



The Roman Catholic
Diocese of Thunder Bay

Screening
Guidelines

July 2007

Diocesan Policy on Screening

PREAMBLE

1. Every organization within the Diocese offering services and programs owes a duty of care to protect its participants, its members (paid and unpaid), its governing body, and the community-at-large.
2. Effective and appropriate management of staff and volunteer-ministers is essential to the safe delivery of services and programs. The management of volunteer-ministers is as important as the management of paid staff and requires the allocation of the appropriate human and financial resources.
3. Our Roman Catholic Faith Community would like to ensure that all those who work in the Diocese wish only to help and serve with love, and not to do harm. Experience has shown that this is true of most individuals who generously offer time, energy, resources and skills.
4. However, the Diocese is also aware that the help that is offered can sometimes be offered by discreditable people. They seek out the vulnerable to exploit or abuse them. They take advantage of organizations that have lax or nonexistent screening procedures. Predators gain access to vulnerable persons, win their confidence and trust, and bring immeasurable harm to them and their families.
5. Those who minister in our parishes and groups, such as D.O.O.R.S. or the World Youth Day Committee, in our Diocese can be protected through the development, adoption and implementation of thorough, appropriate, consistent and ongoing screening measures, for our volunteer-ministers and paid staff.
6. At all times, the goal is to demonstrate due diligence in the care of our volunteers and those to whom they minister. Our faith community will strive to create a safe and enriching atmosphere for volunteers, staff and participants in all of our programs.

NOTE: The term volunteer-minister in the policy refers to all unpaid personnel. Parishes may choose to use the term minister or lay minister on their forms.

POLICY

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

It is the purpose of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Thunder Bay:

- a) To safeguard, in all respects, all of those, but most especially the vulnerable, to whom we minister.
- b) To ensure the integrity, safety and reputation of our volunteer-ministers and staff.
- c) To protect the Church from defamation and retribution.

B. LEVELS OF SCREENING BY VOLUNTEER – MINISTRY and/or STAFF POSITION

In order to achieve this purpose the Diocese of Thunder Bay has implemented a screening procedure in its ministry and staff operations. The following categories note the level of risk and refer to the amount of necessary information required to be on file as per the attached example forms.

Risk Level 1 (General)

Eucharistic Minister (Weekend Masses)	Lector
Prayer/Meditation Group Leader	Usher
Sacristan/Senior Altar Server	Lector Trainer/Scheduler
Parish/Diocesan Secretary	Parish/Diocesan Bookkeeper
Parish Housekeeper	Custodian
Children's Liturgy Teacher's Assistant	Choir Director – adult
Parish/Diocesan Finance Council	Adult Choir Member
Parish Council Representatives	Organist
R.C.I.A. Committee Members	

Risk Level 2 (High)

Children's Liturgy Co ordinator/Catechist,
Youth Ministry Co ordinator/Leader, Altar Server Trainer/Scheduler,
Choir Director Youth/Children, Collection Counter, Eucharistic
Minister to the sick (homes, hospitals, etc.)

- NOTE: (a) These lists are suggestions only, a position's risk level is determined by whether or not the volunteer-minister will ever be alone with vulnerable people or confidential records.
(b) Movement from one ministry or staff position to another may require additional screening.

C. STRATEGIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF RISK

When a position is classified as level 2, an effort will be made to manage or reduce the risk by applying one of the following strategies:

- a) Eliminate the risk: There may be activities that have risks and consequences so great that they should be discontinued.
- b) Modify the activity: Change the location and the activity, perhaps by partnering volunteer-ministers.
- c) Transfer or Share Liability: Involve other organizations or service groups which are better prepared to handle the specific risk in question.
- d) Assume the risk but minimize it wherever possible: Design all volunteer-ministry tasks with risks in mind. Ensure appropriate screening of individuals, orientation and training and the ongoing supervision and evaluation of volunteer-ministers as described in this policy.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

The information gathered for the purposes of screening will be accessible only to the candidates for positions of ministry and to those directly responsible for engaging them.

The policy on maintenance and confidentiality of records will be explained to all candidates.

PROCEDURE

A. THE STEPS OF SCREENING

1. The nature of ministry and the level of risk involved will determine the intensity of the screening employed.
2. All paid staff and volunteer-ministry positions within the Diocese are required to have the following:
 - a) description of the ministry
 - b) information form(s)
 - c) appropriate training
 - d) supervision and evaluation

B. PROTOCOL for Risk Level 1 Positions

Complete the necessary forms and keep them on file. Update them as required.

C. PROTOCOL for Risk Level 2 Positions

If it is determined that a ministry is “high risk,” it is essential that all of the following “ten steps of screening” be implemented in the recruiting, selection, and managing of paid staff and/of a volunteer-minister.

High risk is defined as any situation in which one volunteer-minister or staff member is alone with a participant who is deemed vulnerable in any way or has access to someone’s personal property or parishioner’s confidential information.

Determine the risk:

- a) The nature of the ministry and the inherent level of risk involved dictate the degree of screening required. The greater the risk, the greater will be the degree of screening applied.
- b) The risk is measured using the following factors: the participants (or persons being served), the relationship to the person delivering the service, the setting or circumstances, and the level of supervision.
- c) As a matter of policy, all ministries will be examined in light of the relevant factors to determine the degree of risk involved. When there is doubt as to the degree of risk, a position will be categorized as level 2 (highest level).
- d) Volunteer-ministers and employees who are active in more than one ministry will be screened for the position with the highest level of risk. When a person moves from a position with a low level of risk to a position of high risk, appropriate screening will be carried out for the new position.

Ministry Description:

- a) A role description will be written for each ministry.

