

The Selection Process



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Application

A standardized volunteer application form has been created to ensure that WRHA staff have sufficient information upon which to base placement and management decisions. The standardized form also serves to protect the WRHA from liability.

The application form must be completed and signed by all prospective volunteers. In addition to being a useful tool for deciding whether and where a volunteer's talents can be used, the completed volunteer application form can be a helpful source of information at a later time. For example, a volunteer involved in one project may be a good candidate for future involvement of a different nature. A look through the volunteer files could bring this information to light and shorten the recruitment process.

Interview

An interview is an opportunity to match the needs and concerns of the WRHA with the talents, interests, needs and abilities of the volunteer. There is a mutual screening both for the organization and for the potential volunteer.

Why Interview?

Interviewing is important to ensure you are selecting the most qualified person for your volunteer activity. You are also screening to identify risks to the volunteer, WRHA and the persons receiving health services.

Interviewing and screening potential volunteers allows you to determine:

- If the volunteer has the needed skills, experience, and motivation to do the role well;
- If the volunteer will “fit” into your program;
- If the volunteer’s motivational needs can be met; and
- If your recruitment program seems to attract the right people.

The more challenging or sensitive the volunteer activity, the more thorough and careful you should be with the interview process. There should be contact with every volunteer enlisted for service, but not every activity requires an in-depth interview. Persons working as a group or with “one time” projects such as assisting with a party or other group activity requires less screening and less application paper work. As the sensitivity of the volunteer assignment increases there is a need for a varied and comprehensive screening process.

Interview Strategies

In a short period of time you need to determine how a volunteer will function in everyday activities. Methods to gather this information must be role centered and pursued without discrimination. Questions should stimulate the individual to respond naturally.

Using a variety of screening methods increases your chance of finding the most appropriate volunteers for your program. Thorough screening procedures may expose people who aren't telling the truth by revealing inconsistent responses. In addition, the thoroughness of the process may discourage applicants with something to hide.

- Ask general, open-ended questions. These are especially useful in obtaining subjective or personal information from the candidate. They are also helpful when the candidate appears to be holding back or providing guarded replies.
- Ask directive questions to gather data that is factual and objective.
- Probe to learn more about an applicant's thoughts and feelings without biasing the answers.
- Ask short questions. The more words you use in a question, the more likely you are to influence the answer.
- Stimulate value judgments.
- Probe “Choice Points”. These are situations, which require the applicant to explain why they selected one course of action over another. Reasons why a choice was made can help provide insights to the individual's reasoning and value system.
- Use silence effectively. Silence provides time to think.
- Use reflective statements; reflecting comments back to a candidate is a good technique. It shows you are listening and wish to stimulate elaboration of an answer.

A candidate's willingness to share information is often directly proportionate to the questioning skill of the interviewer.

When selecting questions for an interview remember that the most revealing questions address situations that have already taken place. Past behavior is the best indicator of future performance.

What You Want to Learn

The interview should help you assess:

- Motivation;
- Relevant work (paid or unpaid) related experiences;
- Relevant formal and informal education;
- Ability to work with others;
- Integrity;
- Supervision preferences;
- Initiative and judgment;
- Attitude towards clients; and
- Involvement with the police.

The Interviewing Process

An interview is a social process and should be conducted accordingly. The tone should be pleasant, but businesslike. A good interview is designed to gain the cooperation and confidence of the potential volunteer.

1. Preparation

Consider each activity individually. Start with the activity description and a risk assessment. What do you need to know about the applicant to be able to make a good decision about accepting or rejecting his or her application?

Plan for Each Interview

- Review information about the applicant.
- Study the applicant’s general qualifications, work and volunteer history.
- Determine what additional information or clarification is required.
- Decide on what questions will fill any information gaps.
- Know what you want before you begin the interview.
- Develop questions to bring out desired information.
- Schedule adequate time.
- Arrange for a private, comfortable place to interview.
- Take steps to avoid interruptions during the interview.

2. Opening and Greeting

- Introduce yourself.
- To put the potential volunteer at ease, establish rapport.
- Clarify the purpose of the interview.
- Establish an appropriate time frame for the interview.

3. During the Interview

- Provide general information on your program and the WRHA.
- Provide specific information about the activity, working conditions, benefits and expectations.
- The applicant shares information in response to thoughtful questions regarding:
 - Interests;
 - Experience;
 - Skills;
 - Time availability;
 - Work;
 - Leadership style; and
 - Motivation.
- Check all information on the application form including:
 - History of volunteering;
 - Family commitments; and
 - Transportation.
- Give activity descriptions for the activity(s) the individual is interested in.
- Be aware of biases or prejudices being demonstrated by the person.
- Take notes as necessary during the interview. Keep them brief, pertinent and to the point.
- Look for attitudes that do not fit with WRHA values
- Answer questions when appropriate.

4. Closing

- Review and summarize the interview.
- Discuss appropriate placements.
- Discuss next steps, i.e. criminal record and/or child abuse registry checks, references, potential orientation and start date.
- Let the applicant know when to expect to make a final decision.
- Express appreciation for his/her time.

Discuss the importance of commitment and be up front with the person about concerns you may have with the individual being or becoming over committed.

