

RESOURCES

- Q. Could examples or templates be developed for job descriptions and included in the Toolkit?
A. Yes, a template for writing job descriptions, and generic samples of job descriptions are available at the Diocesan Office, and on our Web site.
- Q. Could more materials on abuse be available in order that people recognize its many forms?
A. Clear job descriptions, outlining appropriate and inappropriate behaviour are important. So is proper supervision and feedback. Materials on abuse, physical and emotional, are being compiled and will be available from the Education Task Force of the Safe Church Committee.
- Q. Are the clergy & wardens of a Corporation liable if there is an offence in a parish?
A. Anyone who sues will sue the Diocese because that is where the money is. The Parish and the Corporation will probably be sued as well. The Diocese carries insurance for such an event which is in effect providing the parish has exercised due diligence.

POLICE RECORDS CHECK —The PRC

- Q. How useful is a Police Records Check?
A. It is only one tool of many. It may discourage an inappropriate person from applying for ministry. A PRC is NOT a substitute for all other steps of screening.
- Q. Who pays for the volunteer's PRC?
A. The cost of a police check varies with local police policy. Many are free to volunteers if further identification is required, there may be an RCMP fingerprinting charge. Each Parish should decide how to meet this expense.
- Q. How long is a PRC valid?
A. A PRC is actually valid only on the date it is issued however we ask for renewal of the PRC every three years.

RECORDS

- Q. What should the Parish do with the PRC?
A. It is the property of the person being screened. It should be documented that the screening coordinator has viewed the document and the PRC should be returned to the owner.
- Q. What do we do with all the information, records and forms?
A. The parish needs a secure, locked filing cabinet (fireproof) to store these records. It also needs a bring-forward system, for re-clarifying every three years. See the SIF Toolkit for more details.
- Q. Does the person being screened have access to their file?
A. Yes.
- Q. Who else has access to these screening files?
A. Only the screening committee or chair of the Parish.

A SAFE AND HOLY PLACE

- Q. How do parishes "reduce the risk"?
A.
- Have a 'buddy system' (2 adults with activities involving children and youth)
 - Have a Third Party present when conflict of safety is perceived.
 - One on one? Leave doors and blinds open!
- Q. What renovations do you recommend for a physically safer place?
A. Install windows in doors, security locks, adequate lighting for safety inside and out.
- See our brochure Safe Places.*
- Q. Are we covered when some other person or group uses our church building?
A. The Church is assumed to be a 'safe place, even when used by others. A "terms of use" contract, is being developed for parish use.

With special thanks to the Diocese of Ottawa for their work on this document.



Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

*They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.
(Isaiah 11:9)*

PLEASE REFER TO GUIDELINE # 17

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Frequently Asked Questions

Screening

- Q. Why should we screen volunteers, even our own parishioners?
- A. We desire that our Church be a clear symbol of the Kingdom of God—a safe and holy place for all whom our ministry touches. Therefore it is the policy of the Diocese of Huron, that all who come into contact with vulnerable people be screened in a manner appropriate to the ministry or job being undertaken. The overall aim of this policy is to ensure that there is a safe environment in all Parishes, Diocesan Ministries, and activities for children, seniors, any who are physically, emotionally, or spiritually vulnerable, and those who are ministering in our Church.
- Q. How do parishes move forward?
- A. Go carefully. Get parishioners involved in writing job descriptions and determining risk. Start the screening process with people in high-risk positions. Follow the 10 Safe Steps.
- Q. What are "The Ten Safe Steps"?
- A. Volunteer Canada has developed 10 Safe Steps of Screening in Faith to help with screening for ministry. They are outlined in a brochure available from the Diocesan office, or online.
- Q. Who must be screened?
- A. Assess each job description, to determine the level of risk. Then screen your high-risk job fully. While medium or low risk ministries need interviews, they may not need Police Records Checks. (PRD)
- Q. Who should be screened?
- A.
- The Wardens, to give solid leadership.
 - Parishioners, especially visible people in leadership roles.
 - Leaders of Diocesan ministries involving vulnerable people.
 - All volunteers working with the vulnerable.

- Q. Do we need to screen everyone, even occasional helpers at the nursery?
- A. Use up-to-date job descriptions to determine the level of risk. Nursery supervisors should be fully screened, while occasional helpers, who are never alone, may need less intense screening.

- Q. Who does the screening?
- A. In general, screening is done by the people responsible for supervising the volunteer. A parish may choose to set up a "screening committee", for support and to track progress. Some police forces ask a church to apply for PRC's on behalf of all their volunteers at once. Otherwise, obtaining a PRC is the volunteer's responsibility.

- Q. How do we deal with someone who has done pastoral work for 30 years and resents being screened?
- A. Involve them in writing their own job description or in developing parish guidelines for other pastoral care workers. Assure them that it's not about the person; it is about the position.

- Q. What about the transference of records from other groups such as Scouting?
- A. We are screening for the position, not the person, so the job description would not be the same. A recent Police Records Check ie, within 6 months is acceptable, though.

- Q. How do we screen those who are under 18?
- A. A detailed job description, references and an interview will help screen youth, even without a Police Records Check.

- Q. Can you ask if someone has a police record?
- A. No.

- Q. How are types of abuse other than sexual to be checked, especially for adults, i.e. abuse of authority.
- A. Try to develop clear job descriptions, mentioning attitude and appropriate/inappropriate behaviour. Interview for attitude and be sure that a volunteer's training and evaluation are ongoing.

- Q. What is our responsibility around making judgement calls?
- A. Better to be safe than sorry. If we offer a programme, we must fulfill our "Duty of Care".

- Q. What is our "Duty of Care"?
- A. This is a legal concept, which identifies the obligation of individuals and organizations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect their participants. Failure to meet the Duty of Care can result in an accusation of negligence.

- Q. If someone has "done their time" shouldn't the church allow them to do ministry?
- A. In the Huron Diocese, a criminal conviction for a sexual offense involving a minor disqualifies an applicant from working with children. In "ministering" to the redeemed, the church must be careful not to lead anyone back into temptation. Other types of ministries may be explored.

- Q. Why should I interview all volunteers when some are people I have known for years and see each week over the coffee hour?
- A. An interview provides the ministry leaders with the opportunity to review important items about the job description and the volunteer's application form. In addition, it gives the interview team a feeling about how well this person would "fit" in a particular job or ministry.

- Q. How often should people be re-screened?
- A. When a volunteer changes position significantly or takes on a new ministry, the person should be re-screened. Based on the new job description, try an interview, orientation and perhaps an appropriate records check, i.e. a credit check for treasurers.

- Q. When is it appropriate to do a re-interview?
- A. If the interviewer is uneasy about the "fit" of a person for a particular position, book a second interview. Invite an extra screener, often someone who is familiar with the ministry. You are looking for the right match of person and ministry. See section on Interviewing in the SIF Toolkit.