Recruitment Process:

- a) Recruitment for volunteer-ministers and staff should be done by a formal, public process.
- b) Recruiting materials will clearly indicate that our faith community takes its responsibility towards participants seriously and screens all applicants.

Information Form:

- a) Information forms must be completed for all positions.
- b) The information collected will vary depending on the level of risk assigned to the position. All applicants will provide basic information – name, address, previous ministry experience – as well applicants may be asked for permission to check references and to conduct police records checks, as appropriate.

Interviews:

- a) Appropriate interviews will be conducted for all high risk positions. The Diocesan Committee will assist any parish, which does not have the resources.
- b) The interview will include questions directly related to the position and risk concerns: i.e. interpersonal style with children or vulnerable adults: history of working with money, and so on.
- c) Notes from the interviews, if kept, will be placed in a secure file along with the information forms and the volunteer-ministry descriptions.

Reference Checks:

- a) For higher risk positions (risk level 2) references are necessary. Checks are always to be completed. Referees should not normally be family members. They may be former pastors, employers, fellow ministers, etc.

Police Record Checks:

- a) Police records checks shall be required for all positions deemed level 2 and seen as “high risk” situations due to the nature of the activity.
- b) The procedure is laid out by the Freedom of Information Act and allows for complete openness.

Orientation and Training:

- a) Appropriate orientation to the volunteer-ministry will be provided by parish leaders and/or the pastor along with guidelines for working within the volunteer ministry or paid staff position.
- b) Applicants are required to sign an acknowledgement form stating that they have read the screening policy and the guidelines and that they will comply with them.

Supervision and Evaluation:

- a) All paid staff and volunteer-ministers will be appropriately supervised and evaluated.

Participant Follow Up:

- a) Parish Supervisors will monitor the program by checking, from time to time, on participant satisfaction.

HANDLING and STORAGE OF FILES & POLICE RECORD CHECKS

1. Files will be handled by the parish screening team, including the secretary of the parish, however, Police Record Checks will only be handled by the pastor and the leader of the parish screening team and the applicant.
2. The cost of the Police Record Check (P.R.C.) will be paid by the parish. The P.R.C. will be verified by the pastor/group leader and returned to the applicant after it is reviewed. A photocopy should be kept on file. Individuals may be required to do more than one P.R.C. during volunteer or a paid ministry.
3. The parish will store all files in a secure location.
4. Files of persons in level 1 risk (general) positions will be kept for one year after the volunteer-minister or staff member leaves the parish.
5. Files of persons in level 2 (high risk) positions will be kept indefinitely for legal reasons.
6. Transfer of a ministry from one parish or agency within the Diocese to another will be handled by personal contact between the pastor and/or supervisor involved and the applicant. The applicant for a level 2 position only needs to fill out pages one and two for the new position. No new P.R.C. will be required. A photocopy of the existing PRC should be given to the new parish.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PARISH/OFFICE PROCEDURES AND DESIGN

The following are general examples only. Each parish will have to insure that rooms, halls, offices and situations are safe, both for the volunteers and for the participants.

1. Sunday School – **Room:** the room must have doors with windows so that anyone at any given time may be able to look from the outside without being noticed.
Personnel: there will always be two adults present during Sunday Children's Liturgy sessions. When possible, one adult will be a parent. One volunteer-minister may also be a teenager.
Time: Children's Liturgy sessions will normally be given while other activities are taking place in the building, such as during Sunday mass.
2. Returning Home – When activities take place on church/diocesan grounds or inside the parish/diocesan building, such that the participants must return home by vehicle, there should be at least two adults, one of whom, if possible, is a parent. When required, the parish/diocese will pay for the taxi instead of assuming all the risks.
3. Counselling and Confessions – Rooms for counselling and/or confessions (office or others) will have a door with a window. This should include the parish church's confessional room.
4. Choirs – Even if it can be considered a low risk activity, whenever children or teenagers are present measures will be taken so that they will not be left alone with one adult.
5. Activities with Youth – parish or diocesan activities with youth will always take place in an area where the public has access at all times. If a youth is ever to be alone with an adult in a closed room for a private conversation, that room will have a door with a window so that anyone at any given time may look in.

6. Communion to the Shut-ins – Communion to the shut-ins will normally be done in pairs especially when the person receiving the service lives alone. Parish “ID” may be supplied.
7. Hospital Visits with Holy Communion – Hospitals usually have codes of conduct that must be followed at all times. Moreover, one is never alone in a hospital. Nevertheless, it would be preferable that these visits are done in pairs.

N.B. #1. These norms are not intended to limit our pastoral action but to ensure the safety of all participants, ministers and staff.

#2. The proper doors with windows, where required, should be in place within one year of the enacting of this policy. In the meantime appropriate safety precautions will be observed. A closed circuit system which is monitored and accessible from outside the room, may meet the requirements.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH PARISH

1. To have on file a Ministry Description Form for each ministry in the parish no matter what the level of risk. (Samples are provided.)
2. To have at least one parish representative trained in the screening policy for the implementation and follow-up of this policy.
3. To inform the diocesan office immediately should a volunteer be dismissed and to send a copy of the parish records to the Diocese c/o Susan Nistico

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

1. This policy is enacted this 6th day of January 2002.
2. The Diocesan Screening Committee: Rev. Allan Savage, Susan Nistico, Gail Charlebois, Rev. Mr. Charles Johnston (chair), Bishop F. Colli (ex officio)
3. This policy is subject to, at a minimum, annual review and revisions will be made where required and circulated.

Reviewed: 22.03.03 23.10.04 5.03.05 1.11.05 31.1.06 14.03.07