



# Best Practices for Employee and Volunteer Screenings

Nonprofits depend on employees and volunteers to keep their operations running smoothly. However, new employees can put the physical and emotional safety of your current staff, the populations you serve, and your organization's reputation and productivity at risk. Whether your nonprofit deals with the general public, children or other vulnerable populations, it is crucial you properly screen all prospective employees and volunteers to protect your organization and the community you support.

## Screening Types and Considerations

Research shows that adequately screened and trained personnel results in higher retention rates. But screenings cost time and money — so what level of screening is appropriate? The screening level for each new employee or volunteer should be decided based on the cost, the nature of work, the population being served and any other pertinent risk factors.

### Basic Forms of Screening

- ▶ A completed application that includes questions regarding any criminal involvement or allegations of abuse
- ▶ An interview with supervisory staff that includes open-ended situational questions
- ▶ Reference checks
- ▶ A criminal background check
  - Consent is required to complete a background screening — use a background check consent form and keep it on file
  - If an applicant recently completed a background check for another organization, obtain a copy of the background check



### Advanced Forms of Screening

If your budget allows, the below items should be completed/provided as well. These items are encouraged for those serving high-risk populations, such as children, the elderly or the mentally disabled, or high-risk positions, such as individuals handling money or sensitive information.

- ▶ Multiple forms of identification — verify the authenticity of each
- ▶ Local and national background checks
  - *FBI fingerprinting is a valuable resource for national checks*
- ▶ Department of Motor Vehicles record check, especially for personnel who will be driving
- ▶ Sex offender registry and child abuse log checks
  - Child abuse and sex offender registries may vary state to state
  - Check your state's guidelines
- ▶ Drug and alcohol testing, especially for halfway houses and similar organizations
- ▶ A basic internet search on the individual, including social media checks



### Post-hire Process

Having a solid process will ensure you keep your organization's safety risks to a minimum.

- ▶ Have a formal orientation meeting
  - During this meeting, the following should be reviewed:
    - Code of conduct
    - Sexual abuse policy
    - Incident reporting process
    - Privacy policy — obtain employee's signature, if applicable
  - Conduct renewal screenings annually or as needed based on the position

While these processes can't guarantee all potential hazards will be eliminated, they will help your organization run more safely and effectively.