



## Safe Environment Policy

(Archdiocese of Vancouver and Parish Employees)

Updated June 1, 2016

The purpose of this document is to ensure that all adults acting in an employee, ministerial or other paid position in the Archdiocese are role models who are called to treat each minor and vulnerable adult with respect and care. 'Vulnerable adult' is defined as an individual at least nineteen (19) years of age who is susceptible to abuse or exploitation by virtue of his/her significant mental or physical impairment. It addresses employees and the need to maintain professional relationships with minors and vulnerable adults whether on or off the John Paul II Pastoral Centre or parish property.

### **Part A: Risk Assessment**

### **Part B: Employee Management**

### **Part C: Code of Conduct for Adults**

### **Part D: Crisis Response and Intervention**

### **Implementation**

- All employees must be informed of the Archdiocese's policies to create a safe and secure environment especially for minors and vulnerable adults.
- All employees must be made aware of reporting procedures for the parish, diocese and civil authorities as they relate to issues of abuse and neglect.

### **Part A: Risk Assessment**

The policies and procedures set out in Parts B (Employee Management) and C (Code of Conduct) are for all employees. Thus, the pastor or head of Catholic organizations or groups (Groups) together with the Screening Coordinator (SC)<sup>1</sup> must first determine the level of risk associated with each activity, task, or job with respect to the ministry. Keeping in mind that the document relates to the respect and care of minors and vulnerable adults by employees we must assess the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Every parish and Group must appoint a screening coordinator where there are ministries involving minors and vulnerable adults.

- the participant;
- the setting;
- the nature of the activity;
- the level of supervision; and
- the nature of the relationship.

While risks may be termed as low, medium, or high, the main focus will be factors deemed “high risk.” These are guidelines to help you with your risk assessment and are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all potential risks.

**Examples of Low/Medium and High Risk:**

<b>Category:</b>	<b>Low /Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age 19 and above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth age 18 and under</li> <li>• Vulnerable adults</li> <li>• Seasonal Migrant laborers and Refugees<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large meeting room or hall</li> <li>• Gymnasium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant’s home</li> <li>• Classroom: solid doors without windows</li> <li>• Off-site private or home meeting</li> <li>• Vehicle</li> <li>• Camping or retreat facilities</li> </ul>
Nature of Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large group instruction</li> <li>• Large gathered event</li> <li>• Mass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one meeting or instruction</li> <li>• Youth ministry meeting</li> <li>• PREP class</li> <li>• Counseling</li> <li>• Overnight activity</li> </ul>
Level of Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High supervision</li> <li>• Moderate supervision (eg. recess)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal supervision</li> <li>• Has keys to Parish property</li> </ul>
Nature of relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term</li> <li>• Non-intense</li> <li>• Non-intimate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one relationship</li> <li>• High level of intimacy</li> <li>• High level of influence</li> </ul>

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of screening, seasonal migrant laborers and refugees are regarded as vulnerable persons regardless of their mental or physical condition.

If the risk is high, the procedures in Parts B (Employee Management) and C (Code of Conduct) of this document must be followed. If uncertain of the risk level, screen as if it is high risk. Some examples of positions deemed as high risk:

- Parish Screening Coordinator (PSC) or Screening Coordinators of organizations
- Youth Ministry Coordinator/leader
- PREP (Parish Religious Education Program) Coordinator
- PREP (Parish Religious Education Program) Catechist/Assistant
- LWC (Liturgy of the Word with Children) Coordinator
- LWC (Liturgy of the Word with Children) Presider (Leader)/Assistant
- Altar Server Coordinator
- Choir Director/Music Minister (working with minors)
- VanSpec teacher. Please note: a VanSpec program which is held at the parish constitutes a parish activity. The PSC has to screen the VanSpec teachers teaching at the parish or verify with main VanSpec centre if a teacher has been screened.
- Custodian/Janitor
- Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist or Prayer group members visiting shut-ins
- Bereavement Ministry members
- Drivers of minors and vulnerable adults to parish events
- Coordinators of parish programs for refugees and migrant workers
- Faith and Light
- Parish positions that provide keys to access the Parish
- Priests, Deacons, Religious Brothers and Sisters; priests and deacons are screened separately by the Archdiocese of Vancouver, not the PSC. However, religious or consecrated brothers and sisters are to be screened by the PSC accordingly if they are in high risk positions.

