

Texas Extension
Youth Protection Standards - Qualifications of Volunteers
2005-2006 Rules and Guidelines

I. Who is screened through YPS:

A. All Direct Volunteers who work with youth should be qualified through the Youth Protection Standards Program.

B. Who is a direct volunteer?

A direct volunteer is any enrolled volunteer who meets the following criteria:

- Provides unpaid support for Texas Extension through face to face contact;
- Provides a learning experience for adults or youth;
- Has an individual application on file with the appropriate program areas;
- Has a position description on file.

Examples of direct volunteers: 4-H Club Manager, 4-H Project or Activity Leader, Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, etc....

C. Are Master Volunteers screened?

Master Volunteer candidates, interns and certified individuals will be expected to be screened and qualified through the YPS program due to their expectation of outreach education in fulfillment of certification requirements.

D. Are Overnight or Driving Chaperones Screened?

Yes. Individuals who are driving youth or chaperoning youth for overnight events will be qualified through the Youth Protection Standards program.

II. Screening

A. What kind of criminal background check is conducted:

A national criminal background check is conducted through the Volunteer Center of North Texas. This is a non-profit group identified through legislation that all state agencies with volunteers will use to conduct background searches.

The criminal background check is a national search of 48 jurisdictions and state and national sex offender lists.

B. What information is required:

Name, Address, Date of Birth, Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Social Security Number (or first five digits). These are all determining factors that help confirm identity when a search is done. The Social Security number is the only consistent identification number from state to state. In addition, race and ethnicity are required for state and federal reporting purposes (separate from YPS).

C. How much does the screening cost?

The cost is \$10.00 per volunteer. One check per county submission will be accepted. The county or association/chapter is responsible for how this cost will be handled.

D. When is screening conducted:

Initial screening of a volunteer is conducted when they apply for a volunteer role within Texas Extension. Re-screening through the YPS program is conducted every three years. Each current volunteer should be re-screened every three years from their latest screening. No grand fathering of volunteers is allowed in the YPS program.

E. Acceptance of other prior screenings:

Volunteers may document a prior criminal background check from another entity on their application. Texas Extension will only accept those screenings done by entities on the approved list (Attachment A). If a volunteer's screening entity is not an approved source, they must be screened through the YPS process.

It is our preference that the other screening entity screen at least every three years, because this is a best management practice.

F. Submission of volunteer applications:

Applications for YPS screening are sent through the county Extension office and then forwarded to the Office of Volunteer Development with a transmittal form. Counties or program areas are asked to send submissions at least once a month. Do not hold signed forms for extended amounts of time.

A volunteer may not fulfill their position duties until they have been screened and cleared through the YPS process or qualified through screening from another approved entity.

G. Processing volunteer applications:

Volunteer applications and information are reviewed and process by two employees who oversee the program and complete the data entry. These individuals have been screened for security sensitive proposes and to handle confidential information.

County Extension faculty are not informed of the details of the criminal record history. Information obtained through the volunteer application and screening is held in the highest confidence. All forms are kept under lock and key.

H. Review of Screening Results:

Criminal records are reviewed for "red flags". Red flags are a charge or conviction on a criminal history record. All official criminal record reports are shredded and not kept on file.

I. Determining the Status of Volunteers:

The volunteers status is based on the charge or conviction, frequency of offense and how long ago the offense occurred. Volunteer applicants are identified with one of the following status categories:

-Cleared = approved to fulfill all duties of the volunteer role they are applying for. *-Restricted* = restrictions may be imposed based on the charges or conviction records.

Example: A DWI conviction in the last ten years would result in a restriction of not driving youth other than their own.

Example: A conviction of numerous hot checks would result in a restriction of not handling or managing group funds.

-Pending = This determination is based on an incomplete criminal history report, no disposition to the case or a question related to the charge. Additional information may be requested from the volunteer. Any follow up information is sent to the Office of Volunteer Development. Details regarding records are not shared with county or other program faculty.

Dismissed: A volunteer is dismissed based on certain convictions of the Texas Penal Code. Automatic dismissals are indecency with a child, injury to a child, sexual assault, murder or felony drug convictions.

Example: A conviction of embezzlement or mishandling of Extension group funds would result in a dismissal.

Example: A registered sex offender would result in a dismissal.

III. Follow up to Screening

A. Letters regarding status:

When a volunteer is cleared through YPS a letter is sent from the county Extension office. Any pending, dismissed or restricted letters are sent from the Office of Volunteer Development.

B. Re-screening or status review:

The following conditions may warrant review of a volunteers status or rescreening:

- Questionable situation
- A written complaint against a volunteer
- Our knowledge of a volunteer being charged or arrested
- Our knowledge of a volunteer making improper advancement towards a youth

C. Grievance Procedure

The following is the procedure if a volunteer chooses to dispute a decision made during the application process or at anytime during the volunteer's appointment with Extension programs.

1. Volunteer challenges a decision made (verbally).
2. Volunteer submits concern in writing to the Extension Volunteer Specialist, with a copy to the District Extension Administrator and county Extension agent.
3. The appeal is reviewed and the volunteer receives a written statement regarding the decision within a reasonable amount of time.

The above rules and guidelines pertains only to decision(s) made by Texas Extension personnel. If you have a concern about the information obtained from your background check please refer to the following information.

If an applicant disputes information that is on the criminal history record transcript, he/she must follow the procedure to review personal criminal history record, which includes getting fingerprints and sending the prints along to DPS with the appropriate form. If it is determined that the record is indeed the applicant's own record and the applicant feels that there is a mistake in the criminal record, a letter should be written specifying the area of concern. An investigation will be conducted to determine whether or not an error has been made. Any costs associated with this process will be the responsibility of the volunteer.

This letter should be addressed to: Texas Department of Public Safety
Error Resolution Department
P.O. Box 15999
Austin, Texas 78761-5999
512/424-2151

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Texas Cooperative Extension
Youth Protection Standards
Approved Prior Screening Entities

School Districts

Churches

Youth Groups/Associations (Little League, Sports Associations, etc...)

Youth Agencies/Organizations (Big Brother/Big Sisters, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts,
After School/Extended Care Programs etc...)

Law Enforcement (County, State or Federal/ Prison System)

Texas Youth Commission

Department of Defense - Child and Youth Services

Department of Defense - Family Programs

** The minimum requirement is a criminal background check conducted through
DPS or a National Criminal Search entity**

***Other sources may be considered based on documentation provided with
screening criteria and specifics***