

2008  
BC Community  
Football  
Association  
Rule Book

# **BC Community Football Association**

## **Rules and Regulations -**

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

#### **CONDUCT OF THE GAME**

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>The Ball</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>The Game</b>
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>The Field</b>
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Uniforms and Equipment</b>

#### **PLAYERS**

<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Players</b>
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#### **OFFICIALS**

<b>Section 6</b>	<b>Game Officials</b>
<b>Section 7</b>	<b>Sideline Officials</b>
<b>Section 8</b>	<b>The Game Commissioner</b>

#### **SCORING**

<b>Section 9</b>	<b>Table of Scores</b>
<b>Section 10</b>	<b>League Scoring</b>

#### **FOULS AND PENALTIES**

<b>Section 11</b>	<b>Game Officials and Support Staff</b>
<b>Section 12</b>	<b>Player Fouls</b>
<b>Section 13</b>	<b>Grievance Procedure</b>

#### **MISCELLANEOUS**

<b>Section 14</b>	<b>Special Events</b>
<b>Section 15</b>	<b>Coaching Certification</b>
<b>Section 16</b>	<b>Player Release</b>
<b>Section 17</b>	<b>Practices</b>
<b>Section 18</b>	<b>Game Day Amenities</b>

#### **LEAGUE COMMISSIONER**

<b>Section 19</b>	<b>League Commissioner</b>
-------------------	----------------------------

#### **POST SEASON PLAY**

<b>Section 20</b>	<b>Play Offs &amp; Championships</b>
<b>Section 21</b>	<b>Overtime</b>

#### **CLUB AND LEAGUE ADMINISTRATION**

<b>Section 22</b>	<b>Insurance</b>
<b>Section 23</b>	<b>League and club fees</b>
<b>Section 24</b>	<b>Voting</b>
<b>Section 25</b>	<b>Meetings</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Volunteer Screening Model</b>

BC Community Football Association Handbook **Final Version 11/21/2005**  
**BC COMMUNITY FOOTBALL LEAGUE**  
**RULES AND REGULATIONS**

## **CONDUCT OF THE GAME**

**All games are to be conducted as required by the rules set out in the current year "Canadian Amateur Football Rule Book as approved by Football BC for Canadian Tackle Football in BC" unless otherwise specified herein.**

### **Section 1 - The Ball**

- (1) The game ball will be as follows:

Atom	Wilson 1554
Peewee	Wilson 1554
Junior Bantam	Wilson 1553
Bantam	Wilson 1552
Midget	Wilson 1552
  
- (2) Home team will furnish the game footballs. All game balls will remain under the control of the Officials, and the decision as to the condition of the game ball will be at the discretion of the Head Official.

### **Section 2 - The Game**

- (1) The winner of the coin toss has the option to kick, receive, defend an end or defer.
  
- (2) (a) If a team is behind by 18 points or more, at the start of the second half, they will have the option to kick, receive the ball, or defend an end at the beginning of the second half.  
  
(b) If a team is behind by 30 points or more at the start of the second half the Head Official will ask the Head Coach of the team which is behind if they would agree to running time for the second half. If he/she agrees, the second half will be played with no stop time. This will be known as the "MERCY RULE."
  
- (3) Atom and Peewee teams will play four 10 minute quarters of stop time. The Game Commission or Head Official will signal, with a flag, when there is 1 minute remaining in each half.
  
- (4) The Junior Bantam, Bantam and Midget teams will play four 12-minute quarters of stop time. The Game Commission or Head Official will signal with a flag when there is 1 minute remaining in each half.
  
- (5) Each team may call 2 time-outs per half.
  
- (6) The Head Official or Game Commissioner may call an official's or injury time-out. The clock will be stopped in the event of either of these.
  
- (7) The Head Official will determine if the game time will be kept on the field or on the sideline.
  
- (8) If, during a punt, the ball does not travel more than 10 yards from the kicking point, the ball will be blown dead in the air. The possession of the ball changes hands and the ball will be placed at the point at which it contacted the ground.
  
- (9) All forfeitures of a scheduled game will result in a fine of up to \$250.00, with exception when the league is given 72 hours notice prior to the scheduled game time. Fines collected will be paid to the host team to cover actual costs incurred.

