VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT BLUEPRINT

Understanding the Use of Criminal Record Checks

Managing Risk

Screening

Evaluating & Recognizing

Volunteer Recruitment

Support & Supervision

Planning & Designing

Orientation & Training

Impact

Resignation & Dismissal

JohnHoward
SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

ABOUT US

The **John Howard Society of Ontario** (JHSO) is a leading criminal justice organization advancing the mandate, "effective, just and humane responses to crime and its causes." JHSO works towards it's mission through the delivery of services to those in conflict with the law and those at-risk, both adult and youth, provided by 19 local offices which are active in communities across the province. In 2003, JHSO's provincial office established its **Centre of Research, Policy & Program Development** (the Centre) to contribute to the evidence-based literature and policy discourse in order to further advance it's mandate.

Funded in part by the **Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration**'s Partnership Development Grant Program for Volunteer Management.

The main goal of this resource manual is to contribute to the development of volunteer programs by:

➢ Building organizational capacity by bringing together resources and best practices for those organizations interested in developing robust and inclusive volunteer programs, and

➢ Providing new tools and ideas that can assist organizations in the management, creation and enhancement of inclusive volunteer programs.

The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect that of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and/or the Province of Ontario.

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WHY INVOLVE VOLUNTEERS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Organizations should look well beyond the idea that volunteers help organizations save money or are needed only because they don't have enough paid staff. Volunteers also help organizations to achieve their goals for the betterment of the community in different ways[1]:

➢ Volunteers can be a clear sign of community support. Aside from those individuals that benefit from an organization's services and programs, volunteers can send a signal that the community endorses the work of the organization.

➢ Volunteers can help organizations reach new audiences. As community members, volunteers have connections at their schools, workplaces and amongst their social circles, and they can become informal ambassadors of an organization.

➢ Volunteers can turn into staff in your organization or in other organizations that share similar goals.

➢ Volunteering can have a positive impact on the mental health and sense of purpose of the volunteers.

➢ Volunteering can give volunteers the opportunity to develop new skills and advance their career path within the organization.

PLANNING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Organizations that do not have a volunteer program but are interested in creating one should take the following steps:

1. Assess whether volunteers are needed and how they can contribute to the goals/mission of the organization. This part of the planning process should include consulting existing staff and other stakeholders (i.e. board members, clients, groups/individuals funding the organization).[2] These consultations will help determine the direction an organization wants to take. Defining early on how to use volunteers and how you can develop a program will set the stage for a successful endeavor. Laying the groundwork for a volunteer program will also help create positions that are meaningful and productive, for both the organization and the volunteer.

2. Draft a vision statement with the goal of helping stakeholders understand the overall relationship between the organization and its volunteers. The vision-statement should be broad but brief, yet able to illustrate the type of relationship the organization is hoping to establish with its volunteers.[3]

ROLES IN THE CREATION OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAM IN AN ORGANIZATION

MEMBER(S) OF THE ORGANIZATION	VISION, MISSION, POLICIES AND STRATEGIC PLAN	IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONS
BOARD MEMBERS	- Define and review vision, mission and values around volunteer Involvement. - Create, lead, and ensure a supportive environment and culture for volunteer involvement through the creation of policies. - Develop a **strategic plan** that considers integrating volunteer involvement as a **core function** and resource to support achievement of the mission.	
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND MANAGEMENT TEAM	- Assist with the creation of the strategic plan. - Contribute to the development and management of operational strategies, goals and the annual plan. - Lead the creation of a welcoming and supportive environment for volunteers by contributing to the creation of policies and promoting best practices of volunteer management.	- Continue to foster a welcoming and supportive environment for volunteers. - Promotes policies and best practices of volunteer management among staff. - Identify and obtain the resources (human and financial) required for programs and operations to be delivered.
MANAGER OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AND/OR PROGRAM MANAGERS/COORDINATORS	Contribute to the creation of a welcoming and supportive environment for volunteers by assisting in the creation of policies.	- Promotes policies and best practices of volunteer management among staff. - Link operational work to vision, mission and values (Create Job Descriptions). - Manage annual operating goals and strategies - Manage volunteers that support programs and operations.
STAFF		- Individually contribute to support an environment and culture for volunteer involvement. - Understand how volunteer roles link to vision, mission and values. - Follow policies and procedures. - Support volunteers in the services or program they deliver.
VOLUNTEERS		- Individually contribute to support an environment and culture for volunteer involvement. - Understand how volunteer role links to vision, mission and values. - Undertake volunteer role to achieve operational goals and strategies. - Policies and procedures.

3. Decide who is going to be in charge of the volunteer program. Ideally, there should be one designated staff exclusively in charge of the volunteer program (i.e. a volunteer coordinator or manager of the volunteer program). Evidence shows that volunteer programs run more efficiently by having a single member of the staff responsible for the program. However, there are some valid reasons for which an organization will not be ready to employ a full-time volunteer manager. Organizations sometimes do not have the resources to fund the position and in others the size of the volunteer program is too small to justify a full-time position. In any case, evidence suggests that proper volunteer management should be the responsibility of a single member of the staff.[4]

   Having a full-time volunteer coordinator is the ideal situation. However, the following are some available alternatives for organizations that initially lack the capacity to accommodate such a position:[5]

➢ Part-time volunteer manager (with no other responsibilities). This allows the person to focus exclusively on the management of the volunteer program.
➢ Part-time volunteer manager (with other major areas of responsibility). A common problem related to this option is that volunteer management often takes a secondary role with respect to the other responsibilities assigned to the staff person.
➢ Decentralized model. All staff members recruit and manage their own volunteers as needed and desired. This model risks having a range of standards in various aspects of volunteer management, disjointed efforts and also the potential for redundancy and overlap.
➢ Volunteer position. Recruiting someone to volunteer their time for this position can be a difficult task. Maintaining high levels of accountability and quality can be a challenge with this option.

4. Create the appropriate policies and/or guidelines that will dictate basic aspects of the volunteer program.

SOME OF THE COMMON AREAS COVERED BY VOLUNTEER POLICIES AND/OR GUIDELINES:

❖ Definition of a volunteer
❖ Role that the volunteer plays within the organization
❖ Recruitment, Screening and Risk Management
❖ Rights and Responsibilities of the volunteers
❖ Privacy protection (for volunteer, staff and clients)
❖ Onboarding/Orientation
❖ Supervision and Evaluation
❖ Conflict Resolution
❖ Volunteer Recognition
❖ Conflicts of Interest
❖ Expected Behaviour/Code of Conduct
❖ Property rights of any material created by volunteers
❖ Monitoring and Evaluation
❖ Opportunities for volunteers to provide feedback
❖ Grounds for dismissal
❖ Departure of volunteers

5. Define the roles that volunteers are going play in the organization and create job descriptions. Volunteers need a clear and detailed job description that outlines the specific responsibilities related to their placement. A job description should include:[6]

    ➢ Purpose (how the volunteer position/placement will help the organization achieve its goals)
    ➢ Responsibilities
    ➢ Staff supervisor
    ➢ Desired skills or qualifications
    ➢ Time commitment required
    ➢ Benefits to the volunteer (i.e. development of certain skills). This is an important part of the job description, because it involves thinking about how the position is mutually beneficial to each party. Best practices dictate that this approach will make for a more engaging, impactful, and positive volunteer experience for both sides.

    There are different ways to start visualizing how volunteers can be involved in the operations of an organization. For example, the **RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service** outlines three different methods that can be useful: Brainstorming, Visual Mapping, Needs Analysis.

6. Establish clearly defined goals for the volunteer program. It is important to decide and to communicate what the volunteers need to accomplish and to set metrics to evaluate the success of the program.[7] It is important to enumerate goals and objectives for the volunteers. This will help volunteers, staff and members of the community understand the way your volunteer program is making a difference, and this will also assist your organization to ensure data is available to understand the impact of your volunteer program. This data can be useful to secure funding, promote your volunteer program and recruit more volunteers.[8] See page 47 of this manual for help in identifying the types of data you may want to collect.

7. Prepare to welcome volunteers into the organization. An organization should, where possible, include a budget that covers the costs related to the creation of a volunteer program.[9] It is also important for an organization to identify the resources that are needed to properly support its volunteer program.

THINGS COMMONLY NEEDED TO WELCOME VOLUNTEERS TO AN ORGANIZATION:

❖ A staff member who is in charge of the volunteer program;
❖ A list of staff members that are able to supervise & support volunteers (if needed, update position descriptions to include supervising or working with volunteers);
❖ Orientation and training materials;
❖ The tools required by the volunteer to perform their tasks;
❖ Space for volunteers to perform their jobs in a way that doesn't disrupt the work of the other staff.

8. Train staff and those that will be supervising volunteers on basic aspects of volunteer management,[10] like how to deliver feedback to volunteers and diversity/cultural sensitivity training.[11] Informing staff about how to interact and work with volunteers will help create a positive volunteer experience.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM:

❖ **Service Leader.** "Why Involve Volunteers?"

❖ **Volunteer Canada.** "Canadian Code of Volunteer Involvement."

❖ **RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service.** "Strategic Volunteer Engagement: A Guide for Nonprofit and Public Sector Leaders."

❖ **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).** "Successful Strategies for Recruiting, Training and Utilizing Volunteers: A Guide for Faith-and Community-Based Service Providers."

❖ **Monclova, Abby.** "Volunteer Management is not Volunteer Coordinating."

❖ **Stalling, Betty.** "Resource Kit – The Volunteerism Project."

❖ **HotDocs.** "Guidelines for Volunteer Management."

❖ **Institute for Volunteering Research.** "Volunteering for All? Exploring the link between volunteering and social exclusion."

❖ **Penner, Monica.** "Developing a Volunteer Program: Initial Assessment."

❖ **University of British Columbia.** "A Guide to Developing and Managing a Successful Volunteer Program"

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The positive impact that volunteering can have on an individual is well documented. Volunteering can help individuals generate a more positive outlook on life and even improve their health.[12] Volunteering also contributes to the creation of healthier communities by promoting the civic engagement of its citizens.[13] Crucially, individuals engaged in volunteering frequently improve and/or develop new skills and create new social networks.[14] These benefits can have specific significance for some populations. For example, research among immigrants in Canada participating in volunteer activities showed that learning new skills was one of their most commonly listed benefits and an important step towards social and civic integration.[15]

THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PREVIOUS INVOLVEMENT WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND OTHER SOCIALLY ISOLATED GROUPS

Some sectors of the population can experience unique benefits from volunteering. These groups normally experience a high degree of social isolation and/or marginalization, and may otherwise provide an untapped pool of applicants for volunteer positions. Research[16] shows that volunteer opportunities can benefit multiple populations that are socially excluded by facilitating skills development, improving self-esteem and confidence, and growing a social network. Also, research among young volunteers with previous involvement with the justice system identified several benefits such as building confidence, learning new skills and developing a routine.[17]

When developing a volunteer program and its required resources, organizations should consider the diverse backgrounds of those interested in volunteering.[18] In Canada, approximately 20% of the adult male population has a record of criminal conviction.[19] Excluding people with a criminal record means excluding a significant number of potential volunteers with a broad range of supportive skills, expertise and interests. Moreover, by recruiting members of this group as part of their volunteer team, organizations are demonstrating a serious commitment to inclusion, equality and diversity.[20] This manual provides an entire section on how to recruit and manage this population.

