



PARKS & RECREATION

Volunteer Background

Check Policy

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Section 1: Purpose of Screening

While parks & recreation departments across the country depend on volunteerism, failing to take any steps to screen volunteers places organizations, the volunteers, and most importantly, the participants at greater risk. While no screening process offers absolute assurances, we hope by implementing recommended guidelines for Background Screening from the National Recreation and Park Association to strengthen public confidence and lessen the risk of exposure to liability due to the lack of knowledge regarding a volunteer's background. More specifically, an effective screening process will assist Brunswick County to:

1. Promote public confidence in programs offered by the agency.
2. Make the safety of all participants, particularly the most vulnerable groups (children, elderly, mentally challenged, etc.) a top priority
3. Keep people who have a history of inappropriate behavior or who are deemed "socially unfit" from working within our organization.
4. Select quality individuals/volunteers to work within our programs.

What is a Background Check? (CRIMINAL HISTORY)

A criminal background check is a manual or data base search of federal, state and / or local government files to determine if the individual applying to volunteer has had a past criminal conviction. A criminal background check must be sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that all convictions are revealed. It is our intent to search all states volunteers have resided within over the past 10 years to be classified in confidence as a comprehensive search.

Defining a "Criminal History"

"Criminal history" means a county, state, or federal criminal history of conviction of a crime, whether a misdemeanor or a felony, that indicates the volunteer poses a threat to the physical safety of participants or personnel, or has demonstrated that he / she does not have the integrity or honesty to fulfill his or her duties as a volunteer.

Why are they Important?

Parents enroll their children in a program fully expecting that they will be safe from harm. Conducting a criminal background check is one of several actions that organization administrators must take to protect their participants from potential harm. Others include training and certifying volunteers, setting guidelines on parent behavior and direct supervision of the program being conducted. To be effective, a criminal background check must be conducted before the volunteer is permitted to associate with children and must be done annually on all volunteers regardless of their position or the number of years they have been involved in our organization.

Anyone wishing to participate as a volunteer with Brunswick County Parks and Recreation sponsored youth programs will be required to fill out an application and sign a consent/release form to have his or her "Criminal History" investigated.

Section 2: The Screening Process

Since park and recreation departments are responsible for maintaining safe environments within their programs, they must be aware of the potential risks and safeguards to protect participants and the community in which a program operates.

It is recommended that volunteers be considered with the same scrutiny as paid staff and be recruited, screened, trained, supervised and evaluated with the same rigor as paid staff. The law does not differentiate between paid vs. volunteer staff.

Therefore, regardless of the volunteer's responsibilities, NRPA recommends that volunteers be screened as though they were applying for a paid position. The time, energy, and financial investment of prevention strategies such as conducting a proper background screening, represents a fraction of the impact incidents such as sex abuse, violence, neglect or other crimes and abuses can have on participants, organization and community.

Recommended Screening Guidelines

Social Security Validation

Reveals the state and year the Social Security Number was issued. Verifies the applicants name with their given social security number. This helps to eliminate the possibility of false names and / or information.

Address History Trace

The address history trace determines the appropriate jurisdictions in which to perform a comprehensive search. Verifies the current address and identifies any previous address of every volunteer.

Criminal Records Search

County criminal records are hand searched at the county level. The standard county level search includes the most recent 10 year history. State criminal records are searched through State level repositories. Some state searches include up to a 25 year history.

Sex Offender Registry

Search of 50 State and/or County repositories for known sex offenders.

Section 3: Who will be screened?

Not every volunteer will be screened through this policy. Only volunteers that meet any of the following criteria will be screened:

1. Volunteers that will be working independently from staff supervision within a program.
2. All volunteers that work with programs involving youth or special population participants.
3. Any volunteer that will be approved to operate County owned vehicles or equipment as part of their service.
4. Any volunteer that will be handling the collection of monetary funds on behalf of the County.