### **Section 3 the Field**

- (1) The field shall conform to the Canadian amateur football rule book.
- (2) Where ever possible both teams shall be situated on the same side and this side shall where possible be away from the fans.
- (3) All amenities available at the field of play shall be made available to both the home team and the visiting team on an equal basis, i.e. dressing rooms, shelters, etc.

### **Section 4 - Uniform and Equipment**

- (1) Regulation mouth guards are mandatory and they must be attached to the facemask at all times.
- (2) If a player wears a special mouth guard, the Head Official must be notified.
- (3) Players with casts, guards and braces to protect body parts, are permitted to participate provided that such are appropriately covered on all edges and surfaces by foam rubber or similar material. The Head Official shall have the final say on whether a player is properly equipped to participate.
- (4) Team colours and styles of uniforms must be approved by their League prior to purchasing new or replacement uniforms.
- (5) All players helmets, must be NOCSAE approved and must conform to the regulations as set forth by Football BC. All Players helmets must have a visible warning label affixed to the outside of the helmet.
- (6) A player shall be required to wear a helmet when on the field of play and shall not voluntarily remove it while the play is in progress.
- (7) Any player not wearing proper equipment must leave the playing field and shall not return until the equipment is corrected.
- (8) A player may wear a clear visor only if a Doctors Certificate has been forwarded to the League Commissioner.
- (9) No players shall wear jewelry while playing in the game and that any jewellery that cannot be removed must be taped.
- (10) Absolutely no stickum like substances will be used.

## **PLAYERS**

### **Section 5 - Players**

- (1) All players must have insurance equivalent to B.C. Medical insurance. Football BC will determine if the player has the equivalent medical insurance. The club registering the player must provide the documentation to Football BC. (Changed in January 2008)
- (2) Birth certificates, passports, drivers license, citizenship papers, Care Cards, official court documents, a letter from the family physician and baptismal certificates are acceptable as proof of age.
- (3) Players must be registered on the Verification Roster by Number, Surname (followed by a comma and 1 often used Christian name), birth date (day, month, year)

BC Community Football Association Handbook **Final Version 11/21/2005**

- (4) Prior to the first league game, each player must be verified and their personal information accurately recorded on the verification sheet (see example on pg. 12). The President or the Registrar of their association may verify a player. It is the responsibility of the President and the Registrar of each association to verify that all information provided on the verification Roster is correct.
- (5) Falsification of a verified roster will result in the forfeiture of all games with the illegal player on the roster and the score will be 0 for the team with the falsified roster and 21 for the opposing team.
- (6) Players not present for each game must be noted as absent on the verification roster, in the space provided, prior to each game.
- (7) All verification rosters will be block printed or typed. Each team must provide the Game Commissioner and the opposing team with official copies of rosters. The names and team function of all support staff will be block printed on the reverse side of the verification rosters.
- (8) Player rosters will be frozen on Sept. 30 of the current year at 23:59 hrs. The League Commissioner must receive 1 copy of the frozen roster prior to this time. Hardship cases to add players to the frozen roster may be considered by the League executive on an individual basis.

- (9) **Players ages are determined as of December 31 of the current playing year and the age divisions are as follows:**

Flag	Ages 6 & 7
Atom	Ages 8 & 9
Peewee	Ages 10 & 11
Jr. Bantam	Ages 12 & 13
Bantam	Ages 14 & 15
Midget	Ages 16, 17 & 18 with unlimited 18 year olds on the team.

This was changed  
for 2007

- (10) Teams can carry an unlimited number of players on their roster, except for Bantam and Midget level, which can carry a maximum of 43, and players will be registered on a first come first registered basis. As a vacancy arises the replacements will be taken off the waiting list in order of the date they were placed on the waiting list.
- (11) All teams must have a minimum of 18 players dressed and able to play or the game will result in a forfeit. The exception to this being the Atom level which must have 13 dressed and able to play. If numbers of players are close and both Head Coaches agree the game can be played.
- (12) If it is the opinion of the game official that a player is incapable of playing and the official has determined the player is at risk, the head official will call a time-out and host a conference between the two head coaches, the Game Commissioner and the player's trainer to explain the reason and the concern in removing a player in the interest of the player's safety.
- (13) Players may only play up one age level above their actual age and, once moved up, may not return to their proper age level. The player must have the consent of his or her parents before a move will be considered. The Local Association shall discourage any movement of players except in extreme circumstances. Any player who plays in a BCFC football game after the second league game of the season or appears on the BCFC registrar's roster after the second league game, loses their eligibility to play in any BC Community Football Association playoff game(s) or the Championship. (changed 2008)  
No midget player can participate in a CIS program after September 15<sup>th</sup> and be eligible for BC Community Football Association playoffs or Championship. (changed 2008)

