

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) regarding GKG (Local) Appeals Process for Ineligible Volunteers

1. Do all HISD volunteers have to be registered in VIPS (Volunteers in Public Schools)?

Yes. Any person interested in volunteering in HISD schools must register as a volunteer in VIPS. Prospective volunteers can register using the VIPS online registration at www.houstonisd.org/vipslogin.

2. Who is considered a school volunteer?

“A volunteer is any person regularly providing services for or on behalf of Houston Independent School District (HISD). The term volunteer includes a person volunteering for a single field trip or event on the premises of district property or at a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property who is not compensated beyond reimbursement of expenses”(p.2 HISD GKG1 REGULATION).

3. Do all HISD volunteers have to agree to have a background criminal history check?

Yes. In order to ensure the safety of all HISD students, all volunteers are required to have criminal background checks conducted prior to volunteering in HISD schools.

4. Who is eligible to volunteer?

Any volunteer who is “CLEARED” can volunteer in any HISD school for the current school year.

5. What is GKG (LOCAL)?

GKG (LOCAL) refers to the Community Relations School Volunteer Program Regulations in HISD.

6. When will the policy be in effect?

Immediately, as the HISD Cabinet approved the regulations for the new policy GKG (LOCAL) regarding the appeals process for ineligible volunteers on January 11, 2016.

7. Whom do the policy changes impact?

The revisions include the establishment of an appeals process for parent volunteers. This includes legal guardians and custodians, stepparents, and grandparents. Previously, volunteers with certain criminal offenses in their past were automatically deemed ineligible to serve as volunteers on school campuses and school trips without any consideration of the circumstances of the individual at the time of the offense or changes in the individual’s circumstances in the intervening time.

All HISD volunteers should be aware of the new policy changes, but the policy specifically addresses those volunteers who are currently considered ineligible due to felony convictions in their background history check. The policy can be accessed at www.houstonisd.org/vipsappeal.

8. Who can request an appeal?

Any parent, grandparent, or guardian who is a registered volunteer and whose criminal history background check reveals a violation of HISD policy may appeal the criminal history restrictions precluding their service as a volunteer through a process of review by the Human Resources Department.

9. Who is involved in the appeal process?

If a parent, grandparent, or guardian of a child who is enrolled in a school for which the person volunteers, or is applying to volunteer, wishes to appeal his or her eligibility, he or she may submit a request for an individual assessment and a waiver of this regulation to the VIPS program administrator at VIPS@houstonisd.org using the VIPS Appeals Process form, which can be accessed at www.houstonisd.org/vipsappeal.

10. What steps should the campus VIPS coordinator take once a volunteer has been deemed ineligible?

The campus VIPS coordinator should contact the volunteer and inform them of their ineligible status. The campus VIPS coordinator will not have specific information about why the volunteer is ineligible, but they should inform the parent that they have a right to appeal their ineligible status. Here is a step-by-step outline of the appeals process:

Step 1: The campus VIPS coordinator should inform the volunteer that they may submit a request for an appeal using the VIPS Appeals Process Form, which can be accessed at www.houstonisd.org/vipsappeal.

Step 2: The form needs to be completed and submitted to VIPS Program Administrator Monique Johnson-Garner in one of two ways:

- **By mail:** Houston Independent School District, Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center, 4400 W. 18th Street, Route 1, Houston, TX 77092-8501
- **By email:** VIPS@houstonisd.org

Step 3: The VIPS program administrator will present the request to the human resources representative on the assessment committee, who will schedule an interview with the ineligible volunteer.

11. When are the scheduled interviews held?

Scheduled interviews will be held on a weekly basis at the Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center (HISD administration building), Office of Human Resources, at 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, Texas 77092.

12. Who makes up the review committee?

The review committee will be composed of one representative from each of the following HISD departments: Human Resources, Legal Services, and HISD Police.

13. What happens after the interview takes place?

Once the interview is complete, the committee will submit a recommendation to the chief human resources officer, the Human Resources Department, or a designee. The chief human resources officer, the Human Resources Department, or the designee will consider the criminal history and review the committee's recommendation in deciding whether or not the individual is eligible to volunteer with HISD.

14. Who makes the final decision?

The final decision regarding volunteer appeals is made by the chief human resources officer, the Human Resources Department, or a designee.