

PA ACT 153

Governor Tom Wolf announced that fees for child abuse clearances and criminal background checks required by the Child Protective Services Law will be waived for volunteers working with children. Additionally, the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) will be reducing the cost of both the child abuse and criminal history record checks from \$10 to \$8 for all other applicants. These changes will take effect July 25, 2015.

In 2014, 23 pieces of legislation were enacted including Act 153 of 2014, changing how Pennsylvania responds to child abuse. These changes significantly impacted the reporting, investigation, assessment, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases.

"My action today could not have been accomplished without the hard work of the General Assembly, who has participated in an ongoing bipartisan working group with the Administration in an effort to develop needed clarifications to the Child Protective Services Law," said Gov. Wolf. "Through that process, the General Assembly expressed concerns of many members about the cost of background clearances, particularly for volunteers. I share those concerns, and that is why I am excited to announce these actions today."

Beginning July 1, 2015, volunteers are required to obtain background checks, including the Child Abuse History Clearance, issued by the DHS, and the Criminal History Record Check, issued by the PSP.

Persons seeking employment for work with children and others required under the law will still be assessed fees for the clearances, but at a reduced cost of \$8 each. FBI clearances are also required for all employees and for volunteers who have not been a continuous resident of the commonwealth for the last 10 years, but because these are administered by the federal government current costs will continue to apply.

"The work from DHS and PSP sets a strong example of interagency collaboration," Gov. Wolf continued. "Partnerships like these create the foundation for a government that works."

A comprehensive list of persons required to get clearances is as follows:

- Child care service employees;
- Foster parents and adult household members;
- Prospective adoptive parents and adult household members;
- Individuals 14 year of age or older applying for a paid position as an employee responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children;
- Any individual seeking or provide child-care services under contract with a child-care facility or program;
- School employees governed by public school code and those not governed by the public school code (colleges and universities).

From January 1, 2015 to April 30, 2015, there were 61,019 clearance applications received for volunteers. The projected total number of volunteer clearances for FY 2015-2016 is 296,836

For DHS, the total number of clearances received was 512,583 since the electronic system went live in late December 2014 through May 31, 2015. The PSP processed 828,579 Criminal History Record Checks from January through May of 2015.

More information about clearances required under the Child Protective Services Law can be found at www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov. Individuals seeking clearances can go directly to www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis to create an individual account and apply for their child abuse clearance electronically.