



REFERENCE CHECKS

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DID YOU KNOW that reference checks are one of the most effective screening steps?

Within the St. John Ambulance Screening Policy there is a screening cycle for all roles within the organization. The “Selection” step includes reference checks. As part of the process of screening, it is important to obtain relevant external information about previous volunteer activities. Although checking references is time-consuming, a reference check is a great way to obtain an outside opinion on the suitability of the applicant, while confirming background skills and experience.

When conducting reference checks, remember:

1. Applicants are required to submit at least one personal and one professional reference with their application form. Additional references may be required for positions designated high-risk if the first two references are discordant.
2. Reference checks can be done in person, by phone, mail, e-mail, or fax. It is recommended that the application interviewer perform the reference checks for any given applicant.
3. Plan the reference interview (usually conducted over the phone).
 - Review your jurisdictional human rights statutes.
 - Ensure that the member has consented to having his/her references checked.
 - Verify factual data provided by the applicant.
 - When asking about performance and behavior, ask open-ended questions and probe for the information you need. For example, ask: “Can you tell me how [applicant’s name] responded to stressful work situations?”
 - Encourage both positive and negative feedback about the individual.
 - Avoid questions that lead to information that is prohibited on human rights grounds.
 - If you get a negative impression, probe for more information.
 - Keep a written record of the interview.
4. The following are a few sample questions to guide you in conducting reference checks:
 - How long have you known the applicant?
 - In what capacity do you know him/her?
 - Would you say that you know the applicant well? Slightly?
 - What is your current relationship to the applicant?
 - Describe your experience with the applicant?
 - Can you please tell me what you remember most, good and bad, about this person?
 - Has this person ever demonstrated any characteristics of temperament or personality that you believe would cause a problem if he or she were to take on this position?
 - Would you be willing to have this person work on a one-to-one basis with a vulnerable person e.g. child or a senior citizen?
 - How well does the person work on his own? As part of a team?
 - What would you identify as this individual’s strengths? Weaknesses?
 - Would you recommend this person to our organization?

Reference checks provide additional assurance of an applicant’s suitability. Remember, careful planning is essential to ensuring objectivity in reference checks.

Additional resources: St. John Ambulance National Policies and Procedures
www.vp;imteer/ca; ww.energizeinc.com

DID YOU KNOW?

AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE