

The Army Cadet League of Canada



Screening Coordinator's Handbook

4-step common sense guide to volunteer selection

Introduction

The League accepted to perform the civilian Volunteer Screening function for the Army Cadet Movement as part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on 01 Dec 2005. This decision was taken with careful consideration and for three reasons:

1. **“It’s what we do”**: Recruiting and managing a pool of volunteers and Parents at a Cadet Corps is not new to us and is one way that the League has traditionally supported The Royal Canadian Army Cadets. We did not want to delegate that responsibility.
2. **“Simplicity”**: **The Leagues can implement an efficient, straightforward screening process that is simple, quick and flexible and executed locally by and for the benefit of the Cadet Corps.**
3. **“Safety”**: The best people to make judgment calls on volunteer applicants are the people who live in the communities where the volunteers are **known and** are going to work. References are best checked by local people and the knowledge that this process is in place will in itself deter unsuitable individuals from applying.

This Handbook is designed to help the Screening Coordinators and Sponsoring Committee Chairs address almost any situation that may arise. [You should also familiarize yourself with the Canadian Forces regulations in Cadet Administrative and Training Orders \(CATO\) 23-07 \(Civilian Volunteers in Support of Cadet Duty\) available on the net at:](#)

http://www.cadets.ca/support/cato-oaic/intro_e.asp?vol=2

[This booklet](#) also lays out the standard procedure that The Army Cadet League of Canada (ACLC) will use to process Volunteer registration and screening. We recognize that regional and provincial exceptions will arise and that common sense practical solutions are required to address any unforeseen problems. The League has committed to work with these exceptions so long as we are able to deliver on the fundamental requirements that were identified by the National Cadet Council (NCC) Working Group in 2005 to ensure the protection of the youth in our care:

1. The identity of the Applicant is checked and accurate;
2. The Applicant is thoroughly interviewed;
3. A **Canadian Police Record Check / Vulnerability Sector (PRC/VSS/VSS)** screening confirms the applicant has no criminal **history**;
4. The local Sponsoring Committee verifies the applicant’s references.

If we efficiently meet these four requirements, we will have done all we possibly can do to ensure the young cadets in our cadet corps are going to be provided with safe and effective Volunteers. Canadian Forces (CF) personnel, including the Cadet Instructor Cadre (CIC) and the Civilian Instructors (CI) are considered to be screened as a result of a similar process when they are enrolled (See CATO’s 23-04 and 23-05).

As you read through this Handbook, please **remember it was designed as a guide** to give you an overview of what is required. However, all four steps must be performed. If you need any clarification feel free to contact your Branch President or the National Office at:

Ottawa local: (613) 991-4348

Toll- free: 1-877-276-9223

Email: national@armycadetleague.ca

STEP ONE

THE INITIAL MEETING & APPLICATION

1. Identifying and recruiting volunteers is a prime activity of the Corps Sponsoring Committee, however the involvement of Corps Commanding Officers (CO) is essential to an effective volunteer recruiting program. Out of common courtesy, prospective volunteers should be formally introduced to both the Corps CO and the Chair of the Sponsoring Committee as soon as they arrive to apply.

2. The Chair of The Sponsoring Committee coordinates the activities of the Committee and its volunteers and should conduct the initial interview. The Chair may delegate this to someone else, such as the Screening Coordinator. During this initial meeting, the following information should be passed on to the applicant:

- An explanation of the Volunteer Registration Form (Annex “A” to Policy 10.1):
- Photograph specifications (Digital “Head & Shoulders” preferred):
- A description of the interesting and fun opportunities within the Cadet Corps and Committee;
- Contact information for the Volunteer Screening Coordinator and/or the Committee Chair.

3. Most new Volunteers will be known to the Cadet Corps and/or The Sponsoring Committee when they apply. The goal of the first meeting is to confirm to the applicant that volunteering with the Army Cadet League of Canada (ACLC) can be a both an enjoyable and rewarding experience. It is important not to overwhelm them with the paperwork and policies at this initial stage. The best approach is to offer them a [pre-assembled Registration Kit available](#). This may consist of an envelope which includes (in part) the Registration Application form, some policies, local information and recruiting material and local contact information. This will provide applicants with the information they need in one simple package. As the interviewer hands them the package it is important to stress the importance of the Screening procedure (roughly) as follows:

“Thank you for expressing interest in volunteering with us. We are thrilled to have you on board. Before you start, we have to follow some screening procedures. We must do reliability checks on all volunteers. I’m sure you can understand why it is so important for us to make sure our volunteers have our cadets’ best interests at heart. Please review this information and feel free to call me or the Screening Coordinator [name] if you have any questions. When the screening process is complete, you will be able to start working with us.”

