

# OPERATION BEACON - VOLUNTEERS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS...

- ❖ **Does a Parent have to sign up through Operation Beacon in order to eat lunch with their child?**
  - NO – a parent eating lunch with their child is considered a VISITOR – NOT a VOLUNTEER.
- ❖ **What about anyone who visits a school for one-time events such as Dr. Seuss Day or Career Day? Will they need to go through the application process?**
  - NO - For one day/one-time only events visitors do not have to go through the volunteer application process. If the visitor wants to return on a regular basis to perform a volunteer function, the visitor becomes a volunteer who will need to go through the application process.
- ❖ **Do police officers or firemen visiting a school for a presentation to students need to sign up to do so through Operation Beacon?**
  - NO – they would be considered visitors – NOT VOLUNTEERS. The main thing to keep in mind with this question is: Does this person go come into a school on a regular basis to perform a volunteer function and/or interact with students outside of a general presentation to a class in the presence/under the supervision of a staff member? If the answer is yes – they must register through the application process.
- ❖ **Do Volunteers need to be supervised by school staff?**
  - YES – All volunteers MUST be supervised by school staff. At no time will an SCCPSS employee leave a volunteer unsupervised while interacting with students at the school. Protected student information will not be accessible to school volunteers without the required parental consent approvals.
- ❖ **If a parent wants to visit his/her child at a field trip event, do they need to be screened?**
  - NO – Parents may visit their children at school sponsored events as directed and supervised by school staff.
- ❖ **If someone wants to help out and perform volunteer duties on a class field trip do they need to be screened?**
  - YES - This is a Tier III volunteer duty where an individual will be working with and interacting with many students under the supervision of school staff. He/she must register through the applications process and will be screened.

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### ❖ What do you mean by Tiers?

- There are three basic levels of interaction that occur between volunteers and students. Those different levels of interaction call for a different vetting process. One Tier is not “better” than another. A volunteer is simply placed in a Tier based on the activities they indicate on the application that they would like to participate in at a school. That level then determines the next step in the process to approve the volunteer for work in our schools.
  - **Tier I** - Booster clubs, concession sales, book fairs, PTA, Off-campus volunteer – only limited direct interaction with students.
  - **Tier II** - Classroom parties, class projects, Clerical Volunteer, Field Day, Lunch Buddy – more interaction with students, but always under direct supervision of a teacher or staff member.
  - **Tier III** - Mentors, Tutors, Chaperones/Field Trips, Volunteer Coaches – close interaction with students, staff is normally present, but may not always be directly supervising.

### ❖ Where is the application for volunteers located?

- The application and Operation Beacon information can be found under the Communications Division page on the District website – [www.SCCPSS.com](http://www.SCCPSS.com). Simply look to the left sidebar to find Operation Beacon at the bottom – click the link to go the Operation Beacon landing page where you can find the application and the virtual training module.

### ❖ Do volunteers working in my school as part of a community group need to sign up as a volunteer through Operation Beacon?

- YES – we want to know who is working in our schools. This includes Community Organizations. Because of the wide variety of organizations and the various roles they play, please call Communications with questions and we will determine the correct designation and procedure.

### ❖ Do volunteers working in my school as part of a group need to go through the background screening if their organization already conducts one?

- If they conduct their own background checks that meet SCCPSS criteria – NO. The volunteer organization will need to provide a letter of assurance to the district detailing what criteria they use as part of their background screening and that the volunteer in

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question has passed that screening. A basic formatted letter with the required assurances can be obtained either through the District Communications Office or through the school site Volunteer Coordinator.

- ❖ **Does every volunteer go through a complete background screening with fingerprinting?**
  - NO – only Tier III Volunteers will need to submit to a full background check – these are mentors, tutors, field trip chaperones, etc. who work closely with students. Tier 1 and Tier II volunteers – which include PTA members, Boosters, Concession Stand workers, classroom helpers, frequent event volunteers, frequent career day presenters or speakers, etc. do NOT have to complete a full background check. They must complete the Operation Beacon Application and the school site Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for checking them against the National and Local sex offender data bases before they are cleared to work in a school.
- ❖ **Do High School Students volunteering at a school need to go through a background check?**
  - NO – we do not need to do a background check on our high school students.
- ❖ **Do Community Partners going into a school to perform health screenings on students need to apply through Operation Beacon and go through a Background Screening?**
  - If they fall under an existing Memorandum of Understanding or are working as part of an organization that comes into the school once or twice a year to provide a specific service – it is not necessary that they apply individually as an Operation Beacon volunteer. Those providing a service MUST be supervised by SCCPSS staff.
- ❖ **Do College students or groups who volunteer in a school need to apply through Operation Beacon?**
  - It depends...are they working in a school through a Memorandum of Understanding or regular educational partnership between SCCPSS and the college or the college group? If so, no, they do not. (For example: Nursing students getting college credit for clinicals or student teachers)
  - If however, the college students are volunteering on their own and returning to the school on a regular basis – then yes, they do.

