

# Screening in Faith

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# Canada

This workbook was customized to meet the needs of the faith community in Ontario as part of the Ontario Screening Initiative.

The Ontario Screening Initiative is being carried out by a consortium of provincial umbrella organizations. The faith, community support, sport, rural, and recreation sectors are working to increase the well-being of children and other vulnerable people through the introduction of screening practices.

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1st edition

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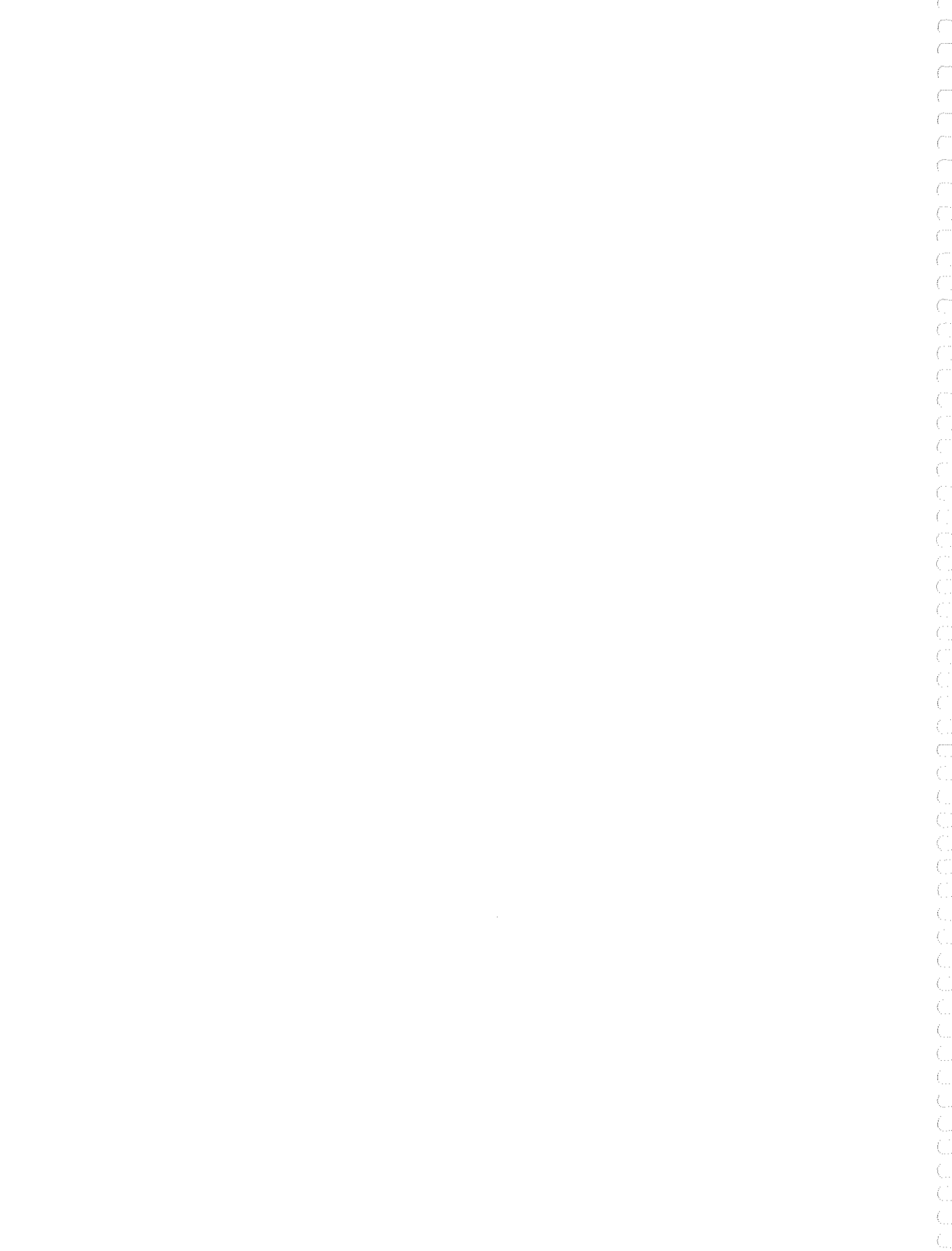
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Brenda Gallagher



# Faith Value Statement

Faith communities of all expressions enrich our Canadian society by providing places where love, self-discipline, justice, truth and peace are nurtured and valued. This has been accomplished by building trusting communities that challenge and support the individual. Yet, in a relatively short period of time, we have had to face the fact that these communities have not always been safe places for all, particularly, the vulnerable. Many men, women and children have been hurt in a place and by people from whom they were supposed to find care, love, healing and support. It is our moral, ethical, legal and spiritual duty to ensure, as best we can, that this does not happen.

The aim of *Screening in Faith* is to provide each faith community with tools to create and maintain a safe environment, to protect those who are to be cared for and to prevent sexual, physical and emotional misconduct from occurring in places of ministry.

The workbook provides an effective Ten Steps procedure which is straightforward and practical. The process begins long before the volunteer is assigned to a task, by listing the many volunteer ministries that are offered on behalf of your community. A mosaic of gifts and services will emerge. A level of risk is then assigned to each of the helping positions. This form of risk management is not directed toward the individual who is willing to help, but toward the role and responsibilities required for the task. These are the building blocks of a screening policy, which your faith community should develop and share with its volunteers. With these key features in place, screening procedures can then be developed, implemented and evaluated.

The responsibility for addressing risk management procedures and implementing the Ten Steps should not rest with any one individual in the faith community; rather, this should become an integral part of the faith community as people of truth, love and mutual responsibility. Every member of our community must strive to create a safe environment.

One of the strengths of a faith community is its ability to reach out to the isolated and disadvantaged and build links between those who need help and those who can provide it. At the core of this spiritual helping is a sacred trust which must be protected and never misused. An effective screening procedure will help in the governance and management of this sacred trust, which can only lead to a stronger, more vital faith community.

Kindly receive *Screening in Faith* into your faith group with the understanding of the importance of your work and ministry.

Glenn Carley  
Chief Social Worker  
Dufferin-Peel C.D.S. Board

Rev. Dawn Davis  
Human Resources Officer  
Anglican Diocese of Toronto



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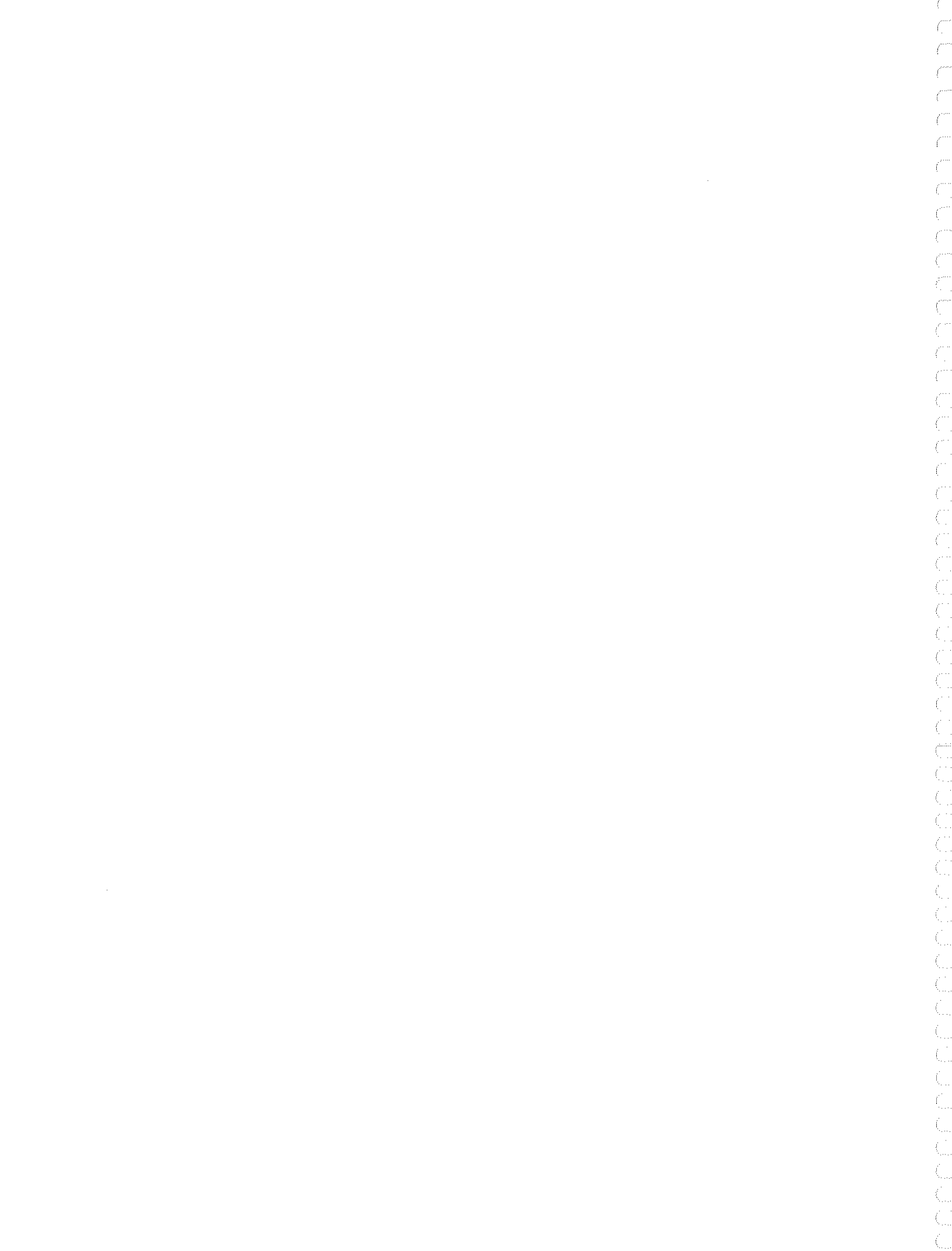
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# Section I

## Introduction to the workbook

### Who is it for?

This workbook is for individuals in faith communities who are responsible for setting policy or directly involved with the screening and recruitment of volunteers at the national, provincial or local level concerning the recruitment of volunteers. In order to have a minimum level of knowledge on screening, it is recommended that groups attend the *What is Screening? Why Screen?* and *Developing Effective Policy on Screening* workshops offered by your local volunteer centre, before attending a *Screening in Faith* workshop. The workshop offered in conjunction with this workbook is much more effective when participants have a basic level of knowledge regarding screening.

This is a hands-on, practical guide for organizations that want to proceed from the theory of screening to the practical application of screening techniques.

### What will I learn?

Following completion of this workbook, you will have a thorough knowledge of the screening process and how to adapt it to your faith community. Completing the exercises, reflecting on your current practices and using the information contained in this workbook will allow you to analyze the risk in your community and take steps to reduce that risk.

You will learn about the 10-step screening process and how to use a combination of those steps in different situations to ensure the safety of your participants and protect your faith community and volunteers.

### Learning objectives

- To define screening as a part of good volunteer management.
- To assess the level of risk in various volunteer positions within your faith community
- To identify the 10 steps of screening.
- To apply the 10 steps of screening in various situations.

### Terminology

The following glossary will ensure the terms that recur frequently in this workbook have the same meaning to all readers.

#### Duty of care

The moral, legal, ethical and spiritual obligation that one owes the other, especially the obligations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect the interests of the other. This obligation includes protection from harm such as sexual harassment, exploitation and assault.

## **Section I**

### **Orientation**

Orientation is a period or process of instruction and training. Providing information to a volunteer about the program they will be involved in, providing them with the rules and regulations and the code of conduct are all part of the orientation process.

### **Participants**

Many different words are used to name people who participate in programs or receive services from faith groups. The word participant is used throughout the workbook as the generic term.

### **Police Records Check**

A police records check is a form of reference check used to determine if an individual has a criminal record.

### **Volunteer ministry description**

Volunteer ministry description is an explicitly stated list of expectations and conditions under which a person functions as an employee or volunteer.

### **Position of trust**

1. Situations in which someone has a significant degree of:
  - authority or decision-making power over another
  - unsupervised access to another person and to his/her property
2. Situations where the success of the service depends on the development of a close, personal relationship between the individuals as in mentoring or friendly visiting programs.

### **Recruitment**

Recruitment is an intentional search for individuals with the gifts, talents, abilities and desire to fulfil the organization's needs.

### **Reference Checks**

A reference check is a process of consultation with others to determine the suitability of an applicant for a particular function.

### **Risk Management**

Risk management is a process of assessing potential problems and developing strategies for solutions to minimize the risk. Screening is an exercise in risk management.

### **Training**

Training is a learning process, during which time an individual is taught specific skills, which will assist them in performing their duties.

### **Vicarious Liability**

Vicarious liability is the liability an organization takes on for the actions of those who function on its behalf.

**Volunteers**

As defined in *The Screening Handbook*, a volunteer is an individual:

- who chooses to undertake a service or activity, someone who is not coerced or compelled to do this activity;
- who does this activity in service to an individual or an organization, or to assist the community-at-large;
- who does not receive a salary or wage for this service or activity.

While this workbook focuses on volunteer screening, the same principles apply to paid employees.

**Vulnerable person**

One who has difficulty protecting him/herself from harm temporarily or permanently and is at risk because of age, disability, handicap or circumstances such as emotional distress or uncertainty.

**What is screening?**

Screening is a process designed to create and maintain a safe environment. This process involves identifying any activity of a volunteer ministry – whether paid or unpaid, volunteer or staff – which by virtue of the position could bring about harm to children, youth, or other vulnerable persons. The screening process also ensures the most appropriate match is made between volunteer and task. Screening involves assessing risk, writing out ministry descriptions, discerning suitability of the individual for the task, training and possibly modifying the setting and arrangement of the task.

Screening is a poorly understood and relatively new concept in many organizations. This is particularly true in organizations that are predominantly volunteer-driven and magnified in organizations that utilize a large number of parent volunteers and work with hundreds of thousands of children. Faith communities are characterized in all of these ways.

**Why screen?**

The answer is simple. We want to do a better job of assigning volunteers and protecting them and program participants. However, it is not enough! All organizations, whether run by staff or volunteers, that minister or provide programs to vulnerable people have a responsibility to appropriately screen their volunteers. This responsibility is both moral, legal and spiritual; it is not only the “right” thing to do but it is legally required under the “Duty of Care” concept.

“Duty of Care” is a legal principle that identifies the obligations of individuals and organizations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect their participants. Faith groups need to understand that Canadian courts will uphold their responsibilities with regard to screening in the context of their “Duty of Care”.

### **Who should be screened?**

While many faith groups may accept their responsibilities to protect the participants in their programs, they may feel overwhelmed by the need to screen every one of their volunteers.

The screening requirements and procedures could be different for each volunteer ministry depending upon the level of risk associated with that ministry. The volunteer who is alone with a vulnerable adult will need a very thorough screening procedure compared to a volunteer who participates in a large group setting. However, an important caveat must be stated here: **THERE IS ALWAYS A RISK!**

The premise of using a risk assessment approach to determine the amount of screening that will be done is based on the fact that voluntary organizations do not have the resources to screen everyone intensively. Even the most seemingly “safe” volunteer assignment – a person who cleans the facilities in a church – can present a risk. Risk management is based on your best judgement – but the world can surprise us. Faith communities must understand that if and when a problem occurs, they will be, and should be, held accountable.

# Section II

## The screening process

### Introduction

Many faith communities already incorporate elements of screening in their programs. Screening begins long before an individual offers him/herself for volunteering and ends only after the individual leaves the organization. Volunteer Canada has developed a practical 10-step process for screening to assist organizations in the recruitment, selection and management of volunteers and staff. The following 10-step process is divided into three sections in this workbook; before you select your volunteers, the selection process, and managing the volunteer.

### Ten steps of screening

Before you select your volunteers

1. Determine the risk
2. Volunteer ministry description
3. Recruitment process

The selection process

4. Application form
5. Interviews
6. Reference checks
7. Police records check

Managing the volunteer

8. Orientation and training
9. Supervision / evaluation
10. Participant follow-up

**Notes**



# Section III

## Before you select your volunteers

### Step 1 – Determine the risk

The first step of any screening process is to determine the level of risk associated with the activities and tasks of a particular volunteer ministry.

This may seem uncomfortable at first because faith groups, by their very nature, are welcoming and accepting and always try to look for good in the individual. As a matter of fact, most of our volunteers are genuine and sincere about the care and love they offer. However, faith groups now realize that the help we offer can sometimes be misplaced. For example, a hug may not be welcomed by all people who need comfort. Also, our efforts to be inclusive may in fact endanger our participants. Abusers can operate in every institution and the impact is severe and exceedingly harmful.

It is important to remember, therefore, that it is the nature of the ministry – and its inherent level of risk – which dictates the need for screening, not the character of the individual. While screening must be carried out on an individual, it is only done because of the ministry that individual holds or is applying for, and not because they belong to any particular group or have any particular personality traits.

While the term "risk management" may seem intimidating, it simply means asking: **what could go wrong here and how do we avoid it?** Risk management involves looking at the possibilities of loss or injury that might arise in programs, activities and services and taking steps to stop, minimize, prevent, or eliminate them altogether.

We do not act out of a sense of fear of litigation but instead out of our need to exemplify our values of trust, justice and accountability.

Faith communities have choices when they look at controlling the risks in their programs. To determine the best course of action, the questions in Exercise 1 (p. 7.1) should be asked for all ministries.

Each volunteer ministry has a specific set of conditions and responsibilities. To reduce the risk factor:

1. Learn to think about risk realistically. Accept the fact that participants can be harmed while taking part in your programs.
2. Establish behavioural standards for your faith group and communicate them to your volunteers and staff at scheduled orientation sessions. An example of a behavioural standard could be that an adult must never be alone with a child before, during or after religious instruction.
3. Group ministry positions according to their level of risk.
  - low risk: minimal or no contact with children or other vulnerable people, ministry functions are in large groups
  - medium risk: volunteers who work with vulnerable people but are never alone with them
  - high risk: volunteers who have the opportunity to be alone with children; volunteers who are in a position to exert influence over youth or seniors.

## Section III

Using the chart of Exercise 2 (p. 7.3), assess the level of risk for each ministry of your organization. Examples of common volunteer ministries are: youth leader, choir member, cantor, organist, liturgical assistant, liturgical reader, greeter, religious instruction teacher, home visitor and office assistant.

