



Dear Scouters,

As you may or may not be aware, PA Act 153 of 2014 went into effect January 1, 2015. This law will have a direct impact on paid employees working with children and unpaid adult volunteers in Pennsylvania, including those involved in Scouting. This law requires that every person responsible for the welfare of youth obtain and keep on file, comprehensive and regularly updated criminal and child abuse background checks. This new PA law is applicable to any person “responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children.” The Child Protective Services Law defines “direct contact with children” as “the care, supervision, guidance, or control of children or routine interaction with children.” This includes parent “helpers”.

While many community-based programs like Scouting, schools, youth sports programs, and religious organizations have long required background checks for volunteers, Pennsylvania law now provides very specific directives on the timing and type of checks required. The background checks performed by the Boy Scouts of America, because they are done through a third party service, do not meet the requirements as outlined in this new law.

Background checks and clearances will have to be obtained according to the following schedule:

1. Beginning July 1, 2015, any new volunteer in Pa. must submit clearances with their new adult application.
2. By Unit recharter time (February 2016 – December 2015 if you are a Western Gate district volunteer) currently registered volunteers previously not required to obtain clearances must submit clearances.

Pennsylvania Act 15 (formerly Act 153) Update

WHAT HAS CHANGED FOR UNIT VOLUNTEERS:

- August 25, 2015 is now the compliance deadline for new volunteers (not previously registered prior to July 1, 2015) to secure their clearances and FBI criminal history (if required).
- **There is no cost for volunteer clearances (PSP Criminal History and DHS Child Abuse) after July 25, 2015.**
- The FBI criminal history clearance (for volunteers who have not been residents of Pennsylvania for the past ten years or residents of other states) is required only once upon establishing residency and when first applying for volunteer service.
- The cost of the FBI criminal history clearance through DHS has been reduced to \$25.75 after July 25, 2015.
- Volunteer clearances (PSP Criminal History and DHS Child Abuse) are valid for 60 months.
- Volunteer clearances may be applied for, at no cost to the volunteer, every 57 months.
- Volunteer clearances, provided they have not expired, are transferable to other volunteer positions or agencies.
- Volunteers from states outside of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – individuals who reside in another state or country may serve as a volunteer for no more than 30 days in a calendar year as long as they provide clearances from their state or country of residence. If the individual will be volunteering for more than 30 days, they must obtain clearances as required of a Pennsylvania resident.
- **Volunteers who reside in Pennsylvania do not have a provisional period, and must provide clearances when submitting their BSA Adult Application.**

A great link to keep on hand is <http://keepkidssafe.pa.gov/> this website has lots of information on the law and the clearances.

50 Hough Hill Road, P.O. Box 261, Falconer, NY 14733

716.665.2697 Fax 716.665.5212 Email: servicecenter@alleghenyhighlands.org Web: www.alleghenyhighlands.org