERED AT THIS SCHOOL?

If yes, please list name and grade of student(s):

NAME _____ GRADE _____

NAME _____ GRADE _____

Please indicate the following areas in which you would be interested in providing volunteer support:

** Note that volunteer coaches, chaperones of overnight field trips, and drivers transporting students for school-related activities are required to undergo police records checks.*

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance | <input type="checkbox"/> Field trips (not overnight) | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Field trips – overnight *</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> School-wide special events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Coaching *</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> General Office Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Small groups of students |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer support | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual students | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports (not coaching) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Displays | <input type="checkbox"/> Inventory/carding/shelving books | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Driver for School Events *</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch/snack program support | _____ |

By signing this form, I acknowledge the following conditions for volunteering:

- A volunteer must respect the privacy of students and staff. Any information about students or staff, personal or otherwise, learned through the course of volunteering is to remain confidential.
- A volunteer must hold any information collected, used, generated, or stored by an Edmonton Public School as strictly confidential.
- A volunteer must not disclose, communicate, publish, remove, copy, or destroy any Edmonton Public Schools documents unless specifically authorized to do so by a teacher, the principal or designate.
- A volunteer must respect that the principal and teaching staff are responsible for student learning and behaviour.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

The information on this form is collected in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act of Alberta for the purpose of maintaining a registry of volunteers in Edmonton Public Schools. Your contact information will be kept confidential and used only by the school for the purpose of communicating with you about school activities for which you might volunteer.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT VIA DISTRICT WEB SURVEY
February 22 – March 22, 2007

Question 1 – Please select the one identifier that best describes the perspective from which you are providing feedback.

Identifier	Count	Percent
Parent	9	32.1
Community Member	0	0
Community/Professional Organization	0	0
Principal/Decision Unit Administrator	8	28.6
Staff Member	11	39.3
Total Responses	28	100.0

Question 2 – Are there aspects of this policy that require further clarification?

- The term "at risk" is too vague.
- The term 'in activities where students would be most vulnerable' seems vague. What does this mean?
- The situations which are considered higher risk need to be spelled out more clearly. Examples may also be useful.
- No – Support wholeheartedly.
- Yes, all of the context provided above should be explicitly outlined in the policy. I read the policy first, and had a number of questions about it, which were answered very well by the accompanying description above. In particular, the costs associated with a volunteer records check, and how the confidentiality of that record check will be maintained.
- What exactly is the "the vulnerable sector"? Would all volunteers have to fill out a form and send it to Central before they could work in the school?
- No.
- Can the school elect to pay for the records check? Would this be required for any sort of involvement in the school ie. parents coming along on fieldtrips? Parent helpers? How often would they need to renew the police check? If they have it in Kindergarten (where we see most parent involvement) would this then last the rest of the child's/parents school career?
- Who will pay for the record checks? Does a parent volunteer heading up running club qualify as a coach?
- If a parent drives to an event, like Journal Games and also drives another child from the school will they be considered a volunteer driver? Will they have to have a security clearance? The difference being the parent of the child has agreed to have this parent drive their child because they are not able to drive.
- Who would cover the cost for the records check?
- Who decides which activities place students at their most vulnerable and qualifies for a record check? Is this left to the principal or set at the district level?

- Who does pay for the records checks? Where do potential volunteers get the appropriate information and forms ~ schools/central office?
- No.
- "required to submit records checks documents if to do so would be in the best interest of students and staff." AWKWARD "So as to not jeopardize the privacy of volunteers or the relationship between." AWKWARD, better to somehow link to confidentiality policy and/or respectful workplace.

Question 3 – Are there aspects of this policy that cause you concern?