Use the Screening grid on page 9.3 to track the screening procedures you assign to each volunteer ministry.

<b>Risk:</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able-bodied adult</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15-year-old</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12-year-old with disability</li> <li>• Infirm senior</li> <li>• Child or baby</li> </ul>
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting room or hall</li> <li>• Worship space</li> <li>• Off-site public space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tents or cabins</li> <li>• Classrooms with doors which have windows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant's home</li> <li>• Classrooms with doors without windows</li> <li>• Off-site private or home meetings with children and youth</li> <li>• Car</li> </ul>
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious literature studying</li> <li>• Greeting</li> <li>• Liturgical reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth group meeting</li> <li>• Children religious instruction with two teachers</li> <li>• Hospital visiting</li> <li>• Nursing home visiting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth group sleep-over</li> <li>• Child religious instruction with one teacher</li> <li>• One-on-one home visits</li> <li>• One-on-one music or liturgical instruction</li> </ul>
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisor always present</li> <li>• Always in large groups</li> <li>• Documentation of meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasionally</li> <li>• Some documentation of meetings or events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little to none</li> <li>• No documentation of meetings or events</li> </ul>
Nature of Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short term</li> <li>• Non-intensive</li> <li>• Non-intimate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal relationship</li> <li>• Extends over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one-on-one relationship</li> <li>• high level of intimacy and influence</li> </ul>

If your volunteers are active in more than one ministry position, make sure they are screened for the position with the highest level of risk. If volunteers change positions, make sure the extent of the screening used for the previous position is appropriate for the new one. If not, screen them again.

Depending on the answers in Exercise 1 and 2, you can choose from the following options.

**a) Eliminate the risk**

Sometimes the risks are too great and the consequences are too serious to bear. In this case, the organization may decide to eliminate the activity altogether.

*Example*

*A faith group providing day programming for seniors may decide that the level of risk is too high to continue taking the participants on trips in cars driven by staff. The group may decide to eliminate the risk altogether, by cancelling such trips.*

**b) Modify the activity**

There may be ways of changing some aspects of a ministry or activity so that it reduces the risk. This modification may involve changing how something is done, where, or by whom, or it may mean that a particular element of an activity will be stopped.

*Example*

*If a group leader is responsible for taking some children home after an event, the policy may state that this activity will always be done in teams of at least two people. This would lower the risk without eliminating the activity. It is also important to change teams occasionally.*

**c) Transfer liability**

In some circumstances, you may choose to have someone else (an individual or organization) take on part of a task and assume the liability for it. This outside party is usually a company or an organization that can bear the risks because either it can afford to, or because it has a particular professional expertise you do not have.

*Example*

*After considering the risks and losses, a faith group may decide to discontinue the practice of having parents drive groups of children to and from its activities. The community may also have decided that the trips are essential, so they may look for someone else to take over that part of the activity, and to assume the risk at the same time. A bus or taxi service, for example, offers the protection of significant insurance coverage for this activity.*

**d) Assume the risk.**

Having clearly identified the risks, assessed the probability of their occurrence, looked at the possible losses, and determined the consequences, you may decide that an activity or ministry is fundamental to your group's functioning and you will not give it up; you may decide to assume this risk.

*Example*

*Counselling for youth is done regularly in a private room with a single adult. The faith community agrees that this counselling is a critical function of the community despite the risk, therefore the practice is continued.*

## **Section III**

### **e) Minimizing assumed risk**

Having decided to assume the risk, the community should nevertheless continue to seek ways of reducing or avoiding the risks and minimizing the possible losses. Purchasing insurance is one way organizations seek to do this while screening is another.

**Here is a list of other ways to modify risk within faith communities.**

- Never allow adults to be alone with children or other vulnerable people
- Ask parents to be present for music or liturgical instruction
- Require all visits and counselling sessions be documented and recorded
- Assign to all high risk positions a supervisor who is met with frequently and who can monitor the situation
- Require meetings take place in professional settings such as in a community counselling room or during the time there is a secretary present in the area
- Require meetings to take place in public settings such as in a coffee shop or restaurant
- Never allow one-on-one meetings in the home
- Have all volunteers sign a policy acknowledgement form
- Require written parental permission for off-site activities
- Require volunteers be active members of the community for one year before they can minister in medium and high risk assignments
- Call a potential volunteer's previous spiritual leader if a the person has just moved into your area
- Design volunteer ministries that require people to work in pairs
- Introduce an initial mentor phase where an experienced person works with new volunteers
- Require periodic sensitivity training.

### **About insurance**

Consult your local insurance adviser about the various types of insurance available to your group.

### **Determining the right screening measure**

Once a risk assessment has been completed and ministry descriptions have been designed and written out, you are ready to make appropriate choices about the appropriate screening measures for each position. Choosing the right approach and procedure is not like choosing from among the many options on a menu. Screening measures have to be appropriate to the ministry that people occupy or are applying for; they should not be chosen because they are easier, more pleasant or less intrusive than others are.

A blanket approach to screening will not work; worse, it could be dangerous. It would be difficult to defend using the same screening measures on someone who types a bulletin and someone who works one-to-one with vulnerable seniors. Screening measures have to be chosen to suit the characteristics of the position in question: participant, activity, setting, and supervision.

**Screening measures have to be based on:**

- the group's awareness of its moral, ethical and spiritual responsibilities and legal obligations;
- the group's decisions about basic principles and values, including decisions about the way in which volunteers and other unpaid staff will be treated;
- the results of the risk assessment conducted and the faith community's assumption of certain risks;
- adherence to the screening policies determined by the governing body;
- the volunteer ministry is developed and designed with risk management considerations in mind and the relevant ministry descriptions.

The risk assessment and volunteer ministry description are the foundation of a screening policy for your faith community. For further information regarding the development of a screening and sexual misconduct policy see Appendix II (p. 11.1).

Each denomination, spiritual group and representative faith group is different. This difference is due to many factors: the province; the type of community (urban, rural, large, small, northern, southern); the nature of the programs being run; the belief system of the community; the age of the participant involved; and the socio-economic level of program participants. The context will affect the kind of screening policy adopted.

**The bottom line**

Taking all of these steps does not, of course, guarantee that everyone will be safe. The bottom line is that your faith group should never assume risks and potential losses by default. Review them, assess them, and think them through. Understand the risks, act to control them, assume those that can't be eliminated and are essential to the work of your faith community. Then look to minimize risk as much as possible.

Having taken the time and made the effort to review, assess, control risks, and document the process, the chance of something going wrong is reduced. As such, you will be in a better position – ethically, morally, spiritually and legally if something should happen.

There are a number of different tools that can assist faith communities to determine the level of risk inherent in a particular volunteer ministry. The tools in Exercises 1, 2, and 3 (p. 7.5) and the Screening Grid are effective and easy to understand.



**Summary of key concepts**

1. Faith communities can control how they will manage risk.
2. Preventing problems before they occur is good management.
3. Analyzing the risk in a volunteer ministry is the first step in effective screening.
4. Begin risk management by listing all the ministry positions of your faith community.
5. Audit the risk activities of the volunteer ministries in your organization based on the participant, the setting, the activity, the supervision, and the position requirements.

### Step 2 – Volunteer ministry description

#### Volunteer ministry description

A volunteer ministry description is a powerful and necessary tool. It is similar to a position description since it is used to define the tasks of a ministry and to set ground rules for everyone involved in your programs.

Although it may be difficult to define the work of some people, it is imperative to be able to describe the ministry and to define the risk inherent in it. Ministry descriptions don't have to be lengthy but they must set guidelines and boundaries. They not only protect volunteers by formalizing roles, but also send a clear message to any potential abuser that you are serious about providing safety for both the participants and volunteers.

The following pieces of information can be included in a ministry description:

- Title of ministry (religious educator, organist, greeter, etc.)
- Participant group (children, seniors, etc)
- Length or term of ministry appointment (6 months, 1 year, 3 years, 20 years)
- Goals of the ministry
- Activities and tasks associated with the ministry
- Outline of responsibilities
- Boundaries and limits to the ministry
- Skills, experience and qualifications required
- Personal traits and qualities needed and/or desired
- Orientation and training available
- Support, supervision, and evaluation provided
- Mandatory activities (e.g. training, signing the policy acknowledgment form, monthly meetings, travel)
- Working conditions (e.g. non-smoking environment)
- Benefits to the volunteer
- Screening measures

As suggested above in the point about boundaries and limits, make sure to include general dos and don'ts related to the position. For example, if a volunteer is not to visit seniors alone, make sure that condition is clearly stated in the volunteer ministry description.

Exercises 4 and 5 (p. 7.7 - 7.9) will assist you in developing and/or adapting ministry descriptions.





### Step 3 – Recruitment process

Recruitment of volunteers is usually done less formally than the recruitment of employees. For example, faith groups sometimes encourage parents to move from watching their children participate to helping out with their activities. These personal ties between volunteers and the program complicate the screening process.

The more informal volunteer recruitment is, the less comfortable recruiters are in applying formal steps. One of the ways to move from an informal to a formal recruitment process is to print or post notices in the bulletin or community newsletter or send home requests for volunteers accompanied by ministry descriptions and application forms.

Since it is rare to have a formal interview for volunteers it is important to spend some time getting to know the individuals before they are assigned to a ministry. It is unwise to assign a new member of your faith community to a high-risk position.

Be careful to achieve balance between formalizing the recruitment process and appearing desperate for volunteers. The worst recruitment notice – in terms of child safety and the integrity of the program – is something like, "Help! We're desperate! Come and volunteer!" This sense of urgency does not always attract the type of volunteer your faith group wants or needs.

Be careful about how you recruit, especially for positions of trust with vulnerable people. Ensure that your recruiting materials clearly outline that your faith community takes its responsibilities towards participants seriously, and screens all applicants thoroughly. Do not leave people with the impression that everyone who applies will be accepted. Be very clear that you are extremely careful about selecting volunteers and don't apologize for that fact. Being asked to volunteer is a privilege and a calling to a sacred trust.

Make sure that your promotional materials, including your volunteer ministry descriptions, are kept accurate and up-to-date. If you are recruiting through your local volunteer centre, ensure that the staff there is kept current about changes in ministry descriptions and of any special considerations that would affect the referral of volunteers. When someone indicates interest in a volunteer ministry, send information to him or her before you commit to an interview. Ensure that the documents include all of the information available about the task in question, and about your screening measures.


It is only fair that there are no surprises, and to give people an opportunity to screen themselves out at this point. It also saves time that might have been wasted interviewing someone who was not aware of the screening measures and who refuses to participate in them.

Volunteer ministry descriptions along with careful promotion and recruitment provide your group with powerful screening measures even before anyone offers himself or herself for a ministry. People can screen themselves out on the basis of the information you have provided with a minimum of wasted time and effort.

A sample of suggested recruiting methods can be found on page 8.1.

## Sample: Recruitment methods

Sample - Recruitment methods



Although most faith groups recruit from within, it is always useful to have additional sources for volunteers.

- establish and maintain contact with key individuals and groups in your community such as:
  - former & current volunteers;
  - religious leaders;
  - their people and members of service, social, security, professional groups, etc.;
- volunteer centres;
- seniors clubs; and
- school boards
- advertise in your community's weekly publication
- use local universities / colleges (many students look for volunteer work to get more experience)
- religion departments
- education departments
- social service departments
- school boards

Volunteer Canada
Screening in Faith 3.1

### Summary of key concepts

1. It is important to formalize the recruitment process.
2. The faith community should be open about its process and make it clear that not everyone is accepted for the ministry they apply for.
3. Recruitment materials should indicate that you screen applicants.
4. Remember that volunteering is a ministry and volunteers should be placed in suitable roles.

**Notes**

# Section IV

## The selection process

The following points should be considered during the selection process.

- Consider each ministry individually, starting with your ministry description and the nature and degree of risk and possible losses.
- Review the descriptions of screening measures that follow. They begin with relatively non-intrusive measures and progress to more intrusive procedures such as police records checks, which reveal much more private information about individuals.
- Having done all of the work described in the previous steps, the nature, risks, and requirements of each ministry should be clear.

**There is no magic to choosing which screening measures to implement. To determine which measures are appropriate, ask yourself these two basic questions.**

1. Given all that you know about the ministry, including its risks and the vulnerability of the participant, what do you need to know about the applicants in order to make good decisions about accepting or rejecting their applications?

**Do you need to know:**

- about their gifts, talents and abilities?
- about their professional qualifications?
- about their attitudes towards participants?
- about their ability to develop bonds with at-risk participants?
- about any involvement they may have had with the police?

2. Which screening measure(s) will provide this kind of information?

Not every screening measure can or will give you all the information you need.

Steps 4-7 will assist in developing a selection process that will help you choose the appropriate person for the ministry.

## Section IV

### Step 4 – Application form

An application form is the first screening tool that potential volunteers will encounter. It collects basic information – name, address, experience – while giving the organization permission to do reference checks and police records checks (if necessary). The reasons for asking for references and the conditions for a police records check should be noted on this form.

As with the use of a ministry description, asking volunteers to complete an application form signals the seriousness of your group’s commitment to screening and provides a paper trail that will protect both the volunteer and the faith group.

Human rights legislation distinguishes between what can be asked of people before they are selected, and what can be asked after they are selected. You should check with the Human Rights Commission or Council in your province or territory for a list of the types of information that may be sought before and after someone is selected.

The following chart was developed by Continuing Education, Edmonton Public Schools and is reprinted here with their permission. The acceptable and unacceptable practices noted here can be applied to your group’s application form as well as the recruiting and interviewing procedures.

Subject	Unacceptable practices	Acceptable practices	Comments
Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking for birth name of applicant.</li> <li>• Asking for previous name when name was changed by court order.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking for name under which applicant has been educated or employed.</li> </ul>	
Address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking for foreign addresses (which may indicate national origin).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking for place and duration of current and previous address in Canada.</li> </ul>	
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking for birth certificate, baptismal record, or any other documents or information regarding age of applicant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking whether applicant has attained minimum age, or has exceeded maximum age, applying to employment by law.</li> </ul>	Verification of age may be obtained after hiring.
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking about the gender of an applicant on the application form.</li> <li>• Using different or coded application forms for males and females.</li> </ul>		Correspondence to applicants may be addressed to their home with or without the prefixes Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., e.g., “Dear Mary Smith”.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Unacceptable practices</b>	<b>Acceptable practices</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Marital status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking whether applicant is single, married, remarried, engaged, divorced, separated, widowed, or living common law.</li> <li>• Asking about applicant's spouse, e.g., "Is spouse subject to transfer?"</li> <li>• Asking for number of children or other dependents.</li> <li>• Asking about child-care arrangements.</li> <li>• Asking about whether applicant is pregnant, on birth control, or has future childbearing plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking if applicant is willing to travel or to be transferred to other areas of the province or country, if this requirement is job related.</li> </ul>	<p>Such information, if required for tax or insurance purposes, may be required after hiring.</p>
<b>National or ethnic origin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking about birthplace.</li> <li>• Asking about nationality of parents, grandparents, relatives or spouse.</li> <li>• Asking about ethnic or national origin, e.g., requiring birth certificate, asking for mother tongue.</li> <li>• Asking whether applicant is native born or naturalized.</li> <li>• Asking for date citizenship received.</li> <li>• Asking for proof of citizenship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking if the applicant is legally entitled to work in Canada.</li> </ul>	<p>An employer may ask for documentary proof of eligibility to work in Canada after hiring.</p>
<b>Medical Information</b>	<p>A medical examination will necessarily reveal prohibited information about an applicant, such as his or her age, race, or sex. For this reason, employers should conduct medical examinations after the hiring decision is made. Employers may indicate on application forms that the job offer is conditional on the applicant's passing a medical examination.</p>		
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking applicant to list all clubs or organizations he or she belongs to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking for such a list with the proviso that applicant may decline to list clubs or organizations, which may indicate a prohibited ground of discrimination.</li> </ul>	<p>The request should only be made if membership in organization is necessary to determine job qualifications.</p>

## Section IV

Subject	Unacceptable practices	Acceptable practices	Comments
<b>Optional inquiries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making any of the above prohibited inquiries, even if marked “optional” on the application form.</li> </ul>		
<b>Military</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking about all military service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking about Canadian military service.</li> </ul>	<p>Asking about all military service is permissible if military experience directly relates to the job applied for.</p>
<b>Languages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking about mother tongue or where language skills were obtained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking about which languages applicant speaks, reads, or writes, if job related.</li> </ul>	<p>Testing or scoring an applicant in English or French language proficiency is not approved unless English or French language skill is a requirement for the work to be performed.</p>
<b>Race or colour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking anything which would indicate race, colour, or complexion, including colour of eyes, hair or skin.</li> </ul>		
<b>Photographs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking for photograph, or taking of photograph.</li> </ul>		<p>Photos may be required after hiring for identification purposes.</p>
<b>Religion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking about religious affiliation.</li> <li>• Asking about willingness or availability to work on a specific religious holiday.</li> <li>• Asking about church attended, religious holidays, customs observed, or religious dress.</li> <li>• Asking for reference or recommendation from pastor, priest, minister, rabbi, or other religious leader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking about willingness to work a specified work schedule.</li> </ul>	<p>It is the duty of the employer to accommodate the religious observances of the applicant, if it is reasonably possible to do so.</p> <p>After hiring, inquiry about religion to determine when leave of absence for religious observance is permitted.</p>



Subject	Unacceptable practices	Acceptable practices	Comments
<b>Height and weight</b>			Height and weight requirements may be discriminatory if they screen out disproportionate numbers of minority-group individuals or women and if they cannot be shown to be essential for the performance of the job.
<b>Relatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking for relationship to applicant of next of kin to be notified in case of emergency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking for name and address of person to be notified in case of emergency.</li> </ul>	
<b>References</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking any questions of a person given as a reference that would not be allowable if asked directly of the applicant.</li> </ul>		
<b>Criminal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking whether applicant has ever been convicted of an offence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking whether applicant has been convicted of an offence for which no pardon has been granted.</li> </ul>	The Canadian Human Rights Act permits discrimination on a criminal conviction for which a pardon has not been granted. However, it discourages inquiries into unpardoned criminal convictions unless the particular conviction is relevant to job qualifications; e.g., a theft and fraud conviction is relevant to a job requiring honesty, but a conviction for marijuana possession is not.