Sample Interview Questions

1. What interests you in volunteering with the WRHA (or for that specific activity he/she has indicated an interest in)?
2. What skills do you think you can contribute?
3. What are some of your hobbies or special interests?
4. What do you hope to gain from your volunteer experience?
5. What do you feel you have to offer as a volunteer?
(Empathy, enthusiasm, ideas, caring, concern)
6. What volunteer work do you or have you done? Describe what you did.
7. What role, paid or volunteer, have you enjoyed the most? Why?
8. How much time do you have for volunteering and when would that be? (Day of week, time of day, need for flexible hours, length of time able to commit).
9. What other commitments do you have on your time?
10. If applicable, a criminal record check and/or child abuse registry check is required by all volunteers who wish to work in this activity. Will that be a problem for you?

Include any other questions you feel may be relevant to the activity the volunteer is applying for. Adapt the above questions to meet your personal interview style and comfort level.

Note:

It is important to respect the individual’s human rights. Questions regarding race, religion, marital status, etc. are inappropriate and in violation of human rights legislation.

After the Interview

After an interview you need to evaluate the potential volunteer’s qualifications in terms of the activity to be filled.

Evaluate the Interview

- Base your evaluation on facts.
- Be aware of behaviors that are likely to surface once volunteer is in the role.
- Be wary of monosyllabic or many yes/no answers instead of complete responses.
- Evasion, general and roundabout answers rather than specific information should raise flags.
- Concentrate on behavior, not words alone.

Document the Interview

Record observations about behaviors exhibited during the interview and the answers to the questions that were asked.

- Complete an interview summary
- Record specific skills
- Record anything that you think might interfere with the person being a volunteer – scheduling, unreliable, not able to establish rapport, etc.

Ensuring the Right Fit

Be prepared to screen out volunteers who are not appropriate for your program. Don't lead the person on. Be as honest as possible – indicate that you don't believe that you can involve this person in your program and feel that other agencies may be able to use his or her skills and talents more effectively.

Well-placed volunteers are satisfied volunteers that will work effectively for you and your clients.

A reference check can be the most effective screening step during the selection process. References will confirm the background and skills of the applicant and will provide an outside opinion on the suitability of the person for the activity.

Don't assume that applicants will only give the names of people who will speak well of them. People often expect that references will not be followed up.

Reference Checks

Prospective volunteers are asked to list 3 references on the application form. If the prospective volunteer has given names of people who might not be objective (family members or friends) ask if it is okay to contact previous or current employers. Whenever possible get the name of someone who is familiar with the applicant's work with specific participant groups.

The consent portion of the application form authorizes staff to verify information and contact references. The reasons for wanting the references and the use to which they will be put should be discussed with the volunteer applicant.

Candidates should be assured that information provided by referees would be handled in a confidential manner.

At least 2 of the 3 references must be contacted by Volunteer Services and/or the placement supervisor. Reference checks can be conducted by telephone, in person or in writing. Information sought through a reference check must relate to the requirements of the volunteer position. Any information that may be perceived as discriminatory in nature such as religious or political

affiliations cannot be requested. Data obtained through a reference check must be summarized and placed in the applicant's file.

Tips for Conducting Reference Checks

- Describe the activity clearly to the person giving the reference. Ask about the applicant's skill and suitability to the tasks as defined
- Identify the level of trust that will be developed with our clients within the activity
- Do not ask leading questions
- Provide opportunity for the reference to give open comment.

Criminal Record and Child Abuse Registry Checks

Criminal Record and Child Abuse Registry checks are probably the most misunderstood element of screening. Too many people believe that doing these checks means that the person has been screened. Nothing could be further than the truth. It is not only important to know if someone has been convicted of a crime, the nature of that crime is also important. If a conviction is an abuse or harassment offence, it can often be more pertinent than a conviction for shoplifting, depending on the role the volunteer will be filling.

These checks do serve a purpose, particularly in those cases (high-risk activities) where the WRHA is committed to a full and complete screening process. The checks will also signal, in a very public way, that the WRHA is concerned about the safety of persons receiving health services.

To conduct the checks, please refer to instructions attached to the application forms for the checks. Both criminal and child abuse checks require a date of birth. This violates human rights. Therefore, checks cannot be completed until the volunteer has been offered the activity (with the condition that they “pass” a check).

Due to the nature of information on the forms and issues of confidentiality, all checks should be verified and kept on file by Volunteer Services.

The Winnipeg Police Service charges a fee for applying for a police records check. Volunteer Services covers the cost if the volunteer is accepted and placed in a volunteer activity with the WRHA. There is no fee for conducted a child abuse registry check for volunteers of the WRHA.

The following procedure is in place for criminal records checks:

1. Volunteers complete the Criminal Record Check Agency form which is prepaid by WRHA. Volunteer Services mails it to the Winnipeg Police Service.
2. The results of the check are sent to the Manager of Volunteer Services who will notify the placement supervisor as to the outcome of the check.
3. The original search certificate is kept in the applicant’s file and a copy will be provided to the volunteer if requested.

An agreement is in place to allow the following procedure for child abuse registry checks:

1. WHRA Volunteer Services will forward completed forms to the Child Abuse Registry office.
2. The results of the check are sent to the Manager of Volunteer Services.
3. The Manager of Volunteer Services notifies the placement supervisor as to the outcome of the check.
4. The results are kept in the applicant’s file and a copy will be provided to the volunteer if requested.