

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF NIAGARA
POLICY WITH REGARDS TO
SCREENING AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

1.1 The Policy

The Diocese of Niagara undertakes to ensure that our Church be a safe and holy place for all whom our ministry affects.

It is therefore our policy that all staff and volunteers, lay and ordained, who come into contact with children, youth and vulnerable people be screened in a manner appropriate to the ministry or job being undertaken.

1.2 Aims of this Policy

The overall aim of this policy is to ensure that there is a safe environment in all parishes, ministries, and activities within our Diocese. It is recognized that clergy, diocesan staff, parish staff, and volunteers serve in situations where abuse has the potential to occur. It is further recognized that children, youth, and vulnerable adults need to be protected from the occurrence of any such abuse, and that those who are ministering in our Church need to be properly selected and trained to avoid abuse or the appearance of abuse to others. Unfortunately, abuse can take many forms. It is necessary to protect people from all forms of abuse, including, but not limited to: sexual abuse, sexual harassment, physical abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, and financial abuse.

In the above paragraph and in the rest of this document, the term “vulnerable adults” refers not only to people who are typically recognized as vulnerable, such as the elderly, those coming from an abusive relationship, and the mentally and physically disabled, but also to those otherwise healthy adults who are vulnerable because of recent life experiences. This includes, but is not limited to, those who are grieving because of the death of a loved one, those experiencing job loss, or career difficulties, those living with separation, divorce, or marital discord, and those living through financial difficulties. It is important to recognize that all of us are vulnerable to varying degrees at different stages of our lives. Therefore, it is critical that those who hold positions of power and trust within the church be properly selected, trained, and supported so that their ministry may be life-giving and not abusive.

The policy is designed to cover two distinct but complimentary issues – screening and management. While no procedure can guarantee that potential abusers will not find a position of trust within a church, the goal of adopting proper screening procedures is to reduce the risk that those who are unsuitable or likely to offend secure such a position.

The goal of good, ongoing management is to ensure that individuals are placed in positions that match their interests, skills, and abilities, that they are fulfilling their responsibilities, that they are behaving in an appropriate fashion, and that they are being recognized, nurtured, and supported in their ministries. Ongoing management is also designed to reveal situations of potential abuse.

1.3 Application of this Policy

This policy shall apply in all Parishes and Ministries of the Diocese of Niagara.

1.4 Additional Information and Resources

For more information on the Diocese of Niagara’s response to sexual abuse see, “Sexual Misconduct Policy: Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Assault (October 2000).

For information and resources on Risk Assessments and Screening Procedures, see Volunteer Canada's Publication, "Screening in Faith", visit their website at www.volunteer.ca or call 1-800-670-0401.

2.1 **Appropriate Screening and Management Method**

The appropriate screening and management method is outlined in step-wise fashion below. Parishes are expected to follow this method when establishing their own Staff and Volunteer Screening and Management Program.

Step 1 – List all Positions

Each parish shall make a list of all positions, both paid and volunteer, within the parish. Care shall be taken to include any position that is associated with the church, whether the ministry is lay or ordained, takes place on Sunday or through the week, on church premises or off-site.

Step 2 – Write Preliminary Job Descriptions

A preliminary job description for each position shall be written to establish the appropriate duties and responsibilities for the position. This preliminary job description will be used as a basis for risk assessment, for establishing proper screening procedures, and for establishing proper training, supervision, and follow-up procedures. Job descriptions are to be finalized after these procedures have been decided upon. (See Step 6)

Step 3 - Assess Risk Associated with Each Position

Each position shall be assessed for the amount of risk inherent to it, and assigned a rating of low, medium, or high. In determining the degree of risk associated with a particular position, the parish shall consider:

- ◆ The age and vulnerability of the people being ministered to
- ◆ The size of group typically being ministered to (Group vs. 1-on-1 Activity)
- ◆ The location and visibility of ministry (Church Hall vs. Private Home)
- ◆ The type of activity involved in ministry (Morning Bible Study vs. Camping Week-end)
- ◆ The level of supervision and monitoring that takes place
- ◆ The degree of authority associated with the position (Warden vs. Chalice Bearer)
- ◆ Other significant attributes of the position

In all cases, parishes are encouraged to reduce the amount of risk associated with a position as much as possible. Where risk reduction is not possible, more stringent screening, training, and follow-up management is required. (See section 3.1 – Minimum Standards)