## Section IV

Subject	Unacceptable practices	Acceptable practices	Comments
Physical handicap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking about all physical handicaps, limitations, or health problems which would tend to elicit handicaps or conditions not necessarily related to job performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking whether applicant has any physical handicaps or health problems affecting the job applied for.</li> <li>Inquiry as to any physical handicaps or limitations that the applicant wishes to be taken into consideration when determining job placement.</li> </ul>	<p>A physical handicap is relevant to the job when:</p> <p>(a) the handicap could be hazardous to the applicant, coworkers, clients, or the public;</p> <p>(b) the handicap could prevent the applicant from performing the duties of the job satisfactorily.</p>

*Note: If you require a police records check for the ministry a volunteer is applying for, the police will require a date of birth. This, of course, violates human rights. Therefore, police records check forms cannot be completed until the volunteer has been offered the ministry (with the condition that they "pass" a police records check).*

Some groups choose to have two different application forms; general and specific ministry application forms.

### General application form

At the preliminary level, application forms must not ask for information not specifically related to the volunteer ministry or are among the prohibited grounds of discrimination, such as age, gender, marital status, etc. Please note that federal and provincial statutes are not identical in terms of these prohibited grounds.


In creating application forms, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why are we asking for this information?
- Is the information necessary to establish the applicant's qualifications for this ministry?
- What effect will asking these questions have on the individual's prospects of being engaged or offered the opportunity to volunteer?
- Will these questions unduly or unlawfully prejudice his or her chances?
- Will these questions elicit information that falls within the prohibited grounds of discrimination?

See page 8.3 for a sample application form.

**Sample: General application form**

**Volunteer application form**



(Adapted from *Speak Out! ... Act Now! A Guide to Preventing & Responding to Abuse & Harassment for Sport Clubs and Associations*, p. 2-15)

Name of Faith Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (Res.) \_\_\_\_\_ (Bus.) \_\_\_\_\_

(Fax) \_\_\_\_\_

Choices of volunteer positions within the organization:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

If these choices are not available, would you consider a different position?  Yes  No

Identify your previous volunteer positions:

Group	Volunteer position
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What are some of your personal ministry goals in the faith community?


\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Canada
Screening in Faith 8.3

**Volunteer application form, cont'd**



Why are you volunteering for this position?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**References**  
(list three references; i.e. faith group leader, professional).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (res): \_\_\_\_\_ (bus.): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (res): \_\_\_\_\_ (bus.): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (res): \_\_\_\_\_ (bus.): \_\_\_\_\_


Relationship to applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out the release of information slip attached.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

8.4 Screening in Faith
Volunteer Canada

**Volunteer application form, cont'd**



**Authorization for collection of personal information**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, authorize ( name of faith group) to collect personal information appropriate to the position applied for concerning my academic background, employment history, and verify the character references I have supplied.

I understand that the information obtained will be confidential but may be shared with relevant organizations in order to obtain an appropriate volunteer position.

\_\_\_\_\_ day / month / year \_\_\_\_\_ applicant's signature

Volunteer Canada
Screening in Faith 8.5

### **Specific ministry application forms**


What you may be permitted to ask by law is entirely dependent on the requirements of the ministry. Before adding any questions to your application form ask, "why do we need to know this?"

Need is the operative word here. You might want to know whether someone is married or where they were educated; however, the issue is whether or not that information is essential to making a decision about a specific ministry. For example, if you are recruiting a teacher for Sunday school it would be appropriate to ask about the applicant's knowledge of your religion.

What you ask must be directly related to the ministry being applied for. Ensure that the kinds of questions being asked don't come as a surprise to applicants. They should have received information about the screening policies of your faith group before being asked to fill in the application.

In Exercise 6 (p. 7.11) you will review your application form and determine whether or not changes are required.

## Exercise 6: Review of current application forms

**Exercise 6** 

Review the application form(s) that your faith group uses. Discuss whether the questions are appropriate. If you do not have a sample of your faith community's application form, feel free to use the sample provided on page K.3.

Choose a position within your group and determine if the questions on the form are appropriate for the skills and responsibilities required for that position.

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Volunteer Canada Screening in Faith 7.11

**Summary of key concepts**

1. Ensure your application form only asks for information related to the requirements of the ministry.
2. There are far more restrictions on what information you can seek before selection than information requests permitted after an invitation to serve.
3. Do not ask for information about characteristics among the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out by federal and provincial statutes.

### Step 5 – Interviews

Interviews are an extremely important step in the screening process. The interview provides not only an opportunity to talk to the potential volunteer about their background, gifts, talents, skills, interests and availability, but also to explore any doubts your group may have about the suitability of the candidate. An interview also serves to express the ministry expectations and to convey the norms/culture of your faith community. In other words, an interview will help determine "the right fit" of the ministry and the applicant. You should be well prepared, in order to be thorough and make the best use of time, but an interview need not be long or difficult.

Most faith groups rely on an informal and non-competitive interview structure. An interview with a volunteer in a faith community may only be a 30-minute meeting where standards, norms and expectations are discussed. This allows leaders to get to know the volunteer better so he/she can assess suitability of the volunteer in the particular ministry.

When planning an interview you may want to consider the following:

- have at least two people conduct the interview;
- explain the interview process to the applicant;
- establish a safe environment for the applicant;
- describe the ministry specifically, using the ministry description;
- describe the screening procedures of your faith group;
- document the applicant's responses to the questions and keep them on file;
- look for attitudes towards children, vulnerable adults and faith that do not fit with those of your faith community;
- ask all applicants the same basic questions to maintain consistency.

When selecting questions for an interview remember that the most revealing questions address situations that have already taken place. Past behaviour is the best indicator of future performance. The selection of appropriate questions is very important in volunteer screening. Also, remember that interviews are subject to the same Human Rights laws as discussed in Step 4 – Application Form.

Interview questions should encourage responses that allow you to judge:

- relevant work related experiences
- relevant formal and informal education
- eagerness to work
- ability to work with others
- integrity
- supervision preferences
- initiative and judgement


#### Location of interview

It is unusual to allow volunteers to run programs from their homes, however, if a volunteer and participant will spend time in a volunteer's home, an in-home interview is entirely appropriate. The applicant must consent to it, of course, but if he or she does not, this may be enough to reject the application. Your group should determine if the home is a safe and appropriate place for the participant to be taken.

If activities will take place in the home, you must ask for information about any other person who lives in the home or visits frequently.

In Exercise 7 (p. 7.13) you will practice interviewing techniques in groups.

**Exercise 7: Role Play – Interviewing**

**Exercise 7** 

**Role play**

In groups of three, two people act as interviewers and one as the volunteer seeking a particular position.

After completing the mock interview, analyze both the questions that were asked and the answers. As a group, decide whether or not the questions were appropriate to the position and if there were other questions, which could have been more pertinent.

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Volunteer Canada Screening in Faith 7.13

**Summary of key concepts**

- 1. To select the candidate most likely to succeed, the process must be completely objective.
- 2. Like screening, selection is based on the requirements of the ministry.
- 3. Interviews are important ways to get to know the applicant better.

### Step 6 – Reference checks

A reference check may be the most effective screening step during the selection process. References will confirm the background, gifts, talents and skills of the applicant and will provide an outside opinion on the suitability of the person for the ministry.

Don't assume that applicants will only give the names of people who will speak well of them. People often expect that references will not be followed up.

Here are some tips for getting the most out of a reference check:

- Describe the ministry clearly to the person giving the reference.
- Ask about the applicant's skill and suitability to the tasks as defined.
- Identify the level of trust that will be developed with children or other vulnerable people within the ministry (e.g. "Joe will be working closely with children and will be alone with them-would you be comfortable with Joe having this kind of relationships with your child?").  
Do not ask leading questions (e.g. "We really think Joe will make a great religious education teacher, don't you?").
- Leave space in the call for open comment (e.g. "Could you comment on Joe and how you think he would fit in this ministry?").
- Do more than one reference check. If the candidate has given names of people who might not be objective (family members, close friends) ask if it is okay to contact previous or current employers or other groups the applicant has volunteered for. Whenever possible get the name of someone who is familiar with the applicant's work with specific participant groups.

#### Dos and don'ts of reference checks

(Celeste J. Wroblewski, *The Seven Rs of Volunteer Development: A YMCA Resource Kit*)


- Do not proceed with reference checks until you have a signed release form.
- If possible, try to contact a non-profit agency the applicant has worked or volunteered for. This contact can offer additional insight into their commitment, organizational skills, and responsibility.
- Make sure you have a phone number for the references.
- Don't make exceptions for anyone. If you've determined that the ministry requires reference checks, follow through on everyone.
- Ask the person giving the reference if they are in a confidential setting and can speak freely.
- Do not accept one bad reference without validation through other resources. Do not reject the applicant based solely on one bad reference.
- Verify that the person to whom you are speaking is indeed the reference given on the applicant's form.
- After you mention the name of your candidate, listen carefully to the attitude, tone and hesitancy of those you have called. If the person sounds upbeat and positive, it is likely that the candidate was a good employee/volunteer. If the person sounds guarded or hesitant, perhaps the candidate was a problem. Remember, however, that some problems arise because of the supervisor; not because of the employee. For this reason, it is important to get several references.
- Remember that you may be able to ask volunteers or other staff to help conduct the reference checks. These volunteers, of course, would have to be trained using a specific format. A standardized reference check questionnaire ensures everyone is asked the same questions and when completed, it can be kept on file.



The sample reference check on page 8.7 can be used as a guideline for your organization.

## Sample: Reference check

**Sample – Reference check script**



**Sample Reference Check**  
(Use ahead of telephone, printed questionnaire, or in writing)

Adapted from The Order of the Province of Ontario / L'Ordre des pasteurs du Canada / Ministère  
de l'Éducation, du Développement de la Jeunesse et des Services à la Famille / Ministère de l'Éducation, de la Jeunesse et des Services à la Famille

This form gives you a good indication of the kinds of questions to ask the references who are asked by the candidate.

**To use:**

- Identify yourself and your faith community.
- Notify the person reporting to the person named as reference.
- Tell the person that (name of applicant) gave you permission to call for references and that you will keep the information confidential.
- Ask if the person has a suitable and suitable for being the candidate's reference.
- Explain that the applicant would be using the past faith community and the pastoral group they would be working with.

**Sample script:**

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling on behalf of (name of faith community).  
(If name of applicant) has applied to be a volunteer with us doing \_\_\_\_\_ . Your name has been provided as reference. Do you have a few minutes to answer some questions now?

How long have you known (name of applicant)? What is your relationship to (name of applicant)?

It is important that our references are reliable. Tell me about your experience with (name of applicant) in regard to reliability.

What are (name of applicant) strengths and weaknesses in regard to working with (include specific pastoral group, parishes, etc. people with disabilities, etc.)?

How would you feel about being (name of applicant) next to you in a volunteer role with your faith community's efforts?

It is important to include (name of faith group) activities, as well as other work (pastoral or service) which is most representative with him or her experiences. What is your opinion with (name of applicant) ability to manage being involved in working independently?


How do you feel about being (name of applicant) next to you in a volunteer role with your faith community's efforts?

Are you aware of a reason why (name of applicant) is applying to volunteer with us as a volunteer?  
(Other than reason of a faith leader's call?)

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about (name of applicant)?

Volunteer Canada Screening in Faith 8.7

**Sample – Reference check script, cont'd**



Is there any reason you know of why (name of applicant) would not be able to perform the tasks assigned by this volunteer position?

Would you be available to provide your name as a reference for (name of applicant)?

Comments (in addition to what you have said to the person calling, additional questions that you want to ask in the interview phase)

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8.8 Screening in Faith Volunteer Canada

### Summary of key concepts

1. A reference check is the most effective screening step during the selection process.
2. To get the most out of your reference check, prepare a list of questions or sample script beforehand.
3. Be aware of the dos and don'ts of reference checks before you proceed with one.

### Step 7 – Police records check (PRC)

Police records checks are probably the most misunderstood element of screening. Too many people believe that doing a PRC means that the person has been screened. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is not only important to know if someone has been convicted of a crime, the nature of that crime is also important. If a conviction is an abuse or harassment offence, it can be more pertinent than a conviction for shoplifting, depending on the ministry the volunteer will be filling.

#### **What information do the police see when they enter a volunteer's name in their database?**

Contrary to popular opinion, not all police forces check the same data sources. Your local police units will consult their local records but may or may not consult the national database. By contrast, a national search done through the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) produces federal level data but may not reveal pertinent local details.

Local police force databases show:

- convictions and charges
- information on plaintiff, victim, suspect, and witness

CPIC database shows:

- criminal charges and convictions
- probation
- related court orders (i.e. possession of firearms, etc.)

Prior to requesting a PRC your faith community should decide what type of information it requires from the police. For example, if the ministry allows the volunteer access to the group's finances but there is no risk of one-on-one contact with a participant, the police should be checking the data base for any convictions related to theft, fraud, etc. If the police receive very specific information about the ministry it is more likely that they will be able to provide you with the information you need.

Unfortunately there are abusers and sex offenders who have never been convicted of a crime. Furthermore, despite the excellent RCMP data system (CPIC) – there are inherent problems with any list.

The limitations of police records checks include:

- it is only good up to the checking day; a recent conviction may not show;
- there are time lags in sending records from one country to another;
- the individual may be using an alias so only fingerprint checks will ensure they are "clear";
- relying solely on police records checks is dangerous - groups may believe that they have done enough; a false sense of security may be created;
- the individual may have obtained a "pardon" and therefore is no longer on the list; and
- the information may not be available because the conviction occurred while the individual was a youth and is protected by the Young Offenders' Act.

Despite the built-in limitations of PRCs, they do serve a purpose, particularly in those cases (high-risk ministries) where the faith group is committed to a full and complete screening process. The PRC will also signal, in a very public way, that the group is concerned about the safety of its participants.

The following steps should be taken when requesting a PRC:

- The ministry application form, for high-risk ministries, should state that the employee or volunteer will be asked to provide a PRC; the applicant should confirm acceptance of this. Just as stating your screening policy in your recruiting notices can be an effective deterrent, making all applicants aware that you conduct police records checks can ensure that some applicants screen themselves out.
- Use a release form (see page 8.12) which states the agreement of the volunteer or employee to a PRC. The resulting information can be handled in one of two ways:
  1. the applicant may be asked to give permission to the police to release the result directly to your group (the results will only indicate whether or not there has been a conviction).
  2. the applicant may be asked to take the form to the police, have the results released directly to the applicant and bring it back to the faith community. This option puts more control into the hands of the applicant and allows him or her to make the decision whether or not to share the results.
- A written policy should be in place (see p. II.11)— that all current and prospective employees and volunteers are familiar with – that defines organizational policy on selecting individuals with criminal records.
- A number of police forces and municipalities now charge for doing PRCs. Groups will need a policy on whether these costs will be borne by individuals, the faith community, dependent on the ministry etc.

In some provinces communities and organizations have signed a memorandum of understanding with their provincial / local police force which specifies the roles of the police, the organization, and the individual being screened. An agreement about cost is also developed. Sometimes police departments will waive the cost for this service for faith communities.

The following should be taken into consideration when you are developing a screening policy, which includes police records checks:

1. Clear guidelines must be developed concerning how your group will handle a volunteer whose PRC shows a previous conviction. For example, you can determine that for positions of trust where there is the opportunity for one-on-one contact with a participant, certain classes of convictions (e.g. fraud, violent crimes, and sex-related crimes) will automatically preclude a volunteer from filling that ministry.

Your faith community must decide in advance the position they will take with regard to volunteers with convictions outside the specified classes (e.g. theft, possession of narcotics). There is a range of positions that you may consider:

- establishing a panel to assess individual cases which fall in the "grey area"
- accepting volunteers with a criminal history, as long as they are not in positions of trust and dependent on

## Section IV

the tasks required in the ministry they will be filling.

The decision your faith community makes will depend on the activities you carry out, the participants you deal with as well as your group's purpose, philosophy, and values.

2. When deciding whether to accept or reject an applicant, your group will base its decision on the following:
  - the nature of the program, services, and activities provided;
  - the character and degree of vulnerability of the participant group served and your duty of care to the participants, to the staff, and to the community;
  - the relevant moral, ethical, legal, spiritual and policy issues and principles;
  - the potential risks involved in the ministry the individual is applying for, based on the participant group being served, the nature of the ministry and its activities, the setting in which it takes place, and the way in which it is supervised.
3. Once you receive information about an applicant, whether from the applicant directly or from the police, you become responsible for that information and are then subject to many of the same legal requirements and regulations as other holders of personal information, in terms of confidentiality and access.

Your faith community must carefully consider and determine the following:

- What types of information would be helpful to you with regards to the ministry?
- Who will have access to the information once received?
- What policies will govern the gathering or storage of information?
- If your group receives a report from the police (directly or given to them by the individual), where will the information be kept?
- How is it recorded or transferred?
- How long is it kept?
- How secure is it?
- Who has access to it? Why?
- In what circumstances, and with whom, is the information discussed? Why?

In some municipalities, the police may give the report to the individual rather than to the faith group. While this may be less convenient for you, it may actually be a better system. If information is given to the individual concerned, the police may be able to provide more complete information than if the report goes directly to you.

Consider the following when the information is provided directly to the applicant:

- Does your group require an original or a copy of the document?
- Is the document kept or just verified?
- If it is kept, how does your group deal with the issue of confidentiality?

If the information goes to your group directly, you must be vigilant about confidentiality as well as storage and access to the information.

4. Your faith group must also decide whether or not they will conduct police records checks more than once.

Some groups require that PRCs be done annually, or every two or three years. This requirement may act as a deterrent to some; however, the limitations on police records checks remain regardless of the number of checks conducted.

The bottom line is that a police records check can be an extremely important step in the screening process, however, they may not be appropriate for all ministries. The only certainty is that they should never be the first, last or only screening step used by any group.

A sample of a release form for conducting a police records check can be found on page 8.11.

## Sample: Release form for conducting a police records check

**Sample - Consent for criminal record search**

(Adapted from *SpeakUp!... Act Now! A Guide to Preventing & Responding to Abuse & Harassment for Sport Clubs and Associations*, p. 2-24)

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_  
surname given name

Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
city province country

Other names: \_\_\_\_\_  
maiden, birth, alias surname given name

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_  
year/month/day

Current address: \_\_\_\_\_  
number street apt. no.

