

Step 2– Position Design and Description

Position design

The first level of screening consists of effectively designing positions in your organization. Each position has a specific set of conditions and responsibilities, and with these, risks.

To reduce the risk factor:

- Accept the fact that participants can be harmed while taking part in your organization’s programs.
- Establish behavioural standards for your organization and communicate them to your volunteers and staff.
- Group the positions in your organization according to their level of risk.
 - Low risk: minimal or no contact with vulnerable people.
 - Medium risk: contact with vulnerable people but never alone.
 - High risk: opportunity to be alone with or exert influence over vulnerable people.
- Set the screening standard based on the risk factor. For high-risk positions, all 10 steps of screening should be followed.
- Actively work to reduce risk in specific positions:
 - Design positions that require people to work in pairs.
 - Introduce an initial mentor phase where an experienced person works with new volunteers.
- If your volunteers are active in more than one position, make sure they are screened for the position with the highest level of risk. If volunteers change positions, re-screen accordingly.

Position description

A position description is a powerful and necessary tool. It is used to define a position and to set ground rules for personnel—both paid and unpaid.

Position descriptions not only protect personnel by formalizing roles, but also send a clear message to any potential abuser that your organization is serious about providing safety for both their participants and personnel.



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

Funding for the Ontario Screening Initiative is provided by the Government of Ontario.

The following pieces of information can be included in a position description:

- Title
- Participant group (children, seniors, etc.)
- Goals
- Activities and tasks
- Outline of responsibilities
- Time commitment expected
- Boundaries and limitations
- Skills, experience and qualifications
- Personal traits and qualities
- Orientation and training available
- Support, supervision and evaluation provided
- Mandatory activities (e.g. training, monthly meetings, travel)
- Working conditions (e.g. non-smoking environment)
- Benefits to the volunteer
- Screening measures.

Ask questions – who the participant is, what the activity is, where it is undertaken and how it is supervised. These questions should focus on how to build in ways of avoiding inherent or foreseeable risks in the position being created.

Examples

1. 4-H is looking for a volunteer to take some children to a nearby farm to demonstrate the nightly routine of milking dairy cows.
2. A volunteer Girl Guide leader is needed to take six children on an overnight trip to a campsite 45 minutes outside of the city.
3. A community support agency is looking for a volunteer to help organize and serve dinner to seniors who attend the Congregate Dining program.

List behaviours or actions that are inappropriate in each position. Discuss how an organization can best communicate which activities are inappropriate.

Summary of key concepts

1. Comprehensive position design is the foundation for all other screening measures.
2. Clear position descriptions send the message that your organization is serious about screening.
3. Several components of the position, taken together, determine the position's level of risk (i.e. participant group, boundaries, supervision).

For additional information 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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