

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA



DATE November 23, 2011 – 7 p.m.

Please turn off or place on non-audible all cell phones, PDAs, Blackberrys and pagers during the meeting.

O Canada
Silent Prayer
Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

DELEGATIONS ON THE PROPOSED 2012 TAX SUPPORTED OPERATING BUDGET

- Representative of the St. Joseph's Foundation
- Sue Bennett, Board Chair and Cathy Taylor on behalf of the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington
- Kate MacDonald or Shelly Andrews on behalf of the Guelph Synchronized Swim Club
- Denise Elizuk and Brian Storey on behalf of the Guelph Girls Minor Softball Association
- Joanne Shoveller on behalf of the MacDonald Stewart Art Centre
- Randalin Ellery, Coordinator, Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination
- Marty Williams, Executive Director, Downtown Guelph Business Association

ADJOURNMENT



Police Records Checks for Volunteers Presentation to Guelph City Council - Summary

November 23, 2011

The Issue

Guelph Police Service has a long history of supporting community agencies, and partners with many organizations in order to effectively provide community-based policing. Guelph Police Service has always supported free police record checks for volunteers. **In October 2011, the Guelph Police Service Board approved a \$10 fee for police records checks for volunteers when they were required to find additional revenue and/or cost savings as part of the 2012 budget process.**

Guelph's volunteer rate is the highest in the country. With 69.7% of our population volunteering (*MacLean's Magazine, 2008*), that represents over 87,000 volunteers who contribute an average of 168 hours/year (*Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering & Participating, 2007, Statistics Canada*). This totals 13.8 million volunteers hours annually or a volunteer economy in Guelph that is, *at minimum*, valued at **\$149 million**.

And yet, our community needs more volunteers. The Volunteer Centre is currently recruiting for 189 active volunteer positions, representing 2,536 volunteers needed in our community.

In a 2010 survey of our member agencies (community benefit organizations - local not-for-profit and charitable organizations), every organization surveyed said that this fee would have a negative impact on their organization. Half of these organizations also believe that this fee will make it difficult to recruit volunteers.

We also learned that 70% of respondents were unsure of how they would manage a fee for police records checks, and yet 97% of respondents require police records checks for their volunteers.

Our Position

The proposed \$10 fee, however small it seems, will put organizations and volunteers at risk and create challenges within our local voluntary sector. **Our communities need more volunteers than ever before to build our community's resilience - putting up barriers to recruiting volunteers (such as a fee) is absolutely the wrong thing to do at the wrong time.** Covering the costs of providing police records checks is a preventative and appropriate expense of community-based policing.

We believe:

1. Volunteering rates have made Guelph the most caring community in Canada and have cemented our city's brand in "making a difference". There is a cost to effectively managing and screening local volunteers.

2. A fee for volunteers to obtain police records checks will be a barrier to volunteering, particularly for those volunteers that are already marginalized in our communities.
3. A fee may result in changes in volunteer screening policies or leniency in applying existing policies, therefore increasing the risk to our most vulnerable citizens.
4. This is the wrong time to institute a fee-for-service. Community benefit organizations face unprecedented financial threats, government downloading and continuing impacts from the recent recession.
5. Police records checks for volunteers are a critical component of volunteer screening, however, they are not the only appropriate method of screening volunteers. We believe that we can support organizations in improving their volunteer screening practices and use police records checks only as needed.
6. This is a larger issue than just for our local police services. At the federal level, the RCMP and the Ministry of Public Safety have identified volunteer screening and police records checks for volunteers as a priority public policy issue. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police have recently released the "LEARN" guidelines, regarding volunteer screening. At this time, they indicate that fees for volunteers for police records checks are a local decision. In August 2011, the Ontario government's "Open for Business" process identified police records checks and volunteer screening as a top issue. Recommendations are due in spring 2011. Changes are coming to volunteer screening practices within the next 6-12 months. This is not the time to make further changes at the local level.

Recommendations

1. Guelph City Council state that they do not support a fee for police records checks for volunteers within the City of Guelph.
2. Explore alternative methods of financially supporting the costs of providing this community service through the City of Guelph's budget process and allocation to the Guelph Police Service budget.
3. The Volunteer Centre will continue its role educating and training community benefit organizations with respect to volunteer screening and the role of police records checks, and we recommend a stronger partnership with the Guelph Police Service and City of Guelph in this regard, including a public education campaign.

Our members' views:

"Many organizations that depend on volunteers do not have a budget that can accommodate this cost on behalf of their volunteers. I feel there is a real potential to lose good volunteers or worse, a potential for organizations to stop requiring the checks in order to avoid downloading a cost to their team."

"Guelph is known for having a wonderfully high rate of volunteerism. This may be due to the City of Guelph making it feasible for people to get involved in various volunteer opportunities. Having the police checks completed free of charge eliminates a major obstacle that may otherwise make people hesitant to volunteer."

Please see our background document for additional information.

Thank you for your consideration,



Sue Bennett, Chair, Board of Directors



Cathy Taylor, Executive Director



Police Records Checks for Volunteers

City Council, City of Guelph

November 23, 2011

Backgrounder

A. Preamble

The Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington is committed to ensuring the safety of all of our residents and citizens. Every community benefit organization (not-for-profit and charitable organizations) is also concerned and responsible for those that they serve. This remains our utmost priority. It was clear to us that we must get involved with this issue. The level of interest from our members, community volunteers and the media simply reinforced this. Our vision is that everyone has the opportunity to engage in building a healthy, vibrant and resilient community. Our values tell us that we do what we value a culture of giving and we do what we believe is right. Our members count on us to advocate on their behalf on issues related to volunteer engagement.

At the same time, our community needs more volunteers. We all need to work together to create opportunities and processes that encourage and enable volunteerism, while protecting our most vulnerable citizens. We need to thoughtfully consider our decisions, such as fees for police records checks, from a community impact perspective. Financial impact is only one of the factors that must be taken into account. Policies like the one we are discussing today should be debated and discussed and public consultation should be a priority. Short time lines for implementation, especially when fees are involved, are not appropriate and puts us all at risk of being able to do our jobs to our best ability.

More than ever, now is the time to develop effective partnerships. We believe we are in this together – the Guelph Police Services Board, Guelph Police staff, City of Guelph Council and staff, our community benefit organizations, our community's volunteers and our organization itself. We all want to live in a healthy, vibrant and resilient community.

Today, we are representing our members (109 organizations), and have taken a very thoughtful approach to our comments.