BC Community Football Association Handbook **Final Version 11/21/2005**

- (14) All players will shake the hands of the opposing team at the conclusion of the game. The coaches shall ensure that the players uphold a high degree of sportsmanship at the end of the game and shall be responsible for any deviation from this regulation.
- (15) A player must have played a minimum of three games during the regular season in order to be eligible to play in a playoff game. (The only exception would be on presentation of a doctor's medical certificate.)
- (16) To register a complaint concerning the use of an ineligible player(s) during playoff games the opposing team must note such a complaint on the Leagues Game Commissioner's report during or immediately after the game.

If the League Commissioner determines that a team has played an ineligible player(s) the result shall be the forfeiture of the playoff game and all points or awards being awarded to the opposing team.

(17) **Minimum play rule for all playoff games**  
The number of game plays for player participation is:  
10 plays for Atom, Peewee, Jr Bantam, Bantam

All provincial quarter, semi and final playoff games shall have plays monitored.

Monitors for player participation: each team will supply 2 individuals, one will monitor their own team and the other will monitor the opposing team, thus having two monitors working together per team and the results will be forwarded to the games commissioner for final verification. These monitors will work from the game commissioners area of the field.

This rule was modified in 2005

Injured players are exempt from this rule. All injured players either before the game or during the game shall be noted on the monitors form as injured.

Penalty for non compliance with this rule is game forfeiture.

## OFFICIALS

### Section 6 - Game Officials

- (1) All field officials will be appointed by the chief allocator of the referee's association that is contracted.
- (2) The Head Referee shall detail and initial all serious infractions on the Game Commissioner's sheet, at the time of the infraction.
- (3) There will be a minimum of 3 Game Officials present during a game.
- (4) The home team shall be responsible for the safety and welfare of the Game Officials. Where possible the game officials will be provided a private locker room for their use.

### Section 7 - Sideline Officials

- (1) The home team will be responsible for providing downs person, linepersons (yardstick personnel), a qualified Game Commissioner, as well as the prescribed game ball. The sideline personnel will work under the direction of the Head Referee.

**Section 8 - The Game Commissioner**

- (1) The home team's association will be responsible for providing a qualified Game Commissioner for all home games. If no Commissioner is present the Home team forfeits the game.
- (2) The Game Commissioner shall be 19 years of age or older.
- (3) The home team will be responsible to advise the Game Commissioner of the nearest available telephone or, if possible, provide a cellular phone, in the event of an emergency. The Game Commissioner shall have a copy of the sites emergency protocol.
- (4) The Commissioner will be responsible for ensuring the following:
  - a) each team is prepared to play at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the game, and ensure, as well, that each team has a verified and completed player roster. This may include a PA roster. All absent players are to be noted on the verified roster and the Game Commissioner is to confirm the number of players listed on the verified roster minus the absent players equals the number of players on each team's bench.
  - b) If a team is late by 15 minutes to play a scheduled game, it will be considered forfeiture.
  - c) the Head officials are ready for the game to begin and that the game timing has been decided and the game balls have been chosen.
  - d) the conduct of the players and team support staff on the benches is proper and issue instruction if required.
  - e) no family members or fans are at or near the players benches.
  - f) that, in the event of an injury, they shall check with the trainer to see if a stretcher or ambulance is required.
  - g) that only qualified medical persons attempt to move a player with any neck back injury, and that an ambulance is called under these circumstances.
  - h) that the Game Commissioner's report is properly filled out at the end of the game, including the signature of both head coaches, as well as the Head Official.
  - i) the number of game officials that officiate each contest, as well as their name, excluding sideline officials re recorded on the Game Commissioner's report.
  - j) that the game reports are mailed or faxed to the League Commissioner on the same day the game is concluded or as soon as possible thereafter.
  - k) that there is a BC Community Football Association League Rules and Regulations at his/her desk for every game, as well as a current copy of the Canadian Amateur Football Rule Book.
  - l) the game scores are properly recorded in order for the home team to forward to the League Commissioner, or his designate, those scores at the end of the day.
  - m) The Game Commissioner's sheets are properly filled out. This shall include details of all serious infraction which must be completed at the time of the infractions as per the Head Referee's instructions, and ensure that the Head Referee initials all serious infraction on the sheet.

