

DIOCESE OF NIAGARA
12 Steps for Volunteer Management and Screening

PHASE I - GETTING GOING

1. Appoint the position of “Parish Volunteer Coordinator”

This is a significant responsibility and will include input from a variety of people. It may be best if the person named as coordinator has had experience with job descriptions in their own workplaces or will call upon these people as necessary. The gifts of communication, diplomacy and a passion for enhancing the ministry of your parish through appropriate use of volunteers are all highly essential! Computer skills are invaluable. This position does not end when the report is handed in but is ongoing to enable the parish to properly maintain this ministry.

2. List All Positions in the parish

Refer to the document “Checklist of Parish Volunteer and Professional Staff Positions” found on the website as a guide.

3. Create a Preliminary Job Description for each position following the “Position/Job Description Template”

Try to keep this task informal and non-threatening. There is certainly a need for diplomacy! The purpose is simply for everyone to discover exactly what the responsibilities are for each ministry in your parish.

The actual writing of the job description can be done in several ways. To help people think about their ministry role, begin by asking them to list their duties and responsibilities. Then ask them to take that list and incorporate it onto the job description template, filling in as much information as they can. Work with others to edit the job description as necessary.

Parishes have completed job descriptions in a variety of ways. One model is to hold a meeting or job description writing ‘blitz’ - bringing together as many volunteers as possible, describing the process and then having people begin writing, returning their first drafts within one week. Another way is to have the supervisor for those ministries and their volunteers create one together.

Examples are provided on the website that can help you as you create your own job descriptions. Experiences from different parishes have taught us that editing is easier than writing from scratch so anything on paper is a good starting point. Also, once you ‘get the hang’ of it, the wordings come along quite easily. Use the expertise of members of your parish who may have experience with writing job descriptions at their places of employment.

4. Perform a Risk Assessment on each position using the diocesan chart

Refer to the “Risk Assessment chart and examples” found on the diocesan website. Remember that it is always best to reduce risk as much as possible. Designate positions as low, medium and high risk.

Some sort of screening process is necessary for every position ranging from “agreed to uphold the job description” for a low-level risk position to “requires a police records check” for the highest-level risk positions.

An outline of this assessment needs to be part of the Position Description (see example) so that it is clear to the person filling the position what the assessed risk of the position is.

5. Based on the Level of Risk, create Appropriate Screening Procedures and Boundaries and Limitations and add them to the Job Descriptions

Adjust the position responsibilities as necessary. Additional screening procedures include: interview, references, compulsory attendance at training sessions and police records check (CPIC and VSC).

An essential step in creating healthy and safe communities for volunteers and participants is to create a parish “code of conduct”. This helps ensure that volunteers working directly with vulnerable people (children, youth, the elderly, people in need) are aware of how best to minister safely to others. A list of basic do’s and don’ts for ministry as well as details related to specific positions can be listed in the boundaries and limitations section of the job description. An alternative is to create a “parish code of conduct” document that includes all of this information. This information should be based on the parish’s mission statement and values, and the definition of a vulnerable person. Part of the screening procedure would be a requirement that the volunteer understand and agree to abide by the contents of that document. Refer to the documents “Guidelines for Ministering to Vulnerable People” and to the “Code of Conduct examples” provided on this website.

6. Establish Appropriate Follow-up Procedures for Each Position and add them to the Job Descriptions

This would include details regarding the training, supervision and evaluation that will be offered for each ministry position.

7. Adjust Position/Job Descriptions and create the record-keeping forms that you will use for the screening process

Examples of reference forms, volunteer agreements, information on obtaining Police Record Checks (PRC) in the various regions of the Diocese and a suggested filing system for managing the documents is found on this website as “Record-keeping suggestions”.