4. The forms and policies are self-explanatory. Giving these to the applicant to review later allows the interviewer to focus on building the eagerness and enthusiasm of the applicant. Reputable volunteers will understand the need for screening and safety policies. By presenting a professional package you will demonstrate to a potential volunteer that the ACLC **is a professional organization that** appreciates their volunteer efforts and is determined to prevent disreputable individuals from joining the Army Cadet Movement.

5. After the Initial Meeting, the name and phone number of the applicant should be retained by the Volunteer Screening Coordinator for follow-up. Whether or not the initial meeting is followed-up is a local decision.

6. Information must be kept confidential. Once the screening process is complete, any information collected must be sent to the National Office, where it will be stored in accordance with the Federal Privacy Act and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA).

7. When the applicant submits their paperwork, several points need to be checked:

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| √ | VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – each section is complete and legible – contact information matches Identification |
| √ | IDENTIFICATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two pieces of ID - verify originals to ensure they match the photocopies |
| √ | CANADIAN POLICE RECORD CHECK / VUNERABILITY SECTOR SCREENING (PRC/VSS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure it is an original, name and birth date match the ID provided and it has an original stamp, impression or signature from the Police Service, if used. |
| √ | PHOTOGRAPH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Photos may be submitted either in original format, digitally on diskette by e-mail from the Screening Coordinator or the Chair of The Sponsoring Committee to <i>national@armycadetleague.ca</i> <u>or</u> by Canada Post to the National Office. |

When all these documents are in order, the screening process can proceed.

Remember: At any stage of the screening process, the Branch Screening Coordinator may decline the volunteer or a recommendation may be made in confidence, to the Provincial or National Office, to decline the application.

STEP TWO **THE FORMAL INTERVIEW**

8. Once all of the documents in Step One are in order, there should be a formal interview with the applicant. The formal interview should be conducted by a panel of at least three persons. The Panel should be composed from the Volunteer Screening Coordinator, one or two other volunteers, the Cadet Corps CO and perhaps one other individual from the Sponsoring Committee. The different perspective brought by each individual will help determine if the candidate is suitable. The Committee Chair is responsible for establishing the Interview Panel and will decide the place, time and conduct.

9. Before meeting the applicant, the Volunteer Screening Coordinator should brief the members of the Interview Panel as to how the interview should be conducted. This includes reviewing the list of questions and outlining generally prohibited areas of questioning, such as:

Sex or Sexual Orientation

Age

Race

National/Ethnic Origin

Colour

Religion

Disability * See Note 1 below

Family Status

Marital Status

Pardoned Convictions * See Note 2 below

10. The following suggested questions are simply a guideline. Feel free to ask any questions that are not prohibited by any of the ten factors listed above, but bear in mind the interview is part of a process that addresses a greater good: the safety of Youth in the Cadet Program. As well, consider that the Applicant is not applying for paid employment. There is no risk of lost wages. If the Panel feels a sensitive question should be asked to determine or clarify a sensitive point, that question should be asked. Following are some suggested questions:

Volunteer Interest

- Did you review the documents we provided and do you have any questions about them?
- Did you review the Harassment and Abuse, Drug and Alcohol and Safety Policies
- As a volunteer, do you agree to abide by these policies?
- Why did you decide you would like to volunteer with us?
- What are your personal goals for involvement within the Army Cadet League?
- What activities are you interested in assisting with?

Background

- How long have you lived here? If applicable, follow with:
 - Where have you lived before?
 - Why did you move?
 - Why have you moved so often?
- Have you worked with youth before? If applicable, follow with:
 - What organizations did you work with?
 - What were your duties?
 - How long did you volunteer for?
 - Why did you leave?
- What are your hobbies and interests?
- What skills do you possess that relate to a volunteer position with the Army Cadet League?
- Ask any questions relating to the reference check, for instance, "What do you think your references will say about you?"