Below is a general listing of programs offered by the County where background checks for volunteers will be required:

County Sponsored Programs

1. Brunswick County Youth Football
2. Brunswick County Dixie Boys Baseball
3. Brunswick County Dixie Belles Softball
4. Brunswick County Dixie Debs Softball
5. Brunswick County Youth Basketball
6. Youth Tennis Programs
7. Any future Planned Youth Sports Programs
8. Special Olympics & Special Needs Programs
9. Summer Day Camps
10. Any Future Planned Youth Programs

It is relevant to note that Parks & Recreation does not handle background checks for private non-profit youth sports groups (example, Little League Baseball Organizations) that operate programs in our parks. However, all private non-profit user groups must sign a use contract with the Athletics Division of Brunswick County Parks & Recreation and a required item of that agreement does require each organization to have an active Volunteer Background Check policy. It is recommended, but not required, that their policies be consistent with the requirements of Brunswick County's policy.

Section 4: Responsibility of Conducting Background Screenings

The Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department will administer the background screening process. Any potential volunteer meeting the criteria in Section III of this document will be required to sign and date consent / release form to authorize a background investigation. Failure to consent will disqualify any volunteer from working as a volunteer within our organization. All individuals must provide truthful, correct and complete information on the release. Failure to do so will result in disqualification as a volunteer within our programs.

Volunteers will present completed consent forms for background checks to the Parks and Recreation Athletic Coordinator, who is the sole agency contact appointed to handle coordination of background checks with the contracted 3rd party agency used to conduct the actual review.

Consent forms will be required to be submitted and background checks completed before any volunteer can work with children. Volunteers should give themselves at least four weeks to have background checks completed. It is imperative that no volunteer begin work with any children until the check has been completed. Doing so will result in suspension from all Brunswick County programs for a period of one (1) year.

Once an individual has been found eligible to participate in an activity, the individual's name shall be placed on a list of individuals eligible for activities with the Parks and Recreation Department. Each year all volunteers will be required to follow the same procedure to be eligible to serve as a volunteer. Eligibility will last for one year from the time period the background check was completed. The volunteer is responsible for alerting the Parks & Recreation Department of any new charge, pending charge or conviction that occurs during the 1 year period of eligibility since the last background check was completed.

The Brunswick County Parks & Recreation will incur the fee to have a background checks administered for each applicant volunteering with the department.

Section 5: Confidentiality

To maximize the chances of obtaining honest and accurate information from a volunteer during the screening process, the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation will have a third party contracted company research an applying volunteer's background for county programs. Brunswick County Parks and Recreation respects the privacy of all program volunteers and would like to inform applicants that information received during a volunteer's screening process will not be disclosed outside of the organization and will be shared within the organization only on "a need to know" basis. The Brunswick County Parks and Recreation acknowledges that the organization might, in special circumstances, have a duty to disclose to third parties, including government agencies, certain types of information when the law requires that the information be disclosed. Once again, every measure will be taken to ensure the privacy of volunteer applicants.

1. Applicant will be given a consent form and confidentiality policy.
2. Applicant consent forms will be collected by the Athletic Coordinator.
3. Information will be sent to a third party investigation company.
5. Report will be returned to the Athletic Coordinator.
6. Volunteer applicant will be notified by Athletic Coordinator of eligibility or ineligibility.
7. All forms and information will be stored in a locked file with the Athletic Coordinator.

Section 6: Responsibilities of the Parks & Recreation Department

1. Distribute, collect, and record all screening forms before any volunteer work with the department is done and notify volunteers of photo sessions for picture ID badges.
2. Responsible for removing any volunteer from all duties who does not meet the background screening guidelines.
3. Distributing volunteer credentials to each approved volunteer.
4. Responsible for removing any volunteer who is not approved to be in the designated practice or playing area.
5. Monitor and evaluate program and make necessary adjustments when needed.
6. Enforce all policies as outlined in the Background Screening Manual.

