

**Diocese of Prince George
Prince George, BC**

Developing a Safe Parish & Community

Introduction

As a local faith community of the Roman Catholic Church, the Diocese of Prince George upholds and promotes the values expressed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in the teachings and laws of the Roman Catholic Church. This means, among other things, that the Diocese takes a stance of deep respect for the dignity of all persons and commits itself to the well-being of all persons.

The Diocese upholds the fundamental goodness of all that God has created. It further holds that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ all humanity has been redeemed, lifted up and transformed. We are also deeply aware of the continuing weakness of human beings and the sinfulness present in humanity. We acknowledge that we must take seriously the possibility of misconduct – even among our own clergy, religious, employees and volunteers – and so the Diocese has put in place the “Developing a Safe Parish & Community” policies and procedures outlined in this document. These guidelines are designed to create and maintain a safe environment for our parish and diocesan ministries. The process involves identifying ministry positions which could put children, youth or vulnerable persons at risk and implementing procedures to prevent their harm.

The goal at all times is the protection and safety of our people, our volunteers, our staff and our Church. Thus it is a permanent policy of the Diocese of Prince George to screen all parish ministry positions. The Diocese will always act in accordance with the laws of Canada and of the Province of British Columbia. This Policy reflects existing federal and provincial laws and current canonical norms and it applies to all clergy, religious, employees and volunteers of the Diocese.

It is designed to complement the Diocese of Prince George’s existing policies: “Guidelines in Cases of Alleged Sexual Abuse by a Representative of the Diocese” and “Catholic Independent Schools of Prince George Policy Manual”.

Divided into four parts, the policy outlines a series of administrative and pastoral steps that will create a safer environment for all members of our faith community.

Part One: Mandatory screening procedures for all who minister in the diocese

- Clergy
- Religious
- Employees
- Volunteers
 - At general risk level
 - At higher risk level

Part Two: Ministerial and procedural guidelines for creating a safe community for children, youth and vulnerable adults

Part Three: Requirements for annual orientation sessions for all ministers, employees and volunteers

Part Four: Responsibility chart summarizing roles and timelines required to ensure the successful implementation of this policy

Part Five: Master copies of forms referred to in this policy:

- Safe parish community pledge
- Ministry letters of reference
- Ministerial risk assessment for parishes
- Screening requirements reporting form

Part 1: Mandatory screening procedures for all who minister in the diocese

Applicants for Ministry

Clergy and Religious

Candidates preparing for ordination to the ministerial priesthood or permanent diaconate are required to undergo a rigorous screening program which includes:

- Personal reference checks
- Personal interviews
- Completion of a comprehensive psychological assessment including an integrated report by a registered psychologist
- Recommendation by a seminary formation team, including observations regarding the candidate's suitability for ministry

Priests from another diocese or priests who are members of religious orders who wish to minister in the Diocese of Prince George must obtain the permission of his bishop or religious superior who will submit a letter providing full disclosure attesting to the good character and history of the priest candidate.

Religious brothers or sisters applying to minister in the Diocese of Prince George must obtain the permission of his or her superior who will submit a letter providing full disclosure attesting to the good character and history of the religious.

All clergy and religious, in addition to their appointment requirements, must satisfy the following requirements to be approved for parish or diocesan ministry:

- Complete a criminal record check and it indicates no convictions
- Attend a mandatory orientation session: "Developing a Safe Parish & Community"
- Sign and submit the "Safe Parish Community Pledge"

Employees

In addition to their particular employment requirements, employees must satisfy the following requirements to be approved for parish or diocesan employment:

- Complete a criminal record check and it indicates no convictions
- Attend a mandatory orientation session: "Developing a Safe Parish Community"
- Sign and submit the "Safe Parish Community Pledge"

Volunteers

In order to undertake ministry in a parish or the diocese, volunteers must satisfy particular requirements depending upon volunteer frequency and the risk level of their position. The volunteer must satisfy the requirements for the ministry with the highest risk.

Volunteers who volunteer regularly are required to follow the requirements at both risk levels listed below. Volunteers who commit to volunteering for an annual one or two-day event prior to the event must read and sign the "Safe Parish Community Pledge". Volunteers who offer to help while at an event do not need to complete any paperwork but are not to take a supervisory position.