A pilot project in the United Kingdom showed that between **90%** and **100%** of the participants from a volunteer program for individuals with convictions felt socially included and improved skills.*

In one longitudinal analysis, researchers found that volunteering in adolescence may **reduce criminal involvement** in adulthood, suggesting that there are community safety benefits to volunteer opportunities for younger populations.**

* Volunteer Action Leeds. "Setting Up an Offenders Volunteer Programme."

** Ranapurwala, Shabbar I. Casteel and Peek-Asa. "Volunteering in adolescence and young adulthood crime involvement: a longitudinal analysis from the add health study."

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DESIGNING INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

There are some important actions that organizations can consider in terms of designing an inclusive volunteer program:

1. Promoting a culture of acceptance is a key factor in creating a successfully inclusive volunteer program.[21]

2. Creating policies that are clear about the organization's support for equal opportunities and diversity.[22]

3. Diversity training for staff to create a more inclusive environment.[23]

4. Adding flexibility to some volunteer placements.[24]Organizations can create or adapt volunteer roles to accommodate volunteers and/or meet the needs of a specific individual by asking them why they have decided to volunteer, what kind of skills and experience they have, what they want to get out their volunteer experience and what kinds of accommodations would be required to help them succeed.[25] This type of foresight can dramatically improve the volunteering experience, from both a management and volunteer perspective.

CREATING A FRAMEWORK TO INCORPORATE VOLUNTEERS WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD INTO A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

A significant percentage of the population has a criminal or police record. Non-violent offences represented more than three quarters (77%) of all cases completed in adult criminal court in 2014/2015.[26] Organizations should be prepared with policies and procedures that address how/when to incorporate individuals with previous involvement with the justice system into their volunteer programs. The John Howard Society of Ontario's **"On the Record" Guide** includes key takeaways on this topic:

1. *There is little justification to automatically exclude an individual with a record*
   The National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO) recommends that unless an individual is barred from working with children and vulnerable populations, people with past convictions shouldn't be automatically excluded from volunteering.[27]

Most organizations use record checks as risk predictors, the assumption being that individuals with records are riskier in the workplace. However, there is little evidence that records checks are good predictors of crime in the workplace.

WHILE A RECORD CHECK MAY BE REQUIRED OR SUITABLE FOR SOME POSITIONS, BEST PRACTICES DICTATE THAT THE ORGANIZATION:

| IDENTIFY THOSE POSITIONS THAT WILL REQUIRE A RECORD CHECK (AND WHICH TYPE OF CHECK) AHEAD OF TIME | DELAY ASKING FOR A RECORD CHECK UNTIL A POSITION IS OFFERED | CREATE A PROTOCOL FOR HOW TO ASSESS THE RELEVANCE OF THE RECORD TO THE POSITION BEING APPLIED FOR | DESIGNATE STAFF WHO WILL SEE ANY RECORD CHECKS |

While a record check may be required or suitable for some positions, best practices dictate that the organization:

2. *There are different types of records and record checks.*
    Organizations should understand the differences between conviction records (records for which an individual was found guilty, convicted, and sentenced) versus non-conviction records (absolute and conditional discharges, withdrawn charges, acquittals, stays, and other types of police contact). In Ontario 2015/2016, there were 117,815 total decisions in criminal courts. Of those, there were 52,147 non-conviction decisions - roughly 44%.[28] Visit JHSO's **"On the Record"** for details.

3. *Record checks, especially Vulnerable Sector Checks, should not be the default.*
    For many employment or volunteer opportunities, a record check is unnecessary. It is not a particularly good screening tool. Having a past police record does not tell you much about what a person will do in the future. This is not to say that a record check will never be a prudent screening measure. It may be more justifiable to use a record check for certain positions depending on nature of the role & responsibilities.

A record check may be required when: (1) Legislation requires it; (2) Having a record would interfere with core job requirements (for example, people who need clearance to get into a correctional institution); (3) the position will involve significant control of organizational/client assets; (4) the position involves ongoing and unsupervised contact with a vulnerable population; (5) there is a requirement from the body funding the program or service. There may be other scenarios. This Manual includes a Record Check Assessment Tool to help decide when a record check may be necessary.

MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM:

❖ **National Council of Volunteering Organizations.** "Setting Up an Offenders Volunteer Programme."

❖ **Ontario Volunteer Centre Network (OVCN).** "A Guide for Cultural Competency Application of the Canadian Code."

❖ **Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR).** "Involving Young People with Criminal Convictions As Volunteers: Guidance for volunteer-involving organizations."

❖ **Institute for Volunteering Research.** "Volunteering for All? Exploring the link between volunteering and social exclusion."

❖ **NACRO.** "Recruiting Safely and Fairly: A practical guide to employing ex-offenders."

❖ **National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO).** "Safeguarding for volunteer involving organizations: A guide to help you develop a comprehensive approach to safeguarding in your organization."

MANAGING RISK IN A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Organizations that involve volunteers as part of their operations need to identify, assess and manage potential risks to staff, volunteers, clients and the organization.[29] This process should include the creation of a volunteer risk management plan before volunteers are welcomed into an organization.[30]

A risk management plan is important because it helps organizations to protect everyone involved in the volunteer program from personal harm, property loss and lawsuits. For that reason both volunteers and staff should be aware of policies and procedures related to their position and that they are an important part of the organization's risk management plan.[31] The process of developing a risk management plan should be inclusive and reflect a range of perspectives.[32] By making the process collective, organizations encourage a sense of ownership and buy-in among staff and volunteers, which is a key to effective implementation.[33]

Benefits of having a risk management plan:[34]

Contributes to the sustainability of an organization by helping to ensure the security of its assets (people, property and finances), the quality of its services and the overall health of the organization

Maintains accountability and the good reputation of the organization among stakeholders (clients, staff, volunteers, donors and others)

Helps organizations to maintain or receive new funding

Helps to obtain or keep insurance (and could lower the cost)

Helps organizations avoid breaches of laws and regulations which could expose an organization to accusations and legal action

IDENTIFYING RISK

Risk management, as it relates to a volunteer program, starts with an audit of all the risk factors attached to the different volunteer roles.[35] During the scrutiny of the different activities where volunteers are involved, organizations should ask themselves what are the potential dangers, potentially risky situations or problems that might occur relating to the volunteer placement.[36] This assessment can expand to incorporate other aspects of the organization like its insurance policy (to make sure that it covers volunteer-related activities) and any restrictions related to children and youth.[37]

Some of the more common potential risks associated with volunteer programs in organizations are:

➢ Substandard performance by volunteers resulting in harm to clients, users, participants, or the public
➢ Client or volunteer abuse (physical, emotional, financial)
➢ Volunteers exceeding role descriptions, skills, boundaries or authority
➢ Misleading or wrong advice and information given to clients or the public
➢ Breach of confidentiality
➢ Volunteer inappropriately speaking for/misrepresenting the organization
➢ Loss or damage of property
➢ Theft, misappropriation of funds or fraud
➢ Damage to organizational credibility and reputation

ASSESSING RISK AND DEVELOPING A RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Once the risks related to a volunteer position have been identified, organizations should assess the likelihood for these risks to materialize and list appropriate measures to mitigate the potential of these taking place.[38]

Once an organization has completed the lists of potential risks and mitigation strategies for each of them, staff must decide which ones are going to become part of the organization's formal risk management plan. While making this assessment, staff can consider some of the following factors:

➢ What is at risk (i.e. clients, staff, property, member of the public)
➢ Likelihood of the risk to materialize or the incident to take place;
➢ Potential severity in terms of physical harm, and extent and/or cost of the damage;
➢ Actions that can be put in place;
➢ Cost and consequences of implementing such actions.

Some of the most common actions or tools included in a risk management plan:[39]

SCREENING OF VOLUNTEERS

MAKING SURE THAT THE COVERAGE OF THE INSURANCE POLICY IS UP TO DATE

MAKING SURE THAT RESTRICTIONS AND REGULATIONS REGARDING TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE PROPERLY SET IN PLACE

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENTS AND LIABILITY WAIVERS

ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEERS

PROPER ORIENTATION AND TRAINING VOLUNTEERS

RECORD-KEEPING

TRAINING VOLUNTEERS

Risk management and volunteers with criminal records

Volunteer placements can vary in terms of length, risks and responsibilities. For that reason, organizations should make sure that each placement has a risk management approach that is proportional to the nature of the placement.[40]

Due to the nature of their work, some organizations are more or less able to include volunteers with criminal records.[41] Still, it is good practice for organizations to avoid "blanket approaches" to risk management. Requiring a criminal record check should not be considered a standard part for the screening of all volunteers.[42] Instead, organizations should assess each volunteer placement individually[43] to determine whether a criminal record check is required. In other words, in identifying the "Actions" to mitigate the identified risks (harms, reputation, loss), organizations should not automatically conclude that a record check is a necessary "Action" to effectively mitigate the risks. It should be a case by case basis, considering a variety of factors.

Staff can use tools such as the **Record Check Assessment Tool** in order to decide whether a volunteer placement requires a police background check. It's important to remember that a criminal record check is only one tool that can be used for the screening of volunteers. In Volunteer Alberta's ten steps to screening, a record check is only one of ten steps that an organization should perform.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON MANAGING RISK:

❖ **Gaskin, Katharine.** "Risk Toolkit: How to take care of risk in volunteer. A guide for organizations."

❖ **National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO).** "Safeguarding for volunteer involving organizations: A guide to help you develop a comprehensive approach to safeguarding in your organization."

❖ **Volunteering Australia.** "Running the Risk? Risk Management Tools for Volunteer Involving Organizations."

❖ **National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO).** "Managing Risk: Guidelines for medium-sized voluntary organizations."

❖ **Volunteer Alberta.** "Risk Assessment Matrix."

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Once it has been decided the types of volunteer placements are needed and the volunteer manager/coordinator has created the job descriptions for each one of the volunteer placements, organizations must start thinking about where they can recruit volunteer from. A good idea is for the staff in charge of the volunteer program to create a list of places in their community from which volunteers can be recruited. These places can include colleges and universities, volunteer focused websites, professional associations, etc.

