



Screening Process

To begin screening, you must draw up a plan and get organized. Here are a few helpful steps:

1. Decide who will oversee the screening process. This person may not have to do the actual screening, but will train and support those doing the screening, make sure all the steps are followed, and keep track of the paperwork. This person must be well respected in the congregation, able to handle confidential information, be well organized and, if possible, have human resources/management experience. It could be the Incumbent, a Deputy Churchwarden, a qualified parishioner or a committee.
2. Make sure the screening overseer has read and understood the Safe Church: Our Sacred Trust policy and has had an opportunity to ask any procedural questions.
3. Work with the screening overseer to create a list of names of those who will do the actual screening. In general, it is the responsibility of the supervisor of the ministry to screen those who report to him or her. In order to assist this process, the Rector/Incumbent and Churchwardens should establish clear lines of accountability between clergy, staff and parishioners/volunteers. In most cases, parish employees report to the Incumbent, a Churchwarden or a Parish Administrator. Contract people must also be accountable to someone in the organization.
4. Decide who needs to be informed of this program and how you will inform them. For example, Churchwardens, Advisory Board members, ACW, choir members, parishioners, outside groups. Remember, the effectiveness of this program will depend on how you introduce it to the parish.
5. Set up a filing system. You will need a lockable file cabinet and letter size folders for each parishioner who ministers in high-risk ministries. (See Records Keeping below)



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Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the organizational leadership (Bishop, Churchwardens, Director, Rector, Incumbent, Priest-in-Charge) to ensure that screening standards are implemented in the parish or organization. If the leadership does not comply with this policy, it could jeopardize insurance coverage. It could also result in disciplinary proceedings.

Application

The policy applies to all lay and ordained people under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Huron, that by virtue of their ministry or work, are in positions of trust.

It is a requirement that this policy be implemented in all parishes, ministries or other organizations which:

1. are funded, in whole or in part, by the Diocese of Huron;
2. function on behalf of the church (whether on or off its premises);
3. operate on church premises;

The Safe Church: Our Sacred Trust policy establishes minimum standards for the screening of staff and volunteers. Any parish or organization may develop more comprehensive policies of its own to reflect its own circumstances provided such policies at least meet the minimum standard of protection for children and vulnerable adults, and physical, spiritual and financial responsibilities contained in this policy. Screening standards must be consistently applied to all appropriate ministries.

Records Keeping

The minimum records that must be sent to the Diocesan Synod Office are:

1. A copy of the Screening Checklist for all ministry positions ranked as High Risk.
2. The Police background records check processed through XpressChek.



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This information must be sent to the Diocesan Office so it can be permanently stored in the Archives in a manner consistent with the Privacy Standards policy of the Diocesan Office.

All screening documents (excluding the police background records check) should be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the parish for an indefinite period of time. Access to the filing cabinet shall be limited to the Rector, Incumbent and the Parish Administrator or Director. Those who have access to the files have a moral obligation to do everything within their power to maintain confidentiality. The location of the locked filing cabinet may or may not be at the parish. However, if it is not at the parish, it must be in a location mutually agreed upon by those who have access to the files. Files must never be left out in the open or in a readily accessible location. People being screened should know who has access to their file. Only documentation that is necessary to the screening process should be kept on file. Although this type of record keeping and storage may be a difficult adjustment for some congregations, maintaining appropriate documentation is key to a meaningful screening program and is required as proof of implementation of the screening practices.

Your parish may also want to develop an electronic means of tracking the steps of the screening process. To assist with this, the Diocese has created a Screening Steps Worksheet.

Outside Groups Using Church Property

While the church or organization is not directly responsible for screening leaders of other organizations that use the church's property, it could be named in a legal action and held vicariously liable should there be charges of negligence or abuse. It is therefore necessary that the church inquire into the screening procedure of the groups using the facilities. Where the screening procedures of an outside organization do not meet the standards outlined in this policy, a discussion should take place between the churchwardens and the user organization to determine an appropriate course of action. If the user group ministers to vulnerable people and is unable or unwilling to undertake proper precautions in terms of risk-reduction and/or screening procedures the church must consider terminating the relationship for safety reasons.