General risk - a position that is categorized as general risk requires that:

- The volunteer completes a "Volunteer Application" form including providing two references from parish members
 - If the person has served in parish volunteer work previously and is a person of good reputation, the pastor and/or parish staff may serve as references
- The references named in the "Volunteer Application" complete the "Ministry Letter of Reference" form and if there are any concerns expressed on the reference form the pastor or his delegate follow up
- The volunteer reads and signs the document "Safe Parish Community Pledge"
- The pastor is responsible to decide if an existing general-risk level volunteer requires documented references
- The pastor approves the volunteer for ministry and notifies the volunteer
- Completed "Volunteer Application" and "Ministry Letter of Reference" for volunteers are kept in a secure file in the parish office
- Completed "Safe Parish Community Pledge" forms are sent to the Diocesan Office where they are kept in a secure file

Higher risk - a position that is categorized as higher risk requires that the volunteer:

- Complete the above requirements of the general risk volunteer
- Complete a Criminal Record Check and it indicates no convictions
- Attend a mandatory orientation session: "Developing a Safe Parish & Community"
- Completed Criminal Record Checks are sent to the Diocesan Office where they are kept in a secure file

Approval to minister

When a clergy or religious, employee or volunteer has satisfied the screening requirements and is approved to serve in a parish or the diocese, that approval is normally renewed automatically each year for a maximum of five years. After five years, a new screening process should be undertaken.

Approval to minister in a parish or the diocese may be transferrable to another location within the diocese. If a volunteer or employee moves to another parish, references and documentation from the previous parish must be sent to the new parish. In those parishes that are served simultaneously by the same pastor, a pastor may employ a single team of volunteers to serve, for example, as youth group leaders. In these cases volunteers would not have to be separately screened for each parish; a single screening in one parish would be sufficient.

Confidential storage of reference forms

All copies of Criminal Record Check and Safe Parish Community Pledge forms are sent to the Diocesan Office where they are kept in a secure file. They may not be copied, circulated or otherwise distributed to outside organizations or institutions. Ministry letters of reference and notes based on follow-up references are likewise treated as confidential and are kept in a locked file in the parish office.

Risk level

Ministries shall be assigned a risk level of either general risk or higher risk based on four criteria as outlined in the following chart. **If any ONE of the criteria applies, the position is considered higher risk;** if none apply, it is considered of general risk.

Criteria indicating higher risk ministry

<u>Participant</u>	• a child under 19 years of age • a physically/mentally/emotionally vulnerable person • a non-able-bodied senior
<u>Setting</u>	• an isolated place (a private home, a cabin, a tent, etc.) • a room without windows • an automobile • a private one-on-one setting
<u>Activity</u>	• visits in a home, hospital or nursing home • overnight events • activity that is of high physical or emotional intensity (for example: coaching or counselling) • direct handling of money • access to church buildings, offices, computers, files or property (including being entrusted with a key to parish buildings) • access to confidential information
<u>Supervision</u>	• little or no direct supervision • no documentation of meetings or events

Diocesan Categorization of Risk Level

Based on these four criteria, the most common ministries in the Diocese of Prince George are categorized as follows:

1. Adoration Coordinator – *General Risk*
2. Altar Server – Adult – *General or High Risk**
3. Altar Server – Child/Youth – *General Risk*
4. Altar Server Coordinator – *High Risk*
5. Baptismal Preparation Coordinator – *General Risk*
6. Baptismal Preparation Team Member – *General Risk*
7. Bereavement Team Coordinator – *High Risk*
8. Bereavement Team Member – *High Risk*
9. Bible Study Coordinator – *General Risk*
10. Bible Study Coordinator – Youth – *High Risk*
11. Building Maintenance Committee – *General Risk*
12. Catechumenal Catechist of Children's Initiations – *High Risk*
13. Children's Liturgy of the Word Coordinator – *High Risk*
14. Children's Liturgy of the Word Helper/Volunteer – *High Risk*
15. Children's Liturgy of the Word Teacher – *High Risk*
16. Choir Director – *General or High Risk**
17. Choir Member – Adult – *General or High Risk**
18. Choir Member – Child/Youth – *General Risk*
19. Collection Counter – *General or High Risk***
20. Collection Counter Coordinator – *General or High Risk***
21. Coordinator of Children's Initiation – *General or High Risk**
22. Custodian/Maintenance Person – *High Risk*
23. CWL President – *High Risk*
24. CWL Treasurer – *High Risk*
25. CWL Christian Family Life Standing Committee Chairperson – *High Risk*
26. Extraordinary Minister of Communion – *General Risk*
27. Extraordinary Minister of Communion Coordinator – *High Risk*
28. Extraordinary Minister of Communion to Homes/Institutions – *High Risk*
29. K of C Activities Member – *High Risk*
30. Lay Pastoral Visitor – *High Risk*
31. Lay Pastoral Visitors' Coordinator – *High Risk*
32. Lector – *General Risk*
33. Lectors' Coordinator – *General Risk*
34. Liturgical Environment Planner – *General or High Risk*
35. Liturgical Hospitality Coordinator – *General Risk*
36. Liturgical Hospitality: Greeters and Ushers – *General Risk*
37. Marriage Preparation Coordinator – *General Risk*
38. Marriage Preparation Facilitator – *General Risk*
39. Outreach Program Coordinator – *High Risk*
40. Outreach Program: Cook – *General or High Risk**
41. Outreach Program: Friendly Visitor – *High Risk*
42. Outreach Program: Meal Delivery – *High Risk*
43. Outreach Program: Server – *General Risk*

44. Parish Finance Council Chairperson – *General Risk*
45. Parish Finance Council Member – *General Risk*
46. Parish Finance Council Vice Chairperson – *General Risk*
47. Parish Pastoral Council Chairperson – *General Risk*
48. Parish Pastoral Council Member – *General Risk*
49. Parish Pastoral Council Vice Chairperson – *General Risk*
50. Parish Social Ministries – *High Risk*
51. Parish Volunteer Screening Committee Member – *High Risk*
52. Parish Volunteer Screening Coordinator – *High Risk*
53. Prayer Group Coordinator – *High Risk*
54. RCIA Catechumenal Catechist – *General Risk*
55. RCIA Catechumenal Director – *General Risk*
56. RCIA Sponsor – *General Risk*
57. Religious Articles Purchaser – *General Risk*
58. Religious Articles Vendor – *High Risk*
59. Sacramental Preparation Coordinator – *General or High Risk**
60. Sacramental Preparation Team Member – *General or High Risk**
61. Social Committee Coordinator – *General Risk*
62. Social Committee Member – *General Risk*
63. Sport's League Coach – *High Risk*
64. Sunday School Religious Education Assistant – *High Risk*
65. Sunday School Religious Education Catechist – *High Risk*
66. Sunday School Religious Education Coordinator – *High Risk*
67. Volunteer Driver – *High Risk*
68. Wedding Coordinator – *General Risk*
69. Youth Minister – *General or High Risk**
70. Youth Ministers' Assistant – *General or High Risk**
71. Youth Ministers' Director – *General or High Risk**

* When children unaccompanied by a parent and/or guardian, or a vulnerable adult are involved, this ministry position is High Risk.

** When the pastor is always present, this ministry position is General Risk.

The pastor knows the actual conditions in his parish that would require a ministry to be either upgraded or downgraded in its risk assessment. He is to review the ministries offered in his parish annually and (using the four risk criteria of: participant, activity, setting and supervision) categorize each ministry as either general or higher risk.

Each parish is to complete the form "Ministerial risk assessment for parishes" and submit it to the Diocesan Office on the date indicated. The diocese can be contacted for advice in completing this form.

Part 2: Ministerial and procedural guidelines for creating a safe parish community for children, adolescents and vulnerable adults

All religious instruction of children and youth is to be done in a public, group format with at least two adults present at all times. One-on-one instruction in a private place as well as in-home religious instruction is to be avoided.

One-on-one counselling, interviews and discussions are to be conducted in a space that is visible to others. All rooms used for these purposes should have clear glass windows or doors or the door should be left open when the room is in use.

The celebration of Reconciliation with children is to be done in a space that is visible to others (clear glass windows and doors or open doors) or in a traditional confessional.

Overnight trips, camps, parish picnics and socials are to be carefully planned so as to ensure privacy, modesty and safety. Ministers and volunteers are never to be alone with children and youth during an overnight trip but are always to work as teams of at least two adults (19 years and over). Parents are to be closely involved with the preparations, planning and execution of all overnight trips and camps. A sufficient quorum of employees, volunteers and/or parents should be present to ensure child safety.

