

Archdiocese of Kingston

Screening Policy for Clergy, Religious, Lay Employees, and Volunteers

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for Clergy, Religious,
Lay Employees and Volunteers

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Introduction

Screening is an essential aspect of creating and sustaining a safe faith environment. The goal of this policy is the protection and safety of our children, our vulnerable people, our volunteers, our clergy, our religious, our employees and the Church. Thus, it is a permanent policy of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Kingston that all positions be assessed and assigned appropriate risk levels, and that appropriate screening and management practices be maintained consistently throughout the Archdiocese.

In addition to the screening process, the safe environment program of the Archdiocese includes the use of a CMG video: 'Safe Haven', which is intended to educate clergy, religious clerics, employees and volunteers on the identification of symptoms and markers associated with a child or vulnerable person who may be suffering from an abusive situation.

Furthermore, the Archbishop has mandated that the screening of volunteers and lay employees be implemented in every parish of the Archdiocese of Kingston. This policy is divided into two parts: Part One: Clergy and Religious; Part Two: Volunteers and Lay Employees.

Part One: Clergy and Religious

A. Candidates

Candidates preparing for ordination to the ministerial priesthood or permanent diaconate are required to undergo a rigorous screening program which includes:

- 1) Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Check;
- 2) Personal reference checks;
- 3) Personal interviews;
- 4) Completion of a comprehensive psychological assessment, including an integrated report by a registered psychologist;
- 5) Recommendation by a seminary formation team, including observations regarding the candidate's suitability for ministry;
- 6) Recommendation by a priest overseeing the candidate's pastoral year(s), including observations regarding the candidate's suitability for ministry;
- 7) Review of the Safe Environment Policy and education in the identification of symptoms and markers associated with a child or vulnerable person who may be suffering from an abusive situation.

B. Incardinated Clergy

All clergy and religious, in addition to their appointment requirements, must satisfy the following requirements to be approved for parish or diocesan ministry:

- 1) Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Check;
- 2) Acknowledgment in writing that they have received and read the Code of Pastoral Conduct; that they are familiar with the requirements and responsibilities associated with the Safe Environment Policy established by the Archdiocese of Kingston; and that they have received training in the identification of symptoms and markers associated with a child or vulnerable person who may be suffering from an abusive situation.

C. Non-Incardinated Clergy

- 1) A priest from another diocese, or a priest of a religious order, who wishes to minister in the Archdiocese of Kingston, must provide a Statement of Suitability from his bishop or religious superior prior to his arrival in the Archdiocese of Kingston;
- 2) A Religious Brother or Sister applying to minister in the Archdiocese of Kingston must provide a Statement of Suitability from his bishop or religious superior prior to his or her arrival in the Archdiocese;
- 3) All clergy and religious, in addition to their appointment qualifications, must satisfy the following requirements to be approved for parish or diocesan ministry:
 - a) Complete a Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Check and provide a Statement of Suitability, where possible;
 - b) Attend a mandatory orientation session on “Safe Environment Guidelines”, which includes education in the identification of symptoms and markers associated with a child or vulnerable person who may be suffering from an abusive situation;
 - c) Acknowledge in writing that they have received and read the Code of Pastoral Conduct and are familiar with the policies and responsibilities associated with the Safe Environment Policy established by the Archdiocese of Kingston.
- 4) ALL CLERGY are required to provide an Offence Declaration every year. Documentation related to Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Checks and Offence Declarations are kept in a confidential file with the Archdiocese of Kingston.

Part Two: Volunteers and Lay Employees

A. Screening Expectations

- 1) All parish volunteers and lay employees, as well as staff of the Catholic Pastoral Centre, shall be screened according to the procedures and guidelines of the Archdiocese of Kingston and provided education in the identification of symptoms and markers associated with a child or vulnerable person who may be suffering from an abusive situation.
- 2) Each pastor is to establish a screening committee in his parish. A screening committee ranges in size from a minimum of two to a maximum of five people.
- 3) Standardized forms, provided by the Archdiocese to each parish, are to be used in the implementation of a uniform screening process, as are Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Checks, if appropriate.

B. Ministry Position Descriptions

- 1) A ministry position description outlines the responsibilities and duties of volunteers, as well as the screening measures to be applied.
- 2) The basic outline of position descriptions is to follow the same format in all parishes of the Archdiocese.
- 3) Ministry position descriptions are developed and signed by the ministry leader, pastor, or the screening committee. They are to be reviewed as needed and updated when necessary. If there is a change to the position, then the position description should be revised at the same time.

C. Determining Levels of Trust and Risk

- 1) Three categories will be used to assess a ministry position based on the level of trust afforded the volunteer or paid staff member. These are: GENERAL TRUST, INCREASED TRUST, HIGH TRUST. These 'trust' categories correspond to the levels of risk for potential harm to participants, the vulnerable, or church resources through the position. Risk levels are categorized as low, medium, and high.
- 2) All positions within a given ministry are to be assessed for the level of trust involved and the level of risk associated with the position. The level of screening of a volunteer or staff position must meet the level of trust assigned to that ministry. When there is doubt as to the evaluation of a position, the position will be deemed HIGH TRUST.
- 3) All ministries involving children or youth, as well as ministries that require volunteers to do home visits, are to be categorized as HIGH TRUST. All employees are to be categorized as HIGH TRUST.

