

Using the Risk Assessment Matrix, you can determine the level of risk for program participants and volunteers, and the necessary level of screening for your volunteer positions according to multiple categories. Your organization can use these levels of risk to develop screening policies and procedures.

This matrix does not provide a simple formula to indicate the exact level of risk, or determine what your policies and procedures should look like to mitigate that risk. Each organization will have different needs and strategies to address them. Please refer to the risk discussion guide to help you think through the results of your assessment.

	Minimal risk	Low Risk	Medium Risk ¹	High Risk
Interactions with Participants/Clients	Volunteer is in a role that involves none, or very little interaction with vulnerable population (ex. <i>Social media coordinator who does not speak with vulnerable population, bookkeeper or accounting volunteers</i>)	Volunteer is in a role that involves minimal, incidental interaction with vulnerable population (ex. <i>Social media coordinator who sometimes does interviews with vulnerable population to gather stories/experience to share in communications</i>)	Volunteer is in a role that involves moderate, semi-frequent interaction with vulnerable population (ex. <i>Online group activity or education facilitator/instruction, with a fixed number of sessions</i>)	Volunteer is in a role that requires frequent or prolonged interaction with vulnerable population (ex. <i>Online youth mentor, who provides mentorship on an ongoing basis with no planned end</i>)
Setting/Confidentiality	Volunteer works in a confidential setting with no potential of unscreened individuals* within visibility or earshot of volunteer/participant interactions (ex. <i>private room in their home or private office, using headphones, password protected online platform</i>)	Volunteer works in a mostly-confidential setting with some potential of unscreened individuals within visibility or earshot of volunteer and participant interactions (ex. <i>common room in home or office cubical with others present, using headphones, password protected online platform</i>)	Volunteer works in a setting that is somewhat confidential with moderate potential of unscreened individuals within visibility or earshot of volunteer and participant interactions (ex. <i>library, or open/shared office space, perhaps without headphones or password protected online platform</i>)	Volunteer works in a public setting with high potential of unscreened individuals within visibility or earshot of volunteer and participant interactions (ex. <i>a mall or other public space, no headphones, no password protected online platform</i>)
Supervision/Support	Supervision by a paid employee or fully trained/screened volunteer is present at all times through real-time communication methods (Teams, phone, etc.) and a solid plan is in place for when a volunteer must contact supervision for immediate concerns/support	Supervision by a paid employee or fully trained/screened volunteer through real-time communication methods (Teams, phone, etc.) is on an as-needed basis, and a general plan is in place for when a volunteer must contact supervision for immediate concerns/support	Supervision by a paid employee or fully trained/screened volunteer through real-time communication methods (Teams, phone, etc.) is inconsistent, and only a loose plan is in place for when a volunteer must contact supervision for immediate concerns/support	There is very little to no supervision by a paid employee or fully trained/screened volunteer through real-time communication methods (Teams, phone, etc.), and no plan is in place for when a volunteer must contact supervision for immediate concerns/support
Nature of the Relationship (Level of Trust and Authority)	There is no relationship or level of trust and authority present between the volunteer and a vulnerable population (ex. <i>Graphic designer or web developer</i>)	There are minimal, incidental instances of trust and authority present between the volunteer and a vulnerable population. The volunteer does not have decision-making power over the vulnerable group. (ex. <i>Online group activity or education facilitator/instruction, with a fixed number of sessions</i>)	There is a moderately personal relationship and moderate degree of trust and authority developed between the volunteer and a vulnerable population. The volunteer has a moderate degree of decision-making power over the vulnerable group. (ex. <i>Language or homework tutor</i>)	There is a one-on-one personal relationship with a high degree of trust and authority developed between the volunteer and a vulnerable population. The volunteer has a high degree of decision-making power over the vulnerable group. (ex. <i>Friendly Caller/Visitor, Youth Mentor</i>)
Volunteer Technological Literacy**	Volunteer has advanced understanding of how to use, manage, and evaluate technology (ex. <i>No training required, identifies as an expert</i>)	Volunteer has general, comfortable understanding of how to use, manage, and evaluate technology (ex. <i>No or very little training required, comfortable with most technology and not nervous about using it</i>)	Volunteer has basic, understanding of how to use, manage, and evaluate technology (ex. <i>Some training required, comfortable with some technology, but also expresses nervousness about using it</i>)	Volunteer has very little to no understanding of how to use, manage, and evaluate technology (ex. <i>Substantial training required, the volunteer identifies as not comfortable using technology</i>)

* Unscreened Individual in this case refers to a member of the public or a non-program user. Essentially, someone who is not bound by confidentiality agreements. It would be a risk to the client or participant if their private information could be overheard by someone sitting in the same room as the volunteer while they are carrying out their duties.

** Technological literacy refers to one's ability to use, manage, evaluate, and understand technology (ITEA, 2000/2002). In order to be a technologically literate citizen, a person should understand what technology is, how it works, how it shapes society and in turn how society shapes it. (<https://www.iteea.org/48897.aspx>)

¹ Volunteer positions in the medium or high risk category may be eligible for the Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC) Fee Waiver under the Volunteer Screening Program. Please refer to the eligibility guidelines to determine if the VSC Fee Waiver is applicable.

Last Updated: February 2022

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	BOARD/LEADERSHIP CONSIDERATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you need a police information check or vulnerable sector check based on the risk to participants? • Are your volunteer positions and associated procedures in line with existing policies for your organization? • Are the training requirements for this position appropriate given the level of risk to participants or volunteers? • Does your organization have policies or procedures in place that outline strategies to avoid unforeseen risks? <i>For example, if you have a volunteer position that is regularly supervised, what happens if the supervisor calls in sick?</i> • If you're assessing risk based on the written volunteer position, when was the last time you talked to your volunteers about how closely the written position and their work align? When was the last time you talked to your participants/clients about the volunteer position? Are you missing anything? • Are any of the assessments you made in the risk matrix dependent upon a specific volunteer instead of their volunteer position? <i>For example, you may have a volunteer who fills a role and prefers to work in isolation or with minimal interaction with clients/participants, but their volunteer position doesn't actually require them to work this way. Should it? Would you want every volunteer in that position to work the same way?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you need a police information check or vulnerable sector check from your volunteers based on insurance or parent organization requirements? Is there any room to advocate for a different approach? • Are your volunteer positions and associated procedures compliant with existing bylaws, legislation, and regulations for your organization? <i>For example, the legislation your organization was incorporated under, Occupational Health and Safety, labour standards, privacy legislation, etc.?</i> • How does the volunteer position and the volunteer's experience reflect on the organization? Are there any components of the volunteer position that could damage the reputation of your organization in the community or with funders? Are there good reasons to accept a reasonable level of risk to your organization's reputation? <i>For example, recruiting a volunteer with 'lived experience' with the program?</i> • Are there any financial risks presented by the volunteer position? Are there policies or procedures to deter or respond to theft, fraud, or misuse of funds? • Are there appropriate mechanisms in place for volunteers, operation staff, and participants/clients to provide feedback and identify unforeseen risks? <i>For example, yearly surveys, exit interviews, anonymous feedback, focus groups, etc.</i> • Does the board have a clear understand of what the responsibilities of the board, the staff, and the volunteers are? Are there shared responsibilities?

Please note, this tool and any resources developed by Volunteer Alberta do not constitute legal advice. Any specific legal concerns should be brought to a legal professional. .

Last Updated: February 2022