B. What We Have Learned

Today, right now, we have 189 active volunteer opportunities posted from over 100 organizations requiring 2,536 volunteers – and these represent our members only. Guelph needs more volunteers and volunteers that are effectively screened and engaged.

Discussions within Other Jurisdictions

- At the federal level, the RCMP and the Ministry of Public Safety have identified volunteer screening and police records checks for volunteers as a priority public policy issue. On November 28, 2011, 40 leaders from national voluntary sector organizations, the federal government and RCMP will be attending a “National Screening Dialogue” in Ottawa, hosted by Volunteer Canada. Cathy Taylor, Executive Director of the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington will be attending on behalf of Volunteer Centres in Ontario.
- The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police have recently released the “LEARN” guidelines, regarding volunteer screening. These guidelines are currently being reviewed and adopted throughout the province. At this time, they indicate that fees for volunteers for police records checks are a local decision.
- In August 2011, the Ontario government’s “Open for Business” process invited representatives from Ontario’s community benefit sector (not-for-profit sector) to present issues and opportunities that could be resolved to benefit the sector. Senior leadership from a number of ministries attended; police records checks and volunteer screening was identified as a top issue. A working group has been convened and talks continue as to how the provincial government can reduce barriers to business for this sector. Recommendations are due in spring 2011. Consistent policies and practices across the province has been a critical element in these discussions to date.

2010 Member Survey

31 of our member agencies completed a detailed survey for us in August and September 2010. From their responses, we know:

- 97% of respondents require police records checks for their volunteers
- 61% require a police records check for all volunteer positions; while 35% (1/3) require police records checks for some volunteers
- When asked how organizations would handle a \$10 fee: 29% of respondents said they would require the volunteer to pay; 7% said they would pay the fee only for those that could not afford it; while 29% said they would pay the fee for all their volunteers. One quarter of respondents are unsure of how they would handle the fee at this time, while the other 10% had other strategies for responding.
- **Every organization said that this fee would have a negative impact on their organization**, except for those that do not require any police records checks currently or those that work within Wellington County only.
- Comments about the impact of this fee include:
 - ***“the burden of covering all the costs for any volunteers is substantial for a not-for-profit organization”***
 - *“...we could not absorb this fee. We have over 100 volunteers”*
 - *“police checks... would equal approx. \$500 annually, therefore those interested in volunteering will be required to assume the cost”.*
 - ***One organization pointed out that the fee “would be a huge barrier for many of our volunteers. It would definitely reduce our volunteer base.”***
 - *due to our small budget “every dollar counts, would take away benefits offered to volunteers...”*
 - ***Another organization stated “...we do not have government funding to cover the cost of PRCs...We would definitely be impacted financially and these dollars could be better used in funding therapy programs for children.”***
 - *One organization stated “we would not be able to recruit volunteers if they had to pay themselves. A big majority of our volunteers are on limited incomes themselves.”*
 - ***Another organization indicated “Many of our volunteers have financial challenges and it would be inappropriate to ask them to pay this fee.”***

- *“100 volunteers a year at a cost of \$1000. The Volunteer Program budget has constraints. It means finding more money for the program.”*
- *“It may not be possible for us as an organization to cover the fee, however it could potentially be a limiting factor in our volunteer recruitment if volunteers are paying the fee,”*
- *“A fee for a police record check for volunteers could impact the number of people willing to assist at the school. We would have to ascertain if we could support payment of this fee in our budget.”*
- Although a number of organizations would not alter their current volunteer screening practices (25%) as a result of the introduction of a fee, the rest indicated uncertainty as how a fee would affect their volunteer policies. Police records checks were noted to be an instrumental and necessary part of volunteer screening policies. Of particular concern, is that one organization reported that they “may in fact become more lenient on our requirements to have a police records check completed”.
- 48% of respondents felt that the fee would have a negative impact on the recruitment of new volunteers, particularly if the volunteer was required to pay the fee themselves.
 - ***“volunteers not willing to pay this fee would screen themselves out of our program and move on to another volunteer role where the police check is not required”***
 - *this would create an element of competition amongst agencies: “it would mean competing with other agencies who will pay the cost of the fee”*
 - ***“if our agency pays the fee, this means needing to fundraise for the volunteer program in order to increase its budget”***
 - *“I believe this fee will deter some volunteers from volunteering if this fee were not covered by us - which in turn would create the need to staff some programs that are currently volunteer-run, creating yet again, a large financial impact and hit hard at our grassroots community approach”*
 - *another organizations highlighted “during large scale disasters we will not have to time to screen walk-in volunteers and have them go for paid police records checks”*

C. Our Position

1. **Volunteering rates have made Guelph the most caring community in Canada and have cemented our city’s brand in “making a difference”. There is a cost to effectively managing and screening local volunteers.**
 - The impact of volunteerism in Guelph is astronomical. 69.7% of our population volunteers (*McLean’s Magazine, 2008*) - approximately 87,000 people - contributing an average of 168 hours per year (*Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering & Participating, 2007, Statistics Canada*). The economic impact is staggering.
 - It is a priority of community-based policing to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are protected. Surely the anticipated revenue of charging \$10 for police records checks for volunteers (approximately \$50,000 annually) is worth the investment of 14.6 million volunteer hours each year. Valued at minimum wage only (\$10.25/hour), this represents a volunteer economy of \$149 million.
 - It is our position that this is not an appropriate area for cost recovery within the police services budget, just as other prevention programs are not operated as cost recovery (such as theft prevention program, crime prevention programs, seat belt blitzes, drug abuse prevention, VIP program, etc.).
2. **A fee for volunteers to obtain police records checks will be a significant barrier to volunteering, particularly for those that are already marginalized in our communities.**
 - No matter the amount, fees for volunteers are a deterrent to volunteering. Many prospective volunteers will not pay the fee and organizations will struggle to cover this cost for their volunteers.
 - Fees for volunteer police records checks will create a “have” and “have-not” divide between local organizations. Some will be able to pay the fees for their volunteers and others will not

be able to accommodate this in their budgets. Volunteers will seek those opportunities where there is no cost to volunteer.

- Fees for volunteer police records checks will create a “have” and “have-not” divide between local organizations. Some will be able to pay the fees for their volunteers and others will not.
- The administrative burden for both the Guelph Police Service and either organizations or prospective volunteers who will pay the fee is onerous and unnecessary.