## **SCORING**

### **Section 9 - Table of Scores**

(1) Atom, Peewee & Jr. Bantam

Touchdown	6 points
Kicked convert	2 points
Run or pass convert	1 point
Rouge	1 point
Field goal	3 points
Safety Touch	2 points

(2) Bantam & Midget

Touchdown	6 points
Kicked convert	1 point
Run or pass convert	2 points
Rouge	1 point
Field goal	3 points
Safety Touch	2 points

### **Section 10 - League Scoring**

- (1) The points shall be awarded on the basis of 2 points for a win, 1 point for a tie, and no points for a loss.
- (2) If a game is forfeited on a "no show" basis in league play, the team forfeited to will be awarded 2 points in the league standing, and the game will be recorded as a win. The team will also receive 21 points for and 0 points against.
- (3) League standing will be based on the number of wins vs. losses. In the event of a tie, at anytime during the season, the record of wins versus losses against each other will be the first tiebreaker. If there is still a tie, the team with the least points against for the entire season versus all opponents will be declared ahead in the standings and if there is still a tie, points for the entire season versus all opponents will be considered and the team with the most points for will be placed higher in the standings.

## **FOULS AND PENALTIES**

### **Section 11 - Game Officials and Support Staff**

- (1) Any coach or support staff whose conduct is detrimental to the league or who conducts himself or herself in a manner which constitutes unsportsmanlike conduct, including the use of foul language or physical acts of aggression, will be dealt with at the discretion of the Local League Board of Directors.
- (2) The League reserves the right to impose what penalty it may deem fit under such circumstances.
- (3) Any coach, or team personnel ejected from the game, must immediately leave the field of play.

### **Section 12 - Player Fouls**

## BC Community Football Association Handbook **Final Version 11/21/2005**

- (1) Any player who receives objectionable conduct penalties or unnecessary roughness penalties, during the seasons, including playoffs, shall be dealt with as follows:
  - a) If any one game, if a player receives two of the above noted penalties, that player shall be ejected (disqualified) from that game.
  - b) If a player is ejected (disqualified) from two games in a season, he shall be suspended for one additional game.
  - c) If a player is ejected (disqualified) from three games in a season he shall be suspended for the balance of the season and all play-offs.
- (2) Any player ejected from a game must remove jersey helmet shoulder pads and remain seated on the players bench until conclusion of the game.
- (3) Ejected Players must be escorted from the park by a member of the coaching staff.

### **Section 13 - Grievance Procedure**

- (1) As there may be grievances, each matter will be judged on its own merit. Common sense and prudence will be used in all matter pertaining to the subject.
- (2) All grievances must be submitted in writing in the prescribed form to the League Commissioner within 48 hours of the game in question. Each grievance shall be accompanied with a cheque in the amount of \$200.00, payable to the local league.
- (3) The League will discourage petty and frivolous grievances. As well, grievances that deal with specific rulings by the official shall not be heard.
- (4) The League Commissioner, shall appoint a grievance committee made up of the League Commissioner and two randomly selected Presidents from the list of Presidents in BC.
- (5) If a grievance is filed due to a player suspension, that player shall remain suspended until the grievance is settled.
- (6) The grievance committee shall set a date and location for the hearing (this may be done by conference call)
- (7) The committee shall, investigate and contact all parties involved in the grievance.
- (8) The committee within 24 hours of hearing the grievance shall render a decision and contact all parties involved, via phone, email, fax, or letter.
- (9) The grievance committee decision shall be final.
- (10) The loss of the grievance shall result in the loss of the \$200.00 deposit.

## **VOLUNTEERS ,COACHES AND MEDICAL PERSONNEL**

### **Section 14 - Coaching Certification**

- (1) All BC Community Head Coaches, at all levels, must be in possession of a Level I coaching certificate, all assistants must have a minimum of level 1, with the exception of a first year coach.

- (2) There must be competent medical personnel at each practice and at each game to be available for medical emergencies. The following qualifications are recognized:
  - a) Doctor
  - b) Registered Nurse
  - c) Practical Nurse
  - d) Paramedic
  - e) Industrial First Aid
  - f) St. John's Ambulance
  - g) First Responder
  - h) BC Firefighter
- (3) All Volunteers and coaches with any BC Community Association, must complete the Volunteer Screening Model as adopted by the Provincial Sport and Recreation branch and as required by Football BC. See Appendix A.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Section 15 – League Championships**

- (1) The League Championship games for all division, whenever possible, will be held at one stadium or park, as agreed to by the League membership.