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- ❖ **The school PTA is hosting a PTA event that is approved to take place at the school. Do the PTA event helpers/volunteers associated with the event need to go through the Operation Beacon Volunteer application process?**
  - NO – a PTA sponsored event taking place at the school is not considered an Operation Beacon Volunteer activity. PTA events taking place at the school site are reviewed for approval at the site level.
- ❖ **The school PTA has recruited volunteers to help at the school to perform volunteer duties, do they need to be approved through the Operation Beacon Volunteer application process?**
  - YES – if the PTA is bringing in volunteers to help the school and perform a volunteer function for the school, they will need to go through the application process.
- ❖ **How will volunteers be notified if they are cleared to work in a school?**
  - If the potential volunteer is a Tier 1 or Tier II level volunteer – the school site Volunteer Coordinator will be notified by Ms. Gloria Brack-Ford in the Communications Office or Ms. Kim Stevens, Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator, that a volunteer has requested to work at the school. The volunteer coordinator should then check the name against the sex offender databases and if no match comes up – the coordinator may contact the volunteer for training and begin scheduling them as a volunteer. Volunteer coordinators should conduct their own site-based orientation and training.
  - All Tier III volunteers that must go through a full background check will be contacted by Ms. Brack-Ford or Ms. Stevens for scheduling. Once they have gone through the process (approx. 48 hours turnaround in most cases) – the names of all who have been cleared will be sent to the school site volunteer coordinator to reach out to them regarding any necessary school site training and to begin scheduling them as a volunteer.
- ❖ **Do potential volunteers need to go through a background check with SCCPSS if they just completed one a few months ago?**
  - NO – Background screenings are good for one year. If they just completed one in March, then they are cleared until March 2018. Volunteer Coordinators should keep track of those who are cleared at this time because of a prior background check and notify the volunteer and Ms. Brack-Ford or Ms. Stevens when it's time for the volunteer to be screened again.

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- ❖ **Do permanent SCCPSS employees need to go through the background screening process in order to volunteer?**
  - NO – Permanent SCCPSS employees will automatically be cleared as Tier III volunteers.
- ❖ **What about training?**
  - SCCPSS Professional Development has created a simple online “virtual training”. It is available on the Operation Beacon page at SCCPSS.com. All volunteers will be required to complete training and will need to print a confirmation/certificate of completion at the end. The volunteer will need to bring that confirmation to the volunteer coordinator along with a photo ID on the first day he/she arrives to volunteer. The Volunteer Coordinator should keep the document on file for their volunteers. If the volunteer does not have a computer/internet access at home – the volunteer coordinator may opt to have the potential volunteer complete the training on a computer at the school site. Any school based training beyond that will be any site specific policies and procedures. All volunteers are required to sign a Volunteer Expectations form at the school site that also indicates training has been completed and that the volunteer understands the requirements of Mandatory Reporting.
- ❖ **Are Volunteer Hours tracked?**
  - Yes, volunteer hours are a part of our District Accountability System report for Community Engagement and will need to be reported by the school site coordinators on a set schedule. There will be incentives and awards given to volunteers in appreciation for the hours they spend working to make our schools successful. Schools must maintain a record of volunteer hours.
- ❖ **How will volunteers sign-in and be identified at the school site when they show up to work?**
  - Volunteers should sign in at the school site as required by Board Policy using the school’s established visitor or volunteer sign-in protocol.
- ❖ **How will a Tier III volunteer be informed that they have passed the background screening and is approved to work in a school?**
  - The school site volunteer coordinator will receive names for those approved from the Communications office as background checks are completed. Unless a person’s name has been sent to the school from the Communications office – they are NOT cleared to work in our schools. Once the name is received by the school site volunteer coordinator

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– the coordinator will be the one to reach out to the volunteer and let them know they are approved for volunteering.

### ❖ **How are Tier I and Tier II volunteer applications handled?**

- The Communications team will sort applications into the appropriate Tiers based on the activities in which the volunteer applicant expressed an interest. Once sorted – a list of Tier I and Tier II volunteers will be sent from the Communications office to the school site volunteer coordinators at the school of preference to the volunteer applicant. If no preference was indicated, the applicant's name will be assigned to a school or schools that have indicated a need for more volunteers. The Volunteer Coordinator will be responsible for checking names/addresses against the sex offender database registry. Once cleared, the volunteer coordinator is able to contact the applicant regarding volunteer opportunities at the school. If an applicant's name is found in the registry – the name is sent back to the Communications Office and sent to the SCCPSS Human Resources office for notification.