

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 Edmonton, 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 Synod Office, DART, or online.

Q. Who must be screened?

A. Follow the diocesan guidelines, at this time only extreme high risk positions require Police Record Checks and Child Welfare checks. These include Clergy, Youth Leaders, Sunday School Teachers and Supervisors who work one on one with children, Directors of Children's and Youth Choirs, Trainers and Supervisors of Young Servers and anyone else who may be in a one on one position with someone vulnerable, i.e. Pastoral Visitors. Screen your high-risk jobs fully, while medium and low risk ministries need interviews, but may not need Police Record Checks and Child Welfare checks.

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, would need less intense screening and are at a lower level of risk. In an emergency when your screened volunteers are not available, make sure you have two people present in the nursery and reduce the risk.

Q. Who does the screening?

A. In general, screening is done by the people responsible for supervising the volunteer. Parishes may set up a “screening committee”, for support and to track progress

Q. How do we deal with someone who has done pastoral work for 30 years and resents being screened?

A. Involve them in the process of developing parish guidelines for pastoral care. 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.

Q. How do we screen those who are under 18?

A. A detailed job description, references and an interview will help screen youth, for any volunteer position. It is unlikely that children would be in volunteer positions of extremely high risk. However, working in the nursery, visiting the elderly etc. all place the volunteer in the same position of trust as an adult. Therefore screening will apply. Many organizations which use volunteers e.g. Capital Care and the Caritas Group in Edmonton, require screening such as Police Record Checks for the protection of both the clients and the volunteer.

Q. Can you ask if someone has a criminal record?

A. No.

Q. How do we monitor for types of abuse other than sexual abuse in our parish ministries?

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 act with Due Diligence and fulfil 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?

In the Edmonton Diocese, a criminal conviction for a sexual offense involving a minor disqualifies an applicant from working with children. This does not mean that other areas of ministry could not be considered.

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 for a ministry position gives dignity to the ministry and provides an opportunity to value the volunteer and their gifts. An interview also 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. If an individual is remaining in the same ministry they should be re-screened every 3 years.

RESOURCES

Q. Are there any examples or templates for job/ministry descriptions we can use?

A. Yes generic samples of job descriptions are available at the Synod office, and on our Web site.

Q. Could 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. The diocesan policy on Clergy Misconduct and Sexual Abuse is available from the Synod office.

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 could probably be sued as well. The Diocese carries insurance for such an event.

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. 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.

Q. What is DART?

A. DART is the Diocesan Advisory and Response Team (formerly the DRG). It is a committee formed of both lay and ordained members of the diocese. DART advises on questions of abuse and has a role in education and training so that we might be proactive in this area.

Q. Where do I get more information?

**A. Visit Synod office, or download related materials from our Web site:
www.edmonton.anglican.org**

This brochure was developed with the help of materials from:

**Volunteer Canada
430 Gilmour Street
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Diocese of Edmonton



Screening in Faith

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

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