\_\_\_\_\_  
city province state/region telephone

Whereas I am interested in being considered for a sensitive position of trust and well-being of *(name of faith group)* participants and I am required by the *(name of faith group)* to disclose whether or not I have any convictions or have been charged under any federal or provincial enactment:

And whereas I understand that disclosure of a criminal record may not necessarily preclude me from performing duties/functions/responsibilities I am interested in:

And whereas I understand that, if the *(name of faith group)* should decide any conviction or charge disclosed might preclude me from being involved, I will be given an opportunity to see and discuss that criminal record to determine whether or not any criminal record indicates that I present a risk to participants.

I therefore authorize the RCMP, other Provincial or Municipal Police Service on my behalf to inquire into and determine whether or not I have a criminal record, and also make to the *(name of faith group)* member a full and complete disclosure of any criminal record they may find. I also make this authorization with the understanding that I may be required to provide my fingerprints to verify a criminal record and the fingerprints will be returned to me when the record is adjudicated.

\_\_\_\_\_  
signature date

Volunteer Canada Screening in Faith 8.11

**Sample - Consent for criminal record search, cont'd**

**Note to police**

*(name of applicant)* has consented to release information in the *(name of faith group)*. Please check the individual's record and indicate the results on this form.

Please forward the completed form and fingerprints if necessary to:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Attention: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
signature title

**Police use only - Results of record check**

Results of record search is merely a record, or lack of official contact with police agencies, not an affirmation of good character.

A search of (check appropriate category):

The Central Repository for Criminal  In the above name and birth date shows:

Records for Canada  No record

Index of (police agency conducting check)  A record exists on local index, and a copy, certified by the individual, is attached

A Central Repository Record exists, has been verified by fingerprint comparison, and a copy is attached.

\_\_\_\_\_  
name and signature badge number year/month/day

8.12 Screening in Faith Volunteer Canada

### Summary of key concepts

1. PRCs are only one step in the 10-step screening process.
2. Be aware of the limitations of PRCs.
3. PRCs are an important screening tool, particularly for high-risk ministries.
4. Every faith group should consult with their local police force when establishing their policy.

**Summary: The selection process**

Now that the volunteer has filled out an application form, been interviewed, had their references checked and, if necessary, completed a police records check and you are satisfied that this is the person who has the most to offer your faith community, you have a new volunteer. The selection process is over but volunteer management and screening involve more than just selection. The next steps involve orientation and training, supervision and evaluation, and follow-up.

It is important to remember that screening does not stop when an applicant is accepted into your group. Appropriate measures must be developed to ensure ongoing screening.

A number of cases of participant abuse reported over the last few years have been in organizations that have extensive pre-engagement screening. Sometimes, no matter how good the policies, procedures, and practices are, someone slips by. It is not enough to be vigilant at the outset only to stop screening the person once he or she is on board.

Section V, *Managing the Volunteer*, outlines steps 8-10 in the screening process.

**Notes**



# Section V

## Managing the volunteer

### Step 8 – Orientation and training

Orientation and training are an important part of the screening process. Screening continues through the early period of the volunteer's involvement and should be ongoing throughout the entire ministry. Ongoing vigilance on behalf of participants is a must – the responsibility does not end once the volunteer is in place.

A volunteer should be considered "on probation" at least until the training period is complete. A three to six month probation period allows both your group and the individual to ensure they have made the right choices and offers each the chance to change their minds.

During the orientation and training period, your group should achieve:

- knowledge of the volunteer's approach, values and work style. Role-playing may be used to explore some of these issues;
- translation of the policies to the individual's role within the faith community. The policies need to be clearly understood by new volunteers, especially in areas that relate to participants who are vulnerable;
- development of interpersonal skills in areas where each individual will be ministering;
- the final decision of whether the person is appropriate or not.

Groups relying on volunteers are obviously reluctant to reject help. It is important, however, to remember that the aims and responsibilities of the organization need to be considered before the feelings of the individual volunteer. Being tactful and considerate of these feelings is important and will minimize any potential damage to the individual or the organization. Therefore, it is perfectly acceptable to change your mind about your choice of volunteer. Trust your observations and make decisions accordingly. A sensitive way of handling this is to discuss the situation with the volunteer and assign him/her to another ministry more suitable to his/her talents. Everyone should have a part to play so be creative and think of other ways for the person's gifts to be offered.

Tips on reassigning a volunteer or stopping a ministry:

- inform all volunteers of the length of the probation period and the term of the ministry assignment.
- discern why the volunteer wants to ministry and what personal needs are being met. Then find a more suitable, low-risk, ministry to reassign this volunteer to which addresses those personal needs.
- if the volunteer wants to know why they are being reassigned, tell them that their gifts and talents are not being put to the best use. You and the volunteer can then together explore new ideas for ministry.
- if the volunteer is insistent and you continue to believe there is a bad match then you must modify or stop the ministry. Do not compromise the safety of your children and other vulnerable people.

Although training volunteers may use some of your community's resources, you will benefit in the long run through better equipped and informed volunteers, safe environments and the opportunity to continue with the screening process.

## **Section V**

Orientation and training sessions provide opportunities to test our observations of individuals, to see them under different circumstances. People who are skilled manipulators in one-to-one interviews may reveal different behaviour in group settings.

Make orientation and training events mandatory, not optional. Apart from providing an opportunity for you to pass on information, including manuals and handbooks, and answer questions, it gives you and other volunteers a chance to follow up on the ministry appointment. Refusal to attend, or constant excuses for not attending may signal that something is wrong.

Involve other volunteers and staff in the screening by asking them to seek out applicants and engage them in conversation at such events. Urge people to participate at these meetings; don't always let them sit on the sidelines, or accept shyness in groups as an excuse for not interacting with others.

Exercise 8 will assist participants in brainstorming and exchanging ideas about orientation and training.

See page 8.17 for a sample training workshop.



### Step 9 – Supervision and evaluation

Feedback on volunteer performance should occur at least once a year and probably two or three times in the first year. In order to give feedback, someone in the group must be responsible to supervise the volunteer, teaching him or her how to do the ministry, and periodically reviewing their performance. By instituting a formal supervision and evaluation process, the volunteer can be observed "on the job" and their ministry can be monitored on an ongoing basis.

If supervision and evaluation is new to your volunteers, they may resist.

Overcome these barriers by clarifying that the purpose of evaluation is:

- to ensure a standard level of practice;
- to improve the experiences of volunteers and participants in the programs;
- to enrich individuals' experience in their ministry;
- to protect all participants.

All supervision and evaluation processes should use the ministry description as a reference point. During the evaluation interview:

- go through the ministry description point by point;
- ask volunteers to comment on how they think they are doing in each area, and how they enjoy their tasks;
- be open to new ideas of how the organization can better equip and support the volunteer ministry;
- give feedback on their performance in each area;
- keep comments positive but clearly state any concerns;
- if it is possible, document the evaluation;
- have the document signed by both volunteer and supervisor;
- file the document.

The amount of supervision and evaluation needed will depend on the level of risk in the ministry – but all volunteers need to be periodically observed and given feedback. Any cause for concern requires immediate action.

Exercise 9 offers some ideas on reassigning or stopping a volunteer assignment.

There is nothing more difficult than saying no to a volunteer who is willing to help. By taking the time to meet and review the ministry and referring to the ministry description, the difficult decisions are less likely to be taken personally. (See above "Tips for reassigning or stopping a ministry.")



### Step 10 – Participant follow-up

It is important to make volunteers aware of the follow-up activities that may take place after they begin their volunteer work. Ensure that the volunteer is aware that any follow-up that happens is because of the level of risk in the ministry.

One of the most valuable sources of information about the nature of relationships between volunteers and program participants is the participant themselves. Through education programs on abuse and harassment and healthy relationships, participants have the opportunity to talk about their experiences, their feelings about the way they are treated, and their reactions to the people around them. Listen!

#### **Regular contact with participants and families**

Regular ongoing contact with program participants and family members can act as an effective deterrent to someone who might otherwise do harm and go undetected. It is vital that the organization let all volunteers know that regular supervision and evaluation, including contact with program participants and families is part of your faith community's risk management procedures and that there is nothing personal about it.

#### **Random spot checks**


If a volunteer and a program participant are usually alone together, it may be appropriate to conduct random spot checks by visiting the location where they are together.

It should be made clear when the volunteer joins your group that random spot checks are a possibility in high-risk ministries. It may also be appropriate to make clear to the program participant that this is a risk management and screening measure that the group intends to take for everyone's protection.

Exercise 10 provides an example of how spot check schedules can be part of managing volunteers.

## Exercise 10: Spot Check Schedule

**Exercise 10**



If you do plan to conduct spot checks, you may consider establishing a schedule for them on an annual or semi-annual basis. This type of planning makes it easier for you to work the spot checks into your schedule and it can protect you.

If your spot checks are scheduled ahead of time you can defend your reasons for choosing a particular time and place for spot checks in high risk positions.

The following is an example of an action plan that could be used when scheduling spot checks. Spend some time thinking about how you could use this type of form.

position	volunteer's schedule	spot check dates	complete	comments
Hospital visitor	Tuesday and Thursday mornings	March 13 and November 17		
Youth group leader	Retreat - 1st weekend in December	Call in on Saturday afternoon		

Volunteer Canada
Screening in Faith 7.19

### Summary of key concepts

1. Make volunteers aware of follow-up activities that may occur.
2. Listen to your program participants.
3. Stay in contact with program participants and their families.
4. Consider conducting spot checks on individuals working in high-risk ministries with little or no supervision.

### **Summary: Managing the volunteer**

Congratulations! You have developed a screening policy that meets the needs of your community. This is the biggest step in the screening continuum. Now you have to think about maintaining the policy and putting the steps into action.

One issue that confronts many groups around the implementation of screening is that of existing volunteers versus new volunteers. It is expected that new volunteers will all be screened. Many groups have difficulty introducing screening to the volunteers who are already involved in their programs.

While it may seem difficult to ask someone who has already been accepted by your faith community to submit to screening measures, remember where your first duty lies – the safety and protection of participants, and the community. Minimize the reactions by ensuring that screening doesn't come as a surprise to anyone. Identify this policy and the procedures in your documents, orientation and training. Help people to understand why it is necessary to do this and most will understand. Be aware that someone might try to enter your group in a ministry that requires little screening, planning to move into a position of trust without further screening. Decide upfront how you will handle people moving from one ministry to another. You may even want to include this possibility in your policy.

As your faith community develops a screening policy appropriate to its needs make sure to continually remind yourselves that you are doing this to protect children and other vulnerable people from harm. Keeping your goal in focus will help to motivate you.



## Conclusion

Although screening may be costly and time-consuming, faith communities must address this issue. Any organization working with vulnerable people must take on this responsibility.

Each denomination, spiritual group and representative faith group is different from the other. This difference is due to many factors: the province; the type of community (urban, rural, large, small, northern, southern); the nature of the programs being run; the age of the participant involved; and the socioeconomic level of program participants. The context will affect the kind of screening policy adopted.

Steps can be taken to reduce your group's workload while still ensuring the protection / safety of your program participants. An orientation session on policies and expectations can serve a large number of low-risk volunteers who have limited access to program participants. By introducing the concept of screening in this format, these volunteers will understand the policies that protect their program participants and themselves without going through the individualized screening processes. This approach will serve two purposes. Initially, it will put the group on guard giving them the skills to watch for abusive and harassing behaviours. Secondly, it will put them at ease by helping them understand that the rules are not a "witch hunt" but a responsibility to protect all vulnerable program participants. Medium and high-risk ministries require a more in-depth screening process.

There are many practical strategies to meet the challenge of screening. Volunteer centres across Canada are able to provide local faith groups with training and consultation. Screening policies can be custom made for each group.

### What's next?

#### Education of volunteers and participants about screening issues

It is important to communicate to the public why your faith group screens and what screening measures it uses.

By communicating to the public that your group takes screening seriously, not only through policy development, but also in its practices, you will be taking one more step in preventing inappropriate individuals from applying.

More importantly, the faith group must also articulate its values and philosophies related to screening based on its mission statement, while keeping them consistent with policies and procedures.

Development of policies and procedures related to screening is not just to prevent legal liability but more importantly should be based on ethical, moral and spiritual responsibilities to promote wholeness, healing, trust and care.

It is particularly important to keep in touch with other faith groups and umbrella organizations. By sharing the successes and failures of implementing a screening policy with others, eventually the process will become less daunting. Become an advocate of screening and become a resource to other organizations that are just beginning to learn about screening.

Most importantly, continue to learn and grow as a faith group. Always keep in mind that the goal of the National Education Campaign on Screening is to assist voluntary and public sector organizations in their efforts to protect people from harm and your goal is to provide safe programs for the participants in your programs.

**Notes**

# Exercise 1



Choose two different positions in your faith group to analyze (i.e. Sunday School teacher, youth choir conductor). You may want to photocopy this exercise and repeat it for every ministry in your group.

What are the potential risks?

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How likely is it that the potential risks will occur? (not likely, possible, probable)

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What are the consequences?

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Can we accomplish our purpose if we eliminate this activity?

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How could we modify the activity? (i.e. separating activities)

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Is there a way we can transfer the risk? (i.e. insurance, outside contracts, etc.)

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Can we assume the risk?

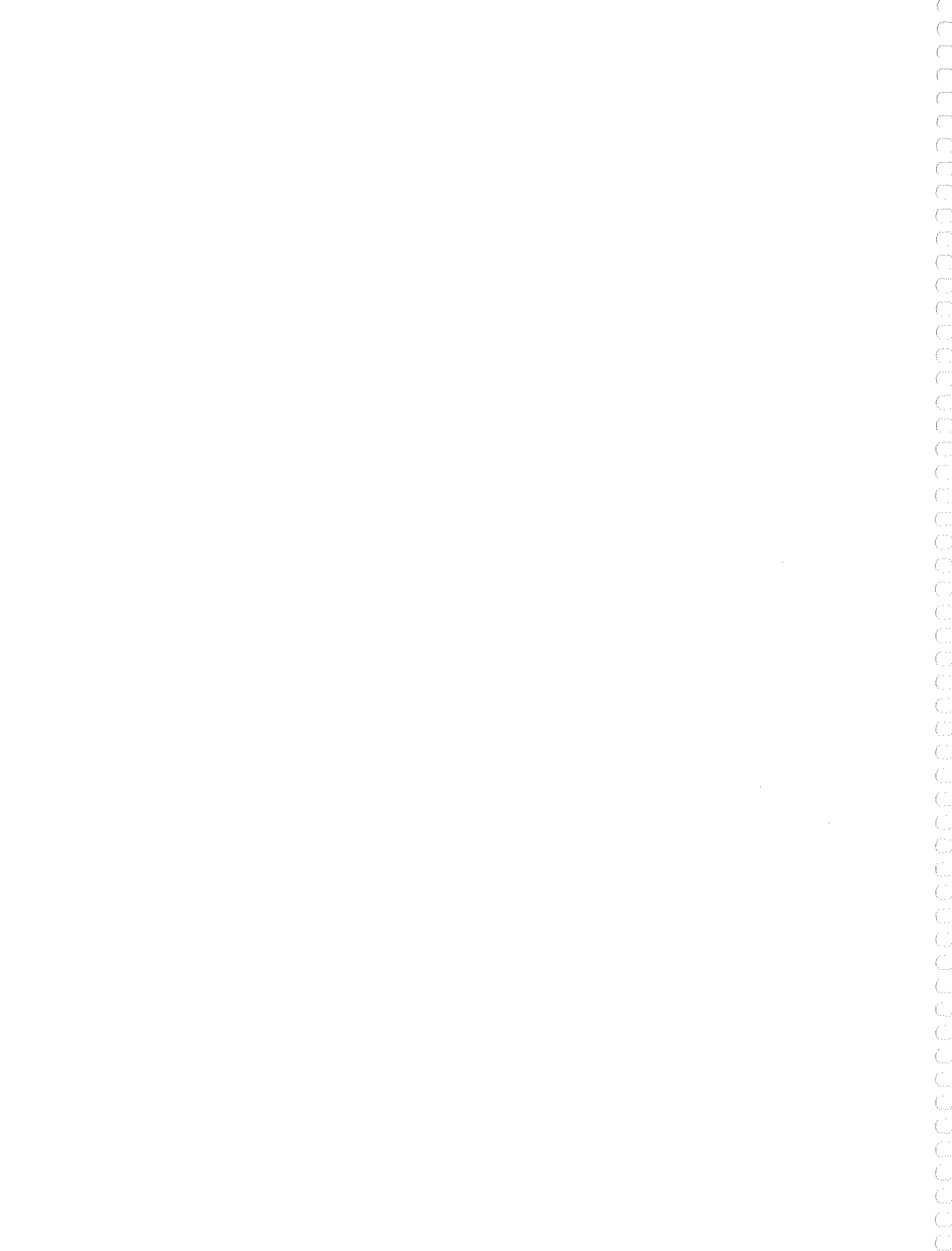
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How will reducing the risk affect the activity?

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# Exercise 2



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BÉNÉVOLES  
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## The continuum of risk

Some activities, jobs, and tasks have a higher risk than others do. Think of a line which represents a continuum of risk. At one end of the continuum are situations that have minimal risk. At the other are situations with considerable / enormous risk.

The factors that help to determine where an activity or a position sits on the continuum of risk are:

- the participant
- the setting
- the nature of the activity
- the level of supervision

The following matrix classifies risk as high, medium, or low in the four categories listed above. Use this matrix to determine the level of risk in one or more situations that your faith community faces regularly.

Example:

Risk:	Low	Medium	High
Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able-bodied adult</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15-year-old</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12-year-old with disability</li> <li>• Infirm senior</li> <li>• Child or baby</li> </ul>
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting room or hall</li> <li>• Worship space</li> <li>• Off-site public space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tents or cabins</li> <li>• Classrooms with doors which have windows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant's home</li> <li>• Classrooms with doors without windows</li> <li>• Off-site private or home meetings with children and youth</li> <li>• Car</li> </ul>
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious literature studying</li> <li>• Greeting</li> <li>• Liturgical reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth group meeting</li> <li>• Children religious instruction with two teachers</li> <li>• Hospital visiting</li> <li>• Nursing home visiting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth group sleep-over</li> <li>• Child religious instruction with one teacher</li> <li>• One-on-one home visits</li> <li>• One-on-one music or liturgical instruction</li> </ul>
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisor always present</li> <li>• Always in large groups</li> <li>• Documentation of meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasionally</li> <li>• Some documentation of meetings or events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little to none</li> <li>• No documentation of meetings or events</li> </ul>

Think of positions in your faith community and see where they fit on the continuum of risk.



# Exercise 3

In small groups, discuss a screening dilemma that your faith community is currently facing. How would you decrease the risk in any of these situations? Use any of the tools introduced in the previous pages or share the methods your group uses to assess and manage risk.

If you prefer, you may use one of the following examples.

## Example 1:

A member of the New Catholic Partnerships at St. Mary's requests assistance to supervise children of parents who are attending a sexual abuse survivors group.

The current volunteer has retired. There are limited funds to budget for a replacement.

A student New Catholic Partner responds to the request and volunteers four of her friends at the high school to assist.

### Questions:

1. Do you see any potential for risks in this scenario?
  - a) to the care receiver(s) (i.e. the children in the group)
  - b) to the caregiver(s)
2. How might you manage the risk in this situation?

## Example 2:

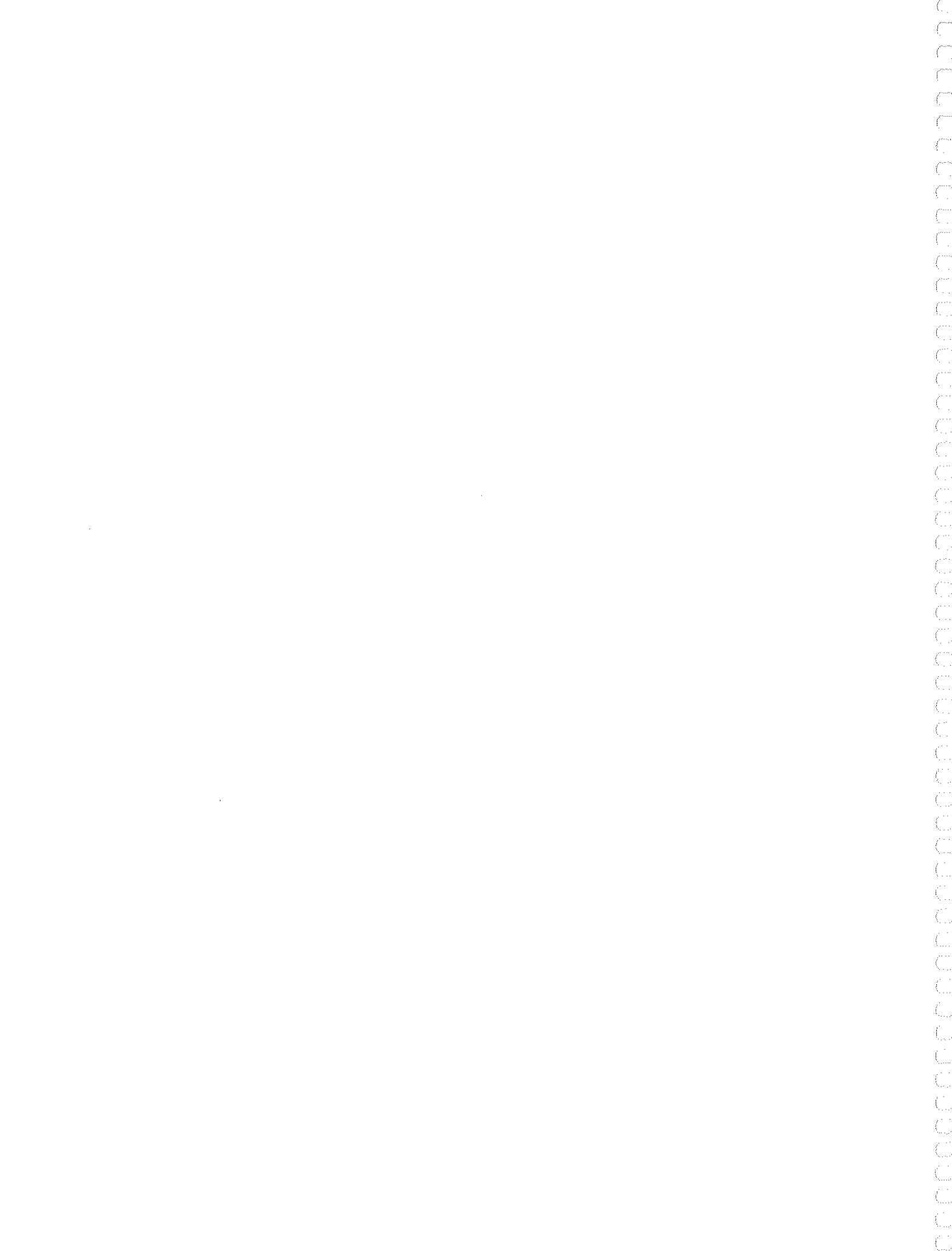
A referral is received from a neighbouring parish via the Priest and later from a caring parishioner.

The family includes: a mother, a father (at work), son "A" who is 18 and has a relapse of leukemia, son "B" who is 14 years old and considered a responsible son, son "C" who is 10 years old with a learning disability and has special needs and daughter "D" who is 6 years old.

When "A" is in the hospital, mother and father spend most of their time with him. Mom finds it difficult to ask for help. When "A" was first diagnosed 10 years ago, the family coped on their own. Mother is very stressed and worried about her children at home. Son "B" has had the responsibility of taking care of his siblings. He is tired of this and his marks at school are suffering. Son "C" has been behaving inappropriately and is challenging "B's" authority.

### Questions:

1. How would you select a caregiver to respond to the needs of this family? What screening strategies would you put in place?
2. What are the potential risks involved?
3. How would you monitor this involvement?





# Exercise 4



Designing volunteer ministry is not as complicated as it sounds. For the purposes of a screening program, the intention of ministry design is to ensure that the ministry can be achieved in a safe or safer way by incorporating elements that can reduce risks to participants and volunteers

Using the list below, design a position for your faith group.

- Title of ministry (religious educator, organist, greeter, etc.)
- Participant group (children, seniors, etc)
- Length or term of ministry appointment (6 months, 1 year, 3 years, 20 years)
- Goals of the ministry
- Activities and tasks associated with the ministry
- Outline of responsibilities
- Boundaries and limits to the ministry
- Skills, experience and qualifications required
- Personal traits and qualities needed and/or desired
- Orientation and training available
- Support, supervision, and evaluation provided
- Mandatory activities (e.g. training, signing the policy acknowledgment form, monthly meetings, travel)
- Working conditions (e.g. non-smoking environment)
- Benefits to the volunteer
- Screening measures

Ask questions – who the participant is, what the activity is, where is it undertaken, and how is it supervised as a template for position design. These questions should be asked with a focus on how to build in ways of avoiding inherent or foreseeable risks in the position being created.

### Examples

1. *Your faith community is looking for volunteers to supervise 'out of the cold' nights for the homeless.*
2. *A faith group is looking for a volunteer for the Finance Committee of the church.*
3. *Sunday/Saturday school is looking for volunteers to look after snacks at break time.*

Feel free to use examples more specific to your own faith community.

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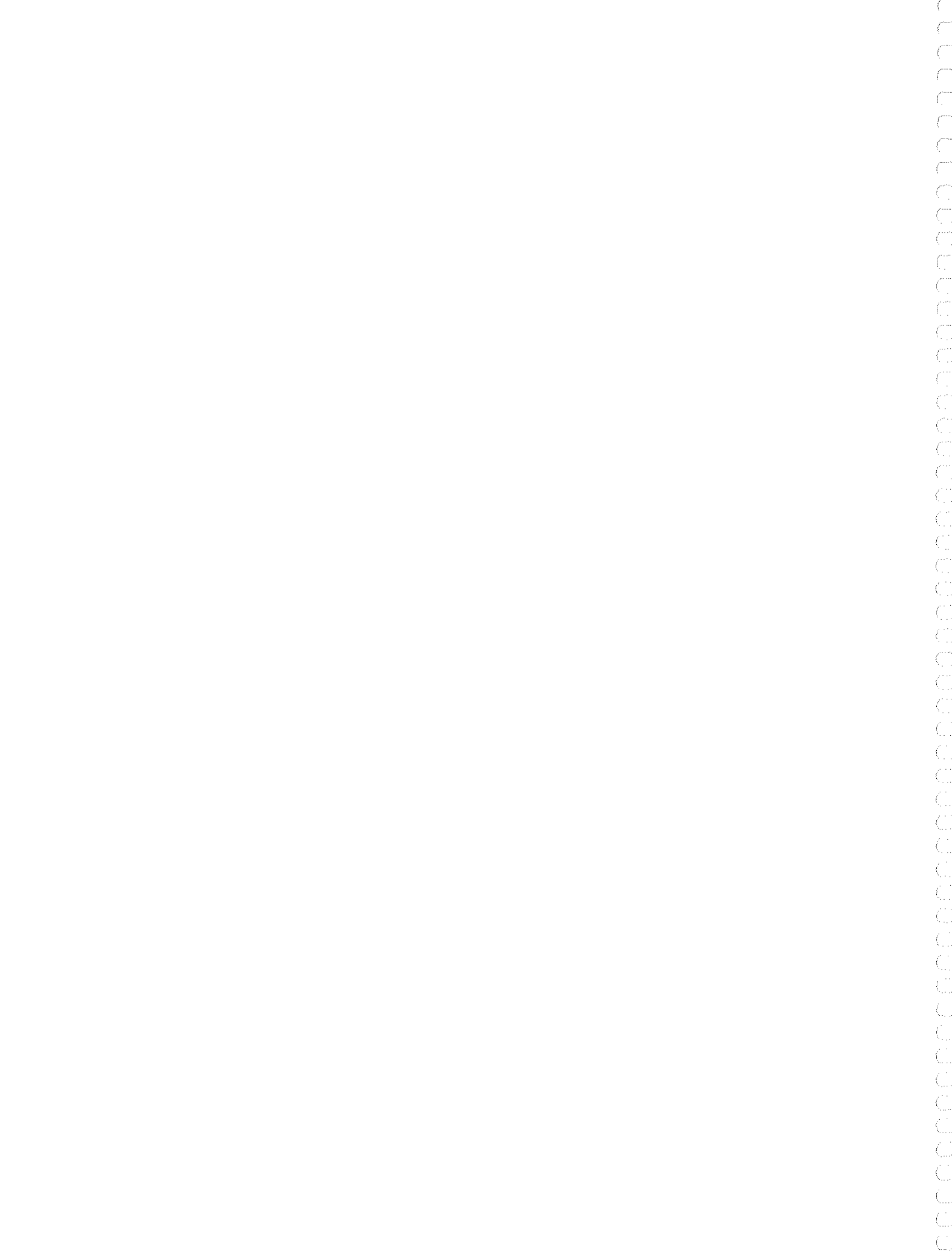
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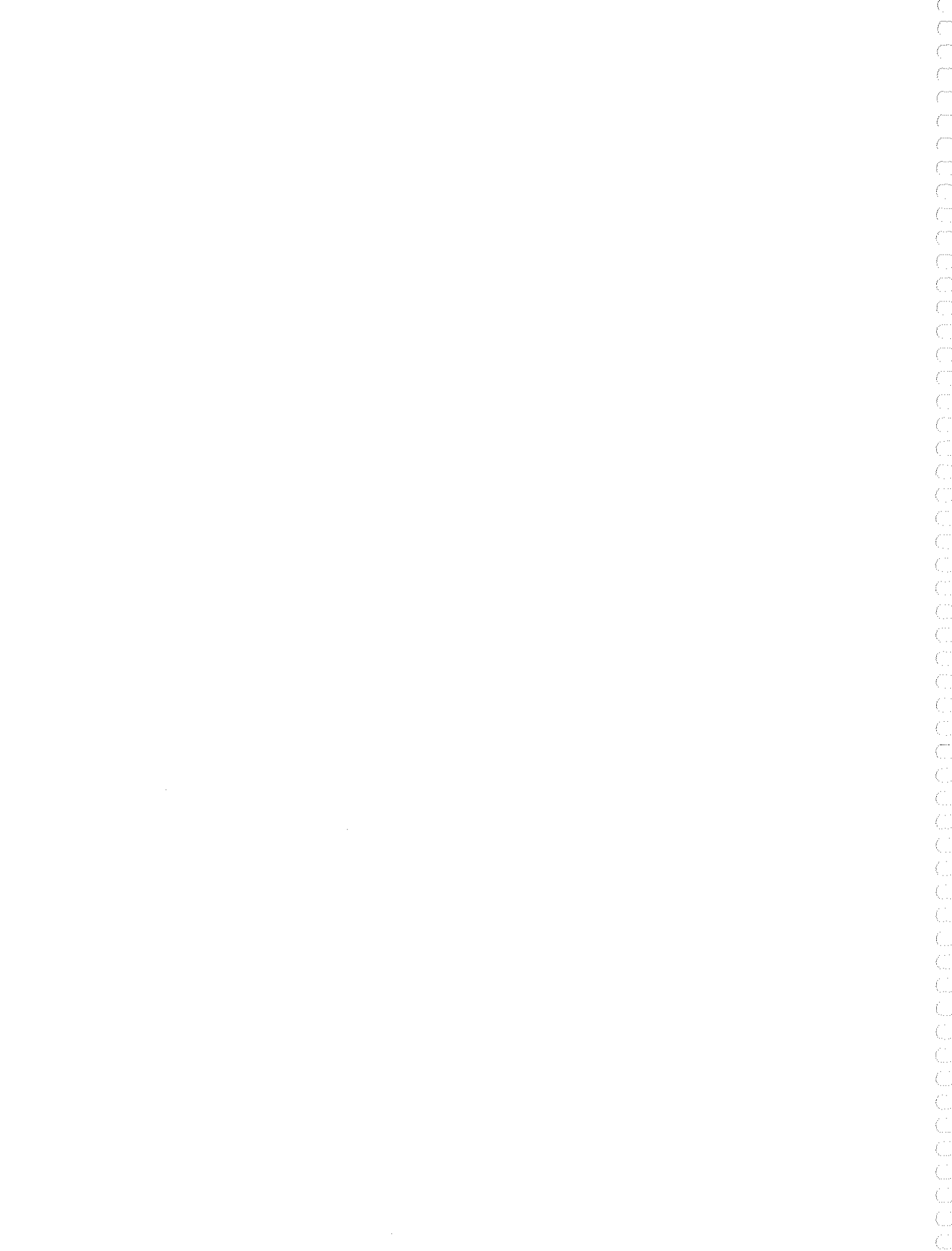
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# Exercise 8



## Discussion

List the types of orientation and training that would be helpful to your volunteers and serve as a protection mechanism for the participant. Discuss how these sessions can be implemented within your community for:

- new volunteers
- existing volunteers

(e.g. buddy system, spot checks, mentor system)

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# Exercise 9

## Pointers for reassigning or stopping volunteer ministry

1. The primary emphasis when reassigning or stopping a volunteer should go on the ministry and not the person. Example: The ministry is not best suited for your skills, gifts, or talents.
2. Bring up the ministry description that was mentioned at the initial stage (when selected) and point out discrepancies.
3. Emphasize the seriousness of the ministry and the importance of a proper match between the skills of the volunteer and the needs of the program.
4. Finally, always thank them for having taken the time to try it out and perhaps suggest a different ministry (if wanted or needed).

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# Exercise 10



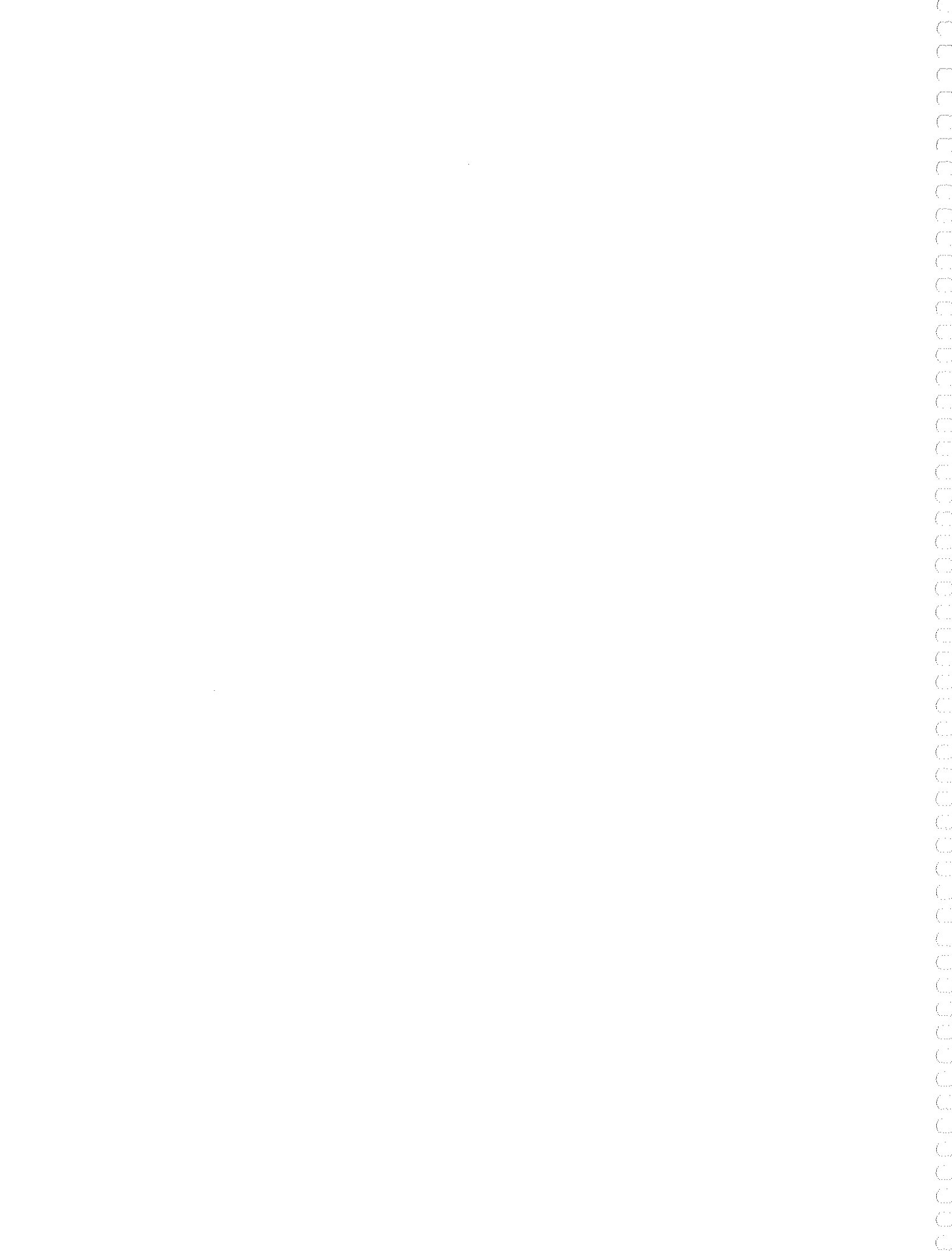
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CANADA

If you do plan to conduct spot checks, you may consider establishing a schedule for them on an annual or semi-annual basis. This type of planning makes it easier for you to work the spot checks into your schedule and it can protect you.

