

Overview Pennsylvania Act 15 Pertaining to Volunteers Updated with Changes

Summary:

In October 2014, Governor Corbett signed PA Act 153 into law. This legislation is designed to increase the safety of children by requiring background checks and child abuse clearances for all volunteers and staff who are responsible for children. This law impacts all organizations who serve youth and also includes strengthened mandatory reporting requirements for adult volunteers and staff. (On July 2, 2015, Governor Wolf signed PA HB 1276 which made changes to PA Act 153 establishing it as Act 15. Those changes are reflected below and noted with **).

What is the criteria for clearances?

Adults who are currently unpaid volunteers, or are applying to be unpaid volunteers with the following responsibilities should ask: Am I....

1. A Direct Contact Scout Leader - (Cubmaster, Asst. CM, Tiger, Den or Webelos Leader, Scoutmaster, Asst. SM, Crew Advisor, Asst. Crew Adv., Post Advisor, Asst. Post Adv., Skipper, Mate, Merit Badge Counselor, Unit Commissioner). If **YES**...you need clearances. If **NO**...ask the following...
2. Am I ever in charge of a group of Scouts? **OR**
3. Do I assist in the care, supervision, guidance, or control of Scouts more than 3 times during a calendar year at meetings and day trips, or on more than one camping trip since joining the unit? If your answer to either question 2 or 3 is **YES**...you need clearances. If **NO**...you do not need the clearances.

Note: If you do not meet the criteria and are not required to secure clearances, you must complete the PA Scouter Waiver of Mandated Background Checks.

What clearances are required?

Volunteers who meet any of the above criteria must have the following clearances:

- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History. No cost.
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Child Abuse Clearance. No cost.
- FBI fingerprint based Federal Criminal History. Cost is \$25.75. **Note: If you have been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the entire past 10 years, you may sign a Minsi Trails Council Disclosure Statement for Volunteers in lieu of the FBI fingerprint based Federal Criminal History. The disclosure form affirms your residency and indicates there are no criminal convictions that would disqualify you from volunteer service.**

Where do I get the clearances?

- PA State Police Criminal History – <https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp>
- PA Human Services Child Abuse Clearance – <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS>
- FBI Fingerprint Criminal History – https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_dpw.htm

Timeline for clearances:

Existing volunteers - (involved prior to August 25, 2015) who meet the criteria above, have until July 1, 2016 according to PA law to complete and submit the required clearances. Please be aware Minsi Trails Council has determined the most effective and efficient way to collect several thousand clearances is to utilize the 2015-2016 recharter process.

District Recharter Months:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| • Anthracite District | December 2015 |
| • Pocono District | December 2015 |
| • Scoutreach District | December 2015 |
| • Exploring District | December 2015 |
| • Forks of the Del. District | January 2016 |
| • North Valley District | January 2016 |
| • South Mountain District | January 2016 |
| • Trexler District | February 2016 |

New volunteers - (involved after August 25, 2015) who meet the above criteria above, must complete and submit the required clearances before beginning their volunteer work with youth.

Each of the clearances and the disclosure form must be renewed every 60 months (5 years)

Where do I submit my clearances once I have them?

Unit level volunteers should provide a copy of their clearances to their Unit Committee Chairman along with their BSA adult application and BSA youth protection training certificate for approval. Each of these items should then be immediately submitted to the Council Office by the Unit Committee Chairman or the individual applying for leadership. By law, the Council office must retain copies of clearances for all volunteers.

Additional Information:

Additional information on PA Act 15 can be found on the Council website located at www.minsitrails.com.