Step 4 – Establish Appropriate Screening Procedure for Each Position

Based on the risk assessment completed in Step 3, the parish must decide on the appropriate screening procedure for each position. *It is important that the screening procedure be determined and maintained for the position, and not altered based on the person currently holding that position or based on the person being considered for that position.*

Typical screening procedures include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Meeting with clergy or another direct supervisor to discuss the duties and responsibilities of the position and the candidate's suitability for the position

- ◆ Application Forms or Submission of Resume
- ◆ Reference Checks
- ◆ Police Records Check

It is not expected that all 4 of these screening procedures be implemented for every position. In general, for most low-risk positions, a meeting will be the only procedure that is necessary. For high-risk positions, reference checks are recommended, and for some positions, a Police Records Check is required. (See Section 3.1 – Minimum Standards)

Step 5– Establish Appropriate Training, Supervision, and Follow-up Procedures

All positions shall be assigned appropriate training, supervision, and follow-up procedures. Based on the natures of different positions and the levels of risk associated with them, different levels of training, supervision, and follow-up will be required. In general, positions at higher levels of risk should be monitored more closely.

The type and frequency of follow-up, as well as who is responsible for supervisory activity needs to be decided before a person is assigned to a position. As with screening procedures, appropriate follow-up procedures should be established by considering the nature of the position, not the nature of the person holding the position.

Step 6 – Finalize Job Descriptions

Every position within a parish shall have a corresponding job description. At a minimum, each job description shall be finalized to include:

- ◆ A job title
- ◆ A defined length of term
- ◆ A brief, one or two sentence summary of the nature of the position
- ◆ A description of the ages and types of people being ministered to
- ◆ A statement clearly outlining the goal(s) of the ministry
- ◆ A list that clearly outlines the necessary screening procedures for the position (as defined by the parish in Step 3)
- ◆ A list of the duties, responsibilities, and activities associated with the position
- ◆ A list of necessary skills or experience required to perform the position
- ◆ A list of expected benefits that the volunteer or staff person will realize through performing this ministry
- ◆ A statement clearly outlining any specific training that the volunteer or staff person must receive from the parish in order to fulfill the requirements of the position
- ◆ A statement clearly outlining the support and supervision that the volunteer or staff person will receive and any follow-up that they can expect
- ◆ A statement clearly outlining the boundaries and limitations that the volunteer or staff person will adhere to

Step 7 – Application of Screening Procedures

After establishing appropriate screening procedures (Step 4), establishing appropriate training, supervision, and follow-up procedures (Step 5), and finalizing job descriptions for all positions (Steps 6), the procedures need to be applied on an ongoing basis. Diligence in following prescribed procedures is necessary in order to ensure the integrity of the system.

Step 8 – Ongoing Supervision, Follow-up, Evaluation, and Recognition

Once a person has been selected and placed in a position, it is important to maintain contact with him or her and with the people to whom he or she ministers. Where children are involved, follow-up with the parents of the participants is also required. The appropriate supervisory personnel should adhere to the follow-up procedures as determined in Step 5.

This type of follow-up will help determine if the volunteer or staff member is acting in an appropriate manner, and allow for intervention in the form of supervision, further training, or dismissal if they are acting inappropriately.

It is also necessary to recognize and thank people for the tasks that they perform. Recognition and appreciation give people additional satisfaction from their ongoing ministries.

Step 9 – Annual Review

Every parish operates as a dynamic system, with constant changes in membership, and job responsibilities. Therefore, on an annual basis, it is necessary to review and update:

- ◆ The list of volunteer and staff positions
- ◆ The risk-assessments
- ◆ The screening procedures
- ◆ The follow-up procedures
- ◆ And the job-descriptions

Although at first glance this may seem like an onerous task, it is likely that only a few changes will be necessary each year.

As well as ensuring that proper procedures are in place, an annual review allows an opportunity to reflect on which people are currently assigned to which positions, and whether or not those positions are best matched to their interests and abilities.

3.1 Minimum Standards

It is recognized that parishes throughout the Diocese differ with regards to: size, location (rural or urban), financial and personnel resources, and the number and type of vulnerable people.

It follows that different parishes will therefore arrive at different screening procedures based on the method outlined above. However, the standards outlined below in sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2, and 3.1.3 are to be seen as minimum standards and are to be met in all Parishes and Ministries of the Diocese of Niagara.

