

Background Check/Screening Policy

Due to the positions of trust that are inherent in the provision of active, high quality sport activities, volunteers shall be required to undergo a screening process based on the duties assigned by the each member organization. The screening process will be comprised of a variety of measures and includes a Police Record Check for all volunteers that have any interaction with those of minority age.

Given this responsibility, all member associations must adhere to the British Columbia Volunteer Screening Model. This model will also apply to any paid employees of our member organizations that interact with minors.

Screening is an ongoing process designed to identify any person, whether paid or unpaid, volunteer or staff, who may harm children, youth or other vulnerable persons. Screening involves isolating the risks related to specific volunteer positions, and then establishing appropriate methods to reduce the risk. Screening takes place before someone starts volunteering and continues throughout their involvement.

Definitions Related to Screening Volunteers

A volunteer is an individual:

- Who chooses to undertake a service or activity, someone who is not coerced or compelled to do this activity;
- Who does this activity in service to an individual or an organization, or to assist the community-at-large;
- Who does not receive a salary or wage for this service or activity. (While this policy focuses on volunteer screening, the same principles apply to paid employees, interns, students on placement and trainers.)

Duty of Care

- “Duty of Care” is a legal principal that identifies the obligations of individuals and organizations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect their participants. It is important to understand that Canadian courts will uphold organizations’ responsibilities to screen carefully. This is part of their “Duty of Care”

Vulnerable Person

- One who has difficulty protecting himself or herself from harm temporarily or permanently and is at risk because of age, disability or handicap. Children and youth are considered vulnerable. The standard of care is higher when running programs for vulnerable participants

Position of Trust

1. Situations in which someone has a significant degree of:

- a. Authority or decision-making power over another
 - b. Unsupervised access to another person and to his/her property
2. Situations where the success of the service depends on the development of a close, personal relationship between the individual as in mentoring or friendly visiting programs.

Where volunteers are in a position of trust: The greater amount of interaction with a vulnerable person, the greater the expectation that the member organization will do what it can to reduce the risk of unethical behaviour.

Orientation

Orientation is a period of process of adjustment. Providing information to a volunteer about the program they will be involved in, providing them with the rules and regulations and the code of conduct are all part of the orientation process. Orientation is a valuable screening tool.

Educating participants, coaches, managers, leaders and volunteers about abuse and harassment is very important. All member organizations, whether run by staff or volunteers, has a responsibility to appropriately screen any person who will have access to vulnerable people. This responsibility is both moral and legal; it is not only the right thing to do but it is mandated because of the Duty of Care concept.

Risk Factors

Screening is a way of reducing the risk of harm involved in doing certain things within the sports environment. The screening that is done for each position is based on the specific risks related to that position. Factors that increase risk include: young age of participants, minimal family presence, transporting participants, low or no on-site supervision, isolation, overnights, physical contact, close relationships, positions of trust, and lack of organizational policies. While the member organization, through its selection process, cannot unduly discriminate against people, each has the right and the obligation to refuse potential volunteers based on the risks and requirements of each position.

Having a screening policy and a selection process implies a commitment to effective volunteer management. Good human resource management takes time and resources, both scarce commodities in the voluntary sector. While many fitness, recreation, sport and community organizations may accept their responsibility to protect the participants in their programs they can feel overwhelmed by the need to screen every one of their volunteers.

Screening is a flexible process: Clearly the onus on an organization that puts individuals in positions working with minors but who are never left alone is different than for an organization that places individuals in significant positions of trust with participants in an unsupervised setting. While there is an investment of time and energy upfront to develop appropriate screening, the benefits are worth it. These include safer programs, less liability risk for Board volunteers, and more satisfied volunteers.

Criminal Record Checks

Under the *Criminal Records Review Act*, a person must have a criminal record review conducted by the Criminal Record Review Program (CRRP) if that person:

- Works with children or vulnerable adults, or
- Have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults during your employment, occupation or education, or
- Are licensed by or receiving funding from the provincial government
- If you are an employee of a company that is contracted by a provincially-operated or -funded organization you may be required to have a criminal record check.

Volunteer organizations can register with the CRRP to receive free record checks of volunteers who work with vulnerable people. (For more information, visit the Criminal Record Review website).

It is mandatory that all member associations require all volunteers and paid employees to submit a criminal record check no less than every two (2) years. These records will be held – at minimum – by the association that the volunteer belongs to. (*Note:* Member association may elect to require annual CRCs.)

It is also *recommended* that all volunteers/employees that have a greater degree of interaction with vulnerable people be required to submit reference checks.