3. A fee for volunteers to obtain police record checks is likely to result in changes in volunteer screening policies or leniency in applying existing policies by organizations, therefore increasing the risk to vulnerable people in our community.

- Our survey suggests some organizations that currently require record checks for volunteers, beyond those that are mandatory by law, indicate they may change their policies to avoid the cost burden or potential loss of volunteers.

4. Our communities need more volunteers than ever before to build our community’s resilience - putting up barriers to recruiting volunteers (such as a fee) is absolutely the wrong thing to do at the wrong time.

- This is the wrong time to institute a fee-for-service. Community benefit organizations understand, more than anyone, the financial stress of running an organization and providing critical services on a shoestring budget.
- The recession has had a dramatic impact on our sector which has been well documented, and which we do not see improving for some time.
- We are experiencing the “perfect storm”: reduced revenues and increased need for service. A recent report from the Social Planning Council of Ontario entitled “Hard Hit” identified that, as a result, most organizations were recruiting more volunteers, and relying more heavily on existing volunteers, to fill this gap.

5. Police records checks for volunteers are a critical component of volunteer screening, however they are not the only appropriate method of screening volunteers.

- We believe that volunteer screening should be based on each volunteer position: organizations should determine the appropriate screening steps depending on the duties and responsibilities of that volunteer role within the organization.

Example: Hillside Festival: police records checks are only required for positions that involve handling money, taking care of children or those that are vulnerable. Of their 1,500 volunteers, only 40-50 require police records checks.

Blanket policies that suggest that all volunteers must obtain a police records check are, in most cases, unnecessary. There are exceptions, however.

- Police records checks are one of ten steps of volunteering screening that are available to organizations (“Safe Steps to Volunteer Screening”, Volunteer Canada). In many cases, interviews, reference checks, on-site supervision and ongoing evaluation provide the necessary support to ensure appropriate risk management is in place.
- Local organizations do need assistance in developing their volunteer screening policies and procedures as there is often inconsistency in the implementation of their policies, a lack of professional volunteer management skills available on staff, uncertainty regarding changing rules and regulations, and a high turnover of staff and leadership volunteers.

6. We recognize that this is a larger issue than just for our local police services. Changes are coming to volunteer screening practices within the next 6-12 months. This is not the time to make further changes at the local level.

- Other communities are struggling with the cost of providing police records checks and many have instituted fees. This has led to inconsistency from jurisdiction to jurisdiction in Ontario. In our region, checks for volunteers are free in Wellington County which make it difficult for the majority of our local community benefit organizations who serve both Guelph and Wellington County.
- We believe that the Province of Ontario should ensure that police records checks for volunteers are free throughout the province, in each jurisdiction. Alberta made this policy decision in 2009. Our Volunteer Centre, along with other Volunteer Centres in Ontario are advocating for such a policy review.

D. What We Can Do

The Volunteer Centre is committed to continuing an education campaign with our members and the broader community benefit sector to share information and consult with organizations on appropriate screening policies and procedures. We have developed two fact sheets on police records checks (one for volunteers, one for organizations) and a step-by-step volunteer screening policy guide, that are now being used by Volunteer Centres across the country as templates (attached). We share these resources freely. We encourage organizations to take a multi-step approach to volunteer screening, and to adopt appropriate volunteer screening policies which do not include blanket police records check requirements.

The Volunteer Centre would be pleased to proactively work, on behalf of our members, in partnership with the Guelph Police Service and the City of Guelph to review, discuss and debate policies and procedures that would impact volunteerism in Guelph.

Some last words from our members, August 2010 – November 2011:

- “Our organization is undergoing massive changes due to supporting agency and funder changes and cut backs and internal struggles with organizational development and volunteer recruitment and retention. While \$10 may seem a small amount, when compounded with the other changes, new fees from other organizations we rely on, new requirements for several of our operating procedures which is creating more work for an already over burdened set of staff and volunteers, I begin to wonder what the breaking point will be for some of the programs and services. Some of these services are regarded by the users as essential to reduce the harm of poverty, prevent child maltreatment and connect them to other people and services in the community.”
- “This is always a question when we ask people to get the check - "do I have to pay?". It is intimidating enough to go to the police station to get the record, let alone then have to pay if you are on a very limited income.”
- “The point of being a volunteer is giving of one's time freely without expectation of payment and certainly without expectation of paying a fee for the privilege of volunteering.”
- “I just feel like this fee is a barrier to getting involved. For many, \$10 is a lot of money limiting people's abilities to have choice in where they volunteer. For myself, I know that while I can't give financially to most organizations, I can donate my time. Many organizations that depend on volunteers do not have a budget that can accommodate this cost on behalf of their volunteers. I feel there is a real potential to lose good volunteers or worse, a potential for organizations to stop requiring the checks in order to avoid downloading a cost to their team. There is something about paying to volunteer that doesn't sit right with me.”

- “This would affect both our volunteers and clients, as volunteering is part of their participation and training in the preparation to handle service dogs.”
- “Many of our clients volunteer, and many of them are on ODSP...\$10 is certainly a barrier.”
- “It would be unfortunate to see a cost incurred for volunteers who want to give of their time and talents. At a time when we are seeking increased volunteer involvement to enhance then lives of our residents, I feel a cost for the police check may hinder our recruitment efforts.”
- “It is discouraging to see this is back on the table again. There is no question that our volunteers have to have a Police Records Check and that it should be renewed every 2 years. Existing volunteers would be discouraged to pay this fee and potential volunteers may think twice about volunteers. Many of our volunteers are students and retirees who can least afford any added expenses. Paying for each volunteer and prospective volunteer would be very expensive for us. This could mean that we would request funds of \$1500 to \$2000 from the City to cover these expenses. Would City council cover this?”
- “(At our organization), we continue to require police checks for volunteers. We have over 125 volunteers each year who require a police check. Most of our volunteers are community members and the fee would be a barrier to their participation if we stick to our current policy requiring police checks. (We) would then need to cover the expense, and we also don't have \$1250 to cover this for them. It would impact the quality of our programs by having fewer volunteers and the possibility of volunteers without that screening check.”
- “Many arts organizations will soon need to get police checks for anyone who volunteers or works (with us) in order to maintain our core funding from (one of our funders). If we have to pay for the volunteers, we already have a budget deficit, and we won't be able to do it. We have approximately 80 volunteers in any given year and we don't have an extra \$800....this cost will cut into our ability to use volunteers at all.”



