

THE SAFE STEP

Your connection to protecting those who improve your community



DRIVING AND TRANSPORTATION RISKS: VOLUNTEER DRIVER SAFETY GUIDE

Volunteer drivers play a vital role in supporting nonprofit missions, but their involvement introduces unique risks and responsibilities. This guide outlines essential safety practices, insurance considerations and risk management strategies to help organizations protect their volunteers, clients and reputations.

VOLUNTEER DRIVER SCREENING CHECKLIST

Before allowing volunteers to drive on behalf of your organization, implement a thorough screening process:

- Motor Vehicle Records (MVR) Check: Review driving history for violations or unsafe behavior.
- Valid Driver's License: Confirm licensure in the volunteer's state of residence.
- Vehicle Registration: Ensure up-to-date registration for any personal vehicle used.
- Insurance Verification: Require proof of minimum adequate personal auto insurance.
- On-the-Road Driver Evaluation: Especially important for volunteers transporting passengers.
- Physical and Mental Fitness: Volunteers must disclose any conditions that could impair safe driving.
- Incident Reporting: Volunteers must report traffic citations or major incidents, even if they occur off-duty.

DRIVER SAFETY PROGRAMS & REFRESHER COURSES

- Establish a formal Driving Safety Program that includes:
- Comprehensive driver safety training for all volunteer drivers.
- Vehicle-specific training, especially for unfamiliar or high-risk vehicles (e.g., 15-passenger vans).
- Refresher courses offered regularly to reassess and reinforce safe driving practices.
- Pairing volunteers during transport (e.g., a "driver helper" to manage passengers and reduce distractions).
- Clear policies on compliance with traffic laws, seatbelt use, child safety seats and mobile device restrictions

PERSONAL VS. FLEET VEHICLES

When deciding whether volunteers should use personal or fleet vehicles:

Fleet Vehicles

- Offer more control over maintenance, insurance and safety standards.
- Covered under the nonprofit's commercial auto policy, which includes liability, physical damage and medical payments.

Personal Vehicles

- Require additional oversight and insurance considerations.
- Volunteers must understand that personal auto insurance is primary in the event of an accident.
- Nonprofits should verify that personal policies do not exclude volunteer driving and meet minimum liability limits.
- Consider purchasing non-owned auto liability insurance to protect the organization if a volunteer's policy is insufficient.

RISK MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

- Designate a Driving Program Supervisor to oversee training, compliance, and incident response.
- Require volunteers to sign a Volunteer Driver Pledge acknowledging safety expectations and insurance responsibilities.
- Maintain a driver emergency response toolkit in each vehicle.
- Educate volunteers on what to do in case of an accident and how to report incidents promptly.

ACTION STEPS FOR SUPERVISORS

- Assess training and screening needs for each volunteer driver and adapt materials for accessibility.
- Schedule regular check-ins and feedback sessions with drivers.
- Document all training, supervision, and incidents for accountability and improvement.
- Encourage open communication and provide multiple ways for volunteers to share concerns or suggestions.
- Review and update transportation policies regularly to reflect best practices and the needs of your diverse volunteer community.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Nonprofit Risk Management Center \(NRMC\). Risk on the Road: Managing Volunteer Driver Exposures](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\). Motor Vehicle Safety – Employers](#)
- [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\). 15-Passenger Van](#)
- Safe driving and driver safety courses are available through [GreatAcademy](#)