

# CVUSD increasing oversight of volunteers

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By TO Acorn Staff | on September 06, 2018

September 6, 2018



TIGHTER SHIP—The office at Cypress Elementary School in Newbury Park. According to new guidelines recently adopted by Conejo Valley Unified, people volunteering at local schools will have to register and meet various requirements, including being assessed for TB. Requirements vary based on the level of involvement, for example, the amount of time spent with the children. RICHARD GILLARD/Acorn Newspapers

Helping hands at local campuses will have to undergo extra layers of scrutiny this fall.

The Conejo Valley Unified School District rolled out a new volunteer management program in August that outlines a uniform process for authorizing people not employed by the district to be present on CVUSD campuses.

Jeanne Valentine, assistant superintendent of human resources, announced the program at the Aug. 21 board meeting. She said she worked with district staff and school principals to craft a registration process that would keep students safe and campuses secure while allowing parental involvement.

“We love our volunteers being at a school site,” she said. “It really is a partnership between the school and the community.”

The program lays out clear requirements for volunteers depending on the scope and frequency of their contact with students as well as the degree to which they will be responsible for students' welfare.

Many schools already had a volunteer code of conduct, and Valentine said they used those policies to craft the district's requirements.

"These are the expectations if you're going to be working in a classroom with our children," she said.

There are four levels of volunteer involvement.

Level 1 volunteers spend less than 10 hours a month with students under the direct supervision of staff. They will be required to register as a volunteer, sign a code of conduct and confidentiality form, and provide a copy of government issued ID. They must have a tuberculosis risk assessment and have their names checked against the Megan's Law registry.

Valentine said 90 percent of volunteers fall into this category.

Parents who drive students and spend limited amounts of unsupervised time with students will be considered Level 2. In addition to the Level 1 requirements, they will have to sign an authorization for release of driver information from the DMV, a copy of their auto insurance policy and an acknowledgment that they received the district's instructions for transporting students.

Level 3 volunteers who spend more than 10 hours a month with students on campus under the supervision of staff will have to complete all the requirements for Level 1 in addition to submitting to a federal background check, which costs around \$55, Valentine said.

Level 4 volunteers spend more than five hours a week with children and may have occasional unsupervised contact with students, such as walk-on coaches and overnight chaperones. They will be required to complete the same process as Level 3 volunteers as well as undergoing child abuse mandated reporter training.

Visitors who are entering a campus for an event like a presentation or a jog-athon will not be required to complete the registration process.

The volunteer forms are available on the district website.

Superintendent Mark McLaughlin said the program codified the process across the district.

There is an expense to getting a TB risk assessment. Valentine said it costs around \$20.

Trustee Betsy Connolly said if the cost or logistics of getting a TB assessment were a burden to some parents, the district should consider financial support for the program or identify a provider that allows a flexible way for families to get it done.

“That could be a significant barrier to some families participating as volunteers,” Connolly said. “I don’t want to discourage the very families we would most like to invite into our schools.”

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