Understanding Soft Risk in Volunteer Engagement

Jennifer Bennett, CVA
Director, Education & Training
Agenda

- What is Soft Risk?
- Soft Risk and culture
- Identify and Minimize Soft Risk
- Help others understand Soft Risk
- Getting Started and Resources
We all think about hard risks...
And, soft risks don't sound that bad
But soft risks can create real and lasting challenges for your organization!
Soft Risks are About Culture

- Lack of leadership around ethos and culture
- Groupthink and lack of self-perception
- Little or no upward communication, poor internal communication
- Top down decision making, little or no decision making or control from non-leadership roles
Soft Risks can Happen When

- Volunteers are in the wrong role – screening policies not aligned with the work
- Training and orientation are not designed around real-life volunteer responsibilities
- Unclear where decision-making authority starts and stops
- Volunteers are poorly – or are not – supervised
Soft Risks can Happen When

- Culture prevents correcting or disciplining bad behavior
- Policies are on paper only
- Volunteers don’t have the tools or resources to find the right answer
Minimize Soft Risk

Ensure that policies have buy-in and are enforceable
  • Enforce them!

Address training and orientation outcomes
  • Talk about them early and often

Outline and define each role’s authority continuum
  • Where does the decision making start and stop?

Provide resources and support
  • What is the right answer?
Minimize Soft Risk

Talk about it!

- Model difficult situations or conversations
- Role play or have volunteers and paid staff switch roles

Know who’s the right person for the role

- Implement screening practices to ensure that you’re making the right match
- Qualifications based on skills & experience
Soft risks don’t go away...
Addressing Soft Risk

- Start the conversation & create buy-in
- Identify the attitudes, actions, and behaviors that might allow soft risk
- Evaluate foundation components
- Update screening, training, and supervisory activities
Getting Started

- Investigate where and how soft risk is happening in the work volunteers do
- Explore how the organization’s culture is allowing soft risk
- Understand the role of ethics in volunteer management
Resources & Next Steps

Soft Risk Evaluation Worksheet

Professional Ethics in Volunteer Management
http://cvacert.org/resources-and-media/professional-ethics
Thank you!

Join us online:
Like us on Facebook: www.Facebook.com/VolunteerMatch
Follow us on Twitter: @VolunteerMatch

For any questions contact:
Jennifer Bennett
@JenBennettCVA
jbennett@volunteermatch.org