Organizations should understand the motivations that people have for volunteering. Based on literature, some of the most common reasons to volunteer are the following:[44]
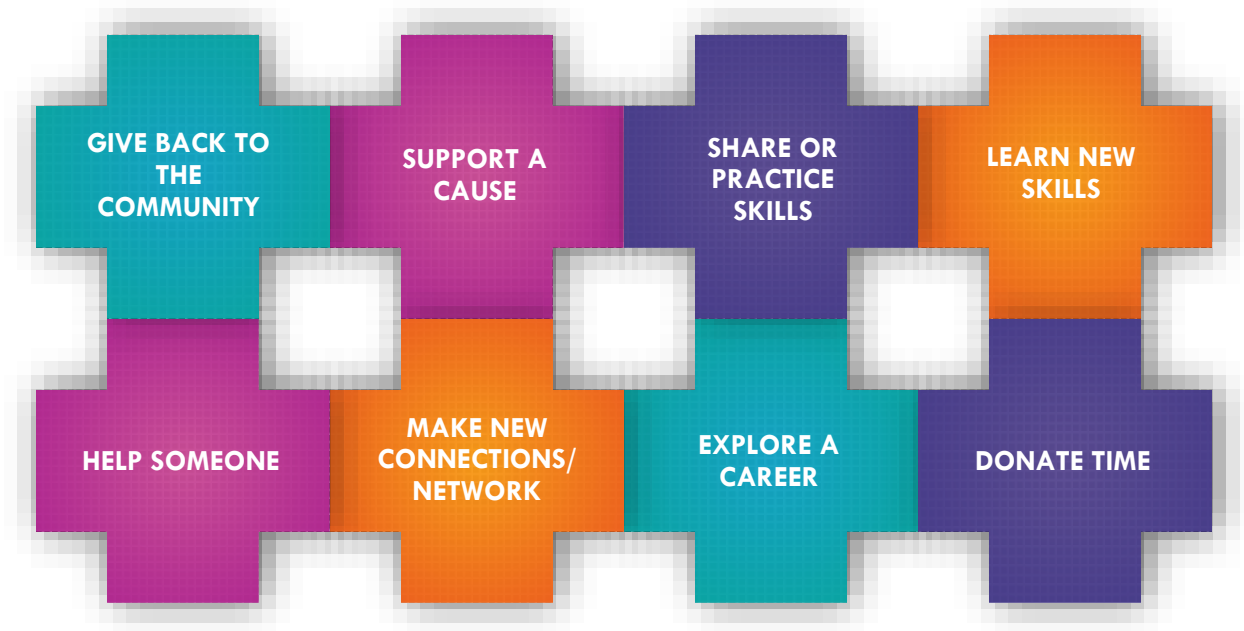
VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

The volunteer manager/coordinator should be primarily responsible for the recruitment of volunteers. However, the promotion of volunteer opportunities and pro-active recruitment of new volunteers should be encouraged as a team effort among the staff of an organization led by the person in charge of the volunteer program.[45] Moreover, the recruitment of volunteers should involve reaching out to diverse sources of volunteers, not only with the purpose of reflecting the diversity of the community,[46] but also with the goal of maintaining the long-term sustainability of the program. For example: relying exclusively on college students to fulfill volunteer roles may not be the ideal situation for a volunteer program because, among other things, it exposes the program to drastic drops in the number of volunteers available during the summer and winter breaks. In the volunteer recruitment efforts, organizations should try to use every tool available to recruit volunteers including the use of social media. Most importantly

recruitment messaging should be clear and consistent in terms of the expectations for each volunteer role.[47]

Three of the most common strategies that can be utilized for volunteer recruitment:[48]

1. Warm Body Recruitment (or Broad-Based Recruitment). This type of recruitment works for situations when organizations are looking for large groups of volunteers to assist them with tasks that don't' require specific skills or when an organization needs a large number of volunteers for a short period of time (i.e. gala, walk, or a special event). The recruitment material for this type of strategy can be distributed widely in the community via free publications, online postings on websites, community boards, recruitment events or coffee shops.

2. Targeted Recruitment. A very useful method when you are looking for volunteers for a placement that requires a specific set of skills. For this type of recruitment, you will want to consider how a specific position, with specific skills, will help the organization pursue its mandate/mission/values. Targeted recruitment takes more planning and research to locate the best places to promote your opportunities.

3. Concentric Circles Recruitment. This type of recruitment uses the networks you have already developed over time. This strategy is also useful for attracting volunteers with specific skills, but is more strategic in that the organization needs volunteers who are familiar with the work and networks of the organization. This strategy relies on individuals that are more familiar with the organization and having them recruit members of their social circles. People engaged as part of an organizations concentric circles recruitment can include:

   ❖ Staff and co-workers
   ❖ Professional Associations
   ❖ Stakeholders
   ❖ Board of Directors

Some common tactics to recruit volunteers include:

POSTING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN RELATED WEBSITES OR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS	MAKING PRESENTATIONS OR HOSTING INFORMATION SESSIONS	THROUGH CURRENT VOLUNTEERS
MAKING ANNOUNCEMENTS IN SOCIAL GATHERINGS	VISITING OR PARTICIPATING AT SCHOOL EVENTS, SENIOR CENTRES, VOLUNTEER FAIRS AND OTHER EVENTS.	REGISTERING WITH VOLUNTEER REFERRAL ORGANIZATIONS

Once a person has expressed interest in volunteering for an organization, communication should be effective, clear and timely. Quite often people lose interest in volunteering as result of not receiving a proper response in a reasonable amount of time or finding the recruitment/screening process confusing.[49] Some volunteer coordinators for example create automatic email or template responses to help applicants understand the process. Finally, it is important to remember that the needs of an organization can, and likely will, change over time, which will unequivocally translate into changes in the types of volunteer placements needed.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT MATERIAL AND ACTIVITIES

Organizations should consider the following material that can help them find the right person for the right position:

1. **Volunteer Postings.** Advertising volunteer opportunities in volunteer centres, websites and on social media is a very important volunteer recruitment tool. Volunteer postings are necessary to advertise volunteer opportunities on the internet and their content is similar to that of a job description, but it must include information on how to apply and how to contact the staff member in charge of the volunteer program.

2. **Volunteer Handbook.** A Volunteer Handbook is a document with basic information about the organization. The handbook should serve as a good starting point for any potential volunteer and it should include the following:

   ❖ Information about the issue that the organization is trying to tackle (for example if the focus of an organization is homelessness, it should include statistics about it and information to respond to some common stereotypes);
   ❖ Information about the organization (history, values, etc.);
   ❖ The contact information of the office (s) of the organization;
   ❖ Information about the organization's programs, services and goals
   ❖ Information on the volunteer opportunities available.

3. **Website.** Organizations should make sure that their websites have an easy to find section dedicated to volunteer opportunities, including the application form, types of volunteer placements available and the contact information of the staff member in charge of the volunteer program.

4. **Volunteer File Checklist.** Every step of the volunteer relationship with the organization should be well documented by staff and their file accurately maintained.

SOME ITEMS THAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN A VOLUNTEER FILE AND ACKNOWLEDGED ON A CHECK LIST ARE:

❖ **Emergency contact information**
❖ **Volunteer's acceptance date**
❖ **Volunteer's position**
❖ **Staff supervisor**
❖ **Application Form/Resume**
❖ **Interview**
❖ **Police Background Check (if applicable)**
❖ **Reference Check #1**
❖ **Reference Check #2**

❖ **Orientation & Training completed**
❖ **Code of Conduct signed**
❖ **Confidentiality and Privacy Policy signed**
❖ **Evaluation Report**
❖ **Resignation letter/dismissal report**
❖ **Exit Interview**
❖ **Any Incident Reports**
❖ **Any additional information relevant to the volunteer and their placement**

INFORMATION SESSIONS

Information sessions can play an important role in the recruitment of volunteers and can be particularly useful for organizations that need large numbers of volunteers. These sessions give interested individuals the opportunity to learn more about the organization, how they might be able to contribute their skills, as well as a chance to meet staff with whom they can potentially work.

Core elements of a session/presentation:

❖ Welcome to potential volunteers and overview of the session;
❖ Introduction of the organization (mission, values, programs, services and other activities);
❖ Volunteer roles and expectations (shifts, number of hours, etc.);
❖ Benefits of volunteering;
❖ Organizational Policies (shift cancellation instructions, reasons for termination of placement, privacy protection, anti-discrimination policy, etc.);
❖ Ways to provide feedback, program evaluation and other resources available;
❖ Tour of the facility;
❖ Distribution of Volunteer Application Form;
❖ Thank you and next steps.

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FROM MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

While recruiting volunteers from marginalized sectors of society, including those with previous involvement with the justice system, organizations should take the following elements into consideration:

1. Proactive recruitment is an essential component for a successful and inclusive volunteer program. Research about volunteer opportunities for marginalized groups (i.e. people with disabilities, racialized groups, and individuals with previous involvement the justice system) indicates that difficulty finding out about volunteer opportunities' is one of the most common practical barriers to volunteering, and that these individuals may hold negative perceptions about their chances to be accepted into a volunteer program.[50] **Volunteer Action Leeds (VAL)** recommends a series of actions to specifically attract those with criminal justice involvement:

❖ Making links with local prisons and charities working with individuals with previous involvement with the justice system.
❖ Advertising in the local prison visitor's centre.
❖ Advertising that volunteer roles are available specifically for people with previous involvement with the law (or that the organization will consider people with previous justice involvement)
❖ Advertising with the local Probation Services.
❖ Advertising at local volunteer centres that work with people recently released from correctional institutions.
❖ Finally, while promoting volunteer opportunities, it is recommended that organizations make sure that volunteer postings explicitly state that people with criminal records that apply for the positions won't be discriminated against.[51]

In the case of newcomers, refugees and other migrant populations, organizations can demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusiveness by[52]:

❖ Ensuring that their promotional and communication mechanisms such as brochures and websites depict and relate to the diversity of their communities;

❖ Using accessible language, and whenever possible, multiple languages for all volunteer job descriptions, postings, advertising (flyers, media), presentation/display outreach;

❖ Ensuring the recruitment process is accessible to a wide diversity of communities through community specific promotions and media

MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT:

❖ **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).** "Successful Strategies for Recruiting, Training and Utilizing Volunteers: A Guide for Faith-and Community-Based Service Providers."

❖ **Institute for Volunteering Research.** "Volunteering for All? Exploring the link between volunteering and social exclusion."

❖ **Volunteer Action Leeds (VAL).** "Prisoners and Ex Offenders as Volunteers toolkit."

❖ **Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR).** "Involving Young People with Criminal Convictions As Volunteers: Guidance for volunteer-involving organizations."

❖ **Ontario Volunteer Centre Network.** "A Guide for Cultural Competency Application of the Canadian Code."

SCREENING OF VOLUNTEERS

Screening is fundamental aspect of volunteer management. Screening, at its core, is about finding the right person for the right position, and ultimately creating an enriching experience for both the organization and the individual. [53]

The screening process should be clearly communicated and transparent and it should apply to all volunteers. The number and type of tools or procedures should be based on the risk related to the volunteer position.[54] Finally, regardless of the screening tools and procedures selected for a volunteer placement, organizations should make sure that they respect the privacy of all individuals and that the information collected during the screening process remain confidential.

In order to set up the proper screening process for each placement, staff should start to ask themselves some basic guiding questions:[55]

Based on the duties, the nature of the setting, the clients to be served - what screening tools and procedures are adequate for this position?

How will screening tools increase the quality and safety of the programs?

How will screening tools help us match peoples' skills and training to our organizational goals?

How will screening mitigate the risk and liability of the volunteer position?

A VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION/POSTING: THE FIRST SCREENING TOOL

A thorough volunteer job description or posting is the first essential screening tool. There are several key outcomes of creating a detailed job description:

By openly sharing the desired skills, time commitment and other expectations of a volunteer placement, an organization is allowing prospective volunteers to self-screen, and decide whether they meet the requirements.

