



## VOLUNTEER BACKGROUND CHECKS

### **Scope and Purpose:**

As an interfaith, community benefit agency, Project SHARE values recipient/volunteer engagement and appreciates our volunteers' partnership with Project SHARE as we work to serve the Greater Carlisle community.

Pennsylvania State Law requires background checks for adult individuals (18 years of age or older) having direct contact with children. This is defined as the care, supervision, guidance or control of children AND routine interaction with children. Project SHARE requires that all volunteers working directly with children complete background checks in accordance with Pennsylvania law.

Project SHARE routinely conducts public events/activities in which children are in attendance, under the supervision of their parents or guardians (examples: distribution week, farm stand distribution and special events). Project SHARE's standing policy is that children under the age of 14 must be accompanied and supervised by a parent or guardian at all times.

Project SHARE also routinely hosts school groups and other types of youth groups who participate in volunteer activities and tours of Project SHARE. In those cases, children in the group are directly supervised by their teacher or adult leader and will interact with Project SHARE staff.

Children under the age of 14 are encouraged to volunteer with their parents or guardians at Project SHARE. Children ages 14-18 may volunteer independently at Project SHARE and are supervised by Project SHARE staff or designated volunteers.

Project SHARE staff members are required to obtain PA Background Clearances.

Designated volunteers are those volunteers who have obtained background clearances and have been approved by Project SHARE's Volunteer Coordinator to work directly with children, including:

- Nutrition Education: Instructors for "Kids in the Kitchen" and other cooking/nutrition education activities geared to children 18 years or younger.
- Volunteers who routinely work with school groups, youth groups and individual children on in the warehouse, farm stand, gleaning, gardening, sorting/bagging, etc.

**General Information Regarding Pennsylvania Background Clearances:**

- This law goes into effect July 1, 2015. New volunteers are required to have background checks as of August 25, 2015. Existing volunteers are required to have clearances and background checks as of July 1, 2016.
- Three background checks are required: Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History, PA Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History Clearance and the FBI Fingerprint History. These certifications must be renewed every five years.
- Note- if a volunteer has been a PA resident continuously for the past ten years, A FBI Fingerprint History is not required. Instead the Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers can be completed.
- Volunteers who routinely work with children may have already completed the background checks. Copies can be provided to Project SHARE.
- The total cost for all three background checks is \$45.75. Effective July 25, 2015, the cost will be waived on two of the background checks, reducing the total cost to \$25.75. For those volunteers for whom the cost is a financial hardship AND who routinely volunteer more than 40 hours per month, Project SHARE will provide assistance.
- Project SHARE can assist volunteers in completing the necessary paperwork. Please contact Meagan Smith, Volunteer Coordinator to make those arrangements.
- For volunteers who prefer to complete the background checks on their own, basic instructions follow.

**PSP (Pennsylvania State Police) Criminal History:**

1. The record can be completed online: website: <https://epatch.state.pa.us>  
OR
2. By mail, using the attached Pennsylvania State Police REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK (Attachment A) and mailing to the referenced address, along with certified check or money order.
3. Cost: Effective July 25, 2015, the cost is waived for volunteers.

**Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (PA Department of Public Welfare):**

1. The record can be completed online: website: [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis)  
This is a multi-step process, so set aside ample time.  
OR
2. By mail, using the attached PENNSYLVANIA CHILD ABUSE HISTORY CLEARANCE (Attachment B) complete Section 1 only. Sections 2 and 3 (back of page) will be completed by Childline and Abuse Registry.
3. Complete instructions for the form can be found on Attachment B-1.
4. Note- if mailing in the form, first obtain the PSP Criminal History and attach a *processed copy* of the PSP to this form.
5. Cost: Effective July 25, 2015, the cost is waived for volunteers.

**FBI Fingerprint History (3M Cogent Fingerprinting Services)**

1. This is a two-step process- the first step is to register with 3M Cogent. This can only be done online: website: [www.pa.cogentid.com/index\\_dpwNew.htm](http://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_dpwNew.htm)
2. Q & A information is included in Attachment C
3. When the registration has been completed, an email will be sent providing the information required to go to a UPS Store for fingerprinting.
4. The UPS Store forwards fingerprinting information electronically to the FBI for verification. The completed Fingerprint History is mailed to the volunteer's address as registered.
5. Cost: \$25.75
6. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If a volunteer has resided in Pennsylvania continuously for the past 10 years, an FBI Fingerprint History is not required. Instead the Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers (Attachment D) can be completed.

#### **Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers**

1. Read the complete form and sign/date the back of the form.
2. A witness name/signature is also required.

#### **Background Clearance Forms File Retention and Management Practices:**

1. In all cases, requests for volunteers to complete background clearances shall be made in a sensitive and respectful manner. Volunteers have the right to decline to complete background checks.
2. All volunteer background clearance forms shall be maintained in locked file cabinets (in individual folders by volunteer name) to ensure confidentiality.
3. Each volunteer who is a *Designated Volunteer* (a volunteer who has obtained background clearances and has been approved to work directly with children) will be entered into the Giftworks database Group "*PA Clearances Completed & Approved*". At the first of each month, a Group report shall be exported and posted to SHAREPOINT, in Shared Documents; thus providing access to all Project SHARE staff members and lead volunteers.
4. In support of Project SHARE's commitment to ensure a safe environment for all guests, recipients and volunteers and due to Project SHARE's legal responsibility to practice due diligence, it may be necessary to request background checks for volunteers who do not plan to have direct contact with children at SHARE. This request shall be processed through the Volunteer Coordinator. The decision to make such a request must be made on the basis of reasonableness and "abundance of caution", in instances in which the Volunteer Coordinator has information justifying the reason for the request.
5. In instances when a Background check reveals criminal or child abuse investigation activity, the background checks shall be reviewed by a committee consisting of the Volunteer Coordinator, the Operations Manager and the Executive Director and a consensus decision regarding the volunteer's roles/activity will be reached. In cases where a consensus decision is not made, the review shall be forwarded to the HR Committee for final decision. On a monthly basis, the Operations Manager will provide

the HR Committee with a status report of all volunteer background check activity (summary format).

6. The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible to review and update the Designated Volunteers Master List on a monthly basis and to coordinate updated Background Clearances as required.
7. All Project SHARE staff members are required to review the Designated Volunteers Master List and verify that a volunteer is a *Designated Volunteer* prior to assigning them any task involving the unsupervised or minimally supervised direct contact with children.
8. Similarly, all Project SHARE staff members are required to maintain reasonable supervision of volunteers and children during the performance of their duties and responsibilities.
9. When in doubt regarding a volunteer's status as a Designated Volunteer, Project SHARE staff members shall seek the guidance of the Volunteer Coordinator or Operations Manager.

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