## Part B: Employee Management

### Recruiting & Screening

Effective recruiting and screening of employees is an essential part of a healthy ministry. Screening will assist in identifying persons who are unsuitable to working with minors and vulnerable adults.

#### **Procedures:**

- Before the pastor/head of organization<sup>3</sup> or Ministry Coordinator recruits an individual to a ministry position, the pastor & Screening coordinator should determine the risk. (Part A). The role of a ministry coordinator (paid or volunteer) shall be deemed to be high-risk due to the supervisory nature of the position
- Ministry Coordinators must develop a clear and concise job description.
- Indicate during the recruiting process (e.g. on posters, in announcements and advertisements, etc) that screening is part of the application process.
- Individual must fill out an application form, supply at least two references and be interviewed.
- Screening Coordinators must conduct reference checks to determine suitability for a high risk position.
- For high-risk ministry positions, the applicant must provide a Police Record Check report and Vulnerable Sector search.
- Screening should be reviewed on a regular basis at a **minimum interval of every five** 4 **years.**
- A yearly Parish Sign-Off of screened employees and volunteers must be sent to the Archdiocese. Catholic organizations will maintain their records independently.

### Orientation & Training

Employees will need to know their roles and responsibilities, expectations, clear lines of accountability, and crisis response and intervention (Part D).

#### **Procedures:**

- Adequate training of employees must be provided.
- Individuals must review and sign the Code of Conduct (Part C) once they complete the training, indicating they understand the responsibilities involved with their ministry.

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<sup>3</sup> Each organization will have their own administrative structure that would determine who is the head who will oversee safe environment and the screening coordinator(s)'s role.

### **Supervision by Pastor**

Supervision is recommended for all employees serving in ministry. It includes overseeing and monitoring the employee's performance, and aids in establishing clear lines of accountability and expectations, including what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and the employee's roles and responsibilities.

### **Procedures:**

- Performance reviews should be done on a yearly basis.
- Reviews should be documented in writing and signed by both employee and Pastor/head of organization..

## **Part C: Code of Conduct<sup>4</sup>**

Those who act in the name of the Church have special influence in the lives of the people to whom they minister. Employees/volunteers in the Archdiocese are called to treat others with respect and care whether on or off the parish grounds. Employees/volunteers must sign and agree to the Code of Conduct prior to service.

Employees/Volunteers are required to:

- act at all times in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church;
- be competent, reliable and ethical;
- avoid being alone with minors and vulnerable adults;
- ensure that minors are properly supervised;
- take immediate action in situations where others are placing minors/vulnerable adults in danger or potentially risky situations;
- report inappropriate conduct and suspected abuse to the pastor, parish screening coordinator or ministry supervisor; if it involves a priest/deacon, please contact the Archdiocese Delegate for receiving allegations relating to clergy.
- directly report suspected abuse of minors to designated civil authorities;
- refrain from drinking or being under the influence of alcohol while supervising minors;
- wear appropriate and modest attire at all times.

6

### Boundaries

Employees/Volunteers are required to:

- maintain appropriate boundaries in ministerial relationships and work within the limits of their position;
- refrain from relating to minors as their ‘friend’ or ‘parent-figure’;
- ensure visibility by others if it is necessary to be alone with a minor, eg. open doors, visibility through windows;
- obtain the approval of the pastor and the permission of the parents when hosting an off-site event involving minors

### Communications

Communications including verbal, handwritten, and electronic means will only be for reasons pertaining to the employee’s/volunteer’s role.

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<sup>4</sup> The Code of Conduct was drafted for parishes and can be edited by organizations to suit the nature of their activities keeping in mind the Archdiocesan professional standards and boundaries.

