



Considerations for Screening

A Guide for Share Good Nonprofits



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Thanks to your organization's dedication, volunteers can serve where they're needed most to make a meaningful impact in their communities. This guide outlines key considerations to support a screening process that aligns with your mission.

Importance of Background Screening in Nonprofits

- Nonprofits often work with vulnerable populations (e.g., children, the elderly, etc.), so proper screening helps protect these individuals.
- Background checks enhance donor trust by ensuring that the organization onboards individuals who align with their mission and values.
- Screening mitigates risks of fraud, theft, and harm, safeguarding the organization's reputation.
- Opens the door for communication with volunteers to build trust and understanding of what's included in someone's report.

Common Screening Types

- **Criminal Background Checks:** Identifies candidates with histories of violent or fraudulent behavior that may pose a risk, depending on your organization's screening standards.
- **Registry Checks:** Essential for positions involving contact with vulnerable populations.

The Differences Between Screening Volunteers and Employees

- **Scope:** Volunteers might undergo lighter background checks based on their role.
- **Legal Considerations:** Volunteer screening laws can differ from those for employees; some states may have specific requirements for volunteer checks.

Legal Requirements: End User Obligations

- **Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA):** Requires end users to thoroughly understand [their responsibilities](#), clearly disclose a background check will be performed, and receive written consent before conducting them.

Legal Requirements: End User Obligations, cont.

- If adverse action (e.g., denying a role) is taken based on a background report, candidates must be notified. This includes providing the candidate with a copy of their report and a Pre-Adverse Action letter, giving the candidate an opportunity to review and dispute any information they feel may be incorrect. The end user should give the candidate a reasonable amount of time to initiate a dispute. Once that time has passed, they should send the applicant the Adverse Action letter.
- Data Protection: Nonprofits must secure personal information gathered during screenings and ensure that only necessary personnel have access to these records.
- Ban-the-Box Laws: Some states prohibit asking about criminal history early in the screening process. Awareness of local and state requirements is critical.

Creating a Safe & Inclusive Screening Policy

- Focus on Relevant Factors: Create role-specific screening criteria to avoid excluding qualified candidates unnecessarily.
- Second Chance Policies: Consider the relevance and recency of any criminal history. For some roles, offering positions to rehabilitated individuals may align with the nonprofit's mission.
- Transparent Communication: Clearly outline the reasons for screening policies and share these with applicants to build understanding and trust.

Suggested Practices for Ongoing Monitoring for Volunteer Positions

- Consider periodic re-screenings for long-term volunteers, especially those in high-risk roles, to keep records current.
- Role-Specific Credential Verification: For volunteers with access to financial or personal information, ongoing monitoring adds a level of accountability and safety.

Building a Culture of Transparency & Trust

- Educate Volunteers and Employees on Screening Importance: Communicate the intent of screening as a safety measure for everyone.
- Clear and Transparent Policies: Publish screening guidelines so that applicants know what to expect and understand how background checks benefit the organization and the community.

- Consistent Practices: Apply screening uniformly across similar roles, which fosters fairness and builds trust with the community you serve.

Case Studies & Success Stories



Youth Empowerment Nonprofit

CHALLENGE(S)

An incident involving an unscreened volunteer.

SOLUTION

Comprehensive volunteer screenings with sex offender registry and criminal record checks.

RESULT

A 20% increase in volunteer participation from parents and donors.



Community Health Organization

CHALLENGE(S)

High staff turnover and a limited budget.

SOLUTION

A bundled screening package with identity verification and basic criminal checks.

RESULT

Improved volunteer retention, positive feedback from both volunteers and program participants, and completion under budget.



Homeless Shelter Nonprofit

CHALLENGE(S)

Concerns for resident safety during overnight shifts.

SOLUTION

A bundled screening package with identity verification and basic criminal checks.

RESULT

Improved volunteer retention, positive feedback from both volunteers and program participants, and completion under budget.