### **Section 16 - Player Release**

- (1) A player may not join another association until all fees and equipment has been turned in to the departing association.
- (2) Failure to comply With 16-1 makes the player in question ineligible to register with another association.

### **Section 17 deleted January 2008**

## **LEAGUE COMMISSIONER**

### **Section 19 - League Commissioner**

- (1) The League Commissioner shall keep and maintain the win-loss records of all games of the member associations and keep and maintain the football standings of the League.
- (2) The League Commissioner will direct each Association with reference to the League Rules and Regulations pertaining to all activities both on and off the field in all areas that reflect upon the League and its member associations.
- (3) The Commissioners will be under the directorship of the Executive of the League.
- (4) The Commissioners shall have the following duties and responsibilities:
  - a) he/she shall ensure that each association submits all frozen rosters 3 days after the deadline.
  - b) he/she obtains weekly roster and game reports.
  - c) He/she advises all local teams of any player suspensions.
  - d) he/she handles duties as assigned by the local league

BC Community Football Association Handbook **Final Version 11/21/2005**

- (5) The League Commissioner to administer game suspensions for those players receiving more than two objectionable conducts during the course of the season.
- (7) The League Commissioner shall appoint one or more Assistant League Commissioners, as the need requires. The Assistant Commissioner(s) shall perform the duties of the League Commissioner in the absence of the League Commissioner, and other duties as delegated by the League Commissioner.

**PLAY OFFS and PROVINCIAL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Section 20-Post season play**

- (1) The BC Community Football Association shall meet every spring to set the play off and championship dates one year in advance.
- (2) The BC Community Football Championships shall be held no later than the first weekend of December. It is important to note that the BC Community Provincial Championships are a provincial event and shall be held every **even year** in a location outside of the Lower Mainland.
- (3) Once the location of the championship has been chosen, a local host organizing committee shall be formed and shall communicate regularly with the BC Community Executive.

**Section 21 - Overtime During Playoff Games**

This rule was modified in 2005

If the score is tied at the end of regulation time there shall be a five minute intermission followed by a shootout.

Note\*\*\*There shall be no timeouts except for referees or injuries

There shall be a coin toss; the team winning the coin toss gets to choose to play offense, defense or which 20 yard line the ball is spotted on. The offensive team (Team A shall have one possession in which to score.)

If Team A scores during their possession, Team B shall go on offense from the same 20 yard line and have one possession in which to score.

Extra point(s) after touchdown will be attempted.

If only one team scores, the game is over, the scoring team wins the game. If both A and B teams score the team that has the higher score wins the game.

If the score remains tied, this procedure shall be repeated from the beginning with no intermissions until a winning team is determined.

Possession is defined as a first down. Possession remains with the team until they either fail to make an additional first down or they score.

Appendix A

### **Volunteer Screening Model**

- [Back to Publications](#)
- [Volunteers and Screening](#)
- [Screening - An Exercise in Risk Management](#)
- [Minimizing Risk Through Screening](#)
  1. [Determining Policies and Procedures](#)
  2. [Design Job Descriptions and determine Levels of Screening](#)
  3. [Deciding When to Say No](#)
  4. [Follow Up on Screening](#)

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### **Volunteers and Screening**

Volunteers are the lifeblood of sport and recreation. They perform the many jobs which enable participants to be involved in sport or recreation activity. Whether it is ensuring they get transportation to an important event, handing out water during a race or lugging poles down a ski hill, volunteers make it easier for players, athletes and participants to enjoy sports and recreation.

As an organization offering services and programs which benefits from volunteer assistance, it is your duty to protect your members, staff and volunteers. Whether your organization is large or small, mandated by legislation or community-initiated and driven, or whether the staff members are all paid, all volunteer, or a combination of the two, your responsibility remains the same.

One way to help protect your members is to provide a screening process to evaluate volunteers who work or provide services for your organization. Through screening, you can help identify and exclude those people who might pose a risk to your members or staff.

Screening should be part of the everyday life of your organization - an integral part of your program and personnel management - both before people are signed on and afterward. While even the most thorough, rigorous screening procedures can not guarantee that your members are 100% protected, your organization is legally, morally and ethically obligated to do all it reasonably can to protect them and your organization.