- 4) When drawing up position descriptions for volunteer ministries that involve finances, the most current Diocesan Financial Guidelines are to be followed. Positions where volunteers work directly with money are to be considered HIGH TRUST.

D. Screening Forms

- 1) Each volunteer and employee is to receive a copy of *Screening in Faith: Guidelines for Parish Volunteers*, along with a Ministry Position Description. Each volunteer and employee is required to complete a Volunteer/Employee Information Form (as applicable), and is to sign a Ministry Covenant. After the initial Police Record Check, all Employees and High Trust Volunteers are to complete and sign an Offence Declaration Form each subsequent year.
- 2) For GENERAL TRUST ministry positions, ministry leaders or coordinators of the particular ministry may be asked to be responsible for the completion and collection of these forms.
- 3) For INCREASED and HIGH TRUST positions, the screening committee is responsible for the completion and collection of all applicable forms.
- 4) All forms are to be maintained in a confidential file and updated annually. Completed files are kept on parish property.

E. Interviews

- 1) An interview is to be conducted for all volunteers and staff in INCREASED and HIGH TRUST positions.
- 2) A minimum of two people from the screening committee shall conduct the interview. A record of the interview is to be documented on a form provided and kept in a confidential file.

F. Reference Checks

- 1) At least two reference checks are to be conducted by the screening committee for all volunteers and paid staff in INCREASED and HIGH TRUST positions.
- 2) The volunteer or employee is to sign a permission form permitting the screening committee to contact references. Only the persons named as references are to be contacted.
- 3) The details of a reference check are to be documented in a confidential file. Reference check information can only be disclosed to the volunteer or employee concerned with the permission of the reference.

G. Police Records Check

- 1) A police records check (PRC) is required for all volunteers in HIGH TRUST positions and for all employees. If the volunteer or employee is to work with vulnerable individuals, the PRC is to include a Vulnerable Sector screen.
- 2) The police records check must be an original, no more than 60 days old, and requested by the parish. A certified police detachment copy is acceptable.
- 3) The police records check is to be reviewed by the parish screening committee. The completed form is to be kept in a confidential file.
- 4) If the volunteer/employee decides not to present the PRC report to the screening committee, the parish cannot accept this person for a HIGH TRUST position.
- 5) A criminal conviction does not automatically exclude an applicant from volunteering in a particular ministry or from applying for a full- or part-time position. If a police records check confirms a prior conviction, or presents a cause for concern, the parish screening coordinator will consult with the pastor, who will forward the police records check to the Diocesan Screening Coordinator. The Coordinator will then review the application with the Chancellor.
- 6) The Archdiocese of Kingston does not assume the cost of conducting a police records check when police departments charge for this service. When there are fees attached to the records check, the parish will assume this cost upon receipt of the document.
- 7) A volunteer who leaves a ministry for one year or longer is required to provide a new police records check.
- 8) Offence Declarations are to be completed every year for volunteers and employees involved in HIGH TRUST ministries and positions. They are to be treated as confidential and stored with the police records check.

H. Record-keeping and Confidentiality

- 1) Personal information obtained either verbally or in writing will be kept confidential.
- 2) Information gathered for the purpose of screening is accessible only to the volunteer or staff applicant, the pastor, and the members of the parish screening committee. Information is to be kept in a secured file at the parish.
- 3) Should the pastor and/or members of the screening committee have serious concerns, or a difference of opinion, about a volunteer or staff member's acceptance; or should a conflict of interest arise, the Diocesan Screening Coordinator must be consulted to assist with the deliberative process.

I. Orientation and Training

- 1) All current and new volunteers must participate in an orientation session based on the requirements of the ministry position description and the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Policy. These orientation sessions are to be offered at least once a year.
- 2) All volunteers and employees are to receive a copy of *Screening in Faith: Guidelines for Parish Volunteers and Lay Employees*. Although principally addressed to volunteers, the booklet contains useful information that applies to employees, particularly the section on pages 12 and 13, *Reporting Abuse and/or Inappropriate Conduct of a Volunteer, Staff or Faith Community Member*. The screening committee is responsible for providing every volunteer and employee with a copy of the *Guidelines*.
- 3) When orientation and training have been completed, the screening committee will document this on the Screening Checklist (Form D) (see list of Screening Documents).

J. Supervision and Evaluation

- 1) The level of supervision is to be based on the level of trust involved with the position.
- 2) The screening committee will work with the ministry and group leaders to assess the level of supervision currently in place in each ministry or group and to determine what supervision will be needed where none exists.
- 3) Evaluations are to be performed once a year for positions of HIGH TRUST. The evaluations are to be filed in the volunteer's or employee's file.
- 4) When supervision and evaluation have been completed, the screening committee will document this in the volunteer's or employee's file on Form D.

K. Participant Follow-up

Participant follow-up is to be a regular process for HIGH TRUST positions.

L. Acknowledgement

In addition to appointment and screening requirements, which are described above, all volunteers and employees must acknowledge in writing that they have received and read the Code of Pastoral Conduct, and that they are familiar with the requirements and responsibilities associated with the Safe Environment Policy established by the Archdiocese of Kingston.

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