

# Screening Volunteers For Public Entities

Using volunteers is a common practice for public entities. However, if not handled adequately, engaging volunteers can lead to significant risk and liability for the public entity. Therefore, it is necessary to properly screen volunteers prior to permitting them to act on the entity's behalf. Some areas that should be considered for proper screening are listed below. (Note: this list is not necessarily all-inclusive.)

- **Volunteer Job Descriptions.** Job descriptions should be developed for each volunteer position and should include the following criteria:
  - Experience necessary
  - Skills required
  - Educational requirements
  - Physical requirements
- **Reference Checks.** The candidate should list at least three references who are not members of his/her immediate family. The entity then should verify these references by contacting them.
- **Prior Employer Checks.** If the candidate was previously employed, the entity should contact the last one or two employers. The entity should inquire as to the candidate's promptness, attendance, work quality, and consideration for rehiring.
- **Credentials.** Where specific credentials are required (such as First Aid certification), they should be verified.
- **State Registries of Known Child Offenders.** Where the candidate will be placed in the position of supervising children, inquiries to these registries should be made.
- **Local Police Records Checks.** Where the candidate may be placed in a position of security or handling moneys, such checks should always be made.
- **Motor Vehicle Records Checks.** Where the candidate may be placed in the position of driving a motor vehicle (either the entity's or their own) for public entity business, a check of the person's MVR is a must. Criteria should be established to determine MVR acceptability. Applicants whose MVRs are not adequate should not be permitted to drive for entity business.

Checking these items can go a long way toward avoiding engaging volunteers who could place your entity at risk.

Loss Control CFILC

For more information, contact your local Hartford agent or your Hartford Loss Control Consultant. Visit The Hartford's Loss Control web site at <http://www.thehartford.com/corporate/losscontrol/>

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