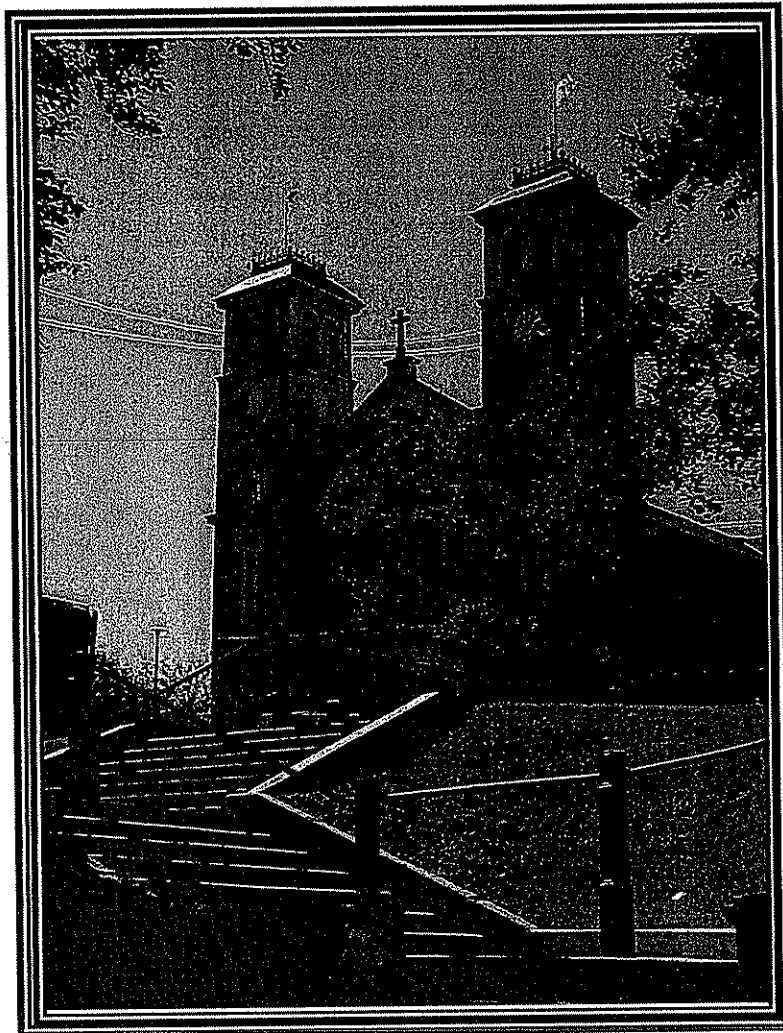


# *Screening in Faith*

## *Volunteer Screening Initiative*



### *Guidelines For Parish Volunteers*

*The Roman Catholic*



*Archdiocese of St. John's*  
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## Reason for the Programme and these Guidelines

Since the earliest days of the Church, we have come together to worship and to live out our faith. As followers of Jesus we are called to show love to one another and to the world as well as to share our gifts and resources. We continue that tradition today. We reach out to those in need; we counsel, help and teach. Each of us brings unique gifts to share.

Volunteers are the lifelines of our parishes. Without the time, effort and gifts of our volunteers, the Church would not be able to fulfill its ministry to help those in need. We recognize and appreciate the invaluable contribution of our many volunteers.

Given the importance of our call through the Sacrament of Baptism to share our gifts with one another and with the world, it is essential that we, as a community, do all we can to ensure that the right gifts are shared in the right way, at the right time, by the right people. We fulfill our mission more effectively when we make every effort to foster a richer, stronger, more vibrant and safer community of faith. Through *Screening of Faith*, we can provide support and protection to our volunteers.

*Screening in Faith* is simply a process designed to create and maintain a safe environment in our parishes. The goal at all times is the protection of our vulnerable people, our volunteers, our paid staff and our Church resources. The programme also ensures that the most appropriate match is made between the volunteer and the position. Thus, it is now a permanent policy of the Archdiocese of St. John's to screen all parish volunteer ministry positions.

