

## **Before Reviewing the Frequently Asked Questions**

Here's some terminology that might help:

**Act 153, Act 15, PA mandated Background checks** – PA Act 153 of 2014 required, among other things, specific background checks for adults working with children. On July 1, 2015, PA Act 15 of 2015 became law and amends much of Act 153. We will refer to this combination of laws, referring to the background checks, as PA-mandated Background Checks. Many resources still refer to Act 153, while a few reference Act 15.

**Background checks, clearances, documents, and certifications** are used interchangeably in various papers and websites that address the PA-mandated background checks. Certifications have replaced clearances, documents, and background checks in the wording of the law and most websites.

**Unit** – is a Scouting term and refers to Cub Scout Packs, Scouts BSA Troops, Venturing Crews, Sea Scout Ships, STEM Scouts labs, and Explorer Posts.

**Chartered organization** – is a community organization that New Birth of Freedom Council partners with to deliver the Scouting programs – if you are not familiar with the concept, think “sponsor.”

These additional clearances add extra layers of protection to the Boy Scouts of America's comprehensive Youth Protection Program – and that's a good thing for our Scouts. It does take a little extra time and effort to understand and comply with the requirements – but it's the law! New Birth of Freedom Council is committed to helping our volunteers through every step of the process.

## **FAQ's**

### **Q: Who in my unit is required to have clearances?**

All registered volunteers, regardless of position, are required to obtain and submit all state-mandated clearances. New volunteers must complete their clearances to submit along with their BSA application before volunteer service begins.

Non-registered volunteers over the age of 18, which includes, for example, parents, relatives, and friends, who provide care, supervision, training or control of a youth member in lieu of parental control and/or have regular and repeated contact (routine interaction) with youth members that is integral to the volunteer activities are required to submit the clearances, as well.

**Q. What are some examples of non-registered volunteers who are required to have clearances and some who are not?**

Here are a few useful examples:

- Lion and Tiger Adult Partners are participants in the Scouting America program as a parent so they aren't considered to be volunteers and clearances are not required of them.
- Adults who stay occasionally at a meeting to help out, but it isn't a regular weekly occurrence are not required to provide clearances.
- An adult who is recruited by the unit to transport youth members to camp and/or events is required to obtain the state-mandated clearances.
- A parent helping youth members with fundraisers (such as the Popcorn Show n' Sells), where the parent could be responsible for a child other than their own, is required to provide clearances.
- Clearances are not required for community volunteers serving on Eagle Boards of Review

**Q. Are Merit Badge Counselors required to have the clearances?**

Yes, whether parents are present or not.

**Q. Do I have to re-do my clearances every year?**

No – the clearances are good for 60 months.

**Q. How long does it take for the clearance results to come in?**

Some of the clearances may come back within a few minutes but others may take as long as four weeks. This is why it's very important to start the process well in advance of when you'd like to begin volunteering.

**Q. If I already completed the three state-required clearances for work or another organization where I volunteer, do I have to do them again for Scouting?**

No, as long as they are current. You should retain the originals of all your clearances and provide copies to the LHC. The one exception is if you're providing the Volunteer Disclosure (FBI waiver), then it must be the council's version since it has language specific to the Laurel Highlands Council.

**Q. Does Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers (FBI Waiver) have to be notarized?**

No, but your signature must be witnessed by another adult and both pages of the form must be provided to the LHC.

**Q. Do I have to request a copy of the FBI Fingerprint-Based Clearance results?**

Yes, you must request a copy of the results, which will be called "unofficial results." The Council cannot accept just a copy of the fingerprint registration.

**Q. When I process my PA State Police Criminal History Clearance on-line, will a certificate showing the results be created automatically?**

No – you'll need to follow the prompts to create and print the certificate, which will have a watermark on it. (There will be a page with "Certification Form" in blue that you'll click on, which will then be followed by a question requiring you to click "OK" and then the certificate will open up for you to print.

**Q. Do I need to have all three of my clearances before I submit them to the Council?**

If you are a new leader, it is best if all of the documents are submitted together along with the Adult Leader Application. You can attach copies of your clearances to that form and submit the entire "package" at one time.

Our new clearances portal will identify each individual clearance needing to be renewed and send an email to that volunteer specifically about that individual clearance.

If you have other valid clearances, you wish to submit at that time (even if not yet due to expire) you can certainly upload those as well.

**Q. Do I need to use a specific web browser to access the PA clearances portal?**

No, any contemporary web browser should work without issues.

**Q. Whose responsibility is it to ensure background check clearances are obtained?**

At the unit level, is the responsibility of the unit committee chair and chartered organization representative to ensure that compliance is handled before the volunteer service begins. At the district level, it is the responsibility of the district chair and district executive. At the council level, it is the responsibility of the council president and the Scout executive. Moreover, a new volunteer will not be registered until the council has evidence of compliance.