Suitability

- Do you know of any limitations, physical, mental or otherwise, that will impede your ability to carry out the duties of an Army Cadet League volunteer as they have been described to you? * see Note 1 below
- Are you comfortable working in a multi-cultural environment with teenagers?
- Are there any groups or individuals you would prefer not to work with?
- How would you motivate cadets to follow your direction?
- How do you think youth should be disciplined?
- Can you think of a situation involving youth that you handled poorly? Follow with:
 - What did you learn from it?
 - How would you handle it differently?
- Former cadets: Ask if they understand the differences between cadets and volunteer staff, and how they will manage the professional separation required between themselves and cadets.

11. The use of hypothetical scenarios is also a good way of determining how an individual may act in a leadership role. Ask the applicant to comment on how they would handle one or two different scenarios. This will create a dialogue that will open any number of questions:

Examples:

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| One of your cadets is a loner and doesn't interact well with the other cadets and is very shy towards the staff.. |
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| A staff member is yelling at cadets for no apparent reason. |
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| Some of your cadets are not following direction, and are a disruptive influence on the other cadets. Their continued disobedience has made you angry and frustrated. |
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Challenge the applicant:

- ⇒ How would you handle this?
- ⇒ Why would you handle it this way?
- ⇒ Are there any other ways to handle it?
- ⇒ What is the most important aspect of this problem?
- ⇒ How could this problem be avoided?

At the conclusion of questioning, the applicant should have another opportunity to ask any questions.

12. How the applicant answers a question can be more important than the answer itself.

| Watch out for: | How to handle it: |
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| Simple Yes or No answers | Ask for details if you feel something is being left out. |
| Evasive answers | These are responses that do not really answer the question or steer the interview in a different direction. Ensure you keep on topic. If necessary, ask the question again. |
| Inconsistencies | The answer given does not match previous answers or information you have gathered. Ask the question again later, phrased differently, to see if you get a consistent answer. Ask the applicant about any inconsistencies you have noted. |
| Body language | Does the applicant make eye contact? <i>(Note however that in some cultures it is considered impolite to make direct eye contact with an official or a senior).</i> Do they appear overly uncomfortable or fidgety? Note whether behaviour is different from the first interview. |

12. After the interview is over, the members of the Interview Committee should discuss the applicant. The Volunteer Screening Coordinator may need to follow up on points raised during the interview. If it is deemed useful, you can call a second interview to clarify any unresolved concerns. It is important there be no doubt that the applicant is a worthy and reliable person.

13. If the [PRC/VSS](#) has revealed a conviction or the Interview Committee may decide (after Step 3) to move the application to the “Exception Tolerance Policy” Annex “E”.

STEP THREE

THE LOCAL REFERENCE CHECK

14. After the completed application has been received and the interview has been conducted the Screening Coordinator must contact each of the references provided in the Registration Form, **prior** to making a recommendation. The purpose of contacting these references is twofold:

- a. To verify the information provided from the applicant is accurate.
- b. To seek further information about the suitability of the applicant to work with youth.

15. When a Screening Coordinator contacts a reference, they should identify themselves and why they are calling. A suggested form can be found at Annex “D” to Policy 10.1 which might be useful:

“Hello, I’m John Johnson from the Army Cadet League of Canada, and I’m calling about a reference check for John Doe. The Army Cadet League is a Charitable Organization that runs youth programs and John has offered to volunteer with us. Do you think you would be able to answer a few questions to confirm information he/she has provided to us?”

16. Ask personal references about:

- How long have you known the applicant?
- What is your relationship with the applicant?
- Does the applicant interact well with children?
- Would you place your child in the care of this person?

17. If an employer, ask for confirmation about:

- How long the applicant worked at your firm?
- (If the applicant is a former employee) Why did he/she leave?
- How did the applicant relate with co-workers?
- Would you rehire this individual?
- Would you recommend the applicant to volunteer to work with Army Cadets?
- Would you place your child in the care of this person?

| Finding References |
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| <p style="text-align: center;">The Canada411 website is an excellent way to seek out telephone numbers of references.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.canada411.com</p> |

18. There is no set list of questions that will meet with every scenario a Screening Coordinator will encounter. Each Coordinator will have to rely on their best judgment when interviewing each reference. Screening Coordinators **may not** ask questions about:

- | | |
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| <p>Sex</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Race</p> <p>National/Ethnic Origin</p> <p>Colour</p> | <p>Religion</p> <p>Disability * See Note 1</p> <p>Family Status</p> <p>Marital Status</p> <p>Pardoned Convictions * See Note 2</p> |
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These subjects are protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and may not be used in determining the suitability of an applicant. Balancing the rights of the applicant against the need to protect Cadets can sometimes be difficult. However it is the position of the Army Cadet League that the welfare of youth is a greater need and takes precedence.

