

SAFETY BULLETIN

Spotlight on Summertime Screening and Selection | Issue 7

In the News...

The lifeguard was a popular straight-A high school student who was arrested on the job when he was caught fondling three young girls in the wave pool. The water park had not checked his references, nor did they systematically observe lifeguards' interactions with minors.



A kitchen employee overheard a 14-year-old camper boast that she had been "making out" with her counselor.

A review of the counselor's application showed that he did not report why he left his previous job. With one short phone call, camp administrators learned that he had been fired from his sales job at the mall because of inappropriate interactions with teenage girls.

A city parks and recreation department re-hired a seasonal employee who had worked there two years before, but didn't bother to run a new criminal background check. After the employee was arrested for exposing himself to a group of kids during a community center lock-in, detectives found that he had been charged with indecent exposure and solicitation while he was away at college.



SUMMERTIME SCREENING AND SELECTION SAFETY TIPS

Super-human powers not needed.

Screening and selecting summertime staff can place serious demands on your organization. You may need hundreds of high school or college students for part-time or temporary positions, or perhaps you use out-of-state or international workers. And you've got to get all this done in a few short weeks. These demands can

push proper screening practices to the wayside.

Follow these tips to ramp up your summertime screening practices!

1. First, create a hiring checklist to document that you've completed every step with every applicant.
2. Second, carefully review the completed application and look for missing or inadequate information, particularly for references and previous places of employment.
3. Third, require applicants to confirm with each of their references that they will agree to serve as a reference. Tell applicants that they will not be considered for employment without references.
4. Ask references five specific questions about the applicants' suitability to work with minors and record their answers.
5. Complete a face-to-face or phone interview with each applicant. The conversation need not be lengthy but it must be precise: ask five specific questions.

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Best Practices Tip...



What should you ask applicants and references?

Because you don't have much time to interview temporary and seasonal applicants, asking the right questions to assess for risk takes on even more importance. If you'd like to learn **five specific questions to ask applicants** and **five specific questions to ask references**, please send us an e-mail at info@PraesidiumInc.com.

How to...

Encourage Applicants to Self-Select Out

Use your screening process to accomplish two objectives: learn about the applicant and teach the applicant about your organization. If someone who should not be in a position of trust with minors learns during the application process that you have in place rigorous practices to keep children safe, they may voluntarily choose to apply elsewhere. You can communicate a *zero tolerance for abuse* by:

1. Including a **Zero Tolerance for Abuse Statement** on your employment and volunteer applications.
2. Informing applicants that you take abuse prevention seriously and have practices in place to prevent the abuse of children and to protect staff from false allegations of abuse.
3. Informing applicants that you follow mandated child abuse reporting requirements and cooperate fully with the authorities if an allegation of abuse occurs.
4. Requiring applicants to read and sign a Code of Conduct that defines appropriate and inappropriate interactions with minors and co-workers.



Are Background Checks Enough?

The simple answer is: No!

You've got to do them, because they may flag someone who should not work with children or they may deter someone undesirable from even applying. But keep in mind, background checks may not tell the whole story.

Consider these facts:

- Only about 4 percent to 6 percent of child molesters have criminal background records.
- Some studies suggest that criminal background checks are only about 50 percent accurate.
- Juvenile criminal records are usually sealed, so they don't show up on background checks.
- International criminal background checks are costly and often unreliable.
- Offenders often plead to a lesser offense, something other than a sex crime.

Screening: only a piece of the puzzle

Summertime hiring can tax even the best organizations. Under normal circumstances, you may have more time to spend in the screening process – so you earn more “Safety Points”* than you do in the summer. That means, then, that you have to earn extra “Safety Points” in other ways. Here’s how:

1. Before staff have access to children, require that they complete specific child abuse prevention training. The training must teach how child molesters operate, how to recognize and respond to inappropriate or suspicious interactions, and how to manage high-risk situations or circumstances on the job. The training must also teach how to prevent sexual activity between children.
2. When children start your program, spend 15 minutes with them teaching them the specific types of interactions that are and are not permitted between adults and children, and between children. Use age-appropriate language and examples that they can understand. And teach them exactly what to do if someone breaks the rules.
3. Increase monitoring by supervisors. You may not know your seasonal staff as well as your other staff. That means, simply, that you’ve got to watch them more. People do not commit sex crimes if they know they are going to get caught. Establish minimum standards for how often supervisors observe programs and staff, and make sure observations occur at random and during high-risk times and activities, such as bedtime, bathrooms, and unstructured activities or free time.
4. Hold frequent de-briefings with supervisors to exchange information about program operations or concerns about staff or children in the program.

*E-mail us at info@PraesidiumInc.com to learn more about “Safety Points.”

What’s New... Screening and Selection Toolkit

This completely updated comprehensive toolkit contains everything you need to know to effectively screen and select employees and volunteers, including more than 80 “red-flag” indicators for identifying potentially high-risk applicants and numerous examples of high- and low-risk responses on applications, in interviews, and on reference checks.

Order the toolkit **before August 1** and receive a FREE day of on-site Screening and Selection Training provided by Praesidium. Call Denise at 817.801.7773 for more information.

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