### **Screening - An exercise in risk management**

Seeking to protect members, staff, volunteers and the community through screening measures is an exercise in risk management - asking what could go wrong and how to avoid it. What may be reasonable in one set of circumstances may not be reasonable in another. For example, should a volunteer who hands out water at a track meet be subject to the same screening practices as a coach who will be in constant, and sometimes unsupervised, contact with a child?

Not all screening measures are the same for all volunteers. Nor should they be. In developing volunteer screening policies, organizations must first assess the potential risks of each position, and apply the most rigorous screening measures to the positions with the highest risks, and similarly along the risk continuum. The vast majority of abuse victims are preyed upon by someone they know and trust, not a stranger. That is why it is important to develop screening measures to help protect those who can not protect themselves.

Things to consider:

- Is the member vulnerable, e.g. a child or someone who is too young to understand when harm is done to them, a senior citizen, a person with a disability which may affect his or her ability to understand or resist harm?
- What type of activity does a volunteer do? Will he or she come in regular contact with a vulnerable member?
- Is the activity supervised - will there be other people around to see the volunteer and member together and have a chance to observe what is going on?
- Are there any situations which may increase risk? e.g. competitions away from home, shared rides.
- Is the volunteer in a position of power? Is a relationship of trust, dependency, authority or reliance created?

## **Minimizing Risk through Screening**

Whenever possible, an organization must take steps to stop, minimize, prevent or eliminate the risk factors, e.g. how closely should volunteers be supervised? Should certain duties be performed by professionals, rather than volunteers (such as driving)?

Screening is about striking balances between vigilance and paranoia, between the rights to privacy and the right to the protection of the community, and between legal and ethical or moral issues. It is a process that begins before anyone is interviewed for a position and may continue after people leave your organization (e.g. if you are asked to provide references for them).

Screening is not the same as a criminal record check. While criminal record checks are an important part of screening, it should never be the only screening procedure used because the person will only have a record if they have been convicted of a crime.

Your organization- harassment policy works hand in hand with screening. Risks can be reduced through these policies, e.g. a coach is never alone with an athlete in a hotel room.

Decisions about who to screen, how to screen and what to screen for should be made on the basis of the characteristics and demands of the specific position and not because of the personal characteristics of the volunteer applicant.

Chances are that not everyone will be happy with the decisions made in the screening process. In some circumstances, such as when a member is vulnerable and the risk significant, the member's right to protection may be more important than the volunteer's right to privacy.

There are four basic steps to screening:

1. Determine the policies and procedures for screening
2. Design the job description
3. Review applications and decide when to say 'No'
4. Follow up on screening and support the process.

### **1. Determine the policies and procedures**

Screening is fundamentally about making decisions and judgments; however, these actions should be based on clear principles and values, and backed by consistently applied policies and procedures.

Organizations should decide in advance which screening tools will be used and when, such as;

- Who will be responsible for screening.
- Can they make the tough decisions, are they objective enough,
- How much training is required for volunteer screening,
- How information gathered during the process will be used and
- How privacy and confidentiality are ensured.

These considerations should be laid out as part of the organization's governance responsibilities.

If screening is consistent, the rationale for screening is clearly explained and follows the values and principles of the organization, all those involved in screening will see that these measures protect the vulnerable as well as the organization, its staff and volunteers.

As well, where possible, decisions about applicants and/or information supplied should be reviewed to assess suitability. Some organizations, like the Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver, hold "case conferencing" sessions where new applications are presented to a group for review and concerns are raised through group discussions.

### **2. Design job descriptions and Determine levels of Screening**

Screening doesn't start when a person applies for a position, it starts with:

- Careful identification of positions and development and design of job descriptions
- Clear and appropriate recruitment, orientation information and ongoing professional development.

By carefully designing job descriptions, risks can be clearly identified and minimized by incorporating a system of checks and balances, such as establishing reporting structures and supervisory responsibilities. There is an obligation to clearly communicate to individuals what they may expect in the application process. For example, applicants should be aware that a criminal record check may be required at some point in the application process. It is also important to let applicants know that criminal record checks are not the sole source of information, and that applicants will be screened. Allow people to screen themselves out. Pedophiles - and others who wish to do harm - often take advantage of organizations with lax or non-existent

BC Community Football Association Handbook **Final Version 11/21/2005**  
screening measures, little supervision, which provide service to vulnerable people.

