

RISK HELP from NRMC



By Erin Gloeckner

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The NRMC team enjoyed a lot of help in planning and executing our recent annual conference, the Risk Summit. Check out photos from the event to find yourself in the crowd or—if you couldn't join us—to see what you missed. Our generous Corporate Partners helped us make the Risk Summit a reality, and our incredible workshop speakers shared their time and expertise with our attendees. Of course our creative keynote speaker, digital painter Jeremy Sutton, helped inspire us all to add a little imagination to our risk management work.

Grateful for the help we received during the Risk Summit, we want to give a little help back to our RISK eNews readers. NRMC offers RISK HELP (personalized risk management guidance) to our valued [Affiliate Members](#). In today's RISK eNews, we wanted to share answers we've written in response to recent RISK HELP inquiries.

If your nonprofit team needs RISK HELP, then join our [Affiliate Member program](#)! NRMC Affiliates get exclusive access to unlimited RISK HELP by phone and email.

RISK HELP Question #1: How do we use results of background checks appropriately?

To fairly and effectively interpret the results of criminal history background checks, your organization should develop *disqualifying criteria* specific to employee and volunteer roles. Disqualifying criteria are any criteria (including criminal offenses) that would make an applicant ineligible for the role in question. Setting disqualifying criteria will enable you to thoughtfully and fairly assess background check results based on the risks related to each employee or volunteer role. For example, an employee role involving supervision of children warrants disqualifying criteria such as: crimes involving children, crimes of a sexual nature, and crimes of a violent nature. For a different role, such as an employee role with responsibility for financial assets, disqualifying criteria might be very different and include crimes like theft and embezzlement, or crimes of dishonesty.

Remember that background checks are just one component of an effective screening process. Learn more about NRMC's suggested 10-step screening process by reading our [Staff Screening Notebook](#). Or read these NRMC articles to learn more about background checks and general screening practices:

- [Checking Criminal Histories: Considerations Before You Begin](#)
- [There's No Mystery to Your History: Using Background Checks in the Screening Process](#)
- [How to Hire the Staff Your Mission Deserves](#)

RISK HELP Question #2: How can we respectfully refuse volunteer service from an individual who

shows up smelling like alcohol?

My best advice for declining this volunteer's service is to simply be honest and treat the individual with respect. Did you know that employees, volunteers and clients who are treated with respect are less likely to bring claims against your organization? When in doubt, treat the people who serve and receive service in the manner you would want to be treated if your roles were reversed.

You might also want to update your volunteer policies or adopt a volunteer code of conduct to explain that volunteers cannot be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while serving your organization in any capacity. Our web app, [My Risk Management Policies](#), includes sample codes of conduct and other organizational policies that you can easily customize to suit the circumstances and needs of your nonprofit. Remember to include a compelling "why" statement in every policy adopted by your organization. For example: "To provide a safe and supportive environment for our clients, no volunteer will be allowed to serve while impaired by alcohol or drugs." Use clear statements to explain the conduct and behavior your mission requires, and also let volunteers know that violating safety policies could lead to termination or suspension of volunteer service.

For more tips, read our article [Termination Trepidation: Disciplining & Terminating Volunteers](#).

Erin Gloeckner is the former director of consulting services at the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. We invite you to join NRMC's [Affiliate Member program](#) and pose your own RISK HELP questions to the NRMC team. For more information about Affiliate Membership, contact Whitney Thomey at whitney@nonprofitrisk.org.