

CORNELL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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New Act 153 Clearance Law

Dear Cornell Community Members:

This letter is in regards to a new law that was recently passed and signed regarding background clearances for all school employees and school volunteers. When this law was signed there were many questions that needed to be answered to clarify how school districts were to enforce this new legislation. With the guidance of our school solicitor and additional information released from the Pennsylvania Department of Education we believe we have a firm grasp on how to stay within compliance with this new law in regards to school volunteers and school visitors. According to Act 153 all current school employees and school volunteers must have the following clearances:

- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 151)
- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check (Act 34)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Background Check (Act 114)

In addition, these clearances will need to be updated every five (5) years if volunteers wish to continue in their role as volunteer. If the Cornell School District does not have copies of all three clearances, then you will NOT be allowed to volunteer in any capacity. According to the Child Protective Services Law (Act 153), a volunteer is an adult serving in an unpaid position in which he or she may be responsible for the welfare of a child or have direct contact with children. These include but are not limited to chaperoning field trips, both overnight and day trips, as well as volunteering at special school events.

The Cornell School District recognizes, and encourages, parents/guardians be involved with the education of their child. We also recognize that there are times throughout the year, in particular with the elementary school, where parents are in our building helping out with different celebrations and activities. In such cases the parent would be considered a visitor and the three clearances are not required to be on file. However, if a parent is considered a volunteer (chaperone, volunteering at special school events, volunteer coach, etc.) then they are required to submit to the school a copy of all three clearances. If you have any questions as to whether you would be considered a visitor or a volunteer please direct those questions to the high school or elementary offices. They will be able to answer any questions you have and inform you if you would be considered a volunteer or visitor.

Information on how to obtain these clearances can be found on the homepage of our district website at www.cornellsd.org. Go to the parents tab then volunteer information and forms tab and you will find a link that takes you to the clearance information.

Lastly, in regards to the Criminal Background Check (Act 114), any volunteer who has been a resident of the Commonwealth for 10 years, and swears in writing (see attached form) that he or she has never been convicted of a disqualifying crime the attached form can take the place of the Act 114 clearance. The affidavit form must also be notarized. The other two clearances are still required and all three forms will need to be on file.

We understand that this new mandate is confusing and a time consuming process. We must stay in compliance with the law and we are trying to make this process as easy as we can for our families. We ask that you be as proactive as you can with this new mandate, and if you have any further questions you can contact either the elementary or high school office so we can provide the clarification.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation, and we value the support we receive from our volunteers. We hope that regardless of the new stipulations we can continue to work together to ensure our children receive the best education possible.

Sincerely,

Dr. Aaron Thomas
Superintendent