

Organizations that employ staff or volunteers who work with vulnerable people—such as children, older adults, or individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities—carry significant responsibility. A central concern is the risk that a vulnerable person may experience abuse, whether physical, sexual, verbal, or financial. Such incidents can be devastating for individuals and damaging to an organization’s reputation and trust. Managing this risk begins with strong hiring and screening practices.

A RIGOROUS HIRING AND SCREENING PROCESS

An effective screening program is an essential component of abuse prevention. In addition to verifying qualifications, experience, and references, record checks must be a core component of your

process for all employees and volunteers. These checks help determine whether an applicant may pose a risk to the people your organization serves.

TYPES OF RECORD CHECKS

Record check terminology and processes vary across Canada, but they generally fall into three levels: basic, enhanced, and vulnerable sector. Some jurisdictions combine basic and enhanced checks into a single level.

Record checks may be conducted using:

- ✓ Name-based searches, which review databases such as the RCMP's Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) using an applicant's name and date of birth.
- ✓ Fingerprint-based searches, which verify identity through the RCMP's Canadian Criminal Real Time Identification Services (CCRTIS). These checks are used when a name-based search returns an inconclusive result.



Fingerprint submissions are destroyed once processing is complete. When fingerprints are used, the result is often described as a certified record check.

The following summarizes the levels of checks used in Ontario, which provide a useful reference for understanding the types of information disclosed. You should ensure that your organization understands the system used in your jurisdiction.

Criminal Record Check (CRC)

A CRC is typically used for positions that do not involve trust, authority, or close interaction with vulnerable people.

It includes:

- ✓ Applicable criminal convictions
- ✓ Findings of guilt under the Youth Criminal Justice Act 2002 (in limited circumstances)

Criminal Record and Judicial Matters Check (CRJMC)

A CRJMC is used for roles with greater responsibility or access to sensitive information. It includes all CRC information, plus:

- ✓ Absolute and conditional discharges
- ✓ Outstanding charges
- ✓ Arrest warrants
- ✓ Certain judicial orders

Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC)

A VSC applies to all positions involving authority, supervision, or care of children and vulnerable people. It includes all CRC and CRJMC information, as well as:

- ✓ Findings of not criminally responsible due to mental disorder
- ✓ Record suspensions (pardons) for sexually based offences
- ✓ Certain non-conviction information, where a strict legal test is met

DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF CHECK

The level of record check must correspond directly to the duties of the position. Public Safety Canada's *The Screening Handbook* provides guidance on assessing the level required.

A CRC or CRJMC may be adequate for many roles. However, positions involving authority or trust over children or vulnerable people require a VSC.



It is important to understand that a VSC cannot be requested unless the role meets the legal criteria, otherwise the request will be denied.

The *Criminal Records Act* defines:

- ✓ A child as a person under 18 years of age
- ✓ A vulnerable person as someone who, due to age, a disability, or temporary or permanent circumstances:
 - a) is dependent on others, or
 - b) is at greater risk of harm from a person in a position of trust or authority.

Examples of positions requiring a VSC include teachers, sports coaches, day-care workers, long-term care staff, nurses, social workers, youth leaders, and volunteers supporting these roles. Organizations must ensure a VSC is conducted for any position meeting these criteria.

OBTAINING A RECORD CHECK

Procedures for obtaining a record check vary across jurisdictions and depend on the level of check required. Basic and enhanced checks can generally be initiated by the applicant or employer with written consent. These checks may be completed through a police service or an accredited third-party provider, where permitted.

VSCs must be initiated by the applicant directly through their local police service. Applicants may be required to provide proof that the hiring organization requires this level of check, often in the form of a formal letter. In some cases, a third-party provider

may collect and submit fingerprints, but the police service completes the search and issues the results.

In all cases, results are released first to the applicant. The hiring organization may review them only with the applicant's explicit consent.

Fees vary by jurisdiction. VSCs are often more expensive, while fees for basic or enhanced checks may be reduced or waived for volunteers. Your hiring policy should specify who is responsible for fees and whether checks from police services, third-party providers, or both are accepted.

USING RECORD CHECK RESULTS

Record check information must be handled in accordance with privacy legislation and used only for its intended purpose. Organizations should assess results on an individual basis, considering whether any disclosure is relevant to the position's duties.

Avoid blanket rules that automatically disqualify applicants based solely on the existence of a record, as such practices may contravene human rights legislation. Decisions should be based on objective, role-specific criteria outlined in your hiring, screening, and abuse-prevention policies.

ABUSE PREVENTION: A MULTI-LAYERED APPROACH

Record checks are one essential component of reducing the risk of abuse, but they are not sufficient on their own. A comprehensive abuse-prevention program should include:

- ✓ Clearly defined abuse-prevention policies and procedures
- ✓ Structured orientation and ongoing training for staff and volunteers
- ✓ Regular supervision and performance oversight
- ✓ Periodic updates of required record checks (e.g., every three to five years)
- ✓ A simple, confidential reporting process for individuals who experience, witness, or suspect abuse

Additional guidance is available in our bulletin *Guidelines for Developing a Safety and Protection Policy for Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults*.

For further information, consult an Ecclesiastical Risk Control Specialist or visit www.ecclesiastical.ca.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

The Screening Handbook 2012 Edition

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca>

Police record checks | ontario.ca

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/police-record-checks>

Criminal Records Act

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca>

Vulnerable sector checks | Royal Canadian Mounted Police

<https://rcmp.ca>

Summary of privacy laws in Canada - Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada

<https://www.priv.gc.ca>

Canadian Human Rights Act

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca>

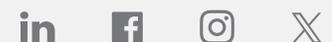
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