

BCI checks for school volunteers

School volunteers are now subject to mandatory background checks

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COVENTRY- The School Committee has passed a new policy that will require all school volunteers district wide to submit to a Bureau of Criminal Investigations (BCI) check.

In June, School Committee members had approved a new volunteer policy and handbook altogether which stated that BCI checks were only done at the judgment of the principle or if a volunteer was chaperoning a field trip.

According to the new policy, the principle of the school still has the responsibility to "oversee and administer

the use of the volunteers" within the school.

However, School Committee Chair, Katherine Patenaude, said that a new decision was made at the Oct. 25 meeting to make these BCI checks now mandatory to every volunteer.

She explained that the committee is now requiring parents that are volunteers to get a background check three times within their child's academic career—kindergarten thru high school.

The first time the BCI check will be executed will be when a volunteer's child enters the school system in elementary school.

Once the child enters grade six however, the parent will have to submit a

background check again before being allowed to volunteer.

And finally, once the student enters high school, the last back ground check is required.

Patenaude explained that if the child is entering as a new student half way through elementary, middle, or even high school, then the parent or parents can then receive the BCI check at that time.

In the past, it was up for debate about passing the BCI check policy and requiring the volunteer to travel to Providence and pay the five dollar check fee.

In a recent article, Superintendent Michael Convery that that many of the

volunteers are parent's of the children attending the schools but that anybody is welcome to volunteer.

Because of this, Patenaude said that the last thing they would want to do was discourage people from volunteering by making them travel and pay that fee.

So the committee decided to make the BCI checks as simple as possible. Patenaude said that volunteers do not have to pay the five dollar fee.

She also explained that applications for BCI checks will be available at the schools so volunteers do not have to travel to Providence.

She explained that the schools will handle the paperwork and the payment

and submit it to the Attorney General's office.

"I feel that's not fair to parents to have to travel to providence and pay five dollars for a background check," she explained. "We're lucky they are volunteering. It's our responsibility to make it as easy as possible on them."

Patenaude said that rules for next year are in the works where paper work will be available at every open house for the parents to submit BCI checks before volunteering.

Some of the information provided was taken from a previous Time article.