A proper job description will help an organization think through the screening requirements required for such position and any risks associated with the position. These outcomes should be front and centre when the organization create the job description.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

A standardized volunteer application form should be used for all volunteer positions to help gather valuable information about the applicant. This information can be used during the interview or other parts of the screening process. The type of information collected through the volunteer application form may vary depending on the organization, but gathering information about the applicant's qualifications, skills, availability and interests, can help an organization to decide whether an applicant can be a good fit for both the position and the organization.

INTERVIEWING VOLUNTEERS

Meeting applicants before they join the volunteer program is an essential part of volunteer screening.[56]

Some of the most common steps taken during an interview are:

➢ Thank the individual for their interest in the organization.
➢ Let the applicant know the purpose of the interview.
➢ Provide a brief background of the organization.
➢ If needed, clarify any information from the volunteer application form.
➢ Explain the organization's expectations of volunteers (some of this discussion may need to occur after specific position for the person has been identified).
➢ Ask the applicant the questions prepared for the interview (more information on interviewing volunteers available **here**)
➢ Explain the next steps of the screening process.

Finally, it's important to keep in mind that interviewing a volunteer should be treated the same way as interviewing a potential employee and should follow the same human resource practices and human rights codes and legislation that apply.

REFERENCES

After interviewing an applicant, staff will likely have a good idea of whether that person is a good fit for the placement and the organization more broadly. Asking for references can help confirm an applicant's skills and personality to ensure that they are a good match. References are particularly important when screening for volunteer placements that will work with vulnerable individuals.[57] Organizations usually ask for two to three references and at least one should be a current/previous employer or volunteer placement supervisor.

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER REFERENCE CHECK

Purpose: A tool to verify the facts and obtain additional information about the applicant.

Remember to explain the position, program and client group the applicant is being considered for.

Applicant Name:_____ Date of Reference Check:_____

Person Checking Reference:_____ Reference Name:_____

Reference Organization:_____

Relationship to Applicant: ☐ Supervisor   ☐ Peer   ☐ Other (specify) _____

Confirm: Dates of Employment?   From_____to_____ Position Held:_____

Was the reason for separation ☐ Voluntary or ☐ Involuntary?

Explain:_____

In what capacity was the applicant employed, and what were their job responsibilities?

_____

_____

Was the applicant successful in fulfilling their duties?   YES ☐   NO ☐

What were their strong points/skills in the position?

_____

_____

Were there any performance issues?   YES ☐   NO ☐

If yes, pleasebexplain:_____

Please rank the applicant based on the following areas:

Attendance:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A
Ability to meet deadlines:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A
Willingness to assume responsibility:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A
Dependability:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A
Ability to follow instructions:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A
Professionalism:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A
Ability to interact with clients/customers:	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A
Degree of supervision required:	Constant	Intermittent	Very Little	N/A

Please explain any that you've ranked "Poor":

_____

Are there any situations in which you would avoid placing (Applicant Name)?   YES ☐   NO ☐

Considering the job being applied for, do you think the applicant is suitable?   YES ☐   NO ☐

Additional Comments/Summary_____

_____

SCREENING PEOPLE WITH PREVIOUS INVOLVEMENT WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM – KEY POINTS:

1. Record checks provide very little insight about an individual, and therefore should not be the default for all volunteer positions (unless required by law). In general, there are better ways (reference checks, interviews) to learn about someone's character and suitability;

2. Know applicable human rights laws with regards to criminal records;

3. Determine ahead of time which positions require a record check, why, what type of check is required and how much information you need;

4. If your policy is to not automatically exclude people with records from volunteer positions, state this on the position advertisement;

5. Have in place a plan/process to determine what to do if a positive check is returned by the applicant. Some useful tips can be found in page 34. ;

6. Individual assessments are key – ask yourself "what is the relevance of this specific record to the particular position being applied for?";

7. Determine who will review the results of record check (senior management) and how those results are stored in the organization;

8. Include references from probation officers or support workers that can also assist with the screening process of the applicant.[58]

VOLUNTEER CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS AND OTHER FORMS

Much like an employment contract, organizations should have a contract or agreement for new volunteers to sign before the beginning of their placement. These forms are an important screening tool because by signing them, volunteers show their commitment to respect the established policies and procedures. A volunteer contract or agreement should include key aspects of the relationship between the volunteer and the organization like general responsibilities and expected behaviours. The volunteer contract or agreement can also make reference to the organization's policies and guidelines. The content of these forms should be discussed with the volunteers before they are asked to sign prior to or during training or the onboarding process of the volunteer.

In addition to the volunteer contract or agreement, some of the most common types of volunteer forms organizations can utilize are:

| Volunteer Code of Conduct | Volunteer Code of Ethics and Principles | Privacy Form | Image Release Form | Intellectual Property Form | Conflict of Interest Form |

SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

Proper support and supervision is one of the most efficient ways to effectively monitor and screen volunteers during their placement. All volunteers need adequate support and supervision, but the way they are addressed depends on the nature of the placement. For example, a volunteer that helps in a single event will likely require less support than a volunteer that assists an organization on a recurring basis.[59]

One way to provide support for volunteers is by developing a system whereby a volunteer works alongside a fellow volunteer or a member of the staff. This practice not only provides support to a volunteer, but also guarantees that at least two people will be present in any situation. Meetings are also another way to provide volunteers with support by giving them the opportunity to discuss any issues related to their work and providing them with feedback on their performance.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON VOLUNTEER SCREENING:

❖ **Gaskin, Katharine.** "Risk Toolkit: How to take care of risk in volunteer. A guide for organizations."

❖ Volunteer Alberta. "Volunteer Screening: Policy and Procedures."

❖ **National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO).** "Safeguarding for volunteer involving organizations: A guide to help you develop a comprehensive approach to safeguarding in your organization."

❖ **Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL).** "Prisoners and Ex-Offenders as Volunteers Toolkit".

❖ **Volunteer Alberta.** "Interviewing - Learning Resources Guide."

UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF RECORD CHECKS AS VOLUNTEER SCREENING TOOL

The demand for record checks as a screening tool for volunteers is increasing in nonprofit organizations. The perceived threat of a liability or simple risk aversion often translates into the creation of unnecessary screening barriers or obstacles for individuals interested in volunteering. Requesting a record check as a matter of course, often exemplifies that risk aversion approach among nonprofit organizations. An unintended consequence of this action sees potentially qualified applicants self-selecting out of the process for a variety of reasons that can include cost and waiting period,[60] fear of rejection[61] or lack of easy access to them.[62]

TYPES OF CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS IN ONTARIO

In Ontario, the types of record checks can change depending on the local police department administering them. However, police departments in this province generally have three types of record checks as recommended by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) in the voluntary provincial **LEARN Guidelines**. As these guidelines are voluntary, there may be a lack of standardization across police services in Ontario. While there is new law aimed at standardizing the record check process in Ontario (The *Police Record Checks Reform Act*), it is not yet in force. The lack of standardization can create uncertainty for both volunteer applicants and employers/volunteer organizations. In the absence of law to standardize, education and information gathering becomes even more important for organizations.

Here in Ontario, a Police Criminal Record Check (PCRC) discloses unpardoned criminal convictions, a summary of convictions for the last five years, and findings of guilt under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* within the applicable disclosure period.[63] This is followed by a more comprehensive Police Information Check (PIC) that, in addition to the standard PCRC, discloses outstanding entries such as warrants, peace bonds or pending charges.[64] Finally, the Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC) is the most in-depth of the police record checks and discloses additional information on incidents where the individual was deemed Not Criminally Responsible (NCR) by reason of mental disorder (for five years), any record pardoned or suspended of sexual offences and in very exceptional circumstances non-conviction dispositions, such as withdrawn charges can be disclosed as well.[65]

VULNERABLE SECTOR CHECKS

In Ontario, as with the rest of Canada, there are legislated criteria governing vulnerable sector checks, including limits on:[66]

1. Who can ask for the check;
   a. The request can only come from an organization or person responsible for the well-being of a child or vulnerable person

2. The position for which a check can be requested;

    a. There must be an existing application for a paid or volunteer position;
    b. The position must be one of "trust or authority" over a vulnerable person

Further provisions in the legislation also specify that the applicant (i.e. potential volunteer or employee) has consented to the check in writing.

What is a position of trust or authority? Not every position that involves contact with a vulnerable person will meet the requirements for a vulnerable sector check. While it may be difficult to determine which positions are of "trust or authority" over a vulnerable person, one criteria suggested in the literature is whether position involves ongoing, unsupervised contact with persons in the vulnerable sector. This Matrix tool, developed by Volunteer Alberta, can help determine the high risk situations which may require a Vulnerable Sector Check.

What is a vulnerable person? Persons who because of age or disability or other factors are in a position of dependency on others, or at an increased risk of harm by a person in a trust or authority position.

COSTS OF CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS

Here in Ontario, the cost of a check is determined by the local police department and it can range widely. Some police services offer a reduced price or free checks to those individuals applying for a volunteer position. It is recommended that organizations that require a record check of any type cover the cost.

Cost of background checks in Ontario (*Canada – Ontario Municipalities 2017*):

POLICE CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK (EMPLOYMENT)	$70 CAD
POLICE CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK (VOLUNTEERING)	$25 CAD
VULNERABLE SECTOR CHECK (VOLUNTEERING)	$0 – $25 CAD

Sources [67] [68]

WAITING PERIODS FOR A CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

The length of time an individual must wait in order to receive the results of a record check can potentially have a negative impact on a person's interest to volunteer for an organization. Some organizations have identified that the overreliance on record checks as screening tools has resulted in "rising costs and increased waiting times for processing"[69]. Lengthy timelines for processing may result in barriers for the applicant, but also in challenges for volunteer agencies and employers whose needs are time sensitive.

In Ontario, the accessibility and waiting periods for a record check depend on the circumstances specific to each local police department. Some police departments offer background checks online for an additional fee,[70] and there is no law in the province mandating the turnaround time for a record check or reconsideration process (a process where the individual can appeal the results of their record check and ask police to purge or suppress certain information).

RIGHTS AND PROTECTION OF THOSE APPLYING FOR A CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

In Ontario, there is minimal human rights protection against labour discrimination for individuals who have criminal records. Section 5(1) of the *Ontario Human Rights Code* outlines the protection against discrimination with respect to employment:

5. (1) Every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to employment without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, **record of offences**, marital status, family status or disability.

The definition of **record of offences** is provided in section 10 of the Code:

10. "record of offences" means a conviction for,

> (a) an offence in respect of which a pardon has been granted under the Criminal Records Act (Canada) and has not been revoked, or

> (b) an offence in respect of any provincial enactment.

In other words, the *Human Rights Code* provisions provide employment discrimination protection in two narrow circumstances: (1) to individuals who have been convicted and received a pardon (record suspension); (2) to individuals who have a provincial offence under provincial law, such as the *Highway Traffic Act*. In order to qualify for protection under the *Human Rights Code*, the individual's criminal record must fall under this definition of "record of offences".