Volunteer Screening *Policy Development Tool*

About this document:

- This document was created by the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington as a step-by-step guide to the development of a policy and procedure surrounding volunteer screening.
- In Step #1, you will think about why your organization should screen prospective volunteers and you will then be able to use this information to develop a policy statement.
- In Step #2 and beyond, you will answer questions about the logistics related to volunteer screening for one volunteer position with your organization.
- By completing these steps, you will have made all the decisions relevant to volunteer screening and will be able to use the resulting information to develop a screening policy and procedure for your organization.
- A policy template is included at the end of this document. You may choose to use this as a starting point and input all of the decisions you have made by using this tool into that document.
- Please note that once you complete Step #1, you will have created a screening policy that is applicable to all volunteer positions with your organization. However, you will need to repeat Steps #2-9 for any other volunteer positions with your organization to develop specific procedures for each one.

Step #1: Generating a Policy Statement

What are the mandated requirements applicable to your organization that pertain to screening?

What do your organization's values and principles indicate you should be doing with respect to screening?

Use your answers to the above questions to create a policy statement. This statement should:

- Answer the question "why do we screen prospective volunteers?"
- Be clear and concise (3-4 sentences)

Sample Policy Statement

"All Trellis volunteers that will be providing direct service to clients will undergo a consistent screening process that will assist in ensuring the suitability of the candidate, will assist in the matching process and will ensure that the safety of vulnerable clients will not be jeopardized in any way. Volunteers providing indirect support to our agency programs will be screened according to the type of position and whether or not they will have access to vulnerable clients and/or information regarding vulnerable clients." (Provided by Trellis Mental Health and Developmental Services)

Step #2: Generating Screening Procedures

Before you begin:

- The following steps will help you to develop procedures in accordance with the policy statement you have just developed.
- Please note that this tool is intended to be used in conjunction with the position descriptions you have developed for the volunteer positions at your organization.
- This tool will guide you through developing procedures for one volunteer position and you can repeat these steps for any other positions as well.
- Select one volunteer position to work on in this sample.

Brainstorm answers to the following questions in the box below. In the second box, list all final answers to the questions.

- What expectations do we have for our volunteers?
- What skills and experience would an ideal candidate have?
- What is the standard that volunteers must meet throughout the screening process?

Discussion Points:

Decisions that can be included in policy:

Step #3

Using your volunteer position description, circle the appropriate risk levels on the chart below:

Adapted from Safe Steps: A Volunteer Screening Process (Volunteer Canada, 2001)

	No Risk	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Participant	Volunteer is in a role that does not involve interaction with participants	Adults	Adolescents and Seniors	Babies and children, persons with disabilities, infirm seniors
Setting	Volunteer works in isolation with no interaction with participants	Public space with high visibility and supervision <i>Example: Classroom with windows, meeting room/hall</i>	Space with limited visibility and supervision <i>Example: Tents or cabins, classroom with no windows</i>	Space with no visibility or supervision <i>Example: Car, private home of participant or volunteer</i>
Supervision	Supervisor present at all times	Supervisor regularly present	Infrequent supervision	Little to no supervision
Nature of relationship with participant	No contact with participants <i>Example: Administrative support, Transportation of clothing donations</i>	Short term, non-intimate <i>Example: Receptionist, Special event volunteer</i>	Personal relationship that extends over time <i>Example: Teaching assistant, Daycare helper</i>	One-on-one relationship, position of trust <i>Example: Coach, one-on-one support worker, overnight camp counselor</i>
Degree of Physical Contact	No physical contact with participants	Infrequent physical contact <i>Example: Coach positioning players on a field</i>	Regular physical contact <i>Example: Childcare provider hugging and lifting children</i>	Consistent intimate physical <i>Example: Changing, bathing, toileting, rehabilitating</i>
Access to Information	No access to money or confidential information	Rare/infrequent access to money and confidential information	Access to limited confidential information, handles money	Manages organization's funds, has access to master keys and passwords, has access to confidential and sensitive information

Step #4

Using the answers you circled on the previous page, check off the risk associated with this volunteer position for each category:

	No Risk	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Participant				
Setting				
Supervision				
Nature of Relationship				
Degree of Physical Contact				
Access to Information				

Based on your answers above, circle the appropriate overall risk associated with this volunteer position.

Overall risk assessment: *No Risk* *Low Risk* *Medium Risk* *High Risk*

Step #5

Considering the risk assessment you have given this volunteer position, read the information below on the appropriate use of screening tools:

General Screening Tools:

Application	Applications are appropriate for all volunteer positions.
Interview	Interviews are appropriate for all positions, however they may not be practical for no or low risk episodic volunteer positions.
Reference Check	Reference checks can be used for all positions, but may not be necessary for certain tasks which require previous experience or a specific skill-set and have no associated risk. You may also want to request more than one reference for medium or high risk positions.
Police Records Check	Police Records Checks are suitable for positions with high risk associated with access to information. They may be suitable for certain medium risk positions as well.
Police Records Check with Vulnerable Sector Check	Police Records Checks with Vulnerable Sector Checks are appropriate for all medium and high risk positions involving contact with vulnerable persons.
Rating Tool	Rating tools can be used in conjunction with applications, interviews, and reference checks. This will help you to standardize your review process and allow you the opportunity to document your assessment of a candidate.

Screening Tools for Special Circumstances:

Driver Record Check	Driver Record Checks are acceptable for positions involving use of an organization's vehicle or transportation of participants.
Performance Assessment	Performance Assessments are suitable for positions involving a high degree of physical exertion or a high necessity for specific skills and knowledge (e.g. First Responder)
Home Visit	Home Visits are suitable for high-risk positions where it is anticipated that the participant will be engaged in activities at the volunteer's home.
Medical Test	Medical Tests are suitable for positions where such tests are mandated by the government (e.g. TB tests for daycare centres) or where a high degree of physical exertion is required (e.g. Volunteer Firefighter)

Adapted from Beyond Police Checks: The Definitive Volunteer & Employee Screening Guidebook (Linda Graff, 1999)

Step #6

Using the information on page 4, check of the tools that you will use for this volunteer position:

- Application
- Application rating tool
- Interview
- Interview rating tool
- Reference check (one)
- Reference check (multiple)
- Reference check rating tool
- Police records check
- Police records check with vulnerable sector check
- Driving record check
- Performance assessment
- Home visit
- Medical test

Add these actions to the chart in Step #9.

Step #7

- For each of the tools listed below that you have decided to use in the previous step, indicate whether you will accept documents that pre-date the volunteer's application
- If you select "yes" for any of the tools, include the acceptable time interval in the final column (e.g. accepting a police records check that has been conducted within 6 months prior to the volunteer's application with your organization)
- If you will not be using any of the tools listed below for this position, proceed directly to Step #8

	No	Yes	Time Interval
Police Records Check			
Driver Record Check			
Medical Tests (<i>please list</i>)			

Step #8

It is recommended that you create a personnel file for each volunteer where you can store the information that you collect during the screening process (application, interview record, etc.).

Answer the following questions in the space provided:

How and where will we store volunteer personnel files?		
Will we store Police Records Checks, Medical Test Records, etc. on-site?	<i>If yes, how will we store them to protect the volunteer's privacy?</i>	
	<i>If no, how will we verify that we have seen these documents and that they are satisfactory?</i>	
Who will be permitted to access to this information?		
How long will we retain these records?		
What is our policy regarding volunteers who refuse to share the results of a Police Records Check?		

Add any actions to the chart in Step #9.

Additional Resources

Guelph Police Service

<http://guelphpolice.com/records-check/>
519-824-1212 x359

Ontario Provincial Police

<http://www.opp.ca/ecms/index.php?id=499>
519-856-1506 (Rockwood Headquarters)

Beyond Police Checks: The Definitive Volunteer & Employee Screening Guidebook

Linda Graff (1999)

Safe Steps: A Volunteer Screening Process

Volunteer Canada (2001)

Best Practice Guidelines for Screening Volunteers

Public Safety Canada (2008)

The Screening Handbook- Protecting Clients, Staff and the Community

Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaux and Centres (1996)



Volunteer Screening Tools

Police Records Checks

Why should my organization request police records checks for volunteers?

Organizations have a legal duty to provide a safe environment for their clients, members, participants, and staff. Directors who do not ensure this have failed to fulfill their responsibility under the Corporations Act. If a records check is not conducted on a volunteer who ends up causing harm to a member or participant, the organization can potentially become exposed to allegations of negligence.

Applicants with a history of abuse of vulnerable persons may go to great lengths to find ways to get involved with these groups and may target organizations that appear to have a weak screening process.¹ Police records checks can be a valuable risk management and liability-reduction tool; the fact that an organization requires police records checks may serve as a deterrent to some inappropriate or dangerous candidates.

Our organization is not a registered not-for-profit. Does this requirement for records checks apply to us?

If you are part of an unincorporated organization (i.e. a club) and do not have responsibilities under the Corporations Act, the safety of your members and participants is still important. If your organization is found liable for negligent hiring and screenings, it can be the individual leaders of the organization who will be held accountable for this, not the organization.

Should police records checks be used as the only screening tool for prospective volunteers?

No. A police records check will tell a manager of volunteers if the applicant has a record of federal offenses, but it will not tell you about that person's skills and abilities or the appropriateness of the applicant being a volunteer with your organization. Police records checks may not screen out potential volunteers about whom you are concerned. Conversely, it may cause you to miss out on a quality volunteer because that person has a record that is irrelevant to the volunteer position. Police records checks can be a very effective screening tool when applied in situations where volunteers will be working with vulnerable persons and when it is used in conjunction with other screening tools such as applications, interviews, and references.

¹ Volunteer BC (www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/riskmanagement/pdf/fawpolicerecordscheck.pdf)

Limitations of a police records check:

- A police records check will only report on convictions that a person has up until the point at which the check is performed. It does not provide ongoing information regarding future indiscretions of the applicant.
- Applicants may have committed crimes for which they have never been convicted
- Any convictions for which the applicant has received a pardon will not appear on the report (exception - if a vulnerable sector check is done, any sexually-based offences for which the applicant has received a pardon will still be listed)
- Applicants may have a record of offenses committed under the age of 18 that is now sealed according to the Youth Criminal Justice Act
- If an applicant has resided outside of Canada during the past 5 years, no record of possible police involvement in those countries will be included

Should police records checks be required for all volunteer positions?

No. Police records checks are not needed for all volunteer positions. Organizations have certain responsibilities to protect the privacy of their volunteers and part of that is to not collect unnecessary information about the volunteer. Police records checks should only be requested if there is reasonable cause, related to the volunteer's job description. Your organization should be able and willing to explain why you are requesting a police records check from the applicant and this reason should be rationally connected to the performance of that volunteer's job. Police records checks should be requested for volunteers who will:

- Have direct contact with vulnerable persons (children under 18 years of age, seniors, and mentally or physically handicapped persons)
- Be in a position of trust
- Drive a vehicle owned by the organization
- Have access to master keys/codes/passwords
- Have access to sensitive/confidential information
- Have access to money or valuables

What policies should an organization have in place regarding using police records checks as a screening tool?

Things to consider when drafting your policies:

- What other tools will be used to screen our volunteers?
- Which volunteer positions will require applicants to have a police records check completed?
- What type of result would exclude a volunteer from gaining a position with the organization?
- Will volunteers need to have the records check repeated? If so, how often?
- Will police records checks be kept on file? If so, how will the organization ensure that the information is kept confidential?

Generally, records checks should be the last step in the recruitment process and should only be requested after the candidate has been offered the volunteer position. A recommended practice is to offer the position to applicants who have a successful interview on a conditional basis, pending a satisfactory police records check. If the check is satisfactory, the offer of acceptance is automatic.²

² Linda Graff (Beyond Police Checks: The Definitive Volunteer and Employee Screening Guidebook)

Should organizations store police records checks for their volunteers?

There is no legal right or wrong answer to this question, however organizations are responsible for the protection of the privacy of their volunteers. Wherever possible, organizations should limit the amount of personal information they retain on-site about their volunteers, including police records checks. Many organizations opt to designate a person to sign off that they have seen the applicant's volunteer check and that it was satisfactory. If you do decide to retain the police records check, you should keep a photocopy in the volunteer's file and return the original report to the applicant as this is their personal property. It is often wise to have the volunteer sign a form to indicate that you have returned their check to them. If you are going to keep these reports on file, you need to ensure that you are taking proper security measures to keep this information confidential and that neither you nor any other staff or board members are disclosing information to third parties.³

For how long is a police records check valid?

