

Step 8 – Orientation and Training Sessions

Orientation and training are an important part of the screening process. Screening continues through the early period of the volunteer's involvement, and should be ongoing throughout the entire engagement. This vigilance on behalf of the organization is a must – the responsibility does not end once the volunteer is in place.

A three- to six-month probation period allows the organization and the individual to ensure they have made the right choices and offers both the chance to change their minds.

During the orientation and training period, an organization should achieve:

- knowledge of the volunteer's approach, values and work style;
- translation of its policies to the individual's role within the organization;
- development of interpersonal skills in areas where each individual will be working; and
- the final decision of whether or not the person is appropriate.

It is perfectly acceptable to change your mind about your choice of volunteer during or after a probationary period. Trust your observations and make decisions accordingly.

Tips on dismissing a volunteer:

- Conduct a personal interview at the end of the probation period.
- Whenever possible, give the reasons for terminating the person's involvement.
- Unless you have clear and irrefutable proof that the individual intends to harm a participant, you should avoid mentioning this possibility for reasons of liability.
- Emphasize the position, not the person (e.g. the position is not suited to your skills).
- Point out discrepancies with the position description.
- Thank them for trying and suggest a different position if appropriate.

Although training volunteers may use some of your organization's resources, you will benefit in the long-run through better informed volunteers, better job performance, increased job satisfaction, safe environments and the opportunity to continue with the screening process.

Make orientation and training events mandatory. Apart from providing an opportunity for you to pass on information, including manuals and handbooks, and answer questions, it gives you and other volunteers and staff members a chance to follow up on the placement. Refusal to attend, or constant excuses for not attending may signal that something could be wrong. Urge people to participate at these meetings; don't always let them sit on the sidelines.



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Ontario Screening Initiative

A partnership of volunteer groups working together to make communities safer through the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network — Volunteer Canada Safe Steps Volunteer Screening Program. www.volunteer.ca

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As always, these requirements should be made clear to the applicant from the outset.

Exercise – Discussion on orientation and training

List the types of orientation and training that would be helpful to the volunteer and serve as a protection mechanism for the participant. Discuss how these sessions can be implemented within your organization for new volunteers and existing volunteers (e.g. buddy system, spot checks, mentor system).

Summary of key concepts

1. Responsibility does not end once the volunteer is in place – ongoing vigilance is a must.
2. A probation period allows both the organization and the volunteer to learn more about each other.
3. Host orientation and training sessions to provide new and existing volunteers with information on the organization’s policies and procedures.
4. Orientation and training sessions offer you the opportunity to observe volunteers in a social setting.

For additional information on Orientation and Training Sessions and other Volunteer Canada Screening Resources, or to order the complete Safe Steps workbook, please call 1-800-670-0401 or visit us at: www.volunteer.ca



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