Section 7: List of Criteria for Exclusion

This section outlines many criminal offenses and the time period associated from which a guilty charge was rendered. "Guilty" means that a person was found guilty following a trial, entered a guilty plea, or entered a no contest plea accompanied by a court finding of guilty, regardless of whether there was an adjudication of guilt (conviction) or a withholding of guilt. This does not apply if criminal charges resulted in acquittal, Nolle Prose or dismissal.

Felony Convictions

Candidates that have been found "guilty" of the following felony offenses shall be FOREVER banned from serving in a volunteer capacity with Brunswick County Parks & Recreation:

- Sex Offenses involving adults or youth (this includes but is not limited to child molestation, rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sodomy, prostitution, solicitation, indecent exposure, pornography)
- Assault/Battery
- Child Endangerment
- Kidnapping
- Manslaughter
- Murder
- Robbery/Burglary

Candidates that have been found "guilty" of the following felony offenses over the past 10 YEARS from conviction date shall be banned for that period from serving in a volunteer capacity with Brunswick County Parks & Recreation:

- Drug Charges- Possession, Distribution, or Paraphernalia
- Habitually Driving While Impaired
- Hit & Run

Candidates that have been found “guilty” of the following felony offenses over the past 5 YEARS from conviction date shall be banned for that period from serving in a volunteer capacity with Brunswick County Parks & Recreation:

- Embezzlement
- Fraud
- Any other felony convictions not directly listed in a category above will be classified within the 5 year ban period.

Misdemeanor Convictions

Candidates that have been found “guilty” of the following misdemeanor offenses over the past 7 YEARS from conviction date shall be banned for that period from serving in a volunteer capacity with Brunswick County Parks & Recreation:

- Child Endangerment
- Delinquency or Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor
- Pornography

Candidates that have been found “guilty” of the following misdemeanor offenses over the past YEAR (1) from conviction date shall be banned for that period from serving in a volunteer capacity with Brunswick County Parks & Recreation:

- Providing Alcohol to a Minor
- Assault/Battery
- Domestic Violence
- Drug Charges- Possession, Distribution, or Paraphernalia
- Drunk & Disorderly
- Embezzlement
- Fraud
- Hit & Run
- Robbery/Burglary
- Driving While Impaired
- Public Intoxication
- Any other misdemeanor convictions not directly listed in a category above will be classified within the 1 year ban period.

Repeat Offense Clause

This policy outlines timelines for a single criminal conviction of a crime whether it is a felony or misdemeanor. However, multiple charges of the same offense within a 10 year period cannot be tolerated. Therefore, if a candidate is convicted of the same offense (or repeat offense) within a 10 year period, they will be ineligible to serve as a volunteer for a 10 year period from the most recent conviction.

Pending Charges/Cases

Anyone who has been charged for any of the disqualifying offenses or has a case pending in court is not permitted to volunteer until the official adjudication of the case.

Section 8: Disputes for Ineligibility

Any volunteer who disputes the results of the background check and would like to challenge them can do so by following these procedures:

1. Call the contracted background investigation company. They will then inform the volunteer of the information gathered and discuss it with them.
2. The contacted background investigation company will provide an updated profile report to the Brunswick County Parks & Recreation at which time the decision is made to allow or disallow a volunteer to participate based on the findings and the criteria for exclusion.
3. Any appeal will be handled by the Director of Parks & Recreation to determine the final status of the volunteer within the organization.

Section 9: Photo Identification

A photo identification system provides assurance that a volunteer is qualified and authorized to provide public service.

1. The ID provides special designation for authorized and qualified volunteers and should instill pride among volunteers to wear a photo ID badge.
2. The ID is a key component of a comprehensive risk management practice that reflects a comprehensive public safety practice.
3. The ID builds trust among the public that parks and recreation is committed to quality management practices.
4. The ID provides public information regarding the leadership role of parks and recreation to make communities safe.

