



National Dialogue on Screening Volunteers 2014

Tuesday, September 9th, 2014

8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Carleton University

River Building

Floor 2R, Board of Governor Room

Summary

The **National Dialogue on Screening 2014** was attended by 27 leaders, practitioners and senior public servants, from national organizations, members of the Advisory Council of Volunteer Centres, the RCMP, Public Safety Canada and the board of Volunteer Canada.

Objectives

1. To provide updated information on the current and proposed processes, policies and standards of practice for screening broadly and for Vulnerable Sector Checks specifically
2. To gather input from voluntary organizations on the impact of proposed changes to Vulnerable Sector Checks on local non-profit organizations and volunteerism
3. To provide a forum for cross-jurisdictional exchange on information related to screening in regions across the country

Welcome

Steven Tipman, President and CEO of Volunteer Canada, welcomed and thanked attendees for taking the time to contribute to the important issue of screening.

Current Context

Paula Speevak, Director of Programs, Public Policy and Applied Research at Volunteer Canada, provided an update on what has been accomplished since the National Dialogue on Screening 2011, when the need for updated resources on screening volunteers was identified. Public Safety Canada later contracted Volunteer Canada to produce the ***2012 Edition of the Screening Handbook*** and to develop an information and training program. Since then, over 80 volunteer centres have been trained, and workshops have been held in local communities in every region. While protection of vulnerable people will always be of prime importance, the handbook positioned screening as a process to improve matching between people and organizations, to increase the quality and safety of programs and to reduce risk and liability. The handbook also contains information about **Access to Information and Privacy** and other legislative updates related to screening.

Roundtable Updates

Participants were asked to address the following questions:

1. What has been your organization's involvement in the area of screening volunteers?
2. What is the current process for screening volunteers working with vulnerable people in your jurisdiction?
3. Have you heard of any questions or concerns regarding proposed changes?

The RCMP participants were asked to explain the proposal for mandatory fingerprinting as part of **Vulnerable Sector Checks**. They indicated that fingerprinting is believed to be the most reliable identifier, and that electronic fingerprinting equipment can potentially increase processing speeds. They have determined that their original proposed implementation target of July 2015 is not feasible, and are in the process of consulting with various stakeholders.

A number of networks and associations had surveyed their members to gather views on proposed mandatory fingerprinting. During the roundtable discussion, the following key issues were identified:

Issue	Questions/Concerns
Cost	Who will cover the cost for organizations, volunteers and local police services?
Time frame	Will proposed changes increase processing times? How will this impact program delivery and volunteer motivation?
Transportation	Will electronic fingerprinting equipment be accessible to small and rural communities? Will transportation/distance for volunteers to travel to the closest facility create a deterrent due to cost and time?
Social cost	Will the process delay or deter volunteer engagement?
Evidence	What is the evidence that shows a link between mandatory fingerprinting and increased safety?
Privacy	How can applicants be assured that fingerprint files are actually deleted?
Human rights	Will the process contribute to or facilitate discrimination?
Special events	Is this feasible when dealing with mass volunteering at major events?
Positive attitude	Will this process create a barrier in maintaining a positive, welcoming and encouraging attitude towards potential volunteers?
Two-tiered system	If private companies are able to access databases, will this create a two-tiered screening system?
Multi-organization	How can the system accommodate people volunteering for more than one organization in similar roles, without necessitating separate checks?
Youth engagement	Will the process create a barrier to youth engagement?
Awareness and education	How can we increase the capacity of organizations to follow the ten steps of screening and to assess the risk of each position to determine whether or not a police records check is actually required?
Inconsistency among police services	Police services across the country use different names, forms, costs, equipment, capacity and timeframe for police records checks and Vulnerable Sector Checks, which causes confusion and inequity.
Small and rural communities	How does increased familiarity among community members influence screening practices?
Non-criminal information	What should the standards for releasing non-criminal information (such as mental health contact) be when police provide reports for police records checks?
Parent volunteers	How do we handle screening for schools, daycares and childrens' programs where parents volunteer?
Newcomer volunteers	Does the lack of police information for newcomers unintentionally create discrimination?
Insurance	Do insurance carriers understand the broad steps of screening enough to assess screening policies of organizations when determining coverage eligibility?
Balanced approach	How can we promote an approach that balances safety with social inclusion?