Parishes are free to exceed the minimum standards where they see fit.

3.1.1 Risk Assessment

All clergy positions shall be deemed to be high-risk positions.

All positions where one-on-one meetings or counseling occur in closed settings shall be deemed to be high-risk positions.

All positions involving residential programs with children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall be deemed to be high-risk positions.

Any position involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults in a non-residential setting shall be deemed to be a medium-risk or a high-risk position based on the nature of the position.

3.1.2 Requirements for Police Records Check

Police Records Checks are required for any high-risk position, where the level of risk cannot be reduced through other methods (example: team ministry, ongoing and regular supervision). This includes, but is not limited to:

- ◆ All clergy positions
- ◆ All positions where one-on-one meetings or counseling occur in closed settings
- ◆ All positions involving residential programs with children, youth, or vulnerable adults
- ◆ All positions requiring significant involvement with money

For example, Wardens in their leadership role in the parish, should consider having a PRC done

3.1.3 Individuals Holding Multiple Positions within a Parish

Individuals who hold more than one position within a parish are to be screened in a manner consistent with the position that holds the highest level of risk and has the most stringent screening requirements.

4.1 Volunteer Manager Position

It is strongly recommended that each parish create the position of "Parish Volunteer Manager". The candidate for this position should have strong administrative skills, good people management skills, and a good knowledge of the parish membership. Along with the Rector, the Parish Volunteer Manager should have primary responsibility for implementing and maintaining the Screening and Management Program.

5.1 Training and Assistance

The Diocese shall supply training in the proper application of Staff and Volunteer Screening and Management methods to every parish. In addition to training, the Diocese will assist individual parishes by supplying sample job descriptions, risk assessments, screening procedures and follow-up procedures for the most typical parish positions. Further, the Diocese shall supply a resource person to answer questions and assist parishes as they begin to implement their own Staff and Volunteer Screening and Management Program.

At least one clergy representative and one lay representative from each parish shall attend a Diocesan sponsored training day on Staff and Volunteer Screening and Management.

It is recommended that, at a minimum, the Rector, one or more of the Churchwardens and the Parish Volunteer Manager attend the Diocesan sponsored training event. Inclusion of larger numbers of parish members at the training event is likely to increase the success of a parish's Staff and Volunteer Screening and Management Program.

6.1 Outside Groups Renting or Using Church Property

Frequently, outside groups use church buildings on a regular basis. While the Church is not directly responsible for screening leaders of these organizations, it could be named in a legal action and be held vicariously liable should there be charges of abuse.

It is therefore incumbent on the Church to inquire into the screening procedures of the groups using their facilities. Where the screening procedures of an outside organization do not meet the standards outlined in this policy, a discussion should take place between the

Church and the user organization to determine an appropriate course of action. If the user group ministers to vulnerable people and is unable, or unwilling, to undertake proper precautions in terms of risk-reduction and/or screening procedures, the Church must consider terminating the relationship for safety reasons.

7.1 Elected Positions within the Parish

There are a small number of elected positions in most parishes. These positions are subject to the same risk-assessment, job description, screening, and follow-up procedure as all other positions. It should be made clear to both the elected individual and to the parish at large, that following election, the individual will still need to meet the requirements of the screening process in order to accept the position. When possible, screening requirements should be addressed with nominees, prior to election, in order to avoid potential confusion and/or embarrassment.

8.1 Procedures with Regards to Police Records Checks

When a parish decides that a Police Records Check is required for a particular position (See Section 3.1.2 for Minimum Standards), the following principles shall apply:

- ◆ Individuals will be responsible for obtaining their Police Records Check from their local police department or OPP detachment
- ◆ The Police Records Check shall remain the property of the individual for whom it is produced and he or she will retain possession of it after having it checked by the appropriate supervisory person(s) and it has been photocopied
- ◆ While most police departments do not charge volunteers for Police Records Checks, a small number charge a fee for volunteers and almost all charge a fee for paid employees. The Diocese will reimburse clergy for the cost of their Police Records Check. It is strongly recommended that the Parish reimburse staff for the cost of a Police Records Check, if required
- ◆ The Police Records Check shall be reviewed by one or more supervisory persons to ensure that it does not reveal anything that may bring the suitability of the individual for the position being considered into question
- ◆ The original Police Records Check must be presented for review; photocopies are not acceptable
- ◆ A Police Record Check that is older than three years is no longer deemed to be valid and must be updated
- ◆ After review, the supervisory person(s) shall return the Police Records Check to the individual, sign a form stating that the Police Records Check has been reviewed, that on the basis of the Police Records Check the person is either suitable or unsuitable for the position being considered, and place the form in the individual's file
- ◆ The number of people responsible for reviewing Police Records Checks within a parish should be kept to a minimum. The following people are deemed most suitable for this task: The Rector, and/or A Warden, and/or The Volunteer Manager, and/or The Parish Administrator
- ◆ In the case of clergy, the Police Records Check shall be reviewed by: The Bishop or The Executive Officer or the Bishop's Secretary or the Diocesan Administrative Assistant.
- ◆ With regards to criminal convictions, it is acknowledged that we all make mistakes and that we all learn differently. Convictions acquired at an early stage in life may lead an individual to significant personal learning, growth, and transformation which may prove useful when ministering to others. It is further acknowledged that some behaviours that have resulted in criminal convictions such as political and social activism around the environment, First Nations issues, civil rights, and the peace movement have been applauded and supported by the church.

- ◆ It must be recognized then, that the existence of a criminal record does not necessarily exclude someone from a position as staff or in lay ministry. The information contained in a Police Records Check should become part of a further conversation to determine the suitability of the individual for the position under question. However, it needs to be clearly understood that where an individual's past behaviour indicates that a vulnerable group could be put at risk should the individual be assigned to a position of trust, the Church must err on the side of caution and direct that individual away from such a ministry.

9.1 Confidentiality of Information

It is understood that through the course of Screening and Management for Staff and Lay Ministries, information about individuals becomes available to those in supervisory positions.

This information must be treated as strictly personal and confidential. While the proper method for keeping and maintaining of records is outlined in Section 10.1, the dissemination of personal information through casual conversation or other means needs to be prevented. Those who hold supervisory positions may need to be trained or reminded to hold this information as confidential, and must be trusted to be able to do so.

10.1 Keeping and Maintaining of Records

Records shall be kept on a consistent basis with respect to the screening and management of individuals. Privacy of confidential information and security of records shall be of prime consideration in the administration of the screening process.

In general, those involved in screening activities shall document their activities. Documenting involves creating a "diary" of the activities that is dated, signed, and easily identifies:

- ◆ Who was being screened
- ◆ Who did the screening
- ◆ When the screening took place
- ◆ How the screening took place (In Person, By Phone, Through the Mail, etc.)
- ◆ What was said and by whom

A separate file should be created for each volunteer and this file should contain:

- ◆ The position description(s) for which they were being considered
- ◆ Their application form(s) or resume (If collected)
- ◆ Any and all records created during interviews or meetings (At a minimum, notes should be taken when a position is discussed with an individual to ensure that they are suitable for the position and that they can meet the obligations of the role.)
- ◆ Authorization to contact references (Where applicable)
- ◆ Records of conversations with references (Where applicable)
- ◆ A photocopy of Police Records Check
- ◆ Letters of Appointment (Where applicable)
- ◆ Supervisory or Evaluative Notes
- ◆ Other pertinent information

Any documents created in connection with screening activities shall be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Access to the filing cabinet should be severely limited. Normally, the only people to have access to these files would be the incumbent, the parish administrator, and the parish volunteer manager.

The records of any volunteer should be regarded as personnel files and treated with the same degree of care and confidentiality as the personnel files of salaried staff.

Records may be copied and sent to another parish upon receiving the signed, original WRITTEN consent (i.e., no fax or e-mail requests) of the person being screened. The parish within which it was created must maintain the original record.

Upon a person's completion of their term of ministry, their screening records should be sealed in an envelope and kept in their file. This will help to maintain the security of the file while it is held in a parish. However, any file must be maintained in the parish in perpetuity.

If a parish is concerned about their ability to safely store any or all files, these files may be deposited in the Diocesan Archives.

Upon the dissolution of a parish, screening related files should be sealed, labeled appropriately, and safely transmitted to the Diocesan Archives.

11.1 Compliance with Policy

To ensure compliance with this policy, each parish is required to submit to the Diocese:

- ◆ Their list of volunteer and staff positions
- ◆ Their risk-assessments
- ◆ Their screening procedures
- ◆ Their follow-up procedures
- ◆ And their job-descriptions

Changes to any of the above materials shall be submitted to the Diocese on an annual basis.