If your spot checks are scheduled ahead of time you can defend your reasons for choosing a particular time and place for spot checks in high risk positions.

The following is an example of an action plan that could be used when scheduling spot checks. Spend some time thinking about how you could use this type of form.

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Youth group leader	Retreat – 1st weekend in December	Call in on Saturday afternoon		



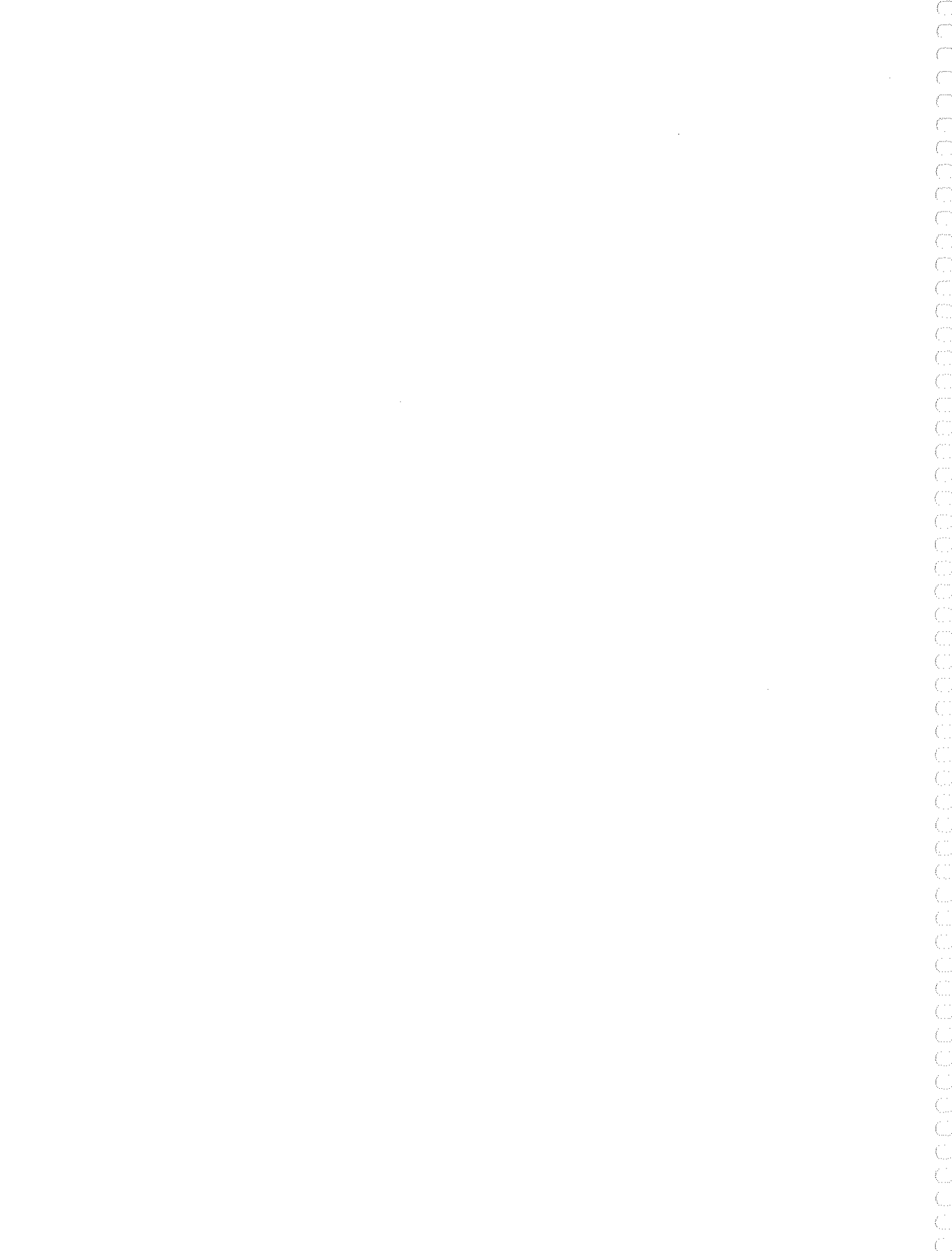
# Sample – Recruitment methods



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**Although most faith groups recruit from within, it is always useful to have additional sources for volunteers.**

- establish and maintain contact with key individuals and groups in your community such as:
- former & current volunteers;
- religious leaders;
- chair people and members of service, social, sorority, professional groups, etc.;
- volunteer centres;
- seniors clubs; and
- school boards
- advertize in your community's weekly publication
- use local universities / colleges (many students look for volunteer work to get more experience)
- religion departments
- education departments
- social service departments
- school boards





# Volunteer application form



*(Adapted from SpeakOut!...Act Now! A Guide to Preventing & Responding to Abuse & Harassment for Sport Clubs and Associations , p. 2-15)*

[Name of Faith Group] \_\_\_\_\_

Name of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (Res.) \_\_\_\_\_ (Bus.) \_\_\_\_\_

(Fax) \_\_\_\_\_

Choices of volunteer positions within the organization:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

If these choices are not available, would you consider a different position?  Yes  No

Identify your previous volunteer position(s):

Group

Volunteer position

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are some of your personal ministry goals in the faith community?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Volunteer application form, cont'd



Why are you volunteering for this position?

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## References

(list three references; i.e. faith group leader, professional).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (res): \_\_\_\_\_ (bus.): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (res): \_\_\_\_\_ (bus.): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (res): \_\_\_\_\_ (bus.): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out the release of information slip attached.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# Volunteer application form, cont'd



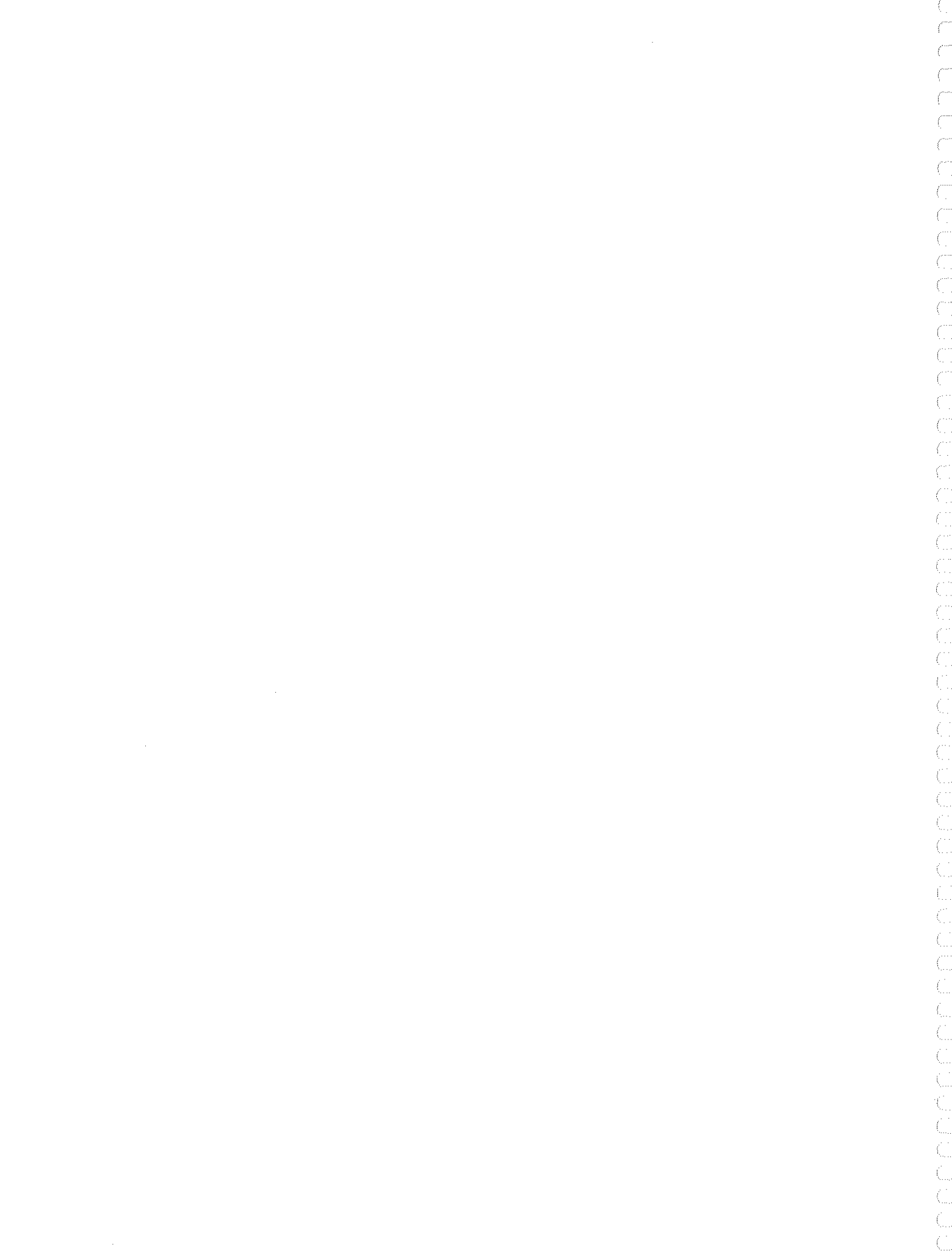
## Authorization for collection of personal information

I, \_\_\_\_\_, authorize { name of faith group } to collect personal  
(name of applicant)  
information appropriate to the position applied for concerning my academic background, employment history,  
and verify the character references I have supplied.

I understand that the information obtained will be confidential but may be shared with relevant organizations in  
order to obtain an appropriate volunteer position.

\_\_\_\_\_  
day / month / year

\_\_\_\_\_  
applicant's signature



# Sample – Reference check script



## Sample Reference Check

(Can be used for telephone, person-to-person, mail, or fax checks)

Adapted from *The Seven Rs of Volunteer Development: A YMCA Resource Kit* by Celeste J. Wroblewski

This form gives you a good indication of the kinds of questions to ask the references who are listed by the candidate.

### To start

- Identify yourself and your faith community.
- Verify that you are speaking to the person named as a reference.
- Tell the person that (name of applicant) gave you permission to call for a reference and that you will keep the conversation confidential.
- Ask if this particular time is suitable and indicate how long the conversation will take.
- Explain what the applicant would be doing for your faith community and the participant group they would be working with.

### Sample script

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling on behalf of (name of faith community). (Name of applicant) has applied to be a volunteer with us doing \_\_\_\_\_. Your name has been provided as a reference. Do you have a few minutes to answer some questions now?

How long have you known (name of applicant)? What is your relationship to (name of applicant)?

It is important that our volunteers are reliable. Tell me about your experiences with (name of applicant) in regard to reliability.

What are (name of applicant)'s strengths and weaknesses in regard to working with (indicate specific participant group: preschoolers, people with disabilities, etc.)?

How would you feel about having (name of applicant) work on a one-to-one basis with your (child or elderly relative)?

It is important to us that (name of faith group)'s volunteers are comfortable with being (supervised or are able to work independently with little or no supervision). What is your experience with (name of applicant)'s ability to accept (being supervised or working independently)?

This volunteer position requires handling many tasks at once and can be stressful at times. How does (name of applicant) deal with stressful situations?

Are you aware of a reason why (name of applicant) is applying for a volunteer position in a faith community rather than one of a more secular nature?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about (name of applicant)?

# Sample – Reference check script, cont'd



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Is there any reason you know of why (name of applicant) would not be able to perform the duties necessary for this volunteer position?

Would you ever consider approaching (name of applicant) for a volunteer position again?

Comments: To get the most out of your reference checks, you should develop additional questions that are more specific to the volunteer position.

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# Sample – Reference check form



*(Adapted from Red Cross Abuse Prevention Services as quoted in Speak Out!...Act Now!)*

Applicant name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list a minimum of two references (personal, faith leader, volunteer-related)

name	home#	work #	occupation

Interviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of reference: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Describe position applied for and why reference is being sought)*

1. How long have you known the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the applicant's strengths? Weaknesses? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is the applicant punctual? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is the applicant reliable? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Can he/she work independently? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How does he/she handle supervision? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How does he/she handle confidential information or positions of trust? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Was his/her position of trust handled to your satisfaction? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Describe his/her relationship with youth. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Is there anything you feel we should be aware of in accepting this person? \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: By adapting the sample script to meet the needs of your group and the volunteer position you are filling, you can create your own reference check form.





# Sample – Consent for criminal record search



(Adapted from *SpeakOut!...Act Now! A Guide to Preventing & Responding to Abuse & Harassment for Sport Clubs and Associations*, p. 2-21)

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*surname* *given name*

Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
*city* *province* *country*

Other names: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(maiden, birth, alias)* *surname* *given name*

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*year/month/day*

Current address: \_\_\_\_\_  
*number* *street* *apt. no.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*city* *province* *code* *telephone*

Whereas I am interested in being considered for a sensitive position of trust and well-being of {*name of faith group*} participants and I am required by the {*name of faith group*} to disclose whether or not I have any convictions or have been charged under any federal or provincial enactment:

And whereas I understand that disclosure of a criminal record may not necessarily preclude me from performing duties/functions/responsibilities I am interested in:

And whereas I understand that, if the {*name of faith group*} should decide any conviction or charge disclosed might preclude me from being involved, I will be given an opportunity to see and discuss that criminal record to determine whether or not my criminal record indicated that I present a risk to participants.

I therefore authorize the RCMP, other Provincial or Municipal Police Service on my behalf to inquire into and determine whether or not I have a criminal record, and also make to the {*name of faith group*} member a full and complete disclosure of any criminal record they may find. I also make this authorization with the understanding that I may be required to provide my fingerprints to verify a criminal record and the fingerprints will be returned to me when the record is adjudicated.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*signature* *date*

# Sample – Consent for criminal record search, cont'd



## Note to police

{name of applicant} has consented to release information to the {name of faith group}. Please check the individual's record and indicate the results on this form.

Please forward the completed form and fingerprints if necessary to:

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Attention: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ signature \_\_\_\_\_ title

## Police use only – Results of record check

Results of record search is merely a record, or lack of official contact with police agencies, not an affirmation of good character.

A search of (check appropriate category):

- The Central Repository for Criminal
- Records for Canada
- Index of (police agency conducting check)

In the above name and birth date shows:

- No record
- A record exists on local index, and a copy, certified by the individual, is attached
- A Central Repository Record exists, has been verified by fingerprint comparison, and a copy is attached.

\_\_\_\_\_ name and signature \_\_\_\_\_ badge number \_\_\_\_\_ year/month/day

# Sample Screening Policy



[Name of Faith Community]

## **Recruitment and Oversight Guidelines for positions of trust.**

In our ministry at [name] a number of people, both paid and unpaid, work in positions of trust. By this we mean work that gives individuals access to money, requires them to work alone or intensively with "vulnerable" people (children, people with cognitive disability, frail seniors, people in crisis) or that results in professional and yet intimate relationships.

We strive to provide the best and most loving kind of ministry possible in our community. We are committed to ensuring the safety and care of our most vulnerable members, especially children. For these reasons the following recruitment and oversight guidelines – screening mechanisms – are being introduced to our community. These guidelines are based on information provided by the national charity Volunteer Canada through the National Education Campaign on Screening.

The first step in considering the screening mechanisms that should exist is to consider the range of ministries and the level of risk inherent in each. The following template assigns a level of risk to a variety of ministries.

### High risk ministries

- the individual has ongoing, intensive or lone interactions with vulnerable people; or
- individual has access to money or confidential records:  
i.e. faith leaders, secretary, trustees, musician, youth leader

### Medium risk ministries

- individual has a relationship with/access to vulnerable people but work
- generally occurs on-site (worship space or hall), in pairs or with other workers in the vicinity:  
i.e. religious instruction leaders, home visitors that go in pairs, choir member

### Low risk ministries

- individual may get to know numerous people, have some access to information or records:  
i.e. greeters, board members

# Sample Screening Policy, cont'd



The screening steps taken should reflect the determined level of risk. The nine steps below describe the full screening process and must be carried out in full for all high risk ministries. Fewer steps are required for lower risk ministries (see below). It should be noted that many of these tasks are about 'good human resource and volunteer management' practice as much as they are to screen for potential problems.

1. A job or ministry description will be provided to potential candidates. The ministry description will outline all tasks inherent in the ministry, will provide the basis for orientation/training as well as evaluation of the person in the ministry.
2. An application form will be completed. Where applicable this will indicate that reference checks and a police records check may be required.
3. An interview will be carried out with at least two interviewers. The interview should include questions directly related to concerns about risk i.e. about interpersonal style with children or vulnerable adults, about history working with money etc. Notes from the interview should be placed in a secure parish file.
4. Reference checks will be carried out. Referees should not be family members. It should be made clear to the referee that the individual is being considered for a position of trust i.e. with children, with other vulnerable people, or with money. Reference check results should be documented.
5. A police records check shall be required. The candidate will be asked to provide a copy of their police record (they will be able to obtain this free of charge from their local police department, or the RCMP). If any convictions appear the candidate will be asked to provide details and give permission for the Church to confirm with the police.
6. Appropriate orientation to [name], especially guidelines for working with vulnerable people, will be provided to all volunteers. In addition training will be provided – or proof that training has been completed will be required – to ensure that the individual is able to perform their duties.
7. Volunteers will be asked to sign an acknowledgment form stating that they have read the misconduct policy, that they understand it, will comply with it and have attended a required workshop.
8. Regular supervision will be provided. This entails a 'senior' person, or peer spending time with the volunteer to observe, support and give feedback on their gifts, skills, style, strengths and challenges.
9. A formal evaluation will be carried out on an annual basis, written up and placed in the volunteer's file.

