

Vulnerable Sector Police Records Checks

1.0 Background

1.1 The United Church of Canada provides guidelines for Vulnerable Sector police record checks for ministers, but not for lay employees or volunteers.

1.2 ESG implemented the Duty of Care for Responsible Ministry in 2006. Job descriptions of all known volunteer positions were written. These positions were then evaluated as to high, medium or low risk, with respect to vulnerable persons. Since implementation of the policy in 2006, ESG has been carrying out Vulnerable Sector police record checks on all lay employees and on all high risk designated volunteer positions (which includes all church school and youth positions).

1.3 The Vulnerable Sector police records check is a paper process that requires a form to be signed by the person to whom the check pertains, which the person then submits to the applicable police authority. The result of the records check goes directly to the person who requested the check, and that person is responsible to bring the original to the church as soon as it is received.

1.4 All police records checks, for both staff and volunteers, are paid for from a budget line ascribed to the Lead Minister.

2.0 Ministers

2.1 Ministers are responsible for complying with the requirements for police records checks mandated by the United Church of Canada for ministry personnel.

3.0 Lay Employees

3.1 ESG has determined that all lay employees must either have or obtain a satisfactory Vulnerable Sector police records check at the time of hiring.

3.2 On or prior to the anniversary of the date of their police records check, each lay employee shall submit a completed and signed Annual Offence Declaration in the form attached as part of Appendix A; provided that on or prior to the sixth anniversary of their police records check, the lay employee shall obtain a current Vulnerable Sector police records check.

3.3 The Ministry & Personnel Committee is responsible for requiring lay employees to comply with this policy. The Church Administrator shall advise the Chair of M&P when the anniversary date each lay employee's police records check is approaching. All police record checks and Annual Offence Declarations shall be kept in the employee's personnel file.

4.0 Volunteers

4.1 The Church Administrator is responsible for carrying out the policy and process for volunteers, working with the Chairs of the various committees who are responsible for informing the Administrator of any new people who have volunteered for positions that have been designated high risk.

4.2 Each person who volunteers in one or more high-risk designated positions must obtain a satisfactory Vulnerable Sector police records check when they start to volunteer.

4.3 The Church Administrator will provide to each volunteer in a high-risk designated position the “Duty of Care at ESG/Volunteer Handbook for those working with the Vulnerable Sector” attached to this policy as Appendix A.

4.4 In October of each year, following the Annual General Meeting, the Church Administrator shall provide to the Chair of each committee that has high risk designated positions a list of the volunteers on such committee shown in the files of the Administrator to be in high-risk designated positions, and the Chair shall advise of additions or deletions to that list.

4.5 After the initial police records check has been obtained, the Church Administrator shall ask each volunteer (i) to submit a completed and signed Annual Offence Declaration (in the form attached as part of Appendix A) on or prior to the anniversary date of their police records check or (ii) to obtain a current Vulnerable Sector police records check on or prior to the sixth anniversary of their police records check.

4.6 All police records checks and Annual Offence Declarations for volunteers shall be kept in files maintained by the Church Administrator.

4.7 There will be *ad hoc* situations such as a parent wishing to stay at the church school with his/her child because, for example, the child is anxious, or is new to the class. This is allowed as long as a person who has a Vulnerable Sector police records check acts in a supervisory role, and the parent or other person is never alone with another child or other vulnerable person.

5.0 General

If someone has had a Vulnerable Sector police records check done as part of their job or in relation to a volunteer activity outside ESG, a copy of that records check is adequate for the purposes of this policy.

Duty of Care at ESG

Volunteer Handbook for those working with the Vulnerable Sector

1. Preamble

Eglinton St George's has a legal, moral and spiritual duty to care for and protect staff and participants in our church programs. At ESG we take this responsibility seriously and expect all who work with vulnerable individuals to do so in a responsible manner, creating a community of trust and safety for everyone.

2. Definition of the Vulnerable Sector

Vulnerable members of society are defined in the *Criminal Records Act* as persons who, because of age, disability, or other circumstances, are:

- In a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of authority or trust relative to them

This includes children, youth, senior citizens, people with physical, developmental, social, emotional, or other disabilities, as well as people who are victims of crime or harm. The vulnerability may be a temporary condition or permanent.

3. Volunteer roles at ESG working with the Vulnerable Sector

- Working with children or youth in any programs or activities
- Visiting seniors as part of our Pastoral Care Team
- Performing any services with clients in our Wellness Centre, such as Reiki or Therapeutic Touch
- Meeting with clients in our Thursday Outreach Program

4. Overview of risk management policies and procedures

At ESG we are taking care to consider the possibility that something could go wrong, and taking steps to minimize, prevent or eliminate the circumstances that could lead to injury, abuse or harm to program participants and our volunteers. This includes the following practices:

- A review of all volunteer activities to identify risk levels relating to work with the vulnerable sector
- Job descriptions for all activities where volunteers interact with the vulnerable sector
- Police checks for anyone working with the vulnerable sector
- Providing this Handbook to volunteers who work with the vulnerable sector

i. Volunteer Positions working with the Vulnerable Sector

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| Pastoral Care | Pastoral Care Team Leader |
| | Pastoral Care Team Visitor |
| Children's Programs | Librarian |
| | Teachers |
| | Toddler & Infant Room Volunteers |
| | Volunteers helping in any capacity |
| Youth Programs | Parents supporting programs or events |
| Wellness Team | Wellness Team Coordinator |
| | Wellness Practitioners |
| Outreach Initiatives | Thursday Afternoon Drop in |
| | |

ii. Police Record Checks Procedures

All church school and youth positions and those working with other vulnerable sector groups are considered roles with high-risk designations. These volunteers will fill in the form to request a Vulnerable Sector police records check, paid for by the church, and the forms will (generally) be mailed to Toronto Police Services from the church office. When the report is received at home by the volunteer (*note: the church does not receive it*), it should be given immediately to the Church Administrator who will record it in our system. Annually, each volunteer will sign the *Annual Offence Declaration*. Every six years, an updated Vulnerable Sector police records check will be required.

