Checklist

Screening Volunteers for Your Organization

Regardless of how your organization recruits volunteers (word of mouth, via your company website or enrolment programs), it is imperative that you establish a stringent screening process. This effective risk management tool will lend a hand in preventing any unnecessary harm. Furthermore, screening volunteers will allow your organization to select the best person for the position.

The ultimate goal at the end of the screening process is to answer the following questions:

- ❖ Does the individual pose a risk of harm to the community members that the organization serves?
- ❖ Does the individual pose a risk of harm to staff members, supervisors and the Board of Directors at the organization?
- ❖ Does the position pose a risk to the individual applying?
- ❖ Does the individual understand the responsibilities involved in the position and the expectations of the organization?

Types of Risks

There are four types of risks that an individual can pose to the organization, the staff and the community. The screening process established by the organization should identify those risks and eliminate individuals who pose them.

- ❖ **Physical Harm**: Physical or sexual assault, child abuse, injuries inflicted from the misuse of vehicles and using poor judgment resulting in injury
- ❖ **Emotional Harm**: Sexual harassment, racial slurs, religious discrimination, gendered remarks, name calling and insults about disabilities
- ❖ **Theft or Damage to Property**: Stealing money from community members and staff, embezzling funds, vehicle crashes and reckless behaviour leading to the destruction of property
- ❖ **Violations of Privacy**: Discussing confidential information without permission

The use of drugs and/or alcohol may also cause volunteers to inflict harm. The screening process should also address substance abuse issues.

Screening Guidelines

The primary rule when developing screening guidelines is that they must be tailored to the position your organization is seeking to fill. Each position requires different skills, interaction with different types of people and different life experiences. Therefore, your organization must develop multiple guidelines for all the positions available.

Before beginning to screen individuals, establish a description for the position and assess the risks involved. Identify the core responsibilities, special skills needed and an idea of the ideal candidate. Then, select the appropriate tools to best assess the individual.

Regardless of the position, each individual should fill out an application, sit down for an interview with a supervisory staff member and have his or her references checked. The only exception to this involves volunteers who have a one-time exposure to a low-risk group of individuals in an extremely controlled situation. Positions in which the volunteer works closely with children or the elderly or handles funds should have more extensive background checks.

Note the chart below. The left side indicates the various duties completed by volunteers in an array of positions. The top row indicates the screening requirement necessary to ensure the safety of the client your organization is serving. The coloured X's indicate the necessity for the volunteer to be required to complete the screening requirements based on the duties required of the position.

POSITION SCREENING REQUIREMENT	APPLICATION	ORIENTATION INTERVIEW	IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW	REFERENCE CHECK	MOTOR VEHICLE RECORDS CHECK	CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECK	PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS	MEDICAL TESTS	HOME VISIT
Position Duty									
Unsupervised contact with a vulnerable client	X (red)	X (red)	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (green)	X (purple)	X (blue)
Access to confidential client information	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (green)	X (blue)	X (green)	X (purple)	X (purple)
Transportation of clients	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (purple)	X (green)	X (purple)
Handling organization's or client's funds	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (purple)	X (blue)	X (purple)	X (purple)	X (purple)
Extensive contact with client in a live-in situation	X (red)	X (red)	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (green)	X (green)	X (red)
Physical exertion in a remote setting with children	X (red)	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (purple)	X (red)	X (purple)
Visiting at client's home	X (red)	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (purple)	X (purple)	X (purple)	X (purple)
Supervised client contact in a group setting	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (purple)	X (green)	X (purple)	X (purple)	X (purple)
Helping clients change clothes, bathe or other personal activities	X (red)	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (green)	X (blue)	X (purple)	X (purple)	X (purple)
Coaching youth sports	X (red)	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (purple)	X (purple)	X (purple)
Delivering meals to a client's home	X (red)	X (red)	X (blue)	X (green)	X (blue)	X (blue)	X (purple)	X (purple)	X (purple)

Source: Corporation for National and Community Service

KEY: The need to conduct the screening tool
X: Extremely Necessary
X: Necessary
X: Neutral
X: Unnecessary

Screening Checklist

Instruct all staff members who hire volunteers to abide by the following background check guidelines:

- Conduct a criminal background checks on all individuals who will have contact with children, the elderly and/or vulnerable members of the community.
- Require multiple forms of identification and verify their authenticity.
- Utilize both local and national resources for background checks.
- Attain Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) records, sex offender registries and child abuse case logs for all individuals who are driving or have contact with children.

The best policy your organization can adopt is to exercise extreme caution while screening individuals. If in doubt, conduct additional checks before accepting the individual as a volunteer. If a supervisor notices an alerting red flag during the screening process, do not continue. The main objective is to uncover these red flags and weed out individuals who pose a risk. By neglecting to fully screen potential volunteers, your organization may inflict unnecessary harm onto itself, staff members and the public - contradicting your mission to assist.

Our team of P&C experts is here to help. If you need assistance with establishing policies for volunteers, please contact Cindy Simmons today.