

GRAND JURY



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SEP 25 2007

RECEIVED

September 18, 2007

Horicon Elementary School District

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R1: Each public school district in Sonoma County should have at least one employee who is trained and authorized to access DOJ website within an official and specified schedule. This employee should fully understand the way in which information is to be communicated. Further in the absence of this employee, a suitable alternate person or system should be in place to responsibly retrieve valuable information as it is posted. This system should also cover notices from the DOJ sent via U.S. Mail.

Horicon Elementary School District agrees with the finding and has one employee, the School Secretary, who is trained and authorized to access DOJ website; the Superintendent/Principal is the alternate person responsible.

R4: School districts should consider changing their policies to require successful employee applicants to pay for their own fingerprinting and background responses from DOJ and FBI. There is at least \$65,000 in 06-07 school district budgets for fingerprinting. As costs are shifted to paid employees, districts could use savings to fund costs for volunteers.

Horicon Elementary School District partially disagrees with the finding. It is already difficult to find highly qualified employees in certain categories; we do not wish to make the application process more costly or cumbersome to potential applicants than it is already. Additionally, employment costs are negotiable conditions of employment (Public Employees Relations Board—PERB).

Currently, the district funds the costs of required background checks, TB clearance, and pre-employment physicals as required for employees and TB Clearance and fingerprinting for volunteers that we do not have long time knowledge about .

R5: School districts should amend their policies, if needed, to allow for volunteers names to be public information and readily available so that a greater scrutiny is provided.

Horicon Elementary School District feels that this may be a Public Records Act issue. We do not provide address or telephone information to the general public.

R6: School should routinely check out names of adult volunteers on Megan's Law website (a public posting of sexual predators) even if fingerprinting is scheduled, and always do so if no fingerprinting is scheduled for that volunteer.

Horicon Elementary School District partially agrees with this finding. The School Secretary uses the website and we encourage our parents to check the Megan's Law website. Beginning this school year, we add a reminder and encouragement to check the Megan's Law website in the school newsletter.

R7: School districts should request criminal activity record from the Sonoma County Superior Courts Records Division on any adult wanting to volunteer with students. This service is available at no cost to a district.

Horicon Elementary School District partially disagrees with this finding.

This is a small, isolated, rural community school with long term employees and families. We have only 85 students. I taught some of our students' parents and know their grandparents and entire families. Volunteers are supervised by district employees so for most volunteers, this recommendation would be unnecessary. We agree with and have implemented the recommendation for volunteers that we do not know.

R8: School districts should, individual and collectively, request that the DOJ implement a system to confirm school district receipt of Notices of Subsequent Arrest. A system that would require the DOJ to follow up if no confirmation was received and would at least give school districts some assurance that information trusted to the U.S. Mail or electronic mail services is actually being received.

Horicon Elementary School District agrees with this finding and agrees to assist the County Superintendent, Dr. Wong, in writing such a letter to the DOJ on behalf of all districts. Currently, we do get notices of subsequent arrest. SCOE also provides us with subsequent arrest notices on substitute teachers that work in our district.

R9: School districts should request FBI responses on all classified employees and volunteers that they do a DOJ response regardless of the time they have lived in California. The relatively small fee of \$24 to get prior criminal activity from a national database seems justifiable, reasonable and the right action to take.

Horicon Elementary School District agrees to this finding and has already implemented the recommendation.

R10: School districts should require fingerprinting for all adults (paid and volunteer) involved in athletic programs, overnight field trips, off-campus field trips, and any school sponsored student activity that occurs outside of the normal school day or hours.

Horicon Elementary School District partially agrees with this finding and has already implemented it for volunteers that we do not know. All programs that are school sponsored have staff members in attendance. Tutoring program(s), dances, and overnight field trips are all well chaperoned. As an example of the caliber of our volunteers--our flag football coach is a past Board President of 15 years (now on the Board of the High School district), his wife currently works for the district, and he has been involved with the district since 1975. We did not ask for fingerprinting on this man.

R11: School districts should implement provisions of Ed. Code Section 33193 and 45125.2 requiring that certain independent contractors and employees of contractors undergo fingerprinting and background checks.

Horicon School District agrees with this finding and requires any contractors to confirm that their employees have undergone background checks and they are supervised by district employees while students are on campus.

R13: School districts should not allow new employees to begin work until all pre-employment requirements are met. Most specifically, this means all fingerprinting and criminal history responses that are required must have been completed and properly evaluated.

Horicon Elementary School District agrees with this finding and has been doing this for several years now.

R14: The Sheriff's Office should make available to all school districts information on how to access services available to them through the Sheriff's Office that would aid districts in determining if individuals should be approved to serve as volunteers in our schools and at school sponsored activities.

Horicon Elementary School District does not disagree with this finding but does not understand what services would be available. We have a close relationship with our local sheriff who serves an area of 65 miles of coastline. The Sheriff's Office is in Santa Rosa two hours travel away. The Sheriff can and does have information on people who would not be good to have at the school site. This information is usually given verbally. If there are other ways that the Sheriff's Office can help then we would welcome that help.

R15: School districts should require all volunteers to sign an agreement that outlines behavior do's and don'ts and consequences if agreement terms are broken.

Horicon does give its school volunteers copies of the school rules and discipline procedures. The Village tutoring center has its own rules and extensive year long training as it is under a school employee but held in a different location. Those who drive on field trips are given an inservice by the teacher in charge and provide drivers licenses, proof of insurance, TB clearance.