- The line that states 'Only those volunteers in activities where students would be most vulnerable will be required to submit records checks.' This causes me (as a parent) concern. The policy should state that ANY and ALL volunteers are required. Comment: Students are most vulnerable when those in positions of authority don't conduct record checks in every instance.
- Who specifically at the district level will be dealing with the knowledge and documentation of the outcomes of the police reports. How secure will the records be?
- Yes, the principal should not be made accountable for all the volunteers. This is simply not fair to that individual. The school board and children would be better served by having a consistent policy that governs all the students.
- Not being familiar with such a records check, my concern would be the judgment placed by "whoever" on what aspects of the records check would nullify a volunteer's eligibility for certain types of volunteerism. What are those criteria and shouldn't the criteria be openly published - to enable potential volunteers to avoid embarrassment knowing that certain events in their past may be brought to light. Also, as a parent, trusting other people (volunteers) to watch over the safety of my child, it is reasonable that I know what kind of records check has been performed and what types of background incidents would prevent them from being in that trusted volunteer role.
- I agree with the policy and think it is reasonable to have ALL volunteers register but ONLY those volunteers with less supervised contact with children (eg. coaches, overnight field trip chaperones, etc.) be required to submit a police check. We do not want to overburden the City of Edmonton Police Service beyond what is reasonable. Thank you to all who worked on this policy.
- Many aspects of this policy cause me concern. First, there is no demonstrated need for such a policy; at the key communicators meeting I attended last year it was reported that there were no documented cases of a volunteer harming a child. Second, the process of getting a criminal record check can be long and costly; this will eliminate parents who do not plan well or who have limited incomes. Third, a criminal record check will be positive for a remote and relatively minor offense. I have seen people struggle with beauracracy for up to 2 years to clear a 15 year old drunk driving conviction; do you really want to eliminate these people from the already limited pool of coaches (for example)? Fourth, how do parents with a record explain to their children that they cannot possibly volunteer to drive to the museum - because they are considered to be bad people? Finally, I think it is consequential that this type of policy will disproportionately affect disadvantaged children; precisely those children who need the schools to encourage the involvement of their parents - not tell them that their parents are not worthy to volunteer their time. I hope the tone of my comments conveys just how strongly I oppose any such measure. It is unnecessary and unjust. A principal with

sufficient judgment to run a school should have sufficient judgment to monitor and restrict the volunteer activities of parents considered suspect.

- What will the turnaround time be for police checks? Adding another layer of people to go through (submitting every form to Central) will make it more difficult to get volunteers.
- Security checks for volunteers on overnight fieldtrips. At an Elementary school we have one or two fieldtrips that are overnight for one night (Bennett Centre & Grade six camp) We rely heavily on parent supervision for these two events and rarely know long enough in advance who is able to attend as a volunteer supervisor. The requirement to have a security check for these volunteers on short notice will likely result in cancellation of this type of field trip in the future.
- No. I think it is responsible and proactive - just very sad that it is needed.
- Being in a low-socioeconomic area where we already struggle to get parent volunteers I see this has having a major impact on us being able to get volunteers and supporting the initiative to involve families.
- NO
- Some activities may be cancelled due to cost associated with transportation when you need to have a volunteer drive outside of the school.
- I don't believe the district should be picking up the tab for the records checks. We don't do this for people seeking employment with the district.
- No.
- Discretion of Superintendent may be too open ended, can it be linked to a particular volunteer position?
- Presently, I track the School Council Registration and Involvement Forms that we receive from our volunteer parents. These are also volunteer registration forms. These forms request a signature to allow us to contact these volunteers. Some schools do not have a formal school council. Instead they have a parent advisory group or nothing at all. In the case of an advisory group, we do not have a form that we use to track volunteers' names here at the Centre. Some School Councils forget to tell us that they have a formal council and we never know who they were. We continue to do the best that we can to contact the schools to let them know about school councils, being involved and our Parents as Partners Program. Volunteers are important to our schools, students and all children they support. Thank you for this opportunity. [*Staff Member, Communications*].

Question 4 – Are there elements that should be added to this policy?

- I believe that volunteer screening for school activities should be approved by the EPSB and cascaded throughout the schools. The costs of this should be absorbed by the Alberta Government. This action would be consistent with other organizations (churches, sporting teams) that require volunteer screening for individuals having contact with children. Typically the organization picks up the costs. The non profit day care my children attended had parents do volunteer screening before they could be a parent volunteer.
- Yes, include the additional information contained in the description at the top of this survey, and specify the criteria assessed in the records check that precludes someone from being trusted as (or allowed to be) a volunteer.
- This policy should be extended to all those external agents who work with our students, including private psychologists and speech therapists, etc. This should also be a central

responsibility, and conducted with the same amount of diligence as we exert in the hiring of new district staff. Private agencies who have partnerships in our schools should also be required to indicate their hiring process have used similar procedures for their staff, and perhaps they should have to sign a contract attesting to all this before they be given access to students.

- This is a very reasonable policy and as a principal I appreciate the flexibility.
- Is there any flexibility on the part of the district to deal with volunteers who fail to receive a clean record check but are already volunteering?
- No.