*For "Medium Risk" ministry items 1, 2, 3, 6, 8\*.*

*For "Low Risk" ministry items 1, 2, and 6 should be in place.*

*\* Item 8 – "Regular Supervision" may be modified when considering a medium risk ministry. Supervision may not be formal however the person in charge of the Children's School or other activities should make time to observe the leaders and provide feedback (or be prepared to act more formally) if any inappropriate behaviours are noted or changes in approach are recommended.*

## **GUIDELINES WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

The following guidelines are intended to provide a general overview of how adult-child interactions should occur. It is recognized that unforeseen circumstances can and will occur. The most important safeguard for our children is full disclosure. If an adult finds him or herself alone with a child for any significant amount of time, or in a situation of emotional intensity, every effort should be made to find another adult or at least inform the child's parent or guardian as quickly as possible under the circumstances.

- Adults (age 16+) should not spend extended time alone with children without the consent of the child's guardian and the knowledge of the program supervisor (ministry leader, religious instruction coordinator, trustee etc.)
- When, and if, programming requires an adult to be alone with children (overnight camps for example, field trips) every effort must be made to protect the child's privacy. Girls and boys should not change together and adults must change separately. Adults should not sleep in proximity to children.
- Adults who form a relationship with children through our faith community's activities should not seek out opportunities to spend with the child "off site". If off site interactions occur the appropriate people should be informed (as above).
- Adults should not help children with toileting. For younger children who cannot manage alone, permission should be given by the parent or guardian before toileting or changing help is given.
- Children should not be taken in an adult's vehicle without parent/guardian permission and the knowledge of leaders.
- Any physical contact between adults and children should occur in "public" and be sanctioned by the program supervisor and the parent/guardian. For example hugs and kisses for younger children or physical 'rough housing' with older kids.
- Parents of children enrolled in programs should be encouraged to ask questions and stay abreast of the nature of the adult/child interactions. Where they feel comfortable they should be encouraged to talk with their children about the programs and the volunteers and staff they encounter.

These guidelines are not intended to hamper relationships between adults or children. More importantly they are not designed to introduce suspicion into adult/child relations. In all cases a certain amount of discretion rests with the adult, based on their knowledge and the nature of their relationship with the child, or the child's family, the setting and the kind of activities. Talking to parents, being transparent when the relationship becomes closer or more time is spent alone, reviewing any incidents with 'supervisors' – these steps will ensure the safety of our children, the integrity of our programs and the well-being of volunteers and staff who work with children.

# Sample Training Workshop (Orientation)



1.5 hours

## Goals:

1. To ensure volunteers are aware of the faith group's policies regarding misconduct and/or screening.
2. To help volunteers develop sensitivity regarding the need to screen and deal with misconduct.
3. To help volunteers understand their responsibility to ensure a safe environment .

## Agenda

Review policy and definitions (30 minutes)

Case studies: small group discussion  
large group debriefing (30 minutes)

Discuss ways volunteers need to minister to create and maintain safe environments.

Sign acknowledgement form (30 minutes)

## Sample case studies:

Case Study 1: You are an adult leader of a youth group. The program has ended and everyone has gone home except for you and one young person. She/he calls home and is told to get a ride from someone at the program because there has been a little crisis with her sister. As she/he is speaking on the phone you recall that you and the other leaders have noticed that this young person flirts with the adult leaders. You realize you are alone with this young person and may be breaking the screening policy. You also know you need to make sure this young person gets home safely. What do you do?

Case Study 2: You are a new religious education coordinator and want to implement the screening policy. You have 10 teachers, one who has been volunteering in this ministry for over 6 years and is a very good friend of ministry leader's family. The teacher's children are extremely unruly in the other classes and when he/she disciplines them excessive physical force is used. When you do a random spot check you hear yelling from his/her classroom. What do you do?

Case Study 3: You are a senior's visitor who is expected to meet weekly with a senior in her home. As you get to know this senior she gradually tells you that the person who comes to help with the cleaning is not very nice to her. At one visit you notice large bruises on her arms. What do you do?

# Sample Training Workshop (Orientation), cont'd



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## Sample Acknowledgement Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_  
(minister/employee/volunteer)

\_\_\_\_\_ I hereby acknowledge receipt of a copy of the [name] Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand the contents of the [name] Policy, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that to function as a volunteer in ministry implies a fiduciary relationship and responsibility with those the organization serves.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please type or print name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Instructions: This signed form will be placed in the named person's personnel file or other suitable file if there is no personnel file. It will remain in the file for an indefinite period of time. Access to personnel files is restricted to the supervisor of the volunteer and the ministry leader.*





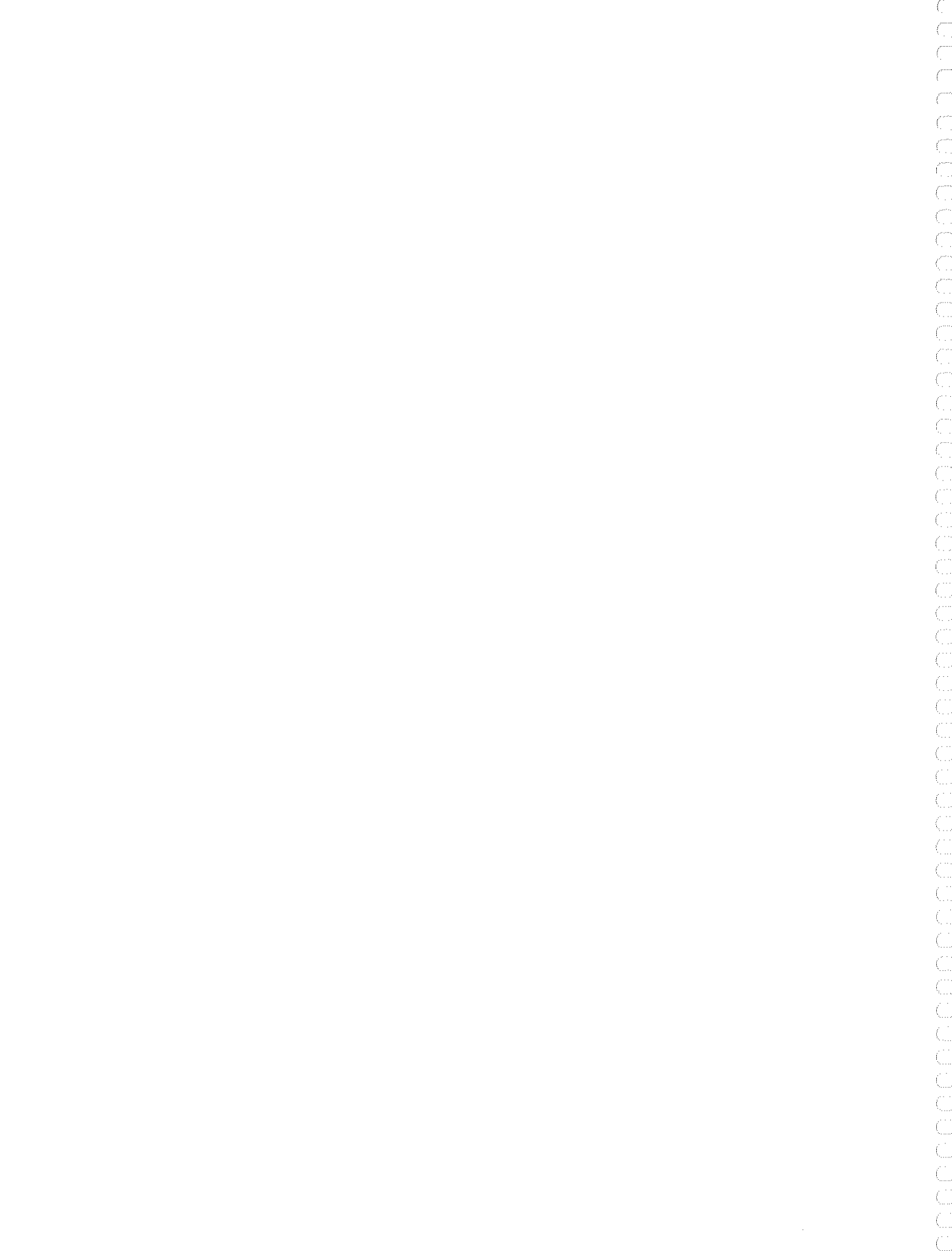
# Additional resources



The following resources are "aids" which can be useful to organizations as they develop policies and procedures around screening specific to their organization. Remember, there are likely a number of steps which your organization has already incorporated into its daily functioning. Congratulate yourself for this and start tackling those areas that your organization has not dealt with yet.

- Screening grid
- Screening checklist
- Screening standards

Please note that most of these resources were developed for a wide audience and use generic terms such as organization, board of directors, etc. Please feel free to adapt them to suit your needs.



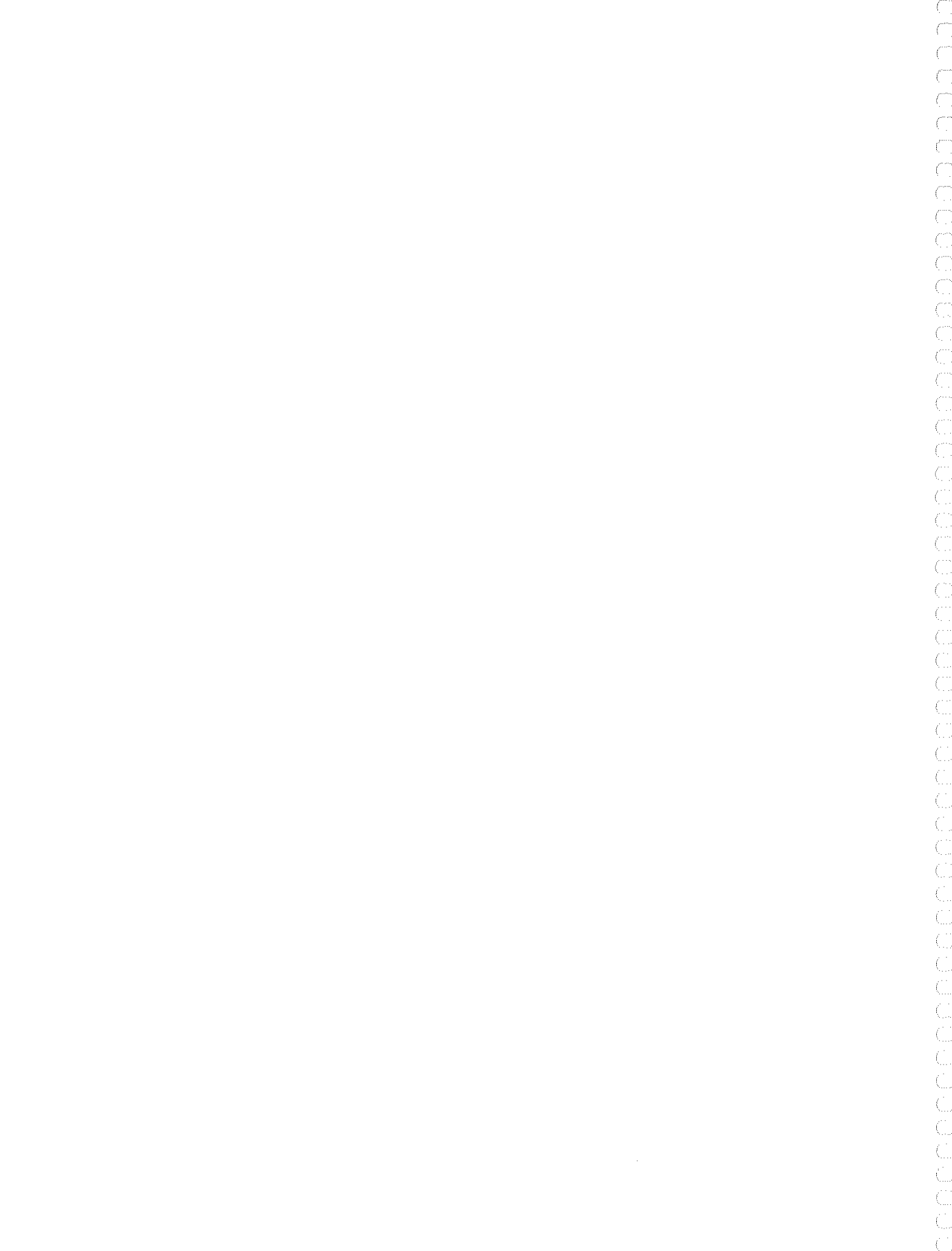
# Screening Grid



The following grid can help you identify which of the screening steps should be chosen depending on the requirements of a specific position. Keep in mind that the two steps; determine the risk and recruitment process, should always be completed for each position.

## Relationship of position requirements to screening tasks

Position	Ministry description	Application	Interview	Reference checks	Police records check	Orientation/training	Supervision/evaluation	Participant follow-up



# Screening checklist

- Assess each position
- Identify the level of risk in each position
- Determine the appropriate screening for the position
- Write position descriptions
- Design interviews based on position descriptions
- Develop an application form
- Develop reference check questions based on position descriptions
- Develop policy on decisions re: selecting or not selecting
- Develop orientation and training package
- Develop orientation and training presentation
- Design guidelines for supervision
- Create evaluation forms
- Develop policy on documentation; particularly what kind of information is to be kept confidential and what kind of information can be made accessible to staff and volunteers.
- Terminate the volunteer if/when it is appropriate



# Screening standards



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The National Education Campaign on Screening is not about "identifying sex offenders" or "police checks"... It is about the need for appropriate, deliberate, considered *comprehensive screening* of staff (an inclusive word for volunteers and paid employees) in positions of trust with vulnerable clients.

Screening standards	in place	N/A	needs revision	to be developed	to be followed up	assigned to	timelines		comments
							start	complete	
1.0 The Board understands their moral and ethical responsibility as well as their legal liability regarding "Duty of Care".									
1.1 The philosophy, values and principles underpinning the organization are clear and explicitly set out in brief written statements.									
1.2 The Board is informed of the pertinent legislation and social policy, as well as the organization's moral and ethical obligation.									
1.3 The Board will establish policies and approve necessary administrative procedures to ensure the organization has appropriate screening measures, thereby maintaining organizational consistency and standards.									
1.4 The Board will designate a budget, supporting education and maintenance of necessary staff and administrative needs to maintain a comprehensive screening program.									

# Screening standards, cont'd



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Screening standards	in place	N/A	needs revision	to be developed	to be followed up	assigned to	timelines		comments
							start	complete	
1.5 The Board will regularly audit the organization's screening process to meet the ever-changing legislation and social environment.									
2.0 The organization's management will have a person(s) designated to manage staff resources and implement a risk management process.									
2.1 A clear, written analysis of potential risks and consequent losses associated with each position within the organization is complete.									
2.2 Position descriptions will be reviewed and risks inherent or foreseeable in each have been identified. The risk management audit considers the following factors: 2.2.1 Client 2.2.2 Setting 2.2.3 Nature of the position 2.2.4 Supervision									



# Screening standards, cont'd

Screening standards	in place	N/A	needs revision	to be developed	to be followed up	assigned to	timelines		comments
							start	complete	
2.3 In designing jobs the following will be assessed: 2.3.1 assessing the staff position 2.3.2 purpose of the position 2.3.3 nature of the position 2.3.4 scope of the position 2.3.5 accountability and risks involved Such a review will conclude whether to: 2.3.6 modify the position 2.3.7 discontinue the activity 2.3.8 transfer liability 2.3.9 accept the risks as identified									
2.4 Appropriate screening measures will be selected and implemented for each position									
2.5 Risk management policies will be written and communicated specific to: 2.5.1 rationale for screening 2.5.2 staff screening 2.5.3 confidentiality and record keeping 2.5.4 standard of care 2.5.5 acceptance and rejection of applicant(s) 2.5.6 discipline and dismissal 2.5.7 authority for decision making									

# Screening standards, cont'd



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Screening standards	in place	N/A	needs revision	to be developed	to be followed up	assigned to	timelines		comments
							start	complete	
2.6 From pre-recruitment until the exit of staff, ongoing screening procedures will be followed addressing: 2.6.1 orientation/training 2.6.2 probation periods 2.6.3 buddy systems 2.6.4 regular supervision 2.6.5 evaluation 2.6.6 random spot checks 2.6.7 periodic reassignment 2.6.8 updated police record checks									
<b>3.0 The organization's management takes responsibility for clients seriously, and screens all applicants thoroughly accepting only those applicants who meet our identified requirements.</b>									
3.1 Recruitment and promotional material will regularly be reviewed for accuracy. Statements are clear and materials state all applicants are thoroughly screened.									
3.2 Based on the results of the risk management audit and job description analysis, measures will be selected from the following: 3.2.1 application form 3.2.2 interview 3.2.3 reference checks 3.2.4 orientation and training 3.2.5 medical checks 3.2.6 police record checks 3.2.7 child abuse register checks 3.2.8 others									

# Screening standards, cont'd

Screening standards	in place	N/A	needs revision	to be developed	to be followed up	assigned to	timelines		comments
							start	complete	
3.3 Application forms will: 3.3.1 comply with the human rights legislation 3.3.2 request general and preliminary information about the applicant 3.3.3 ask for specific and detailed information									
<b>4.0 All prospective staff are interviewed for each position.</b>									
4.1 Interviewers are trained and have a specific and consistent format, with specific questions to ask of applicants. i.e. Driver's license might be used to identify the individual.									
4.2 The "type" of interview procedures will reflect the level of risk involved. Considerations will be given to: 4.2.1 one-on-one interviews 4.2.2 panel 4.2.3 series of interviews 4.2.4 in-home interviews including client and environment 4.2.5 specific positions may require a specialized interview or test.									
4.3 Accurate and objective written records will be completed meeting the Human Rights Legislation. Records will be filed in a confidential environment according to the Human Rights Standards.									