Police records checks will only include information pertaining to the applicant up until the day the check is performed. Furthermore, they will include all convictions (unless the applicant has been pardoned for the offence) but they will only include other offences (i.e. Provincial offences, local involvement with the police, etc.) for the past 5 years. This should factor into your organization's policies pertaining to using police records checks as a screening tool, requesting follow-up checks for long-term volunteers, and accepting police records check reports that were processed prior to the volunteer pursuing an opportunity with your organization.

³ Linda Graff (Beyond Police Checks: The Definitive Volunteer and Employee Screening Guidebook)

Police Records Checks - Frequently Asked Questions

What is a police records check?

A police records check involves checking the applicant's name against the CPIC (Canadian Police Information Centre) database to determine if the applicant has been convicted for any crimes in Canada under the Criminal Code of Canada. Local checks will also be conducted in the municipalities in which the applicant has resided within the past 5 years to determine if they have had any other police involvement that did not result in a conviction.

It is important to understand that a police records check is a process, not an actual object. What the applicant receives at the end of the process is a summary of findings from the check. Anyone requesting a police records check will have their name run through the CPIC database. However, the process that varies among municipalities is the scope of the search into local records performed and what type of information other than CPIC search results will be included in the final report.

What is a vulnerable sector check?

A vulnerable sector check involves checking the applicant's name through the 'Registered Sex Offenders' database. If an applicant has been convicted of a sexual offence and has applied for and received a pardon, information pertaining to this offence will not show up on a CPIC search. However, this information will show up on a vulnerable sector check as this person will still be listed in this database.

Under the Criminal Records Act, vulnerable sector checks will only be performed on applicants who will be volunteering for an organization that puts them in contact with "vulnerable persons". (A vulnerable person is considered to be children less than 18 years of age, seniors, and mentally and physically handicapped persons). For example, if a volunteer will not have contact with vulnerable persons but will be driving a vehicle owned by your organization, it is recommended that you request a police records check from this individual without a vulnerable sector check. Please note that animals do not count as "vulnerable persons" and thus a police records check including a vulnerable sector check cannot be requested for volunteers who will be working with animals. Other screening tools must be used in this case.

Note - persons convicted of a sexual offence must wait 10 years before they can apply for a pardon. Therefore, vulnerable sector checks are not done on persons younger than 18 years of age as it is not possible for them to have been pardoned for any offence at their age. Despite legislation under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, any sexually-based offences will not be withheld from the summary report of a police records check for persons under 18 years of age.

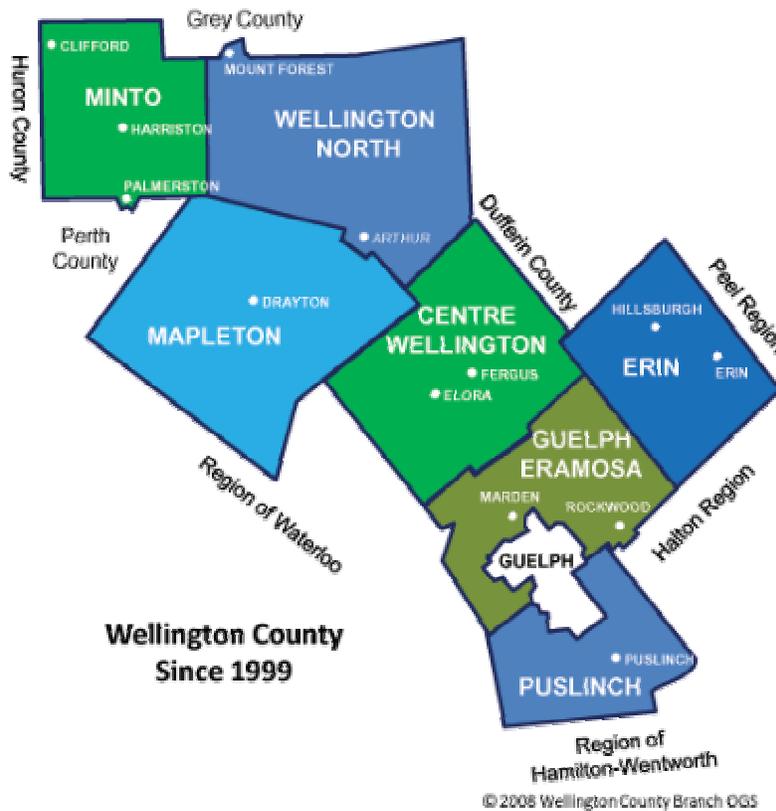
Can a police records check be performed for volunteers younger than 18 years of age?

Yes, however a vulnerable sector check will not be done for anyone younger than 18 years of age (see above).

Where do volunteers go to have the check done?

Checks must be conducted in the municipality in which the volunteer lives, not in the municipality in which the volunteer work will be done. Use the table below to determine where volunteers should go to have their checks done in the City of Guelph and Wellington County.

Area of Residence	Police Service
City of Guelph	Guelph Police Services
Puslinch Township	Rockwood OPP
Town of Erin (East Wellington)	Rockwood OPP
Guelph-Eramosa Township	Rockwood OPP
Centre Wellington	Fergus OPP
Wellington North	Mount Forest OPP
Mapleton Township	Palmerston OPP or Mount Forest OPP
Town of Minto	Palmerston OPP



Guelph Police Services
15 Wyndham Street South

Rockwood OPP
5145 Wellington Road 27

Fergus OPP
321 Andrew Street West

Mount Forest OPP
630 Main Street North

Palmerston OPP
250 Daly Street

To whom is the record check report returned?

The report of the completed police records check will be returned to the applicant directly, not to the organization. The applicant must then decide whether they will share this document with the organization. Organizations should put their own policy in place regarding what to do with applicants who refuse to share the results of a police records check.

Will the final report include local records for applicants who have resided in municipalities outside of Guelph/Wellington County?

Records check applicants must list all addresses at which they have resided within the last 5 years. The local police service will contact the police services of those municipalities to have their local records checked as well. Please note that if the prospective volunteer has resided outside of Canada within the past 5 years, information pertaining to their other countries of residence will not be included.

How long does a police records check take to complete?

Guelph Police Service and Wellington County OPP report that it will take 2-6 weeks to conduct the search and generate the report. Checks for applicants who have resided in other municipalities within the last 5 years will take longer because the local police service must contact the services of the other municipalities in order to complete the full check.

Recent Changes to Vulnerable Sector Checks by the RCMP

As of August 2010, the RCMP has implemented a new policy regarding the use of fingerprint verification in vulnerable sector checks. If anyone requesting a police records check has the same gender and birth date (including year) as a person in the records of pardoned sex offenders, they will need to have their fingerprints taken by their local police service in order to verify their identity. The reason for implementing this policy is to prevent pardoned sex offenders from changing their name as a means to gain access to vulnerable persons. Please see below for more information pertaining to the local process in your area.