### **The Volunteer Application Form**

The application form is a screening tool, and it is appropriate to ask specific, detailed and personal questions of an applicant, especially if the position is one of trust and as long as the information is essentially related to the position. The BC Human Rights Code states that a person must not discriminate against an individual regarding employment (which includes paid and unpaid positions where an employer/employee relationship exists)

*"because of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation or age of that person or because that person has been convicted of a criminal or summary conviction offence that is unrelated to the employment or to the intended employment of that person."*

The process should not come as a surprise to the applicant. They should have received information about the screening policies of your organization before being asked to fill in the application form. A sample application is presented at the end of this booklet.

### **The Volunteer Interview**

Volunteers should be interviewed for their position. It is often useful to have more than one person conduct interviews and, if possible, to have different people conduct second interviews to provide a different perspective, to compare notes and to ensure that the same answers were provided to the questions asked.

#### **An Interviewer Should:**

- find out the applicant's motivation for becoming a volunteer, e.g. his or her child plays on the team;
- find out about the applicant's previous volunteer experience. There is a definite pattern of over-involvement by those who are high-risk volunteers, and often they will be quite open about their amount of involvement. Encouraging them to discuss (both on the application form, and during the interview their previous experience may provide some helpful insight)
- ensure that all the questions are answered as it is critical that the same information be gathered about all applicants;
- avoid close-ended questions that require 'yes' or 'no' answers - rather than those that require thought and judgment by the applicant. Know in advance what they are looking for, e.g. an unwillingness to answer questions directly, attempts to steer the conversation, or poor interaction with the interviewer;

- ask questions in two or three different ways to detect inconsistencies in the answers

The information provided by the applicant should not be taken at face value. After the interview, the information should be verified through references. The individual's consent to do this is required in writing and should be included on the application form.

### **Reference Checks**

In addition to specific information, the applicant should provide three or four references, including professional (e.g. doctor), employer, friend and family members. If an applicant has previously been involved in sport or recreation, he or she should be asked to provide references from former players/participants/parents. Reference checks need to provide options for those who may not want to put anything in writing; they need to know that they can give information confidentially, which can be assured through verbal rather than written communication.

The factual data provided by the applicant should be verified with the references, including dates and descriptions of previous positions, activities etc. Negative and positive feedback about the applicant should be encouraged and by asking open-ended questions about performance and behaviour, the person seeking the information can probe for more information.

Some sample questions are:

1. How long have you known the applicant?
2. In what capacity do you know him or her?
3. Would you say that you know the applicant well? Slightly?
4. What is your current relationship with the applicant?
5. Describe your experience with the applicant?
6. How would you describe the personality and temperament of this person? (e.g. good role model? His or her integrity, honesty, approach to discipline?)
7. Can you tell me what you remember most about this person, good and bad?
8. Would you want this person working with your child?

### **Criminal Record Checks**

Under the Criminal Records Review Act, organizations which are licensed or receive operating funds from the provincial government, must have staff who work with children undergo a criminal record check. Fees for criminal records checks for people covered under this Act will be absorbed by the Ministry of Attorney General. While the Act does not currently include volunteers who work with children, many organizations will have criminal record checks performed on such volunteers.

A criminal record check can be done by local police to determine if there is official police information relevant to:

- a particular person;
- their suitability to do certain kinds of volunteer work;
- a crime in another jurisdiction.

The potential volunteer must give written permission for a criminal record check. The police may charge a fee for this service so there should be a clear policy about who should pay for this.

The information received may have limited use:

- it will not identify people who may have committed crimes but were never charged or convicted;
- it may not identify people who have had contact with the police in jurisdictions other than those in which the search is undertaken, nationally or internationally;
- it may include only information about convictions and not about charges laid or being suspected of criminal acts;
- it may reveal a record of a criminal conviction that is not relevant to the volunteer's suitability to do this volunteer job;
- it will not include information about crimes that have been pardoned, that are still before the courts or not yet recorded, or that were committed when the person was a juvenile.

While criminal record checks and screening are not foolproof, they are a good deterrent to those who fear a background check and may detect people who could be

a threat to children.

