



Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program?

PIN The People and Information Network, Guelph Police Service and the City of Guelph worked in partnership to find a way to defer costs associated with Police Records Checks (PRCs) for volunteers. The program allows volunteers to obtain PRCs from the Guelph Police Service for volunteers engaging in eligible volunteer roles with vulnerable individuals (i.e. minors, children, seniors and persons with disabilities), access to confidential information and/or financial resources.

How does the Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program work?

PIN The People and Information Network staff 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 and expiry date for approved volunteer positions will be provided. The Guelph Police Service will not charge any fees for conducting the PRC when an authorization number and expiry date are presented. Read our FACT sheet to find out more details on the complete process.

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

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

Which organizations are eligible to participate?

The Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program allows volunteers to obtain PRCs free of charge. To participate in the program, organizations must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- ✓ be a member in good standing of PIN The People and Information Network;
- ✓ 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 (under age 18, and 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

Finally, organizations must demonstrate that they have comprehensive volunteer screening policies and procedures in place by providing a copy to the PIN The People and Information Network as part of the application process. If an organization does not have comprehensive screening measures in place, they will be supported to improve their policies.

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 PIN The People and Information Network, James can use an authorization number to obtain a PRC free of charge.

As a committee member of The People and Information Network, 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, a position of direct authority, nor access to information and/or financial resources. 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 and expiry date 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 and expiry date must be presented at the time a PRC request is made to Guelph Police Service.

How can a nonprofit/charitable organization participate in the program?

A nonprofit/charitable organization that meets the program's qualifications can apply for free PRCs through an online application on The People and Information Network's website. If approved, the organization will receive an authorization number and expiry date for each position that is deemed eligible to receive a PRC free of charge. The organization/volunteer can then use this authorization number and expiry date when obtaining a PRC at Guelph Police Service.

Do authorization numbers need to be renewed each year?

Organizations participating in the Best Practices in Volunteer Screening Program 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, providing a great opportunity to review and update volunteer positions and screening policies.

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.

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 not-for-profit and charitable organizations.