Even if an individual has been convicted and has a record suspension (pardon), and thus has initial protection under the *Code*, an employer can still take the "record of offences" into account during the hiring process. Section 24(1) of the Code permits discrimination during the hiring process on the basis of a record of offences if the record is a "reasonable and bona fide qualification of the nature of employment." According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission:

"to be a reasonable and bona fide qualification, the requirement must be rationally connected to, and necessary for, job performance. To get this exception, the employer must show that the circumstances of the individual cannot be accommodated without creating undue hardship, considering costs, funding and health and/or safety risks."[71]

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* does protect against discrimination based on grounds that may be associated with an individual's criminal record. For example, the Code prohibits discrimination based on disabilities, including mental illness. Police records may contain "contacts" with individuals arising from 911 calls or apprehensions under the *Mental Health Act*. Asking for and making decisions on police contacts that include mental health information may therefore constitute prohibited discrimination based on disability. New legislation, the *Police Records Check Reform Act*, is intended, in part, to prohibit the disclosure of mental health related police contacts on an individual's record check for employment purposes.

PREVENTING THE EXCESSIVE USE OF CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS AND MANAGING APPLICANTS WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD

Having a criminal record should not automatically disqualify an individual from volunteering in an organization.[72] For that reason, the screening of volunteers should be proportional to the responsibilities of a specific volunteer position.[73] This principle should be reflected in a policy or guidelines on how to recruit and screen individuals with a criminal record. Another tool available to assist organizations in deciding which volunteer positions require a Vulnerable Sectors Check is the **Vulnerable Sector Position Assessment Tool**. This tool can assist staff in determining whether a record check is necessary based on specific questions related to the placement. For example, staff would write the elements of the position (description, duties, people being served), whether the position is one of "trust or authority" over a vulnerable person, and whether there is unsupervised access to a client (guidance for the decision-maker on how to comply with law in CRA) and if a record check is necessary and what type. It is important for an organization to decide which volunteer placement requires a record check before the advertising and recruitment for the position starts. [74]

DOES THE *ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS CODE* APPLY TO VOLUNTEERS?

The answer is YES. In Rocha v. Pardons and Waivers of Canada (2012 HRTO 2234) the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal found that volunteering can be considered "employment" for the purposes of the *Code*. The general view in courts is that human rights legislation is to be interpreted broadly. Several Ontario tribunals have confirmed that the Ontario Code applies to volunteers, specifically section 5(1) of the Code (see Sprague v. Yufest, 2016 HRTO 642).

RECORD CHECK ASSESSMENT TOOL

Volunteer organizations may not always need a record check for a position. By using this POSITION ASSESSMENT TOOL, and the subsequent RECORD CHECK FLOW CHART, organizations can help determine whether they should perform a record check. *This is only a guide. This tool is intended to provide guidance, not preclude or limit consideration of other relevant factors, as assessed by the organization.* Step 1: complete this **POSITION ASSESSMENT.** Step 2: complete the **RECORD CHECK FLOW CHART** using information from Step 1.**.**

STEP 1: POSITION ASSESSMENT TOOL (*Adapted from Volunteer Alberta*)

ASSESS POSITION DETAILS	DETAILS
Location of Position	
Clients/Contact with People Vulnerable clients? Age? Disabilities?	

Duties:
  ✓ Does position provide access to organizational or client assets?
  ✓ What are core job requirements?	

Supervision Unsupervised? Working alone? Team work?	
Training available	
ASSESS OPPORTUNITIES and RISKS	
What skills are required? What kind of qualities are needed for the role?	
Given position, what are risks? What are risk mitigation tools (ex. supervision, access, policy in place)?	
Other types of screening that could mitigate risks	
❖ Driver's abstract for driving positions? ❖ Reference calls? ❖ Would interview help mitigate risk?	
Is a record check required by: Funder? Legislation?	

STEP 2: RECORD CHECK FLOW CHART

IS A RECORD CHECK REQUIRED BY LAW** OR THE FUNDER?

YES ↓ | **NO** ↓

Is the type of check specified (Basic Criminal Record Check versus Vulnerable Sector Check)?

Does the position involve working with vulnerable clients?

Go to VS ASSESSMENT TOOL below ← **YES**

NO ↓ | **YES** ↓ | **NO** ↓

If unspecified, a basic criminal record check should suffice

Consider the results of the check:

- ❖ in line with organizational policy;
- ❖ if no policy, criteria on Page 34-35 of this manual
- ❖ in line with Position Assessment Tool details above

Complete required record check and consider the results of the check:

- ❖ in line with organizational policy;
- ❖ if no policy, criteria on Page 34-35 of this manual
- ❖ in line with Position Assessment Tool details

Will having a criminal record directly interfere with core job requirements? (ex. A person needs access to a correctional institution, and needs a check to do so)

OR

Does the position involve control over large amounts of organizational or client assets, and other safeguards (supervision, safety measures) are not feasible because of the nature of the work?

OR

Does the position give access to high security environments (ex. law enforcement, corrections)?

↑

Basic criminal record check should suffice ← **YES**

NO ↓

Consider whether record check is necessary, and whether other screening tools would suffice

---

** **QUICK TIPS ON LAWS:**

Bill 168 (Occupational Health and Safety Act) does not oblige organizations to do a record check of current or prospective employee) Income Tax Act does not oblige organizations to record check current or prospective employees. The Ineligibility provisions of the Act apply to Board members or people who control the organization, and do not absolutely prohibit volunteers with criminal records from these positions. See this guidance.

VULNERABLE SECTOR POSITION ASSESSMENT TOOL: IS A VULNERABLE SECTOR CHECK NECESSARY?
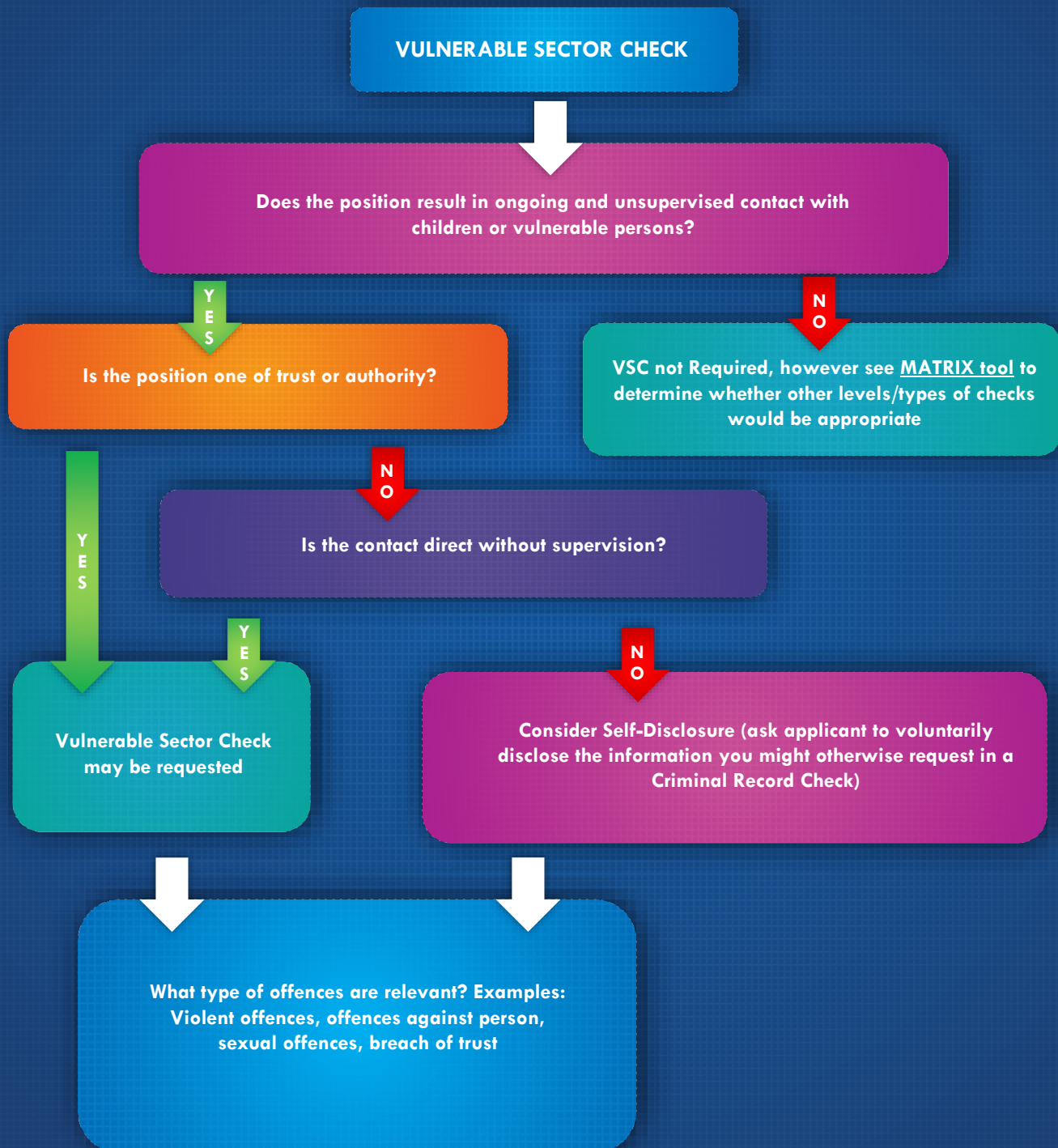
Using this VS Position Assessment Tool, and the Flow Chart, organizations can help determine whether a Vulnerable Sector Check is necessary for the position. *This is a guide only. This tool is intended to provide guidance, not preclude or limit consideration of other relevant factors, as assessed by the organization.* Step 1: complete this VS POSITION ASSESSMENT. Step 2: complete the VULNERABLE SECTOR FLOW CHART by referring back to Step 1. This goal is to identify those positions for which you might want to request a Vulnerable Sector Check.

STEP 1: VS POSITION ASSESSMENT TOOL

ASSESS POSITION		DETAILS
Position Title		
Location/Setting:		
Responsibilities:		
	Yes or No	
Client/People Served by position: ✓ under 18? ✓ over 65? ✓ intellectual/development disabilities? ✓ increased risk of harm by person in position of trust or authority?		
Position: Is there trust or authority over the client/person? Is client/person dependent on volunteer?		
Level of Supervision: Ongoing? Unsupervised?		

STEP 2: VULNERABLE SECTOR FLOW CHART

This screening tool is responsive to the limits of the Criminal Records Act regarding Vulnerable Sector Checks. This screening tool is intended to assist in identifying those exceptional, specific positions involving vulnerable individuals. Unsupervised positions of trust in relation to vulnerable populations will justify more in-depth employee screening, of which a record check is one justifiable component. *This tool is intended to provide guidance, not preclude or limit consideration of other relevant factors, as assessed by the organization.*

VULNERABLE SECTOR CHECK

↓

Does the position result in ongoing and unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable persons?

YES ↓   NO ↓

Is the position one of trust or authority?   **VSC not Required, however see MATRIX tool to determine whether other levels/types of checks would be appropriate**

YES ↓   NO ↓

Is the contact direct without supervision?

YES ↓   NO ↓

Vulnerable Sector Check may be requested   **Consider Self-Disclosure (ask applicant to voluntarily disclose the information you might otherwise request in a Criminal Record Check)**

↓   ↓

What type of offences are relevant? Examples: Violent offences, offences against person, sexual offences, breach of trust

WHAT IF AN APPLICANT HAS A CRIMINAL RECORD?

Consider the following steps if a criminal record is disclosed or provided through a record check:[75]

1. Speak to the candidate to get more information. Zero tolerance policies (i.e. rejecting a person automatically because of a record) are unfair and discriminatory.

   You can start by asking them to share what they feel comfortable sharing about the circumstances and/or events in their life that led to the charge(s). Remember, non-conviction information means the person is legally innocent.

   Then consider asking the following:

   - How have things changed for you in the months/years since? What did you learn from the experience?
   - If applicable, how do you handle situations differently now?
   - Would you share the information/your experiences: With clients? With co-workers? Any examples of how you have handled questions/shared experiences in the past?
   - Can you predict a situation where the topic may come up and how you'd handle it?
   - What support, if any do you feel you'd require from your supervisor/the organization?

2. Consider how the organization will keep the volunteer's past private within the organization, and who should know about the volunteer's past. This includes limiting who will see the record check results and limiting who should be told about the individual's past. Consider giving some guidance to the individual, at the interview stage, that they are not obligated to share their past with anyone outside of the management team. However, there may be some positions where sharing could be meaningful. For example, the volunteer communicating their involvement with the justice system might be beneficial to breaking down barriers with a justice-involved client.

3. Consider Ontario Human Rights law.

4. Consider the type of record. Organizations should be aware of the different types of records: conviction versus non-conviction. The "On the Record "Guide from John Howard Society of Ontario explores the difference.

MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION ON RECORD CHECKS:

- ❖ **Fish, Susan.** "Criminal record checks: A valuable screening tool or a barrier to volunteering?"
- ❖ **Canadian Civil Liberties Association.** "False Promises, Hidden Costs: The Case for Reframing Employment and Volunteer Police Record Check Practices in Canada." *Footnote 194.*
- ❖ **Public Safety Canada.** "Best Practice Guidelines for Screening Volunteers: Finding the right match."
- ❖ **Unlock.**
- ❖ **Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN).** "Reforming Police Record Checks."
- ❖ **Volunteering Australia.** "Quick Guide: Background Checks and Volunteers."
- ❖ **Volunteer Alberta.** "Volunteer Screening: Is a police information check the only way?"
- ❖ **Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.** "Guideline for Police Record Checks."
- ❖ **Theatre Ontario.** "An Overview of Provincially Mandated Police Records Checks: A Resource for Ontario's Not-for-Profit Sector."
- ❖ **Volunteer Alberta.** "Is a Police

5. Consider the <u>nature of the offence.</u> Criminal record checks do not contain a lot of information. You might see "Assault" or "Breach of Order" as the listed offence, with no additional explanatory information. There is a broad range of circumstances and events that can make up the offence or alleged offence. You can learn this information by speaking with the individual, rather than dismissing them automatically.

6. Consider the <u>relevance</u> of the record to the position being applied for. Human rights tribunals in Canada have outlined a number of questions that are relevant to determining whether a record is related to a job requirement:
   a. Does the behaviour for which the charge was laid, if repeated, pose any threat to the employer's ability to carry on its business safely and efficiently?
   b. What were the circumstances of the charge and the particulars of the offence involved – e.g., how old was the individual when the events in question occurred? Keep in mind that that studies have shown that after a few years a person with a criminal conviction is at no greater risk of reoffending than any other member of the population.
   c. How much time has elapsed between the charge and the employment decision?
      i. What has the individual done during that period of time?
      ii. Have they shown any tendencies to repeat the kind of behaviour for which they were charged?

TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS

Training volunteers helps them acquire the skills and direction that they need to properly carry out the responsibilities of their placement. Training is normally provided by the staff in charge of the area of the organization where the volunteer is going to be placed. The format of training will depend on the position. For simpler positions (like serving meals or handing out pieces of clothing), training can be on-site and primarily focused on ensuring that the volunteer feels confident and comfortable. In the case of placements that require a more specific set of skills (i.e. volunteering at a legal aid clinic or a youth justice committee), a formal setting will likely be required for the training.

Staff should also think beyond the session. The completion of a training session does not signal an end to the training of volunteers. It is unrealistic to expect volunteers to retain all the information shared during a single training session. Ongoing support ensures that they have access to adequate on-site support during their placement. This support could be an additional training/refresh session, or even just letting the volunteer know where they can access support. The staff in charge of the volunteer program should routinely check on the volunteers on their progress and if they feel comfortable with their placement.

The format of any additional training also depends on the type of placement. For example, mentoring can be useful in the case of long-term placements, and it may help ensure the retention of volunteers by matching a new volunteer with a more experienced one. Mentoring also helps to develop motivation and growth

as well as loyalty to the work group and the organization. Regardless of the type of placement, the organization should keep in mind that proper training increases the confidence of volunteers and therefore increases their productivity to the benefit of the organization itself and the community.

Training should include these key elements:[76]

- Provide an overview of the organizations policies and practices
- Focus on specific to the requirements of the volunteer placement
- Focus on increasing or developing the skill level of the volunteer
- Be ongoing (available when needed)
- Be specific to the needs identified by both the volunteer and the supervisor
- Be periodically evaluated to make sure that it meets the needs of the volunteers and the organization

Elements that can be included during the training session and its supporting material are:[77]

- o **Welcome message**
- o **Content of training session (or supporting material)**
- o **History of the organization and the program**
- o **Vision and Mission**
- o **Organizational structure and staff from the program**
- o **What the volunteers can expect, what the organization expects of the volunteers**
- o **The Impact of the programs and services delivered by volunteers**
- o **Role/job description of the (volunteer position)**
- o **Information about of the population served by the organization**
- o **Volunteers rights and responsibilities**
- o **Best ways to communicate with staff**
- o **Confidentiality, anti-discrimination and other policies**
- o **Volunteer Code of Conduct**
- o **Conflict Resolution Policy**
- o **Volunteer Recognition**
- o **Things to do during your volunteer shift (sign in, sign out, etc.)**
- o **Evaluation and Feedback**
- o **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)**
- o **Volunteer agreement form**
- o **Emergency procedures**
- o **Additional training resources**

SKILL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Giving volunteers the opportunity to increase or develop new skills is highly valued and greatly appreciated by volunteers, to the point that it is sometimes considered to be a form of recognition.[78] For some volunteers, the opportunity to gain new skills is the main motivator for their placement. For that reason, sending a volunteer to a special course, workshop or conference can be a good reward for their service to the organization. Some training opportunities offer a diploma or certification that is greatly appreciated by individuals that want to develop professionally in a particular field. In other instances, training opportunities do not have to be directly related to the volunteer's placement, but a more general interest of the volunteer and/or the organization for example, conflict resolution, public speaking or CPR. Offering these types of opportunities can contribute to maintaining a motivated and committed volunteer team, which should be a key goal of a volunteer program.

MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION ON TRAINING VOLUNTEERS:

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Considerations for volunteer induction and orientation - Information Sheet."

❖ **Fritz, Joanne.** "The Basics of volunteer training and orientation."

❖ **National Council of Volunteer Organizations.** "Effective Volunteer Training."

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Planning a Training Session."

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Volunteer Information Handbook: Table of Contents."

SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

Providing the appropriate level of support and supervision is essential for the efficacy of the programs and services delivered by the organization, and will help ensure a positive experience for the volunteer. The level of supervision will likely recede as the volunteer gains insight on and experience with how the organization functions and their specific role. Low retention of volunteers is a common problem among non-profit organizations, but also signals an emerging trend where short-term volunteer opportunities are more attractive to a growing sector of the population.[79] A key takeaway is that organizations should aim to manage their volunteers the same way they manage their staff and give them the support they need to perform their duties properly.[80]

ASSIGNING A SUPERVISOR

Depending on the number of areas, programs or services utilizing volunteers, organizations should designate a supervisor(s) for volunteers. A supervisor should be responsible for providing advice, guidance and feedback during the volunteer's placement. That person should also be in charge of making sure that the volunteer has all the materials, training and directions to allow them to perform their tasks effectively. The supervisor's responsibilities should be clearly included in their job descriptions. Bottom line, the most important responsibility of the supervisor is to create an environment that empowers volunteers to perform their duties.

Normally, volunteers want and need to be held accountable for their performance. Effective supervision allows volunteers to gain confidence in themselves, feel satisfied with their level of contribution to the organization, and feel that their placement is helping them to grow both personally and professionally.[81]

The person(s) assigned to supervise volunteers should be willing and able to work with volunteers. A special effort must be made to make sure that the volunteers' needs are met and for that reason, the volunteer manager/coordinator in charge of the volunteer program should support supervisors by promoting best practices with respect to volunteer management. The person in charge of the volunteer program should also regularly collect feedback from the organizations management team for the purpose of evaluating and improving the volunteer program.

Through their everyday support, supervisors can assist volunteers by providing the following:[82]

General information about the organization (policies, procedures and standards)	Fostering good relationships between paid staff and volunteers	Clear and appropriate expectations related to the placement	Ongoing communication with the volunteer(s)	Monitoring the service provided by the volunteer and evaluating their performance
Regular reinforcement and recognition	Corrective feedback when required	Arranging for training and equipment	Recommending new tasks for the volunteer	Planning and maintaining work schedules.

AVOIDING BURNOUT, PROVIDING SUPPORT AND VOLUNTEER RETENTION

Good volunteer retention reflects a healthy organization, and is vital for its continuity and efficiency. For that reason, organizations should try their best to avoid unnecessary volunteer turnover and take the necessary steps to make the organization a place that encourages and supports volunteer work. Support for volunteers is closely linked with providing the proper amount of assistance, training and overall management.[83] Moreover, proper levels of support allows them to develop a strong sense of belonging, prepares them for their role and helps organizations circumvent a number of potential problems (reduces risk).[84]

Some of the conditions that can have a positive effect on the retention of volunteers are:[85]

Being well-oriented to the workplace	Having available training and ongoing training available opportunities to grow or develop new skills	Having meaningful work with specific responsibilities	Having a dedicated space and the necessary resources

Being respected	Having the adequate level of support	Being recognized for work done

Staff can avoid volunteer burnout while maintaining a committed team of active and engaged volunteers by being aware of some of the most common signs of burnout:

❖ Loss of energy
❖ Loss of creativity
❖ Loss of satisfaction
❖ Lack of purpose towards their placement

