

Volunteer Screening Manual

Section Three – Introduction

Diocese of Peterborough

Purpose

The Volunteer Screening Manual is intended to assist parishes in the effective and appropriate management of volunteers. This manual provides policies and procedures relating to the screening of volunteers together with standardized forms that are to be used for the screening process. The purpose of the screening initiative is to protect all those, and most especially the vulnerable, for which ministry is provided. In so doing, parishes likewise fulfil their obligation to their volunteers by establishing safeguards to ensure their safety and protect their reputation.

Screening Process

Screening volunteers is a process designed to create and maintain a safe environment. This process involves identifying any activity or a ministry position that could place children, youth or other vulnerable persons at risk of being harmed.

The screening process involves assessing risk, writing out position descriptions, discerning the suitability of an individual for a volunteer position and subsequent training, supervision and evaluation of those involved. The process also ensures that the most appropriate match is made between the volunteer and the position.

Terminology

Due Diligence

The thoroughness and care that a prudent and reasonable person is expected to use in the evaluation of risks arising from a given activity.

Duty of Care

A general principle of civil law that requires an organization to do everything it reasonably can to adopt measures that care for and protect the participants. It is the moral, legal, and spiritual obligation that is owed to another, whether it is to the volunteer or to the recipient of the volunteer's ministry.

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Participants

A generic term used to describe those who participate in programs or who receive services from ministries.

Positions of Trust

1. Situations in which someone has a significant degree of authority or decision-making power over another and/or unsupervised access to another person and to his or her property.
2. Situations which by their very nature involve the possibility of developing a close, personal relationship between individuals as in mentoring, counselling or home visitation programs.

Risk Management

Screening is an exercise in risk management. Upon an assessment of the possibilities of risk arising from programs, activities or services, steps are then taken to eliminate, prevent or minimize the risk.

Vicarious Liability

The liability an organization assumes for the actions of those who function on its behalf.

Volunteer

An individual, who chooses to undertake a ministry position or activity, provides this ministry for an individual or in the service of a parish or the Diocese who freely carries out the activity and does not receive a salary or wage for this service.

Position Description

A position description is an explicitly stated list of expectations and conditions under which a person functions as a volunteer.

Vulnerable Person

A vulnerable person is one who has difficulty protecting him or herself from harm and is at risk because of age, disability, or other circumstances such as emotional distress due to crisis or trauma.

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Screening Committees

Upon the recommendation and appointment by the pastor, two to three members of the parish are to serve on a screening committee. Members of the committee are to familiarize themselves with Diocesan policy and, the procedures for screening. All members of the initial Parish Screening Committee are to receive training organized by the Diocesan Screening Team in order to undertake the task of volunteer screening at the parish level.

Tasks

- together with the leaders or coordinators of each of the various ministries, develop position descriptions according to the examples presented in the manual
- determine the risk level of each of the ministries in the parish
- initiate the screening process beginning with volunteers involved in high risk ministries, in medium risk ministries and finally volunteers within low risk ministry positions
- ensure that each person completes a Volunteer Information Form
- schedule, conduct and document interviews for medium and high risk volunteers
- contact references
- request an Enhanced Police Information Check (EPIC) from Stirling Talent Solutions
- store a copy of the results of the Enhanced Police Information Check (EPIC) in the volunteers file
- together with the pastor, ensure the proper storage of all documentation
- be responsible for the training and implementation of the ongoing screening steps with the ministry leaders and provide support
- be familiar with the dismissal policies; provide the pastor with the necessary information and documentation when a volunteer is to be dismissed
- keep the pastor and the Diocesan Screening Committee informed of the progress of the parish and with the pastor complete the annual parish progress report.
- keep the manual updated
- attend all training sessions and workshops provided by the Diocese.

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Qualifications

- a practicing Catholic
- responsible, trustworthy, reliable and flexible
- skilled at organizing, interviewing and listening
- able to maintain confidentiality
- some volunteer experience

Orientation and Training

- the Diocesan Screening Committee is to provide orientation and training for all original Parish Volunteer Screening Committee members
- the Diocesan Screening Committee with the assistance of Parish Volunteer Screening Committee members are to help train new Parish Volunteer Screening members

Supervision and Evaluation

- the Screening Parish Committee is directly responsible to the pastor
- the pastor has the responsibility of evaluating the Parish Screening Committee members

Risk Assessment and Screening Requirements

- members of the screening committee are to be screened by the pastor according to the procedures required for those in high risk positions

Organization Liability Insurance

Several Catholic organizations within the Diocese provide services in the parish and/or the community. These Catholic organizations will have liability insurance that pertains directly to the volunteers within their organization. These Catholic organizations are not covered under the Diocese of Peterborough property or general liability program. These Catholic organizations are not screened by the Parish Screening Committee. If any member of one of these Catholic organizations should apply to volunteer for a parish ministry not associated with their specific group, these persons are required to be processed by the Parish Screening Committee.

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The organizations include:

Knights of Columbus

Legion of Mary

The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Society of St. Vincent De Paul

Women's Group

Liability Insurance

Statement of coverage from Catholic Mutual Canada, insurance provider for the Diocese of Peterborough:

The liability coverage afforded to the Diocese of Peterborough and administered by Catholic Mutual Canada, provides coverage to volunteers and employees responsible for the screening of other volunteers and employees and all volunteers while they are carrying out their official duties. They are insured as a protected person and afforded all defense and indemnity coverage. The certificate of coverage excludes claims made for sexual abuse.

Approved by Catholic Mutual Canada

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