

POLICIES OF GRANGE VOLUNTEER REGISTRY & INSURANCE
Adopted – 2002, Revised – 1/2006 & 6/2009

Awareness in the community of providing children with a safe environment is increasing. Parents are concerned about the welfare of their children, and want to be assured that the people working with their child are appropriate role models. Even though there is an increased awareness, there is little advice or information available for adults who are not deliberate abusers and who are in vulnerable positions like teachers and youth volunteers. Adult leaders in Granges working with juniors and youth need to be advised on how to protect themselves from placing themselves at risk in potentially problematic situations involving minors. (Patriots Trail GSA, pg 1)

Junior Grange leaders and members working with youth are in a very privileged and powerful position in their relationship with young people. The Grange needs to ensure that they respect this position and that at all times their behavior and attitude can never be accidentally construed as abusive. The Grange has a responsibility to protect all of its members, youth and adult. Guidelines for leaders are needed to insure that all adults that come in contact with minors during organized activities are familiar with the requirements for maximum child safety. (Patriots Trail, GSA, pg1)

It is our wish to assure the general public of the high moral character exhibited by the Grange, its Junior Grange leaders and members working with youth. We have the utmost confidence in our tireless volunteers who do an outstanding job providing programming and educational activities for our young people. However, to provide parents with a measurable standard of public safety, we have reviewed the policies in practice by other organizations. In an attempt to protect leaders and children, and provide parents with a measure of assurance, we have adopted the following Grange Volunteer Registry Policy for adults that come in contact with underage children.

Massachusetts law, as well as regulations issued by the Commonwealth Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), states that individuals convicted of certain crimes pose an unacceptable risk to children and are therefore ineligible to provide services or support for youth programs. Therefore, all those who have the potential for unsupervised contact with Junior Grangers or youth will be required to undergo a Criminal Offender Records Information (CORI) and a Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) check. This will provide the public with documented proof of what we already know, which is that our adults provide sound role models for our young people to follow, and pose no risk to our youth.

The standardized procedures for the review of criminal and sex offender records help ensure that adults have not committed a crime that places our Junior Grangers and youth at risk. The Criminal History Systems Board has authorized the Massachusetts State Grange to receive criminal record information regarding those individuals who need CORI and SORI clearance to work and/or provide voluntary services to Junior Grangers. (HCC, pg1)

All Junior Grange volunteers and members working with youth under age 18 who have the potential for unsupervised contact with minors must complete a CORI/SORI application. All State Grange Junior Committee members and directors and Youth Committee members and directors must complete a CORI/SORI application prior to being appointed to said position. All those required to complete a CORI/SORI application must receive clearance prior to participating in events where they will be supervising minors, and annually thereafter, as specified by state law. It should be noted that response time is generally two to four weeks.

A reviewer examines the confidential CORI and SORI records and makes a determination as to the candidate's eligibility based on the standards established by the state. The state reference entitled, "Criminal Background Check Technical Assistance Sheet" will be used to assist in evaluating criminal background reports received for potential volunteers and making determination as to the eligibility of adults working with youth and juniors.

A person who is the subject of CORI and SORI checks is entitled to review the information received by the Grange. The information obtained in these reports is mandated to be confidential. Under no circumstances can they be discussed or published. The certified receiver(s) for the Massachusetts State Grange is only allowed to verify the acceptance or denial of an individual's application to work with Grange youth. State law assures complete privacy. Forms authorizing the release of information can be obtained from the Junior Director(s), Youth Director(s), State Master or State Secretary and are available on the State Grange Website.

CORI/SORI checks performed by other organizations do not constitute meeting these eligibility requirements. The check must be performed on behalf of the Massachusetts State Grange.

The State Master (with the approval of the Executive Committee) will appoint a CORI/SORI Coordinator who will serve as the official CORI/SORI reviewer for the Massachusetts State Grange. It will be the responsibility of the CORI/SORI coordinator to follow up with the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) regarding all checks and to communicate the results of all checks to the State Master and State Secretary for proper record keeping. The State Secretary will have the responsibility to maintain a log of all CORI/SORI checks. This log will track the checks that need to be completed as well as the checks that have been completed. The State Secretary will also send certification forms to those individuals who need to recertify each year. The State Master will have a general oversight of the entire process. The State Master, the State Secretary and the CORI/SORI Coordinator will be certified to receive and review CORI/SORI information.

DEGREES OF CONTACT – Dealing with children other than their own

It is a Massachusetts State Grange supervisory requirement that two adults are present at any meeting and that one adult is present for every ten Junior Grangers or youth in attendance. A minimum of one of these adults must be CORI/SORI certified. Under no circumstances can an uncertified adult be left alone with any child(ren). Therefore, all leaders, volunteers or drivers that regularly attend Junior Grange or youth functions or meetings must obtain CORI/SORI certification.

Individuals who offer volunteer services on an irregular basis are not required to be certified, if they are not left alone with children, and are in the presence of another certified adult. Therefore, guest speakers, volunteer parents, other Grange members, etc, would not be required to obtain certification, as long as a certified adult is present at all times.

It is important to re-emphasize that there is to be no “one-to-one” contact between a child and an adult unless the adult has been CORI/SORI certified.

DRIVING JUNIORS AND YOUTH TO AND FROM APPROVED EVENTS

JUNIOR GRANGE

All Junior Grangers transported in personal vehicles must have a seat belt in place and a car seat or booster seat as required by State law.

No child age 12 or under may sit in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with a passenger side airbag.

All drivers must hold a current, valid Driver’s License. The vehicle being used must be properly registered and insured (\$100,000 personal/\$300,000 bodily injury/\$100,000 property damage). It is the responsibility of the Junior Grange Leader in each community to obtain a copy of the driver’s license and insurance policy, and retain this information on file.

Each driver must have complete instructions and directions to the destination, along with copies of the permission slips for the children they are transporting.

YOUTH

Traditionally, youth events do not include transportation. Instead, the youth activity is offered at a site, and participants find their own way to the event. In this case, the above guidelines would not be mandatory. If, however, transportation was included and underage youth were being transported from one site to another, the above guidelines would apply to all those youth who were minors.

ACTIVITY REQUEST FORMS FOR ALL DEPARTMENTS

In the event of an emergency, the State Grange may need vital information to assist authorities in case of accidents. It is also important for the State Grange's insurance carrier to know the full extent of activities offered to assure that our existing insurance policy adequately covers the event.

In order to make certain that activities offered to the general membership or to the public would be covered by our policy, each department must submit an Activity Request Form a minimum of four weeks prior to an event. This request form allows us to monitor events, provide adequate insurance coverage and protect our volunteers from liability.

A Certificate of Insurance should be obtained upon request through Blackmer Insurance Agency (the MA State Grange insurance carrier) for each event. This certificate provides simple proof that the event being offered is covered under our policy and offers the organizers of the event a degree of protection, as well as providing participants with coverage.

PROTECTION OF LEADERS, VOLUNTEERS AND CHILDREN

In order to be eligible for coverage under this State Grange insurance policy, all State Grange Committee people having direct contact with youth (Junior Grange Committee and Directors, Youth Committee and Directors, Junior Grange leaders) must meet the CORI/SORI requirements.

An approved Activity Request Form submitted four weeks prior to the event must be in place prior to the proposed activity. Failure to obtain the required approvals will result in no liability coverage for all members, and non-members involved, and will be considered an unauthorized activity.