Guelph: Individuals will be notified by the Guelph Police Service if a potential vulnerable sector match has been flagged. Individuals then need to call the police service to make an appointment to have their fingerprints taken. The police service will then send this information to the RCMP who will send their results back to the Guelph Police Service when completed. The individual will be notified when the results of their fingerprinting have been returned to the Guelph Police Service. This service is free for volunteers. For more information see <http://guelphpolice.com/records-check/>

Wellington County: Individuals will be notified by their local OPP detachment if a potential vulnerable sector match has been flagged. They will need to return to the detachment to have their fingerprints taken. The OPP will submit the fingerprints to the RCMP and the results of the query will be sent directly to the detachment. Volunteers must bring a letter from the organization indicating they are a prospective volunteer in order to have the fingerprinting fee waived. For more information see <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cr-cj/vulner/index-eng.htm>

Guelph

What type of information will be on the report that is returned to the individual?

If no records are found pertaining to the applicant, the report will indicate that a check has been conducted and that the results of the check were “negative”. If records are found in CPIC pertaining to the applicant, the report will list all offenses and the date of the charges. The report will also include any information pertaining to police involvement not resulting in a charge from local police records for the past 5 years. Please note that Guelph Police Service looks at each application individually and will only include information from local records that is relevant to the applicant’s volunteer position.

Do applicants need a letter of confirmation from the organization that implicates their prospective volunteer role?

No. Applicants will be asked to provide the name of the organization, but do not require a letter of confirmation from the organization. If volunteers wish to have police records checks completed because they could be volunteering for multiple organizations, they are asked to list at least one prospective organization. This gives the representative performing the check an indication of the nature of the work that the volunteer will be doing. This will determine the scope of the search that will be conducted.

Can University of Guelph students have police checks completed in Guelph?

Technically, University of Guelph students whose permanent address is in another municipality should have the records check conducted in their home municipality. However, Guelph Police Services will allow students to have the check done in Guelph if they produce photo ID listing their permanent address as well as their student ID card as proof that they reside temporarily within the City of Guelph.

If a prospective volunteer has been apprehended under the Mental Health Act, will this be included in the records check report?

No. Only information pertaining to “criminal activity” will be included in the report.

Are there any special considerations for organizations that will be requesting police records checks as a large group?

Yes. Organizations can opt to set up a third party form. A set form is provided to all prospective volunteers and an authorized individual from the organization will submit the completed forms to the Guelph Police Service Police Clearance area. If no records are found for the prospective volunteers, the authorized individual will pick up the complete records check reports from the Guelph Police Service and return them to the organization. If records are found for a prospective volunteer, that individual will be contacted directly by the Guelph Police Service and will have to come in to collect their completed records check report in person.

Is there a fee for having a police records check completed?

Fees are currently waived for police records checks for volunteer positions.

Wellington County

Do applicants need a letter of confirmation from the organization that implicates their prospective volunteer role?

No. Applicants will fill out an application that includes a page completed by a representative of the organization. The organization's representative must complete this page in full and indicate that the position is a volunteer position in order to have the fee for a check waived. A letter cannot be used to replace the fourth page of this application. If the organization refuses to sign this page of the application, a check of CPIC records can still be conducted but a vulnerable sector check cannot.

What type of information will be on the report that is returned to the individual?

A vulnerable sector check will be conducted on everyone, provided that the organization fills out and signs the application. If the check is performed and no information is found on the applicant, the report will indicate that a check has been conducted and that the results of the check were "negative". If records are found in CPIC on the applicant, the report will include a list specifying all the convictions against that person. The report will also list any apprehensions under the Mental Health Act. If records are found pertaining to the applicant, the applicant will need to come into the detachment and produce fingerprints. The fingerprints are submitted to the RCMP to verify that the records do, in fact, pertain to the applicant and not to someone else with the same name as the applicant. If the applicant is required to undergo the fingerprinting process, this can delay the records check process by up to 6 months.

If a prospective volunteer has been apprehended under the Mental Health Act, will this be included in the records check report?

Yes, however only apprehensions under the Mental Health Act will be included, not other involvement with the police related to mental health. It is important to note that if someone has been apprehended under the Mental Health Act, they must have posed a serious threat to the safety of themselves or others.

Under Section 17 of the Act, a police officer can bring someone to a facility for an examination if the officer has "reasonable and probable grounds" to believe a person has acted in a "disorderly manner" (meaning irrational but not necessarily illegal) as long as the person "apparently" has a mental disorder and has threatened or attempted to harm themselves, or has behaved violently or caused someone to fear bodily harm, or has shown a lack of competence to care for themselves. (From the Queen Street Outreach Society: Ontario Mental Health Act). For more information on this, see: <http://www.qsos.ca/mha.html>

Wellington County OPP feels that therefore, this is information that is important to include in a police records check.

Are there any special considerations for organizations that will be requesting police records checks as a large group?

Organizations who will have a large number of new volunteers at a specific time of year (e.g. coaches for sport organizations) may appoint someone from their organization to act as a liaison between the organization and the police service. This person must have their own successful police records check completed first. The appointee will collect forms from the detachment, distribute them among prospective volunteers and submit completed forms to the detachment. The appointee will also be able to pick up the completed police records checks reports as long as the results come back “negative”. If any record comes up for the prospective volunteers, the volunteer will have to pick up the report themselves. This is a good option for groups who are located far away from their designated detachment.

Is there a fee for having a police records check completed?

Fees are currently waived for police records checks for volunteer positions.

Family & Children’s Services Checks

A Family & Children’s Services check is another screening tool that is available to volunteer managers in both Guelph and Wellington County. Organizations whose volunteers will work directly with children can establish a protocol with Family & Children’s Services to have their volunteers screened in this manner. There is currently no fee to the organization or the volunteer for having this check completed.

The value of having this check completed is that it could include information about a potential volunteer that the police do not have in their records. The police do not have the same records because Family & Children’s Services has records that include suspected child abuse that did not result in a criminal charge, whereas the police will only have a record for offenses for which the applicant was charged and convicted.