# Screening standards, cont'd



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Screening standards	in place	N/A	needs revision	to be developed	to be followed up	assigned to	timelines		comments
							start	complete	
4.4 All parties involved understand the process for obtaining police record checks, sources of information assessed and how information is released, as well as the limitations of the information provided.									
4.5 Applicants will provide written consent for the organization to obtain personal information from police, medical, and child abuse checks, only in the final stages of placement.									
<b>5.0 All references are checked and completed on all applicants.</b>									
5.1 Reference checks will comply with Human Rights Legislation									
5.2 A minimum of two references will be supplied from such resources as: 5.2.1 business 5.2.2 education 5.2.3 previous work experience (paid or unpaid) 5.2.4 family									
5.3 Position placement is conditional on receiving verified references.									
5.4 The interviewer(s) will keep written records of all telephone references completed on an applicant.									

# Screening standards, cont'd



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Screening standards	in place	N/A	needs revision	to be developed	to be followed up	assigned to	timelines		comments
							start	complete	
5.5 Applicants who do not have the necessary qualifications (based on position requirements) will be refused.									
6.0 Orientation and training is mandatory prior to a position being staffed.									
6.1 Each staff will be provided with the philosophy, values and principles underpinning the organization.									
6.2 All staff will be educated in their: 6.2.1 roles and responsibilities 6.2.2 issue of confidentiality 6.2.3 limits of authority 6.2.4 extent of responsibility, "Duty of Care".									
6.3 Each staff will be provided a written policy and procedures manual.									
6.4 Position specific training will be provided.									
7.0 Administrative and management supports for screening measures will be in place ensuring the Board's policies and procedures are implemented and enforced.									
7.1 Zero tolerance for any abuse will be demonstrated by: 7.1.1 clearly writing down policies and procedures 7.1.2 implementing and enforcing policies and procedures 7.1.3 timely reviews and revisions of issues and decisions									



# Screening standards, cont'd

Screening standards	in place	N/A	needs revision	to be developed	to be followed up	assigned to	timelines		comments
							start	complete	
7.2 Ongoing staff training, specific to their job and "Duty of Care", within the changing environment will be provided.									
7.3 An audit of supports and systems, needed, to ensure success of screening measures, will be completed by reviewing the following: 7.2.1 communication of policies and procedures 7.2.2 administrative and clerical processes in place 7.2.3 information and materials 7.2.4 furniture (locking file cabinets) 7.2.5 space (secure room / office) 7.2.6 documentation (job descriptions, applications, etc.) 7.2.7 schedules for review of policies and procedures 7.2.8 destruction of confidential information 7.2.9 reporting process 7.2.10 accountability 7.2.11 record-keeping policies and procedures for consistency and completeness									

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## Background

### Introduction to Volunteer Canada

Volunteer Canada was established in 1977 and incorporated under the name, *The Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaux and Centres* (CAVBC), in 1987. Volunteers ran the association until 1994, when it received a \$1 million grant over seven years from The McConnell Foundation of Montréal. This grant has allowed Volunteer Canada to develop a significant presence at the national level as well as to engage in a number of initiatives supportive of, and in partnership with, volunteer centres.

The foundation provided CAVBC with support for the purpose of helping to build a national voice for volunteerism and to support and facilitate the development of local volunteer centres through identifying and providing leadership on issues and trends in the volunteerism movement in Canada. Volunteer Canada also supports the work of Canadian volunteer centres through regional meetings, newsletters, a database of centres, fundraising support, and promotional and educational resources.

Provincial centres include Volunteer B.C., Volunteer Alberta, and the Fédération des centres d'action bénévole du Québec. These centres provide further leadership – with Volunteer Canada's support – to local volunteer centres.

The Association is governed by a volunteer board of directors. Volunteer Canada's membership currently includes over 500 volunteer centres, community organizations, and nonprofit agencies.

### What is the National Education Campaign on Screening?

The overall goal of the campaign is to assist voluntary and public sector organizations in their efforts to protect people from harm.

Clearly, voluntary and public sector organizations, which provide services to vulnerable clients, must do everything they reasonably can to provide adequate, appropriate, safe, and well-managed programs. They have moral, ethical, and legal obligations – both implicit and explicit to exercise reasonable care to protect the individuals, as well as the staff, the community-at-large, and the organization. While many organizations have taken steps to introduce screening measures, which will help them meet their obligations, others are seeking support to develop and introduce such policies into their agencies.

Screening of applicants refers to the range of procedures and processes used by organizations to carefully scrutinize individuals who apply for paid or unpaid positions in order to choose the best candidates, and to weed out, as far as possible, those who are incompetent or have the potential to do harm.

Screening is a continuous process, not something that is done once and forgotten. Screening continues once a volunteer is selected; through supervision, evaluation and client follow-ups, particularly if they hold positions of trust with vulnerable clients. Organizations should not apologize for a rigorous screening process; their first allegiance must be to the safety and protection of clients, staff, and the community.

The National Education Campaign on Screening has developed a series of workshops available through volunteer centres across Canada. Certified trainers offer workshops at all levels from introductory lectures to specific consultation on the development of screening policy.

Resource materials available to the public through the campaign include:

**The Screening Handbook**, a comprehensive manual providing information on legislation, liability issues, and a detailed step-by-step process for the development of a comprehensive screening program.

**Duty of Care**, a 15-minute video narrated by actor Al Waxman that discusses the importance of screening and offers an introduction to various screening methods.

**The Education Dossier** contains 20 brochures. Each one highlights a different aspect of screening in a simple question & answer format.

## Description of training initiatives

The National Education Campaign on Screening is one of the programs available through the Canadian Volunteer Centre Training Network (CVCTN). The CVCTN offers a variety of training programs, delivered by certified trainers through volunteer centres in communities across Canada. Curricula for the programs were developed specifically for the voluntary sector and have been tested before being offered as part of the network.

The CVCTN was established to develop the capacity of the voluntary sector by enhancing the training expertise of volunteer centres. This project is a partnership between Volunteer Canada and member volunteer centres.

Currently, the Network has three training programs:

- National Education Campaign on Screening;
- VIVE – Volunteers Involving Volunteers Effectively; and
- Value Added: Gearing-up for Partnerships with Business.



## **Workshops available through the National Education Campaign on Screening:**

### **What is Screening? Why Screen?**

This session outline provides a step-by-step guide for the delivery of a two-to-three hour workshop/presentation on screening volunteers and employees. It is designed to be used with The Screening Handbook and delivered by certified trainers.

### **Developing Effective Policy on Screening**

This curriculum is divided into 3 modules.

- Before you Hire
- The Hiring Process
- The Working Volunteer

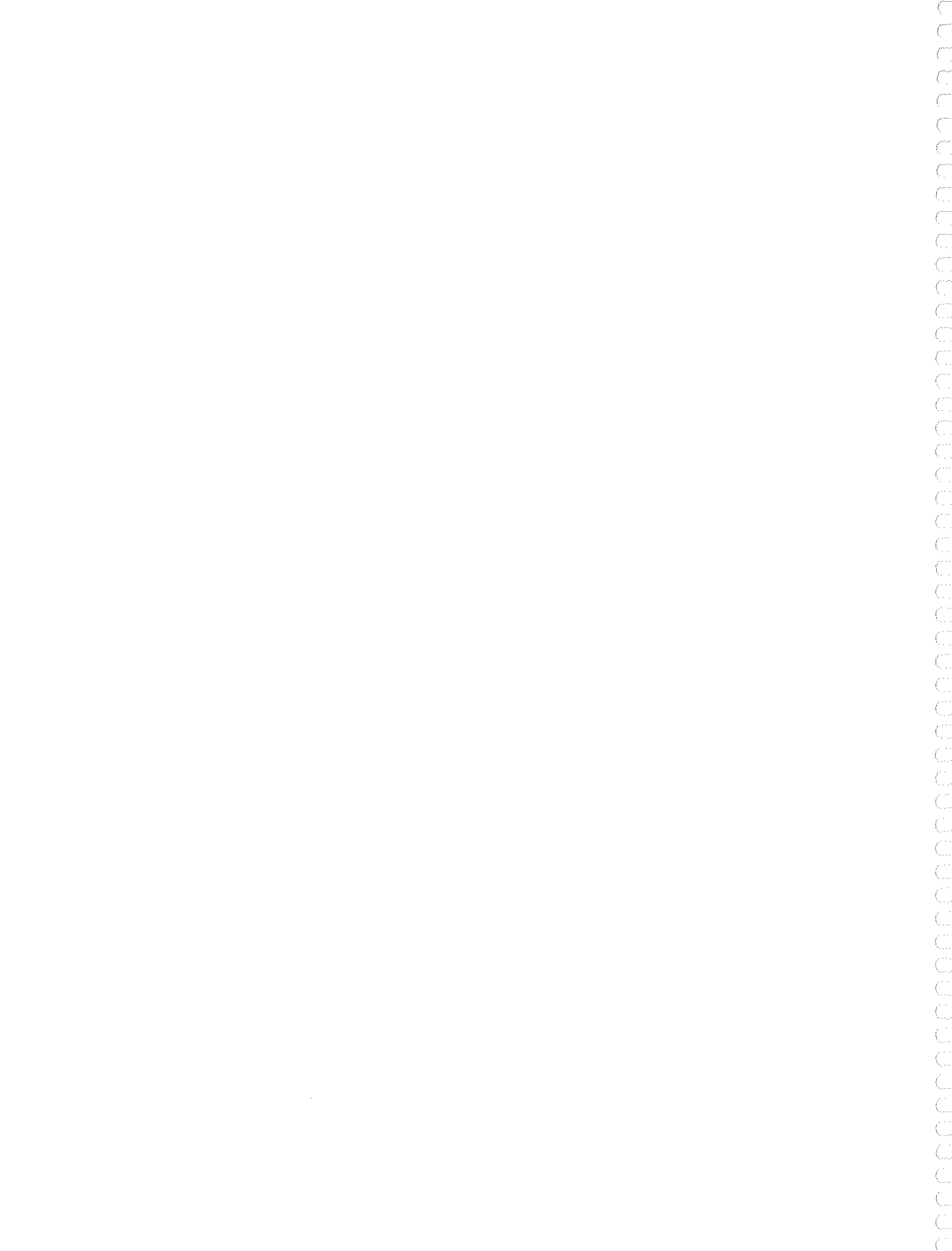
The overall purpose of this training is to give organizations a thorough grounding in all aspects of the screening process and enable them to develop effective policies in each area.

### **Safe Steps: A Volunteer Screening Process for Recreation and Sport**

This curriculum is targeted at recreation and sport organizations. It is a hands-on, practical workbook to help organizations apply the theory of screening to their program and volunteers.

### **Consultation**

Volunteer centres are also available for individual consultation with organizations requiring additional guidance in the development and implementation of screening policy and procedures.





## How to Develop a Sexual Misconduct Policy and Screening Policy

It is important for every community to have rules to govern itself. A sexual misconduct policy provides a step-by-step process of how to deal with a complaint of inappropriate behaviour.

### The four essential components of a sexual misconduct policy are:

1. Faith Mission Statement - provide the theological or philosophical bases for the policy.
2. Definitions – list the terms and their meanings so there is clarity and consistency.
3. Complaints Procedure – develop a structure for handling complaints.
4. Acknowledgement Form – Volunteers should sign this form stating that they have read and understood the policy and that they are entrusted with the care of others.

### Here are a few definitions:

#### Consent

Consent is understood as non-coercive. Consent has not been given if an individual agrees to any sexual activity under threat, or if consent is obtained by fraud or through the influence of a person in authority over that person. Children under the age of 12 cannot give consent. Under specific circumstances between peers, for children age 12-14, and with young persons age 14 - 18, consent is not valid if the accused was in a position of authority over them. There are further provisions for mentally or otherwise incapacitated or vulnerable children, adolescents and adults. (Criminal Code of Canada, Bill C - 127, 1983 and Bill C - 15, 1988)

#### Sexual Assault

Sexual assault, commonly known as sexual abuse, is any intentional use of force or threat of use of force and involving some form of sexual activity, including, but not limited to, the examples listed below, against another person without his/her consent. Sexual assault is an activity that may be criminal in nature as defined either as child abuse under the provincial child and family legislation or as criminal under the Criminal Code of Canada.

#### *Examples:*

- *kissing, sexual contact, fondling or sexual intercourse*
- *bodily harm or threats to harm, assault with a weapon*
- *incest, bestiality and gross indecency*
- *sexual offences against children such as sexual interference, invitation to touching, sexual exploitation of a young person, parent or guardian procuring sexual activity of a child, exposing genitals to a child, juvenile prostitution, corrupting children, indecent acts*

#### Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation refers to the act of taking advantage of the vulnerability of an adult, with whom there is a fiduciary relationship, for one's own pleasure/gain. Sexual exploitation is any form of sexual contact or invitation to sexual contact, with an adult by a professional person, religious leader or anyone in a position of authority or power over that adult whether or not there is consent from the individual.

## Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a specific form of harassment defined in the Human Rights Code of Canada. It is engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome. Sexual harassment is behaviour that has the effect of undermining, coercing, intimidating, humiliating or demeaning an individual on the basis of sex. It may have the effect of creating a place of ministry or workplace, which is hostile or offensive. Such behaviour may consist of a single incident or several incidents over a period of time. The harasser could be of the same or opposite sex as the person harassed and may be a supervisor, co-worker/minister, client, parishioner, volunteer or an external person providing service. Sexual harassment can occur in or outside the office or religious building but is not limited to a work-related activity.

### *Examples:*

- *threats or verbal abuse*
- *unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, innuendo or taunting about a person's body or sexual orientation*
- *distribution by mail, fax or other electronic means material of a sexual nature which potentially could be offensive*
- *displaying sexist, pornographic or derogatory pictures*
- *unwelcome invitations or requests or sexually suggestive remarks*
- *leering or other sexual gestures*
- *unnecessary physical contact, such as patting or pinching*

A screening policy is a document that lists the screening procedures for ministry and how these procedures will be implemented, monitored and enforced. It is a statement of good practices, which minimizes risk and creates safe environments.

The essential components of a screening policy are:

1. Faith Mission Statement – it could be the same as the one used for the misconduct policy.
2. List the screening procedures for ministry in low, medium and high-risk situations.
3. State the enforcement procedures and consequences for violating the policy.
4. Acknowledgement Form – volunteers should review the policy and sign that they understand and will comply with it.

Policies should always reflect what is appropriate for the particular context of your faith group. They should also embody the principles of natural justice, which is the foundation of our legal system. Two examples are: a person complained against is innocent until proven guilty and investigators must be independent from the individual who judges.

Because of the scope, mandate and liabilities involved with sexual misconduct, it is appropriate that these two policies be approved by the most senior level of governance of your organization.

For assistance in developing a policy contact your local volunteer centre for a one-on-one consultation.

## Sources and Further Reading

### Publications

Street, Lorraine, *The Screening Handbook: Protecting Clients, Staff and the Community*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaux and Centres. 1996

*Speak Out!...Act Now! A Guide to Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Harassment for Sport Clubs and Associations*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Hockey Association. 1998

Lai, Mary L; Terry S. Chapman; Elmer L. Steinbock, *Am I Covered For...? A Comprehensive Guide to Insuring Your Non-Profit Organization*. 2nd edition, San Jose, CA, Consortium for Human Services, Inc. 1992.

Drouillard, Roseanne, "Behaviour-Based Interviewing". United Way-Centraide, Windsor Essex County. 1997

*What is Screening? Why Screen?.* Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaux and Centres. 1997

*Developing Effective Policy on Screening*. Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaux and Centres. 1997

"Recruitment and Interviewing Guide", Continuing Education, Edmonton Public Schools.

*Screening NeighbourLink Volunteers Manual*. British Columbia: NeighbourLink Canada. 1997.

Graff, Linda L., "Risk Management", Chapter 5, *Management of Volunteer Services in Canada: The Text*. Ginette Jonstone (editor). Carp, Ontario: Johnstone Training and Consultation (JTC) Inc. 1997.

Graff, Linda L., "Selection, Screening, and Placement", Chapter 9, *Management of Volunteer Services in Canada: The Text*. Ginette Jonstone (editor). Carp, Ontario: Johnstone Training and Consultation (JTC) Inc. 1997.

Graff, Linda L *By Definition: Policies for Volunteer Programs*. Dundas, Ontario: Graff and Associates, 1997.

Patterson, John; Charles Tremper; Pam Rypkema. *Child Abuse Prevention Primer for your Organization*. Washington, DC: Nonprofit Risk Management Center. 1995.

Tremper, Charles; Pam Rypkema. "A Look at the Heart of Risk Management." *Leadership*, Washington, DC: Points of Light Foundation. October - December, 1994. P.8

The Education Dossier, Volunteer Canada (1996)

Tremper, Charles; Gwynne Kostin. *No Surprises: controlling risks in volunteer programs*. Washington, DC: Non-Profit Risk Management Center. 1993.

# Appendix III



Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services. *Planning it Safe: How to Control Liability & Risk in Volunteer Programs*. St. Paul, MI: Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services. 1992.

Patterson, John; Charles Tremper; Pam Rypkema. *Staff Screening Tool Kit: Keeping the bad apples out of your organization*. Washington, DC: Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1994.

Wroblewski, Celeste J. *The Seven Rs of Volunteer Development: A YMCA resource kit*. Chicago, IL: The YMCA of the USA, 1994.

## Videos

Duty of Care, Volunteer Canada (1996)

Volunteer Screening - It's Our Duty - Interviews and Reference Checks and Recruiting Volunteers: The Grizzly Creek Solution, Scouts Canada (1997)

Not in my Church, Centre for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence

Ask Before you Hug: Sexual Harassment in the Church, EcuFilm, 810 Twelfth Ave., South, Nashville, Tennessee 37203

Put the Child First, a training video and package developed for the National Youth-Serving Organizations. Canadian Council on Children and Youth, 1989

## Organizations

The following organizations have done significant work in areas related to screening.

Canadian Red Cross Society - Abuse Prevention Program

1800 Alta Vista Drive

Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4J5

(613)739-3000

(613)739-2599 (fax)

Scouts Canada

1345 Baseline Road

Ottawa, Ontario K2C 3G7

(613)224-5131

(613)224-3571

[www.scouts.ca](http://www.scouts.ca)

Centre for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence

936 N., 34th Street, Suite 200

Seattle, Washington 98103

(206) 634-1903

(206) 634-0115

email:[cpsdv@cpsdv.org](mailto:cpsdv@cpsdv.org)

<http://www.cpsdv.org>