Our actions as volunteers and as a Church should be guided at all times by our goal: the protection and safety of our vulnerable people, our volunteers and our Church. The "*Screening in Faith, Guidelines for Parish Volunteers*" is designed to assist you in performing your ministry.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and gave me clothing,  
I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

*Matt 25: 35-36*

"We intend to do what is right not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of others."  
*2 Cor 8:21*

# Responsibilities in Ministry

From: "A Statement of Commitment, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops"

## Responsibilities of those Who Minister

Desiring to minister as Jesus did and to exercise leadership that is about service, not power, and that calls and enables others to serve, we will:

- ❖ Strive to develop the communication and management skills that are needed in a particular ministry.
- ❖ Welcome regular evaluation of our ministry by colleagues and the people we serve.
- ❖ Acknowledge the limits of our position, our abilities and availability.
- ❖ Try, where appropriate, to make decisions in a consultative manner and to search for consensus so that different views are heard and people respected in the process.
- ❖ Exercise good stewardship of all funds and assets entrusted to our care.

## Responsibilities to those to Whom We Minister

Conscious of the trust placed in us and anxious to respect and protect the dignity and integrity of all people because they are made in the image of God, we will:

- ❖ Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of people to whom we minister, unless serious harm would result.
- ❖ Inform ourselves of, and comply with, the legal obligations to report suspected cases of child abuse.
- ❖ Never sexually, emotionally, or physically abuse or harass adult, adolescent, or child.
- ❖ Always respect the physical and emotional boundaries of the relationship when counseling.
- ❖ Not foster dependency in the people we counsel nor use them to satisfy our own needs nor take advantage of their vulnerability.

We embrace these commitments with the conviction that God, who has called us to a ministry, will sustain us by abundant grace. We rely on God's love and the support of those with to whom and to whom we minister and take to heart the challenge to "Rekindle the gift of God that is within" (2 *Tm* 1:6).

## Responsibilities of Parish Volunteers

The letter of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus show that from earliest times, ministry was expected to be marked by love that overflows into service, stewardship, trust and exemplary personal conduct. The call and commitment to serve God involves accepting certain responsibilities as individuals and members of our communities.

*(Definition of PARTICIPANTS: A generic term used to describe those who participate in programs or who receive services from ministries.)*

### Volunteers in the Church are expected to:

- ❖ be a Christian witness and a model of Christian living: being honest, speaking the truth in love and carrying out all tasks with integrity.
- ❖ be courteous and cooperative in their relations with other volunteers and their parish community.  
attend training and orientation sessions.
- ❖ provide a safe and caring environment for activities through their actions and words.
- ❖ be reliable, following through with the commitment, arriving on time and being prepared.
- ❖ provide adequate notice to the parish team or ministry leader if unable to perform their duties.
- ❖ report any changes in address and telephone number to the parish team or ministry leader.
- ❖ inform the parish team and /or ministry leader if they have concerns for the well being of the participants, other volunteers or the Church.
- ❖ minister within the agreed guidelines of the Ministry Position Description for which they have been mandated.
- ❖ respect confidentiality of the participants, other volunteers and the Church

The following are practical exceptions to the need to respect confidentiality:

- when a person threatens suicide
- when a minor (16 and under) reports physical or sexual abuse
- when someone's life is in danger
- when the volunteer's or someone else's well being is threatened
- when the situation is beyond the volunteer's experience or expertise
- when someone exhibits psychotic behaviour or some other form of mental illness

In these situations, the volunteer should share the information with the coordinator/leader of the ministry, the pastor or the parish team.

\* See page 12 for the appropriate report procedure in this case

*Responsibilities for Parish Volunteers, cont'd...*

### **Volunteers in the Church can expect to:**

- ❖ be treated with respect
- ❖ receive the training and orientation necessary to perform their duties
- ❖ receive support and guidance
- ❖ work in ministries that are compatible with their interests and skills
- ❖ be appreciated for their contributions

The pastor and all volunteers are responsible for creating and maintaining an environment that fosters mutual respect among individuals.

## **Volunteer Ministers and Liability**

### **Liability for the Archdiocese of St. John's and Coverage**

The Archdiocese and its parishes have a Liability Policy that covers anyone acting on their behalf. This includes ordained ministers, lay ministers and volunteers *with this proviso*: that they are acting "within the scope of their duties" and on behalf of the parish/archdiocese (this includes planned, advertised programs or events). The Archdiocesan insurer would pay for "defence costs" if someone were subject to legal action.

The liability policy does not cover an ordained minister, lay minister or volunteer if the accident or mishap occurred when he/she was acting outside of a parish ministry, activity or event.

### **Public Use of the Parish Name**

Without the specific authority of the Pastor or his delegate, parish volunteers should never make any public pronouncement in the name of the parish without permission of the pastor.

It is recognized that volunteers are also private citizens and as such have freedom as individuals to speak out on matters of public concern; however, in so doing, they should make it clear that they are speaking as private citizens and not with the authority of the parish.