If a volunteer lives outside of Toronto, they will have to request a letter from the Church Administrator to take to their local police detachment to complete the Vulnerable Sector check. In this case, the volunteer will be asked to pay for the police check and then submit the receipt for reimbursement.

In some cases when a volunteer's gender and birth date match a person on the list of "pardoned offences," they may be asked to go for RCMP fingerprinting to confirm their identity. The Church Administrator will provide a letter asking that the additional fee be waived.

There will be *ad hoc* situations, such as a parent wishing to stay at the church school with his/her child because, for example, the child is anxious, or is new to the class. This is allowed as long as a person who has a Vulnerable Sector police records check acts in a supervisory role, and the parent or other person is never alone with another child or other vulnerable person.

iii. Distribution of Handbook

All volunteers in positions that are designated high risk will be given this Handbook on Duty of Care, which includes the steps to mitigate risks specific to particular volunteer activities.

5. Steps to Reduce Risk in each group

i. Children's Programs

- Vulnerable Sector police checks are completed for Nursery and Church School volunteers and staff
- Key members of the Children's Ministry Working Group and staff working in the Nursery and Church School have first aid training, and a first aid kit is stored on the wall in the kitchen area
- Fire drill procedures are practiced during the year, posted in various locations throughout the Nursery and Church School, and directions to parents are printed in the weekly bulletin
- Parents are asked about allergies or other conditions for the leaders to be aware of during annual registration
- Volunteers are never alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom. A door is left ajar or two volunteers and/or staff accompany the child
- Church School will not run a program if only one child is present, unless there are two adults present
- Children are signed out by their parents at the end of the worship service

ii. Youth Programs

- Vulnerable Sector police checks are completed for Youth Leaders, volunteers, and other staff working with youth
- Parents are asked to communicate information about allergies or other conditions for the youth leaders to be aware of
- Youth Leaders will not run a program if only one youth is present , unless another adult is also present
- For events such as sleepovers and/or retreats, a male and female leader and/or volunteer must both be present at all times

iii. Wellness Practitioners

- Complete Vulnerable Sector police checks
- Complete an annual *Covenant Statement of Ethics for Wellness Ministry Volunteers* and attend regular training sessions organized by the group coordinator
- Are instructed to keep discussions in the strictest confidence and encourage clients to speak with ministerial staff if it appears they would benefit from pastoral support
- Refrain from diagnosing, verbally assessing, advising or prescribing in respect of any client

iv. Pastoral Care Visitors

- Complete Vulnerable Sector police checks
- Receive training when joining the team in ethical practices and understanding boundaries
- Have a team coordinator and a Minister available for bi-monthly meetings and enquiries or support at any time
- Report on each visit and submit brief summary to the team coordinator

v. Outreach Volunteers-Thursdays Afternoon Drop in

- Complete a Vulnerable Sector police check
- Receive training and overlap with someone experienced until they feel comfortable in the role
- Have access to a binder with instructions and to additional information, at the desk
- Meet with our guests in a private office with the door left ajar and a large window visible in the office, allowing privacy for the guests sharing confidential information and security for our volunteers
- Work on days when staff members are on site and available to offer support
- Have access to a panic button in case of emergency which sounds an alarm in the building and notifies the security company, who contact emergency services
- Have access by way of the front desk phone to a direct line to the custodian's phone, in the event that support is needed
- Refrain from offering counseling or referring to themselves as counselors to any client

6. Documents to complete and sign

**Eglinton St. George's United Church
Annual Offence Declaration**

Name: _____

Volunteer Position(s) _____

Date of Birth: _____

This form is to be completed by anyone in a position working with the vulnerable sector.

I DECLARE, since the last criminal background check collected by Eglinton St. George's United Church, or since the last Offence Declaration given by me to Eglinton St. George's United Church, that:

I have no convictions under the Criminal Code of Canada since my Criminal Background Check up to and including the date of this declaration for which a pardon has not been issued or granted under the Criminal Records Act Canada.

OR

I have the following conviction(s), up to and including the date of this declaration, for offences under the Criminal Code of Canada for which a pardon under the Criminal Records Act (Canada) has not been issued or granted.

List of Offences

1 a) Date: _____

b) Conviction: _____

2 a) Date: _____

b) Conviction: _____

3 a) Date: _____

b) Conviction: _____

Dated at _____ this _____ day of _____, 20

Signature of Volunteer

Other Resources

Faithful Footsteps: Screening Procedures for Positions of Trust and Authority in the United Church of Canada, www.united-church.ca/files/handbooks/faithfulfootsteps.pdf

Screening Faith: A National Education Campaign on Screening Resource from Volunteer Canada, www.nspeidiocese.ca