Date the bottom of all Position/Job Descriptions so that you know when it was last updated. Once changes are made to update them, make sure the date is changed as well. This is a simple way to know if you are staying on top of these position descriptions

Your parish may consider assembling a binder of job descriptions and ministry positions in an accessible space. People who are considering getting involved in the community as a ministry volunteer will then know what the possibilities are. This is especially important at vestry time when nominations for church positions may come from the floor. It is essential that the people being nominated are willing and able to fulfill the screening requirements of the position.

PHASE II – IMPLEMENTATION

8. Apply Screening Procedures

- Have you formally checked all the references for those individuals for whom you asked for references?
- Have you received all the PRCs for those individuals for whom you require a PRC?
- Are all these PRCs copied and on file in a locked space in your parish office?
- NOTE: All PRCs that have been requested for employees or volunteers must be photocopied and kept on file in perpetuity. Original PRCs are to be returned to their owner.

9. Provide Necessary Follow-up

Ensure that the training, supervision, support and evaluation procedures that are listed in the job descriptions take place.

10. Recognize People and Celebrate Their Ministries

A collection of unique thank you/ministry appreciation ideas are included on the website under “Recognition and Celebration Ideas”.

PHASE III - KEEPING THE PROCESS GOING

Suggestions for Maintenance of Parish Volunteer Management and Screening Programs

Preamble

Once you have your program running (that means most, if not all, of the initial 10 steps have been accomplished or are well on their way), it is now time to think about how you will maintain this program. This was never planned to be a one-shot deal!

The following are some ideas of how you can plan to work to maintain this very important and rewarding program. As I am sure you have already figured out, having someone in charge of this ministry who likes details and is very organized is an asset. If you have any other ideas regarding maintenance of the volunteer management and screening program, please forward them to me. I am always looking for helpful ideas from parishes.

Remember to call the diocesan office if you need help!

As the Parish Volunteer Coordinator, there are basically two areas of maintenance:

1. the day to day, month to month stuff such as:
 - Keeping an up-to-date *Volunteer Position List* – do not forget to add new positions to your current list or delete the ones that are no longer required.
 - ensure that any newly recruited volunteers have an up-to-date copy of the job description and any other material such as a code of conduct that should be part of the volunteer package
 - ensure that all necessary screening takes place **before** anyone enters into their new position
 - ensure they are properly trained and supported to fulfill their position

2. Once a year you need to review all job descriptions to ensure they are current based on the expectations of the position. I suggest that you take your *Volunteer Position List* and divide it into two sections:
 - a) **a May/June list** – those positions that usually start up or change in the early fall such as church schoolteachers, youth ministry leaders, altar guild, adult study leaders, nursery care givers, chalice bearers, servers, counters etc.
 - b) **a November/December list** – those positions that usually start up, change, or are appointed at vestry such as wardens, parish council, lay members of synod, treasurer, bookkeeper etc.

If a position does not fit tidily into either list, just put it under one so that it does not get forgotten and therefore not reviewed! Remember to date all position descriptions at the bottom so whoever is maintaining this ministry is aware of last updates.

The bottom line is that your entire Volunteer Position List must be checked over at least once a year to ensure four things:

- 1) that every job description is up to date and properly reflects the position
- 2) that everyone fulfilling the positions has a current job description and volunteer package that assist them in doing their job
- 3) that any new jobs created have a job description written and that steps are taken to ensure that training and support are given (go back and check the 10 steps for any other important stuff such as recognition)
- 4) that the volunteer coordinator ensures that new and existing volunteers have been appropriately screened and are receiving training and supervision as stated in the job description

Just a note for those parishes that have undergone a big change in recent time, such as a clergy staffing change, a big building project or new staff added to your parish. Experience tells us that this tends to shift the volunteer world a great deal in parishes. You should expect that many of your volunteer positions will change a great deal, some will go away, some will be added and others will need great revamping. As times change, so do all the positions in our organizations and this is a good thing!

Blessings in your work - and thank you for working to enhance your parish's ministry in the Diocese of Niagara!