## Guidelines for Volunteers when Working With Vulnerable People

The following guidelines are intended to provide a general overview of how volunteers should interact with the most vulnerable of participants. It is recognized that unforeseen circumstances can and will occur. Guidelines provide clear rules for behaviour so that volunteers understand what is expected of them.

- ❖ Volunteers should not spend extended time alone with the vulnerable participants, such as seniors, children or the disabled, without the consent and knowledge of the ministry leader and parish team.
- ❖ Volunteers who are to be alone with a vulnerable participant must respect his or her privacy.
- ❖ Volunteers must keep information such as medical, financial and emotional states, confidential.
- ❖ Volunteers should inform the ministry leader or the pastor if they observe serious safety problems or signs of abuse.
- ❖ Volunteers should not take any money or property from the vulnerable participant for the volunteer ministry.
- ❖ Volunteers are to act within the stated activities and responsibility of their ministry descriptions.
- ❖ Volunteers are to act at all times in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- ❖ Volunteers and participants have the right to be treated with respect.

These guidelines are not intended to hamper relationships between volunteers and participants. More importantly, they are not designed to introduce suspicion into these relationships. In all cases a certain amount of discretion rests with the volunteer, based on her/his knowledge and preparation.

A very important step to help ensure the safety of our most vulnerable people, the integrity of our programs, and the well being of our volunteers is being open or “transparent” with the ministry leaders/supervisors when the relationship develops or when more time is spent alone with the participant. Being “transparent” means being truthful, candid, open and frank about your activities.

## Guidelines when Working with Children

Society has become very sensitive to ensuring the safety of children. There are numerous examples of adults abusing the trust children have placed in them. These guidelines are not intended to hamper relationships between adults and children or to create suspicion. These steps are to help ensure the safety of our children, the integrity of our programs and the well being of our volunteers who work with children.

- ❖ Respect the dignity and spirit of children and youth. Exercise good judgment and common sense when working with them.
- ❖ Adults should not spend extended time alone with children without the consent of the child's parent or guardian and the knowledge of the ministry co-ordinator or parish team.
- ❖ When an adult is required to be alone with children (overnight or fieldtrips for example), 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 close proximity to children.
- ❖ Adults who form a relationship with children through parish activities should not seek out opportunities to spend time with a child "off site". If off site interactions must occur, it should be with the knowledge and permission of the child's parent or guardian.
- ❖ If help with toileting is necessary, the parent or guardian should give permission before help is given.
- ❖ Avoid potentially compromising situations by ensuring, where reasonably possible, that at least two adults are in attendance while supervising or accompanying children and youth. This prevents the potential for abuse and allegations of abuse.
- ❖ If it is necessary to conduct an activity with youth when only one adult is present in the room, the door should be left open unless there is a clear glass window in the door.
- ❖ If there are two adults present with an activity involving youth and one of the adults must leave for a brief period of time, the door of the room should be left open unless there is a clear glass window in the door.
- ❖ Do not use vulgar or inappropriate language when working with children and youth. Do not shout, swear or call children names.



*Guidelines When Working with Children, cont'd...*

- ❖ Adults should not take children in their vehicle without permission of the parent or guardian and knowledge of the ministry leader or parish team.
- ❖ Never hit or shake a child even in so-called “play”. Do not use physical punishment of any kind.
- ❖ Realize that bullying, neglect, physical, verbal or cultural abuse and sexual harassment or any other type of abuse is unacceptable conduct.
- ❖ Adequate supervision must be provided. Maintain appropriate adult to child and youth ratios for the activities and the age group.
- ❖ Be alert to children at risk, know the signs of abuse and be approachable to children in need. If abuse is suspected, it is your responsibility to report it.
- ❖ Adult volunteers operate in a position of trust. Personal information pertaining to the child or youth must be kept confidential, as well as conversations with parents.

Confidentiality does not need to be respected in the following situations

- When the child or youth threatens suicide
- When a minor (16 and under) reports physical or sexual abuse
- When the volunteer’s or someone else’s well being is threatened
- When the situation is beyond the volunteer’s experience or expertise

In these situations, the volunteer should share the information with the ministry leader/co-ordinator, the pastor or the parish team.

In all cases, a certain amount of discretion rests with the adult based on his or her knowledge and the nature of the relationship with the child, the child’s family, the setting and nature of the activities. Talking to parents, keeping them informed and being transparent helps ensure the safety of the children, the integrity of the programs and the well being of the volunteers.