STEP FOUR **THE APPROVAL**

19. Once the Screening Coordinator has collected all the requested paperwork, conducted the interviews and verified the applicant's references, it is time to make a recommendation.

20. Selecting volunteers is always a judgment call. Screening Coordinators have a major responsibility in determining whether or not an applicant is a suitable volunteer. Even if there is no clear evidence that an applicant will cause problems as a volunteer, the Screening Coordinator can still use their '*Gut Instinct*' to make a determination. The only reasons that may not be used, as defined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, to make a determination are:

Sex or Sexual Orientation

Age

Race

National/Ethnic Origin

Colour

Religion

Disability * Except as noted

Family Status

Marital Status

Pardoned Convictions *Except as noted

21. As the well-being and safety of cadets is the first priority of any youth program, it has clear precedence over the wishes of any prospective volunteer. As such, The Army Cadet League of Canada maintains the right to select its volunteers and will stand by and support the recommendation of the Screening Coordinators and the Sponsoring Committee Chairs.

22. Screening Coordinators that have questions or concerns about an applicant **may** phone the National Office, at 1-877-276-9223, to discuss their recommendation.

23. Once the Screening Coordinator has made a positive recommendation, they will package up all of the information and send it to the provincial or territorial office where it will be reviewed for completeness. The Screening Coordinators should keep a copy of page 1 of the **Volunteer Registration Form only**. All other information on the form is confidential and must not be copied or shared with any other party. The completed package will then be forwarded to the National Office in Ottawa for processing. The ID card will be sent directly to the Chair of the Cadet Corps' Sponsoring Committee for delivery to the Volunteer.

24. If an applicant is declined, the applicant must cease all activity at the cadet corps. The registration documents and all of the information must be packaged up and sent to the National Office. This will include the Volunteer Application Form, identification documents, Canadian Police Record Check (CPIC), and any personal notes taken by the Screening Coordinator. **Exceptions are to be handled in accordance with Annex "E" of Policy 10.1 and treated in confidence with speed.**

25. For political and social reasons, a Sponsoring Committee Chair may request that the refusal of an application be made from the Provincial or National Office.

26. When the Photo ID card is received at the Cadet Corps the Volunteer should then contact the Cadet Corps Commanding Officer and undertake to sign the DND Volunteer Agreement.

27. Applicants may not work with cadets until such time as the screening process is successfully completed.

Notes:

1. Interviewers may ask, without violating the Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

“Do you know of any limitations, physical, mental or otherwise, that will impede your ability to ensure the safety of any cadets under your care or your ability to carry out the duties of an Army Cadet League volunteer?”

2. If an Applicant discloses a prior criminal conviction this may be discussed during the interview process. If the Interviewer or Panel determines that this conviction does not constitute a danger to cadets and that the Applicant deserves to be considered, a recommendation to this effect should be prepared and signed by all members of the Panel well as the Chair of the Sponsoring Committee and the Commanding Officer of the Cadet Corps. This recommendation, marked CONFIDENTIAL should be sent to the Provincial or Territorial Branch President. Upon that President’s recommendation the waiver will then be forwarded for consideration by the **National Executive Committee in accordance with Annex “E” of Policy 10.1**. This should be done quickly. It is unfair to all concerned to allow this process to be drawn out.

3. While the League cannot discriminate against a person with a disability, the Army Cadet League can present a bona fide case for the need to protect our cadets. The best way to approach this is to **provide any disabled applicant** with a description of their duties (in Step One) and ask “Do you know of any limitations, physical, mental or otherwise, that will impede your ability to carry out the duties of a Army Cadet League volunteer as they have been described to you?” Do not ask this question to references, it must only be asked to the applicant. On the other hand, we may not be able to provide a safe environment for such individuals and this must also be considered.