

Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program?

The Volunteer Centre, Guelph Police Service and the City of Guelph have worked in partnership to find a way to defer costs associated with Police Records Checks (PRCs) for volunteers. The program allows volunteers to obtain free PRCs if they are working with vulnerable individuals (i.e. minors, children, seniors and persons with disabilities), have access to confidential information and/or handle funds.

How does the Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program work?

Volunteer Centre staff will work with member organizations in Guelph to ensure appropriate volunteer screening policies and procedures are in place, and that volunteer position descriptions are well defined and indicate the necessity for a PRC. An authorization number for approved volunteer positions will be provided after a successful application has been made. The Guelph Police Service will not charge any fees for conducting the PRC when an authorization number is presented.

How long will it take to get an authorization number for approved positions?

The length of time to complete the process will depend on the quality and comprehensiveness of the application. Organizations that have solid volunteer screening policies and procedures and who have well-defined and comprehensive position descriptions will complete the process more swiftly. Organizations that need support and feedback on these documents may require more time to complete the process.

Does participation in the program affect the length of time it takes for volunteers to obtain a PRC?

The time it takes for the police to complete the PRC is not affected by your participation in the program.

Which organizations are eligible to participate?

To participate in the program, organizations must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- ✓ be a member in good standing of the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington;
- ✓ be a registered nonprofit or charitable organization;

- ✓ perform a community service in the City of Guelph;
- ✓ involve volunteers who work in eligible roles.

Roles considered for eligibility will be those that involve working with individuals who are at greater risk of being harmed than the general population because of:

- ✓ age (those under age 18, and those 65 years of age and older); or
- ✓ disability (including a physical or mental disability, or a mental illness)

AND the individuals the volunteer engages with are:

- ✓ in a position of dependence on others; or
- ✓ in the care of a volunteer who is in a position of direct authority or trust, relative to them, with potential to cause harm.

AND/OR the volunteer:

- ✓ has access to confidential, sensitive information, master keys and passwords
- ✓ manages organization's funds

What are some examples of volunteers working in eligible roles?

Sam wishes to volunteer as a Big Brother with Big Brothers Big Sisters. In this capacity, Sam would be spending time with a child who is under 18 years of age. Sam would also be in a position of authority or trust relative to the child. Sam, therefore, would be volunteering in an eligible position. As a volunteer for Big Brothers Big Sisters, Sam can use an authorization number to obtain a PRC free of charge.

As a volunteer with Meals on Wheels, Sally interacts with seniors who are 65 years of age and older. Sally would also be in a position where there is a relationship involving dependence and trust. Sally would, therefore, be volunteering in an eligible role. As a volunteer with Meals on Wheels, Sally can use an authorization number to obtain a PRC free of charge.

As a volunteer at a local nonprofit, James is responsible for maintaining the financial health of the organization by monitoring donations and financial computer programs, preparing budgets and paying invoices. He may count weekly donations and ensure funds are deposited to the correct accounts. James also has signing authority for financial transactions. As a volunteer at a nonprofit organization that is a member of the Volunteer Centre, James can use an authorization number to obtain a PRC free of charge.

As a committee member of a Volunteer Centre, Meral attends monthly meetings to provide input on the planning of National Volunteer Week activities. Meral works as part of a group with other volunteers and staff. Meral's volunteer work does not involve interaction with someone from a vulnerable population, nor is she in a position with direct authority. This committee volunteer position would not be eligible to receive an authorization number.

Is a unique authorization number needed for each volunteer?

No. Unique authorization numbers will be assigned to each eligible volunteer role. Every volunteer who applies for a particular role will use the same authorization number. The authorization number can only be used by the organization to which it is assigned. The volunteer must use this authorization number when requesting a PRC at the Guelph Police Service in order to obtain the PRC free of charge. The authorization number cannot be used for volunteers in roles other than the ones deemed eligible. To ensure accountability, the authorization number must be presented at the time a PRC request is made to Guelph Police Service.

What if the volunteer role is considered ineligible to receive an authorization number?

An organization that has a volunteer role that is deemed ineligible for an authorization number will have the ability to appeal the decision. An appeal process has been established. For more information on the appeal process, contact the Volunteer Centre.

Please note that organizations can continue to request PRCs at Guelph Police Service for volunteer roles that do not fit this Best Practices model; however, in this case, a fee will be charged.

Do authorization numbers need to be renewed each year?

You will need to renew authorization numbers for approved volunteer positions every two years. You will receive notification by email 30 days prior to the expiry date. This review process was built into the program with the intention of keeping screening practices and procedures as current as possible.

If my organization is already part of the Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program, do I have to go through the whole process again if I need to get an authorization number for a new volunteer position?

No. If you are introducing a new volunteer position, you can send the position description and other pertinent information directly to the program administrator.

What are the responsibilities of the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington as the manager of the Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program?

The Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington will be responsible for:

- ✓ designing, implementing and managing the authorization application process;
- ✓ assessing the eligibility of nonprofit/voluntary sector organizations for participation in the program;
- ✓ approving eligible volunteer roles and assigning authorization numbers;
- ✓ organizing and managing the appeal process;
- ✓ monitoring and measuring participation rates in the program; and
- ✓ ensuring accountability on the part of the nonprofit/voluntary sector.

The Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington, the Guelph Police Service and the City of Guelph will jointly evaluate the success of the Best Practices in Volunteer Screening program on an annual basis. Guelph Police Service will continue to be responsible for conducting Police Records Checks as per their process and timelines.

How does this program apply to private sector (third-party) PRC providers?

This program does not cover the costs of PRC services from private sector, third party providers. A volunteer must obtain a PRC direct from the Guelph Police Service in order to be covered under this program.

Are practicum positions that are not paid eligible?

No. If a practicum is required by the education institution and credits are received for it, then the practicum does not fall under our definition of a volunteer position.

My organization is not a registered nonprofit or charity. Is there anything that I can do?

The program is only for registered nonprofit and charitable organizations.