The photo identification practice serves the dual purpose of identifying volunteers as qualified and authorized personnel and builds public awareness for quality management practices.

Volunteer ID Badge Guidelines:

1. All qualified volunteers are required to wear a photo ID badge.
2. Photo ID badges are to be displayed at all times when on official assignment and are not to be worn or used for any other purpose than official assignment. (Practices, Games, etc.)
3. The photo ID badge must be clearly visible to the public and should be worn between the shoulders and waist with the photo clearly visible.
4. If an ID badge is lost or stolen, it is the responsibility of the volunteer to notify the Program Coordinator to obtain a replacement badge.
5. The photo ID badge will be issued to all volunteers after the successful completion of a comprehensive background check and will expire one year from that date of issuance.
6. The photo ID badge is the property of the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation and the volunteer must rescind the badge upon service completion or termination.
7. It is the duty of every qualified volunteer to report any volunteer failing to properly display their credential to the Program Coordinator.

Badges

Badges will contain the following information:

1. A current photograph of the volunteer.
2. Program name.
3. First and last name.
4. Expiration date.

Section 10: Conclusion

The Brunswick County Parks & Recreation Department would like to take this time to thank you for your dedication and commitment to the youth programs of Brunswick County. Because of citizens like you, youth are given the chance to participate in a recreational setting and the opportunity to learn and improve their skills in athletic competition.

The Brunswick County Parks & Recreation Department is committed to making this experience a rewarding one for all volunteers and participants. With the process of conducting Background Screening for volunteers, we feel comfortable in knowing that we made the effort to ensure safety precautions within the environment surrounding our participants.

Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Contact Information

Director:	Jim Pryor
Athletic Coordinator:	Brian Moore
Address:	P.O. Box 249 Bolivia, North Carolina 28422
Phone:	(910) 253-2670

Disclaimer:

The Volunteer Background Check is an official policy of Brunswick County that has been formally approved by the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners. The Director of Parks & Recreation reserves the right to recommend timely review and amendment of the policy at his/her discretion. Through the appeals process, the Director of Parks & Recreation maintains the right to rule on appeals granting acceptance, denial, or probationary status with or without restrictions as deemed fair or in the best interest of the program.

Consumer Reports Release

In connection with my application for: a) employment (including contract for services), or b) volunteer position, I understand that consumer or investigative consumer reports which may contain public record information, may be requested or made on me including consumer credit, criminal records, driving record, education, prior employer verification, workers compensation claims and others. These reports will include experience along with reasons for termination of past employment. Further I understand that you will be requesting information from various Federal, State and Local agencies regarding my past activities. I also understand that the information below regarding sex, race and date of birth is requested for the sole purpose of gathering the above information correctly, and will not be used to discriminate against me in violation of any law.

I hereby authorize without reservation, any party or agency contacted to furnish the above-mentioned information.

I understand I have the right to make a request of the Consumer Reporting Agency, upon proper identification and the payment of any authorized fees, the information in its files on me at the time of my request. I further authorize ongoing procurement of the above-mentioned reports at any time during my employment (or contract).

FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES: PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY

(Name)

First: _____ Middle: _____ Last: _____

Other Names: Maiden, Aliases, etc. _____

Date of Birth: Month: _____ Day: _____ Year: 19 _____

Race: _____ Gender: M / F Social Security #: _____ - _____ - _____
(MANDATORY FOR BACKGROUND CHECK)

Drivers License #: _____ State: _____

LIST ALL ADDRESSES FOR THE PAST SEVEN (7) YEARS STARTING WITH THE MOST CURRENT:

- | | Street | City | State | Zip | Dates (MM/YEAR) | |
|----|--------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------|--|
| 1. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | From: _____ To: _____ | |
| 2. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | From: _____ To: _____ | |
| 3. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | From: _____ To: _____ | |
| 4. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | From: _____ To: _____ | |
| 5. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | From: _____ To: _____ | |

Signature _____ **Date:** _____