If volunteers seem to be unhappy, they probably are. Supervisors and the staff in charge of the volunteer program should always engage their volunteers, especially in burnout situations, to discuss the matter before they leave the organization altogether.
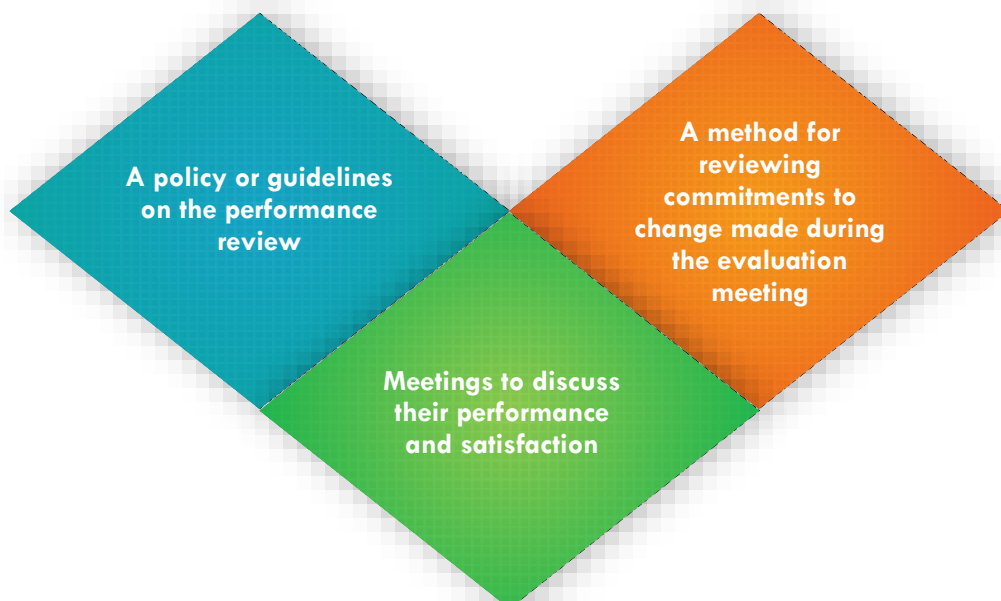
Another way to increase volunteer retention is by providing volunteers with benefits or perks as a way to show appreciation for their work. However, maintaining regular communication with volunteers is often the most underrated way to retain volunteers.

By maintaining regular communication with volunteers, an organization generates interest in upcoming volunteer opportunities and other initiatives. Keeping a volunteer team engaged during the quiet months of the year can be a challenge, but the volunteer manager or coordinator should find creative ways to maintain communication with volunteers (and former volunteers) through things like: contests, giveaways, encouraging them to share their stories or promoting other volunteer opportunities that can keep the organization fresh in their minds.

EVALUATING VOLUNTEERS

Efforts by an organization to evaluate the performance of its volunteers demonstrates that it cares about the quality of their work.[86] Depending on the nature of the placement, and particularly in the case of long-term placements, organizations can evaluate volunteers in the same way that they evaluate their staff; using the same terms, schedule, forms and types of discussions.[87]

A system for evaluating volunteers can include the following elements:[88]

A policy or guidelines on the performance review

A method for reviewing commitments to change made during the evaluation meeting

Meetings to discuss their performance and satisfaction

The way an organization is planning to evaluate its volunteers should be explained during the orientation session. Evaluations also give volunteers and their supervisors (or the volunteer manager or coordinator) the opportunity to talk not only about their performance, but also about how they feel about their placement and make suggestions for improvement. A proper evaluation should also include looking at past performance reviews, talking about their current performance and plans for the future (i.e. is the volunteer interested in a different placement, going back to school or will need a change of schedule). The evaluation session is also a good time to review the volunteer's job description to see if it continues to correctly describe their work.[89]

As with all staff, evaluating volunteers and providing them with constructive feedback about their performance can help them do a better job, which will ultimately benefit everyone: the volunteer, staff, the organization and most importantly the clients that they serve.

MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEER SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION:

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Problems with Volunteers."

❖ **Volunteer Scotland.** "Managing Challenging Volunteer Situations."

❖ **The Urban Institute.** "Volunteer Management: Practices and Retention of Volunteers."

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Performance Appraisal."

❖ **Toft, Doug.** "Managing volunteers: 5 elements of effective evaluation."

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Performance Review Template."

❖ **Oregon University.** "Volunteer Performance Evaluation Tool."

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Organizations with effective volunteer programs acknowledge the contributions made by their volunteers in multiple ways.[90] Recognition should be an ongoing consistent effort, using both formal and informal methods that are meaningful to the individual.[91] It is also important for organizations to recognize their volunteers collectively, both internally and publicly, for the contribution that they make to the organization. These actions will help to foster a culture of collaboration within an organization by making sure that staff understand how the work of volunteers benefits the organization, clients and the community in general; while simultaneously informing volunteers and the community it's about the impact that volunteering has on the organization.[92]

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION:

Informal volunteer recognition

Recognizing and expressing gratitude on an ongoing basis is not only polite and professional, but It is also very important for a positive working environment. Saying "thank you" to volunteers is the simplest and one of the most effective ways to celebrate the contribution of a volunteer.[93] A good principle to keep in mind while saying "thank you" to volunteers is to deliver the praise in a personal and honest manner and avoiding an acknowledgment that is too overproduced or rehearsed.[94]

Ways for staff and the volunteer manager or coordinator to say thank you:[95]

Surprising volunteers by delivering a gesture of appreciation that they don't expect. (i.e. birthday or holiday cards)	Paying personal attention to volunteers and taking time to know what is happening in their lives, and making the effort to ask them about it the next time they meet	Offering small tokens of appreciation like chocolates, soft drinks, lunch, coffee mugs, t-shirts, etc.

It is also important for staff to understand the interests of their volunteers.[96] For example, if an organization focuses its effort in arts, offering free tickets for an arts festival or a gallery can be an excellent way to surprise volunteers. Finally, regardless of the additional ways an organization wants to recognize the work of its volunteers, staff should keep in mind that the simplest ways to show appreciation are often the most effective. Appreciation should be expressed regularly to volunteers with a quick thank you, a prompt reply to an email or phone inquiries or by scheduling a time to sit down and catch up.[97]

Formal volunteer recognition

Informal acknowledgment of the contributions made by volunteers should always be accompanied by formal, regular and structured ways of volunteer recognition.[98] Formal volunteer recognition should follow two main principles:[99]

1. It should be done on a consistent basis
2. It should have a clear message on the reasons for the reward along with the criteria used.

Formal volunteer recognition does not need to be expensive, but some degree of funding and the support of senior management is needed to sustain these activities.[100] Volunteer recognition should be formalized through the creation of the required guidelines and included in the policy governing the volunteer program.

Most common types of formal volunteer recognition:[101]

- **Annual events (i.e. receptions, luncheons and dinners)**
- **Awards (both internal and external)**
- **Media coverage (i.e. profiling volunteers on the organization's website and/or social media, newspaper interviews or letters to the editor)**
- **Gifts (i.e. t-shirts, coffee mugs and other items displaying the logo of the organization)**
- **National Volunteer Week events**
- **Special celebrations. Staff can create their own calendar to recognize birthdays or special milestones reached by a particular volunteer**
- **Professional/Skill development opportunities.**

Some good examples of formal recognition can be listing the names of new volunteers and volunteer service anniversaries, "organizing a volunteer of the year/month" program or nominating volunteer for awards. In the case of internal awards, it is important to develop specific requirements for each one of them and make sure that staff are involved in the nomination process. Internal awards also contribute to the organization's ability to develop its own culture and celebrate its history. An award can be named after the founder of the organization, an important donor or an outstanding volunteer that retired.

Finally, another way to formally reward volunteers is by setting up opportunities for professional or skills development.[102] Offering training can be an effective form of recognition and help to keep volunteers committed and motivated.[103] This can be done by identifying professionals within or outside the organization that can provide workshops or training on different subjects. It can be

particularly beneficial for recent graduates, immigrants and members of marginalized communities who are trying to establish themselves in the workforce. Some volunteers use their placements to gain experience in a field where they want to develop professionally. Finally providing volunteers with reference letters and/or sharing internal volunteer or employment postings can also demonstrate an organization's appreciation and commitment to their professional growth.[104]

MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION:

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Volunteer Recognition Tool."

❖ **Bautista, Christopher.** "7 ways to appreciate your volunteers."

❖ **Volunteer Toronto.** "3 Things to think about when recognizing volunteers."

❖ **Volunteer Halton.** "Volunteer Recognition."

RESIGNATION AND DISMISSAL OF VOLUNTEERS

No matter how effective a volunteer program is, resignations are a fact of life for both the volunteer and the organization. Regardless of the nature and length of the placement, organizations should always know how to handle the exit of volunteers with the aim of ending things in the most positive way possible.

VOLUNTEER RESIGNATION

Organizations should make it clear to their volunteers that resignations are acceptable and should share the policies, guidelines or procedures for this situation.

A formal volunteer resignation process can be different depending on the organization, but it should involve the cooperation of both the volunteer and the organization. For example, the volunteer may need to do the following:[105]

❖ Provide reasonable notice (the interpretation of 'reasonable' will depend on both the organization and the nature of the service provided by the volunteer)
❖ Return any confidential information
❖ Return any material or equipment

In return, the organization may do the following during the resignation process:[106]

❖ Provide references
❖ Provide statements of attendance
❖ Conduct an exit interview

VOLUNTEER RETIREMENT

In the case of volunteers that have been with an organization for a long time, it is possible that at some point they will retire or step back from their responsibilities. A successful volunteer program should be prepared for this kind of situation. This will allow volunteers to retire without affecting the efficiency of the organization and without feeling the pressure or guilt to stay on board because nobody is there to replace them.

There are some ways that an organization can be ready for the retirement of a volunteer:

❖ Offer volunteers the option of "semi-retirement". Give volunteers the option of staying involved in a less demanding role. This will contribute to a smoother transition by allowing their expertise and experience to stay with organization and be passed on to new volunteers.

❖ Celebrate success and achievements. Be sure to recognize retiring volunteers in a special manner. This will ensure that the volunteer can still act as a goodwill ambassador of the organization in the community and potentially help to recruit new volunteers. Word-of-mouth is one of the best recruitment techniques available.

❖ Ask volunteers to fill out an exit interview form when they leave the organization. Recommendations should be shared with staff.

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Any volunteer that has been part of the organization for a reasonable amount of time should be given the opportunity to provide feedback at the end of their volunteer experience.

Exit interviews help organizations with the following: [107]

Get valuable information on the state of the volunteer program	Confirm the reasons why the volunteer decided to end their position with the organization	Learn what aspects were the most and least satisfying for them while volunteering with the organization
Learn if there is anything that the organization can change about their role	Make sure that they felt that they received all the support needed during their placement	Makes the volunteer feel that their views are important

DISMISSAL OR TERMINATION OF VOLUNTEERS

One myth about volunteer management is that volunteers can not be dismissed or terminated because they "work for free". That is not the case and the dismissal of volunteers does happen on occasion.

Common reasons for dismissal or termination of a volunteer: [108]

❖ Position not needed anymore
❖ Illegal, dangerous or careless behaviour causing intentional or unintentional harm, or putting people or the organization at risk;
  o fails to maintain appropriate standards of conduct as set down in the organization's policies
  o lacks the necessary skills for the position
  o breaches confidentiality guidelines

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE THE TERMINATION OF A VOLUNTEER

Perhaps a more difficult decision is how to manage a volunteer when their behaviour creates problems, but not obvious risks. When a performance or behaviour problem is not dealt with through timely corrective feedback, the problem will likely persist and may even escalate. Moreover, other volunteers and staff will continue working with the problematic volunteer who may end up causing harm, a waste of resources and/or damaging the reputation of the organization.[109]   In those situations, before terminating a volunteer, the volunteer manager or coordinator should consider some alternatives as they may be more appropriate for the situation:

❖ Talk to the volunteer: meet with the volunteer in a one-on-one setting and candidly ask the volunteer if they are facing any challenges in their position, that may be affecting their performance. If possible, ask if there is anything that can be done to assist and support them.