Family & Children’s Services will supply organizations with a form which must be filled out and signed by the prospective volunteer. If a check is completed and no records come back for the applicant, Family & Children’s Services will return the form stating that Family & Children’s Services of Guelph and Wellington County has no comments in its possession or any information which would suggest that the applicant is or might be a threat to the health or safety of a child. If the check is performed and a record is found for that individual, Family & Children’s Services will contact the applicant directly to discuss the matter with them. Please note that they will not contact the organization at all as it is the applicant’s decision as to whether or not they would like to share information about this record with an organization or remove themselves as a prospective volunteer because of this record. Records pertaining to victims of abuse will not be shared with organizations and will not prevent a volunteer from receiving a clear Family & Children’s Services check.

Please be aware that Family & Children’s Services of Guelph and Wellington County will only be able to access local records pertaining to a prospective volunteer. Therefore, a limitation of this screening tool is that it will not include all information for volunteers who have resided outside of Guelph and Wellington County.

Additional Resources

Guelph Police Service

<http://guelphpolice.com/records-check/>
519-824-1212 x359

Ontario Provincial Police

<http://www.opp.ca/ecms/index.php?id=499>
519-856-1506 (Rockwood Headquarters)

Beyond Police Checks: The Definitive Volunteer & Employee Screening Guidebook

Linda Graff (1999)

Safe Steps: A Volunteer Screening Process

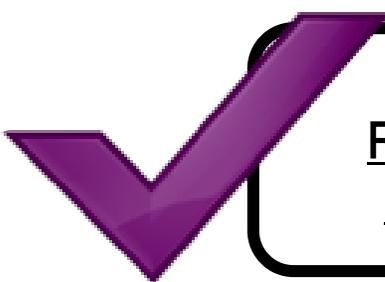
Volunteer Canada (2001)

Best Practice Guidelines for Screening Volunteers

Public Safety Canada (2008)

The Screening Handbook- Protecting Clients, Staff and the Community

Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaux and Centres (1996)



POLICE RECORDS CHECKS

WHY DO YOU NEED A POLICE RECORDS CHECK?

Organizations have a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a safe environment for clients, staff and volunteers. A Police Records Check can be one of the screening tools an organization uses to ensure the safety of clients, staff and volunteers.

Not all volunteers need a police records check. Volunteers who work in a position of trust with children, seniors or persons with a disability will need a Police Records Check along with a Vulnerable Sector Screening. Examples are: camp counselor, volunteer driver and friendly visitor.

Volunteers who may come into periodic contact with the vulnerable population but do not work directly with them in a position of trust do not need a Police Records Check. Examples are: receptionist, parking lot attendant and festival committee member.

HOW DO YOU GET A POLICE RECORDS CHECK?

STEP 1

Go to your local Police Service with at least 1 piece of photo identification. Accepted forms of ID are: Driver's License and Passport. The Police Service in your area may require a letter from the requesting agency before doing the Police Records Check.

STEP 2

Ask for a Police Records Check. A Vulnerable Persons Screening will be completed if required. Fill out the application and consent form. **There is no charge for volunteers in Guelph or the County of Wellington to get a records check at this time.**

STEP 3

You will receive a summary of the report. The finished records check will be mailed to you if no record is found. If a record is found, you will need to pick up the report at the Police Service. This document belongs to you and you can choose with whom you share it.

STEP 4

Submit your summary report to the organization if you choose to do so. Some organizations will take a photocopy of the report, while others may make a note in your file verifying that they have seen it. Ultimately, the original report belongs to you and you should keep it.

WHERE DO YOU GO TO GET A POLICE RECORDS CHECK?

Please remember - have your police records check completed in the township you live in, not the one you will volunteer in.

If you live here:	Go here:
City of Guelph	Guelph Police Service - 15 Wyndham St. S. Guelph, ON
<i>*Special Note: Guelph Police only do Police Records Checks on Wednesday: 10am - 6 pm, Thursday: 9am - 1pm, and Friday: 9am - 5pm. *</i>	
Township of Guelph/ Eramosa Township of Puslinch Township of Erin	Rockwood OPP - 5145 Wellington Rd. #27, Rockwood
Township of Centre Wellington	Fergus OPP - 321 St. Andrew St. W. Fergus
Township of Mapleton Town of Minto	Palmerston OPP - 250 Daly St. Palmerston
Township of Wellington North	Mount Forest OPP - 630 Main St. N. Mount Forest

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH STUDENTS

Students who have a permanent address in another municipality should technically have their records completed there. However, the Guelph Police Service will make an exception for students, if they produce photo id with their permanent address and their student id card as proof of temporary residence.

WHAT IS A POLICE RECORDS CHECK?

A police records check, also called a Criminal Records Check, is done to see if you have been convicted of any crimes in Canada. The local Police Service will check your name in the Canadian Police Information Centre Database (CPIC). They will also contact other Police Services in Canadian municipalities, in which you have lived within the past 5 years to search for any other police involvement. At the end, you will receive a report that summarizes these findings. The report will only display criminal charges, not civil suits (i.e. if you were sued) or charges under the Highway Traffic Act (i.e. speeding tickets).

A Vulnerable Sector Screening is a component of a Police Records Check used to screen individuals who may have access to a vulnerable person. A vulnerable person is defined as a person who is under 18, a senior or a person with a disability or are at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of trust or authority relative to them. A Vulnerable Sector Screening determines if a person over the age of 18 has a record of a sexual offense for which they have been pardoned.

I HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD. DOES THIS MEAN I CAN'T VOLUNTEER?

- There are many opportunities in the community that do not require a Police Records Check. You will be able to volunteer there.
- Some agencies will accept you with a Criminal Record, if the charge is not directly related to the volunteer role.
- If you are interested in an opportunity, but are concerned about your record, it is best to contact the agency directly to discuss your options to volunteer with them.



FINGERPRINTING

- If your date of birth, including year and your gender, matches any record in the RCMP's criminal records database of pardoned sex offenders, you will be required to have fingerprints taken at your local Police Service to prove your identity.
- Your Police Service will send a package including your fingerprints to the RCMP, who will finish the rest of the screening.
- If the fingerprints do not match their records, the screening is complete and your local police will provide you with your completed records check.
- If a match is made, a request is made to the Minister of Public Safety to release your record to your local police service. They will conduct their own investigation and with your consent, will release the information directly to the organization requiring the check.
- The fee for fingerprinting will be waived for volunteers in Guelph/Wellington with a letter from the requesting agency.
- After the vulnerable persons screening is complete, all records of your fingerprints will be destroyed. The RCMP will not keep these on file.