## **Physical Contact**

Physical contact shall be appropriate to the situation and age of the participant and only permissible if:

- i) it does not cause disproportionate or unnecessary stress or anxiety to the participant; and
- ii) it is entirely and unambiguously non-sexual.

Some examples of appropriate touch:

- Shaking a participant's hand in greeting
- Holding hands in a prayer or song
- Short hugs
- High five

Corporal punishment is not acceptable at any time.

Additional examples of inappropriate touch:

- Kissing a participant or coaxing him or her into kissing you
- Lengthy hugs or forceful frontal hugs
- Cuddling
- Tickling
- Piggy-back rides
- Lap-sitting
- Wrestling
- Stroking a participant's hair
- Touching buttocks or genital area

## **Assistance with Toileting/Dressing**

Minors should not be assisted with toileting and/or dressing. If a situation arises (ie. accident or emergency) and assistance is required, another person should be present. The situation should then be reported to the parent and/or coordinator.

## **Transportation**

Employee/volunteer drivers should:

- i) be a minimum of 19 years of age
- ii) receive permission of the minor or vulnerable adult's parent/guardian
- iii) ensure that the coordinator has knowledge of the driving arrangement, and
- iv) ensure that there is a third person in the vehicle.

If required to drive minors and vulnerable adults on a periodic basis, employees/volunteers should submit a suitable Drivers' Abstract and Volunteer Driver form to the Parish Screening Coordinator.

### **Overnight Events/trips**

In parish or diocesan activities involving overnight stays, a minimum of two screened adults must be present. All overnight trips must have specific approval from the pastor.

### **Harassment**

Every individual has the right to be free from harassment. Harassment is defined as objectionable conduct or comment, directed toward a specific person(s), which serves no legitimate work purpose, and has the effect of creating a humiliating, hostile or offensive environment.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality must be respected at all times unless disclosure is required for reasons of:

- i) participant safety;
- ii) parental or professional intervention and guidance; and/or
- iii) legal obligations.

### **Review and Disclosure**

If incidents of concern arise, employees/volunteers should review the situation with the pastor or ministry coordinator. Dealings between employees/volunteers and participants must be open and transparent. If an unduly close relationship develops between an employee/volunteer and participant, the situation must be disclosed to the pastor or ministry coordinator.

### **Gifts**

Expensive gifts from participants are inappropriate and should not be accepted. In some situations, it is appropriate to accept tokens of appreciation. The receipt of gifts from participants should be disclosed to ministry coordinators and pastor.

### **Use of Parish Name & Property**

Speaking in the name of the parish shall be avoided unless specifically authorized by the pastor to do so. Parish resources (for example, keys/computers, etc.) are only to be used for their authorized/ intended purposes. These resources must be adequately safeguarded and must not be shared without authorization.

**I understand that a breach of any of the above may lead to disciplinary action.  
I acknowledge that I may be subject to a screening interview, reference checking, a police record check and vulnerable sector search if I am working with minors/vulnerable adults.**

## Part D: Crisis Response & Intervention

Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a minor or vulnerable adult in the parish is or has been abused must report that suspicion to appropriate authorities and the Archbishop's Delegate (or Deputy Delegate) for reporting the alleged abuse of minors. Clergy and parish coordinators have special responsibility to report allegations of abuse.

1. Please contact the police or call 911 if an offense has been committed or if a person is in immediate danger.
2. If a person has reason to believe that a minor has been abused, you have an obligation to report to the Ministry of Children and Family Development by calling the Helpline for Children at **310 1234** (no area code)

3. In allegations of abuse by the clergy <sup>5</sup>, please contact:  
**Rev. Joseph Le**, Archbishop's Delegate for Serious Misconduct  
Office tel: 604 683 0281 ext. 50462  
Cell: 778 858 3991  
Email: [jle@rcav.org](mailto:jle@rcav.org)

