

Cross Country Ski Ontario Screening Policy

Preamble

1. Cross Country Ski Ontario (XCSO) promotes excellence, enjoyment and ethical conduct through community-based recreational and competitive programs that appeal to skiers of all ages. It is critical to this mission that XCSO provides a safe and secure environment for all its participants. The purpose of adopting a screening policy is to support that secure environment by ensuring, to the extent possible, that volunteers and paid personnel who may work with vulnerable persons are subjected to a process of “screening” to ensure the safety of participants.
2. The intent of this policy and the associated requirements is not to cast doubt on the quality and conduct of volunteers and paid staff engaged by XCSO and affiliated organizations. The focus of the policy is on the positions that create risk because of the demands and exposure of the position to vulnerable participants. The incumbents of those positions which are most affected by screening initiatives are generally the most dedicated and selfless of our leaders. It is therefore critical that this policy be implemented as sensitively as possible.

Aim

3. The aim of this document is to state the XCSO policy on screening, to direct its adoption also at the club level and to provide procedures to support its implementation at the division (XCSO) and club level.

Definitions

4. Junior Athletes: (References may also be made to Junior Participants, or Junior Racing Team, or Junior Racers): all participants in activities run or sponsored by XCSO or affiliated clubs who are under 18 years of age.
5. Criminal Background Check: The process of securing information from the police about individuals, as well as to describe the form or report in which information is provided. It may include a check of national, local and regional police records. At the end of the process, a report is issued. The report may simply identify whether or not someone has a criminal record or it may provide details of actual offences. Just as the process varies among police agencies, so too do the report forms.
6. Position of Trust: A position of trust identifies a situation in which someone is placed in a position of authority over another person in an ongoing relationship. A position of trust implies that someone has some degree of power over another, that the relationship is unequal. Individuals in positions of trust may be family members, friends, caregivers, volunteers or employees. A position of trust identifies a situation which may be considered risky because of the demands of the position.
7. Screening: Screening is a series of initiatives and protective mechanisms which minimize the potential for abuse or injury. These mechanisms may include:



- the requirements for applicants to submit formal applications for employment in “positions of trust” on a volunteer or paid basis (for a sample application form, see Annex A attached);
- the use of interviews for applicants to a volunteer or paid position of trust;
- the use of reference checks for such positions;
- verification of certification or qualification for the position;
- the use of Criminal Background Checks or other background checks by the hiring organization;
- the use of risk management or risk mitigation measures aimed at reducing the risks inherent in certain relationships (refer to reference point #11 for more information).

8. **Vulnerable Person/Participant:** Volunteer Canada uses this term to denote individuals who have difficulty protecting themselves and are therefore at greater risk of harm. People may be vulnerable because of age, disability/ handicap or circumstances. Vulnerability may be a temporary or a permanent condition.

This is purposely a broad definition; one that can include children, youth, senior citizens, people with physical, developmental, social, emotional or other disabilities.

Vulnerable person will also include people who have been victims of crime or accident, or are otherwise left with little defense against those who would harm them.

General Policy Regarding Screening

9. It is the responsibility of XCSO and of any XCSO-registered clubs or other XCSO affiliated organizations to ensure appropriate screening and that other protective mechanisms are in place to ensure the safety and security of vulnerable persons. In particular, this is the case with respect to the engagement of volunteers or paid personnel into positions of trust, particularly where those positions involve care for vulnerable persons.
10. Given the normal range of activities pursued by XCSO and its affiliated clubs, particularly our focus on youth participation and the development of high performance athletes, the situations that pose risk are those which involve the interaction of adult leaders (volunteers and paid) with youth participants and people with disabilities.
11. In many cases, risk management or mitigation measures can be put in place, which can serve to reduce or eliminate risk. XCSO has implemented the following measures for its division-sponsored activities. It is recommended that XCSO clubs adopt the following measures as common practice, and that these be made the subject of written club guidelines:
- For all levels of youth instructional or training activity, including Bunny-Rabbit / Jackrabbit leader positions, to ensure that every training or lesson group is accompanied by at least two coaches; or a coach and at least one other designated, responsible adult.
 - That all youth instructional and training activity be based on a published schedule, with known and predictable locations, destinations and return times.