❖ Additional training: there is a chance that the volunteer may not understand the rules of the organization or the way that they must be followed. The problem may also be the lack of knowledge or understanding. Staff should consider re-training the volunteer and see if their work improves.

❖ Review level of supervision: the volunteer may not be receiving sufficient guidance in their work or may feel unsupported. Talk with the volunteer about different supervision strategies that could encourage and support their work.

❖ Change of placement: the volunteer simply may not excel in their current position. Transfer the volunteer to a new position and see if there is a change in their performance. This may even mean referring the volunteer to a new department or to another organization entirely.

THE TERMINATION AND DISMISSAL PROCESS

Similar to terminating an employee, organizations should have a process in place to deal with the termination of volunteers.[110] For example, the volunteer manager or coordinator can use the following 3-step system as an example of how to articulate, document and justify the decision to dismiss/terminate a volunteer:

1. Forewarning/Notice: the process's first step is to make sure that policies and information about the potential for terminating volunteers is clear and provided to the volunteer (usually at training and orientation, but can and should be revisited). This should include making sure that volunteers understand the code of conduct, privacy policy and other policies or guidelines relevant to their placement and that the job description clearly articulates requirements and responsibilities.

2. Investigation/Determination: A volunteer should never be dismissed "on the spot", regardless of the seriousness of the transgression. This step involves an evaluation of the situation. It is advisable that the organization establishes a process for reviewing the behaviour of the volunteer and recording any problems or incidents. It is also recommended to document the volunteer's

wrongdoing or behaviours by collecting information, records and testimonies of volunteers or staff.

3.   Implementation: This requires that the volunteer manager or coordinator enforces the process. The rules must be applied equally and fairly to all volunteers, and appropriate penalties must be given. If possible, a review process should be implemented so that the decision does not look like a personal one.

Once the decision of terminating a volunteer has been properly documented, it should be reviewed and approved by the Executive Director or the staff member supervising the work of the volunteer manager or coordinator. After this has been done, a meeting should be arranged with the volunteer with the purpose of communicating this decision to them.

Important factors to consider when terminating and dismissing a volunteer:

❖ Privacy. The meeting should be held in a private setting to respect and preserve the dignity of the volunteer and staff;

❖ Have another staff member present in the meeting, ideally the volunteer's immediate supervisor or the person in charge of Human Resources;

❖ The meeting should be short. Staff should be clear and direct with the volunteer, and make clear that they understand that this is a final decision;

❖ Staff should be prepared and practice the exact words that are going to be used with the volunteer. This can be a potentially stressful situation, it is important to make sure that the volunteer understands that the decision is final;

❖ Staff should avoid engaging in an argument about the merits of the decision. The purpose of the meeting is to announce the decision and not to readdress the issue;

❖ Follow-up. Staff should send a letter or email confirming the decision and informing the volunteer of any departure details (i.e. returning material or equipment). A copy of the letter should be included in the volunteer's file. Staff should also follow-up with the appropriate individuals like staff and clients and inform them of the change.

MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION ON RESIGNATION AND DISMISSAL OF VOLUNTEERS:

❖ **Rehnborg, Sarah Jane.** "A Few Pointers On the Unpleasant Topic of Firing Volunteers."

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Exit Interview Questionnaire."

EVALUATION

EVALUATING VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

Measuring the impact of a volunteer program is becoming increasingly important for organizations. The evaluation of a volunteer program involves reviewing, describing and documenting the effects of the services or program and their importance to the organization and the wider community.[111] However, for a variety of reasons, measuring the impact of volunteer programs is probably the least common volunteer management-related activity among organizations. Despite its limitations, the most common and basic way to measure the impact of a volunteer program is by collecting the number of hours that volunteers contribute to an organization and assigning them a monetary value. This is something that all organizations should do in order to understand the scope and reach of their volunteer program. However, reporting only the number of hours volunteers donate has some limitations and it doesn't say much about their impact on an organizations mission and its clients or if their work is making a meaningful contribution towards the goals of the organization.[112] For that reason, organizations should make an effort to take a deeper look into the impact of their volunteer program.

STEPS TO EVALUATE A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The first step in evaluating and measuring the impact of a volunteer program is to ask why the information is relevant to the organization.[113] This will contribute to having a clear understanding of how the information will be used and consequently this will help guide all steps in the process of measuring impact and evaluating. It is also crucial to consult with key stakeholders who may be participating or have a vested interest in the results of this work.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE EVALUATING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM:

- ❖ What are the goals of the volunteer program to be evaluated? (i.e. volunteer satisfaction, volunteer retention, client satisfaction, impacts, reach, etc.)
- ❖ What will the evaluation achieve? (what outcomes are wanted/expected as result of the evaluation?)
- ❖ Who will be involved in the evaluation process?
- ❖ How much time is needed to implement the evaluation process?
- ❖ How will volunteers be informed of the outcomes of the evaluations?
- ❖ What resources are required to perform the evaluation?
- ❖ Which evaluation methods will be used? (interviews, discussion groups, volunteer records, questionnaires)
- ❖ How will the information collected during the evaluation be utilized?
- ❖ Who is interested in the outcomes of the evaluation? And how will results be shared?

The results from the evaluation could be used to: [114]

❖ Seek funding
❖ Provide evidence to support an application for funding
❖ Showcase achievements
❖ Develop new services or activities
❖ Identify 'what works'
❖ Provide direction to the board and staff
❖ Recommend improvements for the program
❖ Support strategic planning
❖ Identify the need to reallocate funding or staff (including volunteers)

Proper evaluation needs to be systematic and requires several steps that the organization should follow:

1. Description: an organization should develop a clear description of the volunteer program. It should include the program's purpose along with services and activities where volunteers make a contribution. It should be done with the goal of ensuring that staff and volunteers have the same understanding about the components of the program, its implementation and intended results. Since the intention is to evaluate a volunteer program as stand alone, the description should include what volunteers do (types of placements) and how the program operates. The description should also include the following:

❖ The need and importance of the volunteer program and services delivered by volunteers (the problem that the program is addressing, the significance of the problem, target groups, changes or trends observed)
❖ Goals and objectives of the services delivered by volunteers
❖ Activities related to the services provided by volunteers
❖ Resources available for the volunteer program (staff, equipment, etc.)
❖ Stage of development of the volunteer program (if the program is planned in stages)

2. Identifying outcomes and indicators to be measured. Staff should decide what outcomes to measure and why they are important in the context of the organization, by looking at three key questions:

❖ Is it reasonable to believe the volunteer program can influence the outcome(s)?
❖ Would measurement of the outcome help identify program successes or areas for improvement?
❖ Would the program's stakeholders accept the outcome as valid?

The outcome(s) to be measured should be relevant to the goals and objectives of the organization, indicative of meaningful changes, capable of being influenced by changes in the volunteer program, realistic, useful in identifying successes and problems, and effective in representing changes attributable to the volunteer program. Once the outcome(s) has been identified that meet these criteria, the next step is to identify indicators. Indicators need to be specific, observable, and measurable. They show the progress the volunteer program is making toward an outcome.

3. Design of the evaluation: depending on the resources available, evaluations can vary on their level of sophistication and complexity. The most basic level of evaluation can involve reviewing service records and their results (i.e. hours worked, number of volunteers, outcomes) and obtaining basic satisfaction levels from volunteers and staff. However, if more resources (time included) are available, staff can create surveys, questionnaires, hold interviews or organize focus groups to thoroughly evaluate specific outcomes and/or program components.

4. Data Collection. At this stage, staff should develop the appropriate tools to collect data like surveys or interview forms with the goal of ensuring data collection uniformity. The type of tools that needs to be developed depends on the type of data that needs to be collected.

   o Quantitative data that can include: demographic data, number of mentors, number of people attending orientation or training sessions, number of volunteer hours (and give them a monetary value). This can be collected through some tools that are already set in place with the purpose of monitoring the volunteer program.[115] For example, during the recruitment process (using the volunteer application form), sign-up sheets, keeping attendance records of training sessions and others.

   o Qualitative Data (outcomes) relies more on the feedback from volunteers, clients and staff from the organization. This kind of data can include testimonials, views, opinions or perceptions. Some of the best ways to collect quantitative data are surveys, questionnaires (that should include comment sections), interviews and informal discussion groups.[116]

5. Data analysis and management: once the data has been collected it needs to be analyzed to determine what it has found about the volunteer program. Key pieces of information should be tabulated, like number of evaluation participants, number and percentage of participants satisfied with their placements. When possible, comparisons can be a useful way to analyze data (i.e. volunteers that received a certain type of training versus those that didn't).

6. Reporting results: once the data has been analyzed and interpreted, a report can be drafted along with recommendations for the volunteer program. While drafting the report, staff should keep in mind who the audiences or objectives of such recommendations are going to be (i.e. volunteers, staff, Board). [117] For example, the findings of the report can include that the volunteer program is effective, but understaffed, which might result in recommending an increase on the recruitment efforts with a focus on certain demographics or groups. Findings should be documented in a formal way and the information communicated in a clear and impartial way. This includes avoiding making excuses for negative outcomes. Instead the report should indicate the problem, why it occurred and ways that it can be resolved[118] with the goal of triggering action among the stakeholders. This process can be beneficial for the volunteer program and the organization as a whole. Reports can help to demonstrate the effectiveness of a volunteer program, develop a budget and justify the allocation of resources. The information collected can also help the volunteer manager or coordinator to

compare outcomes with previous years and see the evolution/growth of the program.

SAMPLE EVALUATION REPORT OUTLINE

I. Executive Summary

II. Background and Purpose

A. Program background

B. Evaluation rationale

C. Program description

III. Methods

A. Design

B. Measures

C. Data collection procedures

D. Data processing procedures

E. Analysis

F. Limitations

IV. Results

V. Discussion and Recommendations

VI. Appendixes (e.g., data tables)

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). "Successful Strategies for Recruiting, Training and Utilizing Volunteers: A Guide for Faith-and Community-Based Service Providers." (2005).

More resources and information on evaluating volunteers and volunteer programs:

❖ **Volunteer Scotland.** "Measuring the impact of volunteering."

❖ **Volunteering England.** "Monitoring and evaluating a volunteer programme."

❖ **Feilchenfeld, Sammy.** "Measure Twice, Cut Once - Evaluating the Effectiveness of Your Volunteer Program Volunteer."

❖ **Saqid, Basil.** "Metrics for Success: Evaluating your volunteer program."

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Volunteer Program Evaluation Tool."

❖ **Volunteering Queensland.** "Program Evaluation Developing Performance Indicators."

❖ **Charity Village.** "Evaluation: Your tool to volunteer program success."

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