

## **Section 6: Volunteers**

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# Energy Express Volunteer Application Process

Volunteers are an important component of Energy Express. Without volunteers the program could not be successful in providing adequate one-on-one reading and writing time with each child. The addition of a broad array of community members and parents to the site increases the need for taking certain security precautions. Therefore, we should increase our "due diligence" by consistently using the following screening procedures to try to provide a safe learning environment.

**1) Privacy Policy for Energy Express Volunteers** needs to be received by volunteers the first time they volunteer at the site.

**2) Energy Express Volunteer Contract** needs to be completed by adult volunteers the first time they come to a site. For youth, in addition to their signature, a parent/guardian should sign the contract for volunteers under the age of 18. Therefore the contracts are to be sent home with young volunteers with the expectation that they be returned the next time they come to the site to volunteer. \*It is not necessary for celebrity readers to complete a volunteer contract.

With the enactment of the Sexual Predator Law, information about offenders is now available to the public. Energy Express sites shall therefore regularly check the Sexual Offender Web Site. This practice will allow us to know in advance if a person recruited to be a volunteer has committed a crime of this nature.

**3) Check the Sexual Offender web site**\* *weekly* to learn the names of convicted offenders residing in your county. Keep this list of names updated and placed in your volunteer file or notebook for frequent reference. If a volunteer is coming from outside the county, check the appropriate county or state list in advance of the volunteer's first time at the site.

**\*State web site address:** [www.wvstatepolice.com/sexoff](http://www.wvstatepolice.com/sexoff)

By leaving the name blank, selecting ALL, and clicking on SEARCH, a list of all the counties in the database will appear. A couple of counties may still not be in the database. To obtain a list of offenders in one of these counties, contact the local sheriff's department.

**\*Out of state** - In the rare case of having a volunteer from another state, the following web site will allow you to access any online database from the other 49 states: [www.klaaskids.org](http://www.klaaskids.org). Click Megan's Law, and at the bottom of the page there is a United States map. Click on the state you want to check and at the bottom of the state's page there is a link to each state's sexual offender website.

**WHAT TO DO IF a potential volunteer is on a list of sexual offenders:**

Get back to the volunteer and explain that our policy does not permit a person with a record of an offense of this nature to volunteer in the program. Alert local law enforcement that an individual with this record attempted to volunteer with children.

4) **Volunteer Information Sheet** - there are two, one for use with **adults** and one for parents to fill out for **youth** volunteers who are younger than 18 years of age.

- The **Adult** Volunteer Information Sheet (Form VOL-1) is to be completed the first time a volunteer comes to the site. The revised form has questions about criminal offenses, a signature line, and verification (signature of a team member or county contact) that a photo ID has been checked. To be fair, this must be done for each volunteer even someone who is known by a member of the site team or county collaborative\*.
- The **Youth** Volunteer Information Sheet (Form VOL-2) is to be sent home with a young volunteer with the expectation that it be returned the next time they come to the site to volunteer. Must be at least 12 years of age and entering seventh grade.

**WHAT TO DO IF a person responds "yes" to one of the criminal offense questions:**

This person should be informed that, according to Energy Express policy, he/she is not permitted to volunteer at the site.

5) All volunteer records and names of offenders found on website lists should be maintained in a secure location to ensure confidentiality. Discussion of contents should be strictly limited to appropriate site team members.

6) For everyone's protection, remember to **never leave a volunteer alone with a child or a group of children.**

7) At the end of the program, all volunteer sign-in sheets, youth and adult volunteer information sheets, sexual offender website lists, and volunteer contracts should be given to the West Virginia University Extension Service contact/liaison in your county. The forms will be kept for 3 years in a secure file location that should be locked.

8) The Privacy Policy for Volunteers, the Volunteer Information Sheets, and the Volunteer Contract can be found on the Energy Express website for duplication purposes.