\* See page 12 for the appropriate reporting procedure in this case

## Examples of Good Conduct When Working with Children and Youth

Situation	Difficulty	Possible Solutions
<b>Holding a private conversation with a child or youth</b>	By placing yourself in a one- to one situation out of sight or hearing range, you can leave yourself open to allegations of abuse.	Keep the office door open. Use an office with a window.
<b>Disciplining a child or youth away from the group</b>	By placing yourself in a one- to one situation out of sight or hearing range, you can leave yourself open to allegations of abuse.	Step away from the group but remain visible. You may remove the child or youth from view but the volunteer must remain visible to others.
<b>Driving or walking a child or youth home</b>	By placing yourself in a one- to one situation out of sight or hearing range, you can leave yourself open to allegations of abuse.	Take along a friend of the child's or another volunteer. Call the parents when you leave and tell them when to expect you. Tell a colleague where you're going and when you'll return.
<b>A child is injured and staff must remove clothing to treat injury</b>	You must decide between safety and modesty.	Get another volunteer or a friend, preferably the same sex as the injured child, to help

## **Reporting Abuse and /or Inappropriate Conduct of a Volunteer**

Everyone has a responsibility for the welfare of children, seniors, and other vulnerable persons. We also have a responsibility to other volunteers, to our parish and ourselves. Abuse or inappropriate conduct may occur while a person is serving as a volunteer in a parish or Archdiocesan ministry. A volunteer may discover an instance of abuse on the part of another volunteer or of a non-volunteer. Should this occur, the volunteer has the responsibility to report it according to the procedures below. If you are unsure about your suspicion, you may consult a police officer, social worker, or the pastor for advice and clarification.

### **Reporting Procedures**

**In the case of a child 16 years of age or younger, there are two steps to follow:**

**Step 1:** The provisions of the *Child, Youth, and Family Services Act* (SNL 1998, Chapter C-12.1, Section 15) of Newfoundland and Labrador oblige a person who has information that a child is or may be in need of protective intervention, to report the matter immediately to a Director of Child Youth and Family Services employed by a regional health authority, to a social worker, or to a police officer. The volunteer must immediately report of these and provide the information that he/she has obtained.

**Step 2:** Contact the pastor to inform him of the matter. Write a report on the situation as soon as possible, and give a copy to the pastor. If the alleged abuse or misconduct is on the part of a parish volunteer, the pastor will immediately inform the volunteer that he/she is to immediately withdraw from the volunteer position. He will also contact the ministry leader or co-ordinator and the Archdiocesan Office of Risk Management.

**In the case of a person over 16 years of age:**

**Step 1:** Contact the pastor to inform him of the matter. Write a report on the situation as soon as possible, and give a copy to the pastor. If the alleged abuse or misconduct is on the part of a parish volunteer, the pastor will immediately inform the volunteer that he/she is to immediately withdraw from the volunteer position. The pastor will contact family members or relatives of the person allegedly abused, civil authorities if necessary, the ministry leader or co-ordinator and the Archdiocesan Office of Risk Management.

### **Documentation of the Suspected Abuse and /or Inappropriate Conduct**

Document any observations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour (and any related statements or conversations) as soon as possible while your memory is still fresh. Describe the incident or situation and include the date, time and location of the incident. Include the names of anyone who may have witnessed it and what actions were taken. (reported it to a social worker or police officer, called pastor, talked to certain persons, etc.).

A sample incident report form is provided in this manual. Keep these documents strictly confidential and give them to the pastor. If the alleged abuse or inappropriate behaviour was on the part of a parish or Archdiocesan volunteer, a copy of the incident will be placed in his /her volunteer file.

# Incident Report Form

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

Name of Person Reporting Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Parties Involved in Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of Incident

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**There's a  
Special Place in  
Heaven for Volunteers**

Many may be shocked to find,  
When the Day of Judgment nears,  
That there's a special place in  
Heaven set aside for Volunteers.

Furnished with big recliners,  
Satin couches and footstools;  
When there's no committee chairman,  
No group leaders or car pools.

No eager team that needs a coach,  
No bazaar and no bake sale;  
There will be nothing to staple,  
Not one thing to fold or mail.

Telephone lists will be outlawed,  
But a finger-snap will bring,  
Cool drinks and gourmet dinners  
And rare treats fit for a King.

You ask, who'll serve these privileged few  
and work for all they're worth?  
All those who reaped the benefits,  
And not once volunteered on Earth.

**Author Unknown**

**Prayer of Volunteer  
Ministers**

*The Prayer of  
Saint Francis of Assisi*

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and in dying  
that we are born to eternal life.