4. In allegations of abuse by lay employees and volunteers<sup>6</sup>, please contact:  
**Mr. James Borkowski**, Archbishop's Delegate for Receiving Allegations of Serious Misconduct by Lay Persons  
Tel: 604 683 0281 ext. 50467;  
Cell: 604 928 5530  
Email: [jcborkowski@rcav.org](mailto:jcborkowski@rcav.org)

**Ms. Sharon Goh**, Archbishop's Deputy Delegate for Receiving Allegations of Serious Misconduct by Lay Persons  
Tel: 604 6830281 ext. 50214;  
Cell: 604 723 5998  
Email: [sgoh@rcav.org](mailto:sgoh@rcav.org)

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<sup>5</sup> Please refer to the Policy Regarding Allegations of Clerical Abuse

<sup>6</sup> Please refer to Policy Regarding Allegations of Serious Misconduct against Lay Persons.

## **Appendix A: Police Record Checks**

“An employer must ensure that every individual who is hired for employment involving work with children or work with vulnerable adults and every employee who works with children or works with vulnerable adults undergoes a criminal record check in accordance with this Part.”

- *Criminal Records Review Act [RSBC 1996] Chapter 86, 8(1)*

### **Who requires a Police Record Check (PRC)?**

We ask all parishes to have their PRC applied online through Sterling BackCheck from April 2015 if a vulnerable sector search (VSS) has been done previously for the parish. A reasonable fee is imposed for each application. Please contact the Safe Environment Coordinator for the service order forms. The parish must obtain a Police Record Check (PRC) including a VSS for all employees working in high risk roles with minors and vulnerable adults. All new employees will have to go to the Police detachment to apply for a PRC and VSS. Please note that no future checking for VSS is necessary through subsequent applications in less than seven years.

### **Responsibilities of the Parish and of the Individual**

10

The parish will:

- Inform the employee of the requirement for a PRC including a vulnerable sector search (VSS) or a Pardon Check.
- Pay for the PRC including a VSS or a Pardon Check.
- Obtain, review and secure the completed Checks.

The employee will:

- Submit to a PRC and VSS.
- Provide the original check results to the Parish. Copies can be made if the employee requests for it.

### **Once the Police Record Check has been received by the Parish**

The pastor is responsible for checking the results. If he is satisfied with the results, the Pastor shall authorize the PSC to put it in an envelope, seal it, and sign the seal of the envelope before placing it in the employee's file or do so himself.

### **Checks applied for through SterlingBackcheck**

Checks for Employees can be done through SterlingBackcheck only if the applicant has done a VSS previously with the parish. Forms will be filled and signed by the applicant and sent to SterlingBackcheck by the parish who verifies the identity of the applicant with two government issued ID. The PRC results are sent directly to the parish within twenty-four hours. The parish will receive the result and if it is returned as 'Clear', the applicant is deemed to have no criminal record.

### **Checks applied for through a Police Detachment**

When the Police Record Check and VSS, done through the local police detachment in person, contain convictions and/or charges, etc, the pastor must contact James Borkowski, the Archbishop's Delegate for Administration. The following factors will be considered by the pastor and the Delegate to determine the person's suitability for the ministry position:

- The nature of the program, activities and services provided.
- The character and degree of vulnerability of the participant group served and the duty of care to the participants, volunteers, staff, community and to the Archdiocese
- The relevant ethical, spiritual and legal issues and principles involved.
- The potential risks involved in the ministry position that the person wishes to do, based on the nature of the ministry, its activities, the setting and the way in which it is supervised.

Please note that a pastor can reject a potential employee when results are returned clear if he is made aware of other facts and circumstances that may render the candidate unsuitable to work with minors and vulnerable adults.

### **Checks Applied for through the BC Ministry of Justice (exception)**

Normally only available for volunteers; however those employed in registered or licensed child or vulnerable adult care facilities are required to be checked through the ministry at a set fee.

Please read: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/crime-prevention/criminal-record-check](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/crime-prevention/criminal-record-check)