

### Preamble

Volunteer- refers to individuals that are not compensated for the position they hold, and service provided to the team, league or association.

Paid Staff- refers to administrators, coaches, officials, or other individuals that are paid for their services to the team, league or association.

The intent of this screening policy is to cover both volunteer roles and the roles of paid staff.

### Background

As organizations that provide services to children/youth we must do everything we can to provide adequate, appropriate, safe and well managed programs. We have moral, ethical and legal obligations both implicit and explicit to exercise reasonable care to protect the individuals in our programs. This includes a responsibility to screen any person who will have access to children and youth and this responsibility is incorporated under the "Standard of Care" concept.

"Standard of Care" is a legal principle that defines an organization's obligations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect their members. When those members are children/youth the duty becomes more intense and the standard of responsibility higher. Duty of care encompasses both moral and legal obligations and it is imperative to realize the courts will uphold that responsibility regarding screening in the context of their "Duty of Care".

A Team, League or Association and its' leaders are generally responsible and potentially liable for the activities done in its name including hiring and retaining volunteers and/or paid staff.

### What is/What isn't Screening?

Screening is not just about identifying sex offenders or doing police record checks. It is about the need for appropriate, considered, comprehensive selection of volunteers and/or paid staff who will be working in a position of trust.

Screening is the process used by an organization to select and evaluate individuals who will provide services for them. Screening takes place before people join the association and continues until they leave.

Through an effective screening program, we are attempting to identify those who might cause harm to our children - harm not only in the physical sense but in the moral and ethical sense. We must decide what standards are appropriate and necessary for the person doing the job and then strive to ensure those standards are met and maintained with care and consistency. We also have an obligation to ensure that our volunteers and paid staff are properly hired, trained, supervised and evaluated.

### How Do We Screen?

Screening follows the basis steps of risk management - we identify the risks attached to any position, assess the significance of those risks and implement standards to eliminate the risks.

Before you begin to screen volunteers or paid staff within your organization you need to develop a good screening policy and a definitive process by which to assess the level of “risk” that each position entails. The ten elements of screening will assist you in establishing the policy and process that work best for your Team, League or Association.

1. Job Design - Clearly identify the positions within the organization and group them according to “low”, “medium” or “high” risk activity. For example, the association ice scheduler would fall in the low risk category while coaches who have power over young athletes and have opportunities to be alone with children would fall into the high-risk category.
2. Job Descriptions - The job description defines the parameters of each specific position and clearly establishes responsibilities, lines of communication, supervision, etc. - the ground rules as to what the individual can expect and what is expected of him/her. If you are unsure of a positions risk level, they should be categorized in the high-risk category.
3. Application Form - This valuable screening tool collects basic information - name, address, experience, etc. - and gives the association permission to conduct reference checks and criminal record checks.
4. Recruitment Process - All too often we recruit our haphazardly because we are under pressure to fill the position, so we can “get on with it”. This action leaves us vulnerable as having “pressured” an individual to assume a position we are then often hesitant to apply proper screening measures.

Establish a proper recruitment process within your association - regularly post a list of the positions, send letters to the membership, have job descriptions and applications on hand always and invite questions from the membership - be prepared not desperate!

5. Interviews - The interview provides the opportunity to speak with the potential candidates face to face about their background, skills, experience, attitudes and philosophy. It assists you in determining whether that individual is suitable for your organization and that specific position.

The “Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act” contains kinds of information that may be collected about an individual and to whom that information may be disseminated.

6. Reference Checks - References will confirm the background and skill of the person and provide an outside opinion on the suitability of the person for the position. The application form should state that the references should be someone who can be objective (not a family member) and if the candidate is to be working closely with children one of the references should be someone familiar with their work with children.
7. Police Record Checks Including Vulnerable Sector Screening - A police record check including vulnerable sector screening, although important, cannot be used as a stand-alone screening tool. A positive response indicates only one thing- the person has been convicted of a crime. The other steps of the screening process, as identified in this document are also important in ensuring the candidate is acceptable for the position applied for within your organization.

Saying this, there is value in that it lets volunteers, paid staff, members and the community know that you are serious about protecting the children in your care and conscientious about selecting the right volunteers and paid staff.

Every Team, League and Association needs to have a clear policy on hiring individuals with criminal records. The policy may state, for example that a panel will assess all persons with a record or it may say that no one with a criminal record will be hired. The policy must be clearly communicated and consistently applied.

8. Orientation and Training - Our responsibility does not end once the individual is “hired” or selected for a role but continues through that individual’s entire involvement with the association. The orientation process allows the association a chance to see the individual in action and to further assist that individual in gaining necessary information relating to their specific job, to the structure, rules and philosophy of the association.

New hires or selections should be provided with adequate opportunity for ongoing training both internal and external to the association. Where mandatory training is required specific details such as program content, time required, etc. should be clearly communicated.

9. Supervision/Evaluation – Evaluation of the job performance should occur at least once a year. The purpose of an evaluation process is:
  - a) to ensure a standard level of practice
  - b) to improve the experiences of the individual and the athlete
  - c) to improve an individuals’ experiences with their role
  - d) to protect all participants – volunteers/paid staff and athletes

It is extremely difficult to let volunteers or paid staff go but by formalizing our screening process we ensure that standards are applied fairly and consistently among all volunteers/paid staff and that things are not taken personally. Any cause for concern requires immediate action and dismissal with cause is appropriate.

10. Participant Follow Up - Ask the children/youth how they feel about their experiences, their reaction to the people around them and the way they are treated.

Included is a checklist to utilize when working through the process of screening volunteers and paid staff who will “work” directly and indirectly with children and for whom you need to decide of their suitability in becoming a productive member of your Team, League or Association.

#### Orientation Checklist

- Job parameters clearly described
  - job description
  - Code of Conduct
- Limits to authority clear
- Association policies and procedures clear
  - copy of Constitution and Bylaws
  - rule books
- Rights and Responsibilities clear

- Contract established and signed
- Orientation completed
- Training ongoing
  - mandatory training explained
- Supervisor and lines of communication clearly identified
- Regular supervision carried out
- Regular evaluation completed
- Regular feedback from participants
- Random spot checks
- Documentation kept on incidents

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