



WILMINGTON News Journal ONLINE

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

New policy: criminal checks for coaches

GARY HUFFENBERGER

Staff Writer

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

The Wilmington Parks & Recreation Department in January will start criminal background checks for coaches and other volunteers who work with youth.

The individuals will be screened using a service provided by Recreational Sports Management (RSM) when they sign up to be involved in Parks & Recreation youth programs.

The RSM service has databases that enable it to conduct a "very extensive" criminal background check, said Scott Parrish, director of the Wilmington Parks & Recreation Department. The cost will be \$20 per person which will be paid by the department, not the coach or volunteer.

Drug testing will not be part of the screening process.

The prospective coach or parks volunteer will use the Internet to go to a secure RSM Web site and enter identifying information. RSM then will inform the Parks & Recreation Department about the applicant's criminal record, if any.

Next, the applicant's record will be cross-referenced with a locally compiled list of disqualifiers to see whether the person qualifies.

Any crime — whether a felony or a misdemeanor — in which a child was either a victim or an accomplice will disqualify a person.

Among other disqualifiers are convictions for any sort of abuse or assault/battery (physical or sexual), rape, any crime of a sexual nature including possession or dissemination of pornography, domestic violence, child neglect, felony drug crimes, animal cruelty and weapons violations.

When a person has been convicted once of a misdemeanor drug offense, that alone will not automatically disqualify the individual, said Parrish. The same holds for having one DUI. But two such convictions will disqualify an applicant.

A couple incidents of marijuana possession or of DUI, explained Parrish, means there's probably a problem, whereas one instance of those activities makes it less clear there's a chronic problem or a pattern of behavior.

Accordingly, the list of disqualifiers includes having twice been convicted (or a pending case) of either DUI or a misdemeanor violation of the Controlled Substance Act during the past four years; or four times convicted (or a pending case) of either DUI or a misdemeanor violation of the Controlled Substance Act during the past 10 years.

Current rules already prohibit coaches from being under the influence or drinking alcohol during youth games, practices or team activities, said Parrish.

"If we find out that occurred, they would get suspended for the rest of the year," Parrish said.

The Wilmington Parks & Recreation Department does not choose personnel and will not perform background checks on youth coaches for organized youth sports operated by other entities that might use city parks facilities. Those include Knothole, church teams, select teams, tournament organizations, YMCA and school teams.

The background check process also will not apply to parent volunteers who are asked by coaches to occasionally perform duties for a team.

In Parrish's 21 years as Parks & Recreation director, he said there was one time when a coach had a criminal record that would have, under the background check system, disqualified him.

It was about four or five years ago, Parrish said, and the discovery was the result of a mother who was concerned about a new coach. It was learned he had a criminal past from Mississippi, although the conviction did not involve children.

But before the games began, the man left the area, said Parrish.

For more information about the background policy, contact Parrish at 382-4781 or sparrish@ci.wilmington.oh.us.

Related Links

Content © 2007 News Journal
Software © 1998-2007 **1up! Software**, All Rights Reserved