FAQs

Updated February 4, 2016

What is the reason for this change in policy?
The University of Minnesota recently updated its safety of minors policy in an effort to ensure a safe learning environment for all. The policy requires University volunteers who work with youth to have a background check every three years. Beginning in 2016, University of Minnesota will require all Arboretum volunteers to have a background check every three years.

Do volunteers currently get background checks?
Since 2011, all volunteers working with youth at the Learning Center have been required to undergo an initial background check. This policy has been expanded to include all volunteers and to be repeated every three years. Starting in January of 2015, all incoming volunteers have been through a background check.

Do I need a background check if I do not work directly with youth?
Yes. Volunteers work in a variety of settings and choose their areas of interest without oversight from the Arboretum. To safeguard this tradition, we are requiring all volunteers, no matter what their current interests, partake in the background check process.

When will volunteers be required to have a current background check and how will it happen?
You will receive an email* from the Volunteer Center with instructions on ordering the background check and completing the University training. You do not need to take action until you receive an email.*If you do not have an email address, you will get a letter.

The updated background check policy will be implemented according to the following rollout plan:

Feb-March   Everyone with a last name starting with A through M
April-May    Everyone with a last name starting with M through Z
May-June    Volunteers with extenuating circumstances who were not able to comply within 60 days.

Do I need to complete the background check to be a volunteer?
Yes, all volunteers must have a recent background check (within the last three years) to continue in their volunteer role.

How do I go through the background check process?
Current volunteers who need a new or updated background check will be contacted by the Volunteer Center and provided with a link to order a background check. Once the order is complete, online background check instructions will be emailed* to the volunteer. *If you do not have an email address, you will get a letter.

New volunteers complete a background check as part of the application process.

What is covered in the background check?
The background check includes criminal background information. Learn what checks the screening process includes. It does NOT include a credit check. University of Minnesota background checks are conducted by the McDowell Agency and all information gathered in the background check process is considered private and confidential.

How do I know if I passed my background check?
Background checks are usually processed within two weeks. You can assume you passed the background check if you do not hear from us. Please note that using the online form expedites the background screening process.

For new volunteers, getting your name tag in the mail is your notification of having passed the background check.

**May I submit a background check from another organization?**
No. Background checks from other organizations cannot be accepted. Only background checks submitted through the University of Minnesota can be verified.

**May I submit a background check from the University?**
Yes, if you have completed a background check through the University of Minnesota within the last three as a volunteer (e.g., Tree Care Advisor, 4-H or Master Gardener program) or an employee, you do not have to submit another background check. You can note the University background check on the form and the Volunteer Center will document your completed background check once it is confirmed.

[Additional Questions?]