The BC Human Rights Code and common law decisions require that anyone determining relevancy between criminal or summary conviction offence and the position must consider several factors including:

- the threat to the "employer" ability to carry on its business safely and efficiently;
- the age of the person when they acted illegally;
- the amount of time that has passed; attempts at rehabilitation;
- the circumstances surrounding the conviction and the likelihood the offender will recommit the crime.

### **Defamation and Invasion of Privacy**

Your organization must be aware of potential legal liability if personal information about someone is made public. Even if something that is said is true, telling it to others, like another staff member, may still constitute an invasion of privacy which could result in a lawsuit. Spoken defamation is called slander and written defamation is called libel. Both refer to information that is made public which is judged to injure a person's reputation.

### **3. Deciding when to say 'No'**

It is important to remember that the position is the issue, not the personal characteristics of the applicant. Any decisions that are made about exclusion should be based on what the position requires.

Anytime a candidate is denied a position it should be for a legitimate reason which can be supported. For example, your organization has carefully determined what is appropriate or necessary for a certain position and makes decisions on that basis.

Here are some basic tests:

- Is the requirement made in good faith, i.e. are you requiring a certain qualification because it is really needed in this position or is it to keep certain people out of the organization?
- Is the requirement reasonable, e.g. are you asking for 10 years experience when 3 will suffice?
- Have you made an effort to accommodate, e.g. is it possible to alter the requirements of the position to accommodate someone, and if so, would that

compromise the safety and security of the members?

### **Gut Feelings**

What happens if there is no concrete, tangible reason to screen someone out but your intuition or a gut feeling tells you that something is wrong?

Those responsible for screening who have this kind of intuition must identify a logical, defensible, concrete or documented reason for their concern. Excluding an individual from a volunteer or employment opportunity for reasons that are not relevant may result in legal action by the applicant. One way to help ensure that your decisions are fair and reasonable is to document your concerns. If, for example, you feel the applicant is evasive, record the questions he or she did not answer. Bringing other people into the issue - other members of your organization, or references - may help in either hardening the feeling or dispelling it.

This is one of the most difficult issues in screening and may present situations where the person responsible for screening's moral and ethical responsibilities leads them in one direction while their legal obligations point in another direction. Your fundamental concern, however, is the protection of your members.

### **4. Follow up on screening**

Sometimes, no matter how good the policies and procedures are, someone slips by. It is not enough for your organization to be vigilant at the outset only to stop screening the person once he or she is on board.

Ways of following up on screening:

- Review the risks and vulnerability of members and the job description of the volunteer. Is there a need for increased supervision? Decide up front how you would handle people moving from one position to another - has a person entered the organization from a low-risk position to one of a higher risk (where organization should re-screen for the new position)?
- Involve participants, their families and other volunteers in screening. Keep in contact with others to ensure that everything is going okay.
- Use the buddy system. Team up a new volunteer with one that has been with your organization for awhile.
- Be sure that volunteers are appropriately supervised. Make sure that there are people who can observe what is going on between volunteers and members.

BC Community Football Association Handbook **Final Version 11/21/2005**

- Establish a probation period for volunteers so that you can observe volunteers in action and make appropriate changes later.
- Require volunteers to notify your organization if they are arrested, charged, tried or convicted of a Criminal Code or other statutory offence relevant to the position held by the volunteer.
- Investigate complaints and take necessary measures to address complaints.
- Be sure the screening process is supported by other measures to protect your members - development and implementation of harassment policy and procedures, education and awareness of what harassment and abuse is and how to prevent it, and use of SportSafe Coach's Game Plan.

It may seem difficult to ask someone who has already been accepted by your organization to submit to further screening measures, but it is important to remember that your organization's first duty lies with the safety and protection of members, staff, volunteers and the community. Minimize the discomfort by ensuring that ongoing screening doesn't come as a surprise to anyone by identifying this policy and the procedures in your documents, orientation and training.

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Produced by:

Sport and Community Development Branch  
Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture  
Province of British Columbia

SPORTSafe is an initiative of the Sport and Community Development Branch in partnership with Sport BC, Coaches Association of BC, BC Recreation and Parks Association, Promotion Plus and other organizations.

The information presented in this booklet includes material from "The Screening Handbook", distributed by Volunteer Canada, and the "Resource Kit for Interviewing Volunteers", distributed by Volunteer Vancouver.

Another excellent resource guide is "Help Stop Child Abuse: A Handbook for Employers and Volunteer Coordinators" available by calling the Ministry of Attorney General 1-800-663-7867