- That parents/guardians ensure that their children are dressed and ready for an activity of known duration.
 - That on occasions involving overnight trips by any youth groups (e.g. skiing to an overnight cabin), the designated coach leading the trip be supported by a sufficient number of other adults, including representation of both male and female adults where youth of both genders are involved; in any case all such trips should be accompanied by at least two adults.
 - For overnight trips including persons under 18 years of age, to ensure that at least one adult of each gender is included in team management (coaches, drivers, chaperones) where the athletes are of both genders;
 - For overnight trips including persons under 18 years of age, where the athletes are all of the same gender, that at least one of the team management be of that gender. Where that is impossible, arrangement could be made with other teams at the same event to share such supervisory roles.
 - That coaches and other team management avoid, to the extent possible, being alone in the same room with one athlete when in lodging facilities and that, in all such cases, the door of the room must be kept open.
 - To ensure that on any trip involving van transportation, there are sufficient drivers to relieve coaches of all or most driving responsibilities.
12. These measures can considerably mitigate risk. There is a range of risk levels among the activities associated with our sport. The potential risks inherent in a typical on-snow Jackrabbit session are normally limited by its short duration and proximity to clubhouse and parents. They can be further mitigated as suggested in paragraph 11 above (e.g. by having parents accompany classes). However, with the further development of our sport, even Jackrabbit-age children are increasingly involved in a greater variety of activities, such as off-season dry-land training, which require attention to be paid to potential risks. The greatest potential risk occurs when a responsible individual is required to lead or accompany a group (or team) on an overnight trip whether on skis to a cabin in the woods or by road to an out-of-town event.
13. Characteristics of “high-risk” positions are those where the incumbents:
- are frequently alone with youth under the age of 18, or with other vulnerable participants;
 - are in a position of significant power over athletes or other participants;
 - travel out of town and away from parent/guardian supervision;
 - may be operating a motor vehicle with youth or others as passengers.
14. Characteristics of “medium-risk” positions are any other positions where the incumbents have prime responsibility for vulnerable persons, even where those situations have been mitigated as suggested above – e.g. Jackrabbit leader.
15. It follows that a Junior Racing Team coaching position should be considered a high-risk position. Similarly, persons who may form part of Team Management staffs (Managers, Drivers, and Chaperones) may also be required to fulfill some of the screening procedures listed below, particularly where such roles are seen as on-going or recurring appointments, rather than occasional

assignments. Depending on the kind of activity, a leader of Jackrabbit-age children could also be operating in a high-risk situation.

Application of Screening Policy

16. It is required that all members clubs and other organizations affiliated with XCSO (including any teams/activities sponsored by XCSO) adopt a screening policy and procedures, as recommended in this policy, and adapt it to their circumstances. Such a club screening policy must include:

For supporting staff in “high-risk” positions (e.g. Team Managers, Team Head Coach, Apprentice Coach(es), Waxing Coach), whether paid or unpaid, accompanying athletes to a race-series, training camps or other activity

- written application;
- an interview and reference checks (where applicants are not well known to the organizers);
- a criminal background check (a current Criminal Background Check is less than 3 years old) (See reference point #18)

For individuals in medium-risk positions (i.e. all other people whose roles involve regular contact with vulnerable persons):

- a criminal background check (a current Criminal Background Check is less than 3 years old) (See reference point #18)

References

17. Volunteer Canada: <https://volunteer.ca/screening>

18. <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/steps-obtain-certified-criminal-record-or-vulnerable-sector-vs-check>



Annex A

Sample Volunteer Application

Applicant Information

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email Address:

Volunteer Involvement (current and/or previous):

Agency/Organization/Volunteer Position

- 1.
- 2.

References (name, address, phone)

- 1.
- 2.

Volunteer Position Selection

Indicate below your choice of position(s) in order of preference:

- 1.
- 2.

Why are you applying for the above volunteer position(s)?

Skills and Qualifications: Please provide information on relevant background (or provide CV)

- 1.
- 2.

What You Can Expect:

- You may be contacted for an interview.
- You may be asked to undergo orientation and training.
- You may have your performance evaluated as a volunteer.
- In the case of certain designated positions, you may be subject to criminal background checks. By signing this document, you indicate your willingness to be subjected to such a check.
- Applicants for coaching roles will also be required to submit a signed copy of XCSO's Coaches Code of Ethics and Conduct.