Segregated change and sleeping areas are to be provided for males and females.

Ministers, employees and volunteers:

- Are not to be alone with a child, youth or vulnerable adult in a rectory, automobile or private living quarters
- Do not seek out opportunities to spend off-site time with children to whom they minister
- Will set and keep appropriate boundaries with those to whom they minister - hugs and kisses for younger children and physical “rough-housing” with older children should be appropriate and occur in public - the adult is responsible for exercising due discretion
- Do not routinely help children with toileting without explicit permission from parents/guardians
- Ensure that toileting assistance for children, when necessary, is undertaken by two adults
- Do not take any money or property in return for ministry apart from contractual salaries or approved stipends
- Shall use appropriate language and show no bias based on gender, ethnic background, skin color, intelligence, age, religion, sexual orientation or social-economic status
- Shall respect others

Part 3: Requirements for annual orientation sessions for all ministers, employees, and volunteers

It is the responsibility of the Diocese to develop and distribute orientation session materials for all new employees and volunteers and to conduct sessions for all priests new to the diocese.

It is the responsibility of the pastor to ensure that all clergy, employees and volunteers under his jurisdiction who are in higher risk ministries attend a parish orientation session that provides an overview of the “Developing a Safe Parish Community” and the “Guidelines in Cases of Alleged Sexual Abuse by a Representative of the Diocese” policies.

By January 15th of each year the pastor will submit a list of all clergy, employees and volunteers indicating their ministry and the successful completion of all requirements of the screening policy. The form “Screening Requirements Report” is found in part 5 of this policy and is also available for downloading from the diocesan website.

Part 4: Responsibility chart summarizing roles and timelines required to ensure the successful implementation of this policy

Task	Person responsible	Timeline
Screen candidates for priesthood and permanent diaconate and screen priests and religious from other dioceses or from religious orders who wish to serve in the Diocese of Prince George	Bishop or his delegate	Candidates will be screened early in their formation and clergy and religious from outside the diocese will be screened prior to beginning ministry
Undertake a review of risk levels of parish ministries using the “Parish Ministerial Risk Assessment” form	Pastor	October 1 of each year
Ensure employees and volunteers have completed the screening process prior to beginning ministry	Pastor	December 1 of each year
Provide oversight and supervision to ensure the guidelines for creating a safe parish community are followed	Pastor	Ongoing
Complete and submit the form “Screening Requirements Report”	Pastor	January 15 of each year
Review “Screening Requirements Report” of each parish; acceptance of the report or return to the parish for improvement	Bishop or his delegate	March 1 of each year

Part 5: Master copies of forms

The following forms are also available on the diocesan website www.pgdiocese.bc.ca:

- 5.1 Volunteer Application (pages 12 & 13)
- 5.2 Safe Parish Community Pledge (page 14)
- 5.3 Ministry Letter of Reference – print on parish letterhead and send a self-addressed posted envelope (pages 15, 16 & 17)
- 5.4 Ministerial Risk Assessment for Parishes (pages 18 & 19)
- 5.5 Screening Requirements Report (pages 20 & 21)

Volunteer Application

Contact Information

Name		
Street Address		
City, Postal Code		
Telephone	Home:	Other:
E-Mail Address		

Availability

During which hours are you available for volunteer assignments?

- Weekday: ___ mornings ___ afternoons ___ evenings
- Weekend: ___ mornings ___ afternoons ___ evenings

Interests

Tell us in which areas you are interested in volunteering

--

Special Skills or Qualifications

Summarize special skills and qualifications you have acquired from employment, previous volunteer work, or through other activities, including hobbies or sports.

--

Person to Notify in Case of Emergency

Name		
Street Address		
City, Postal Code		
Telephone	Home:	Other:
E-Mail Address		

Volunteer Application

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Two Parish Member References

Name		
Street Address		
City, Postal Code		
Telephone	Home:	Other:
E-Mail Address		

Name		
Street Address		
City, Postal Code		
Telephone	Home:	Other:
E-Mail Address		

Agreement and Signature

By submitting this application, I affirm that the facts set forth in it are true and complete. I understand that if I am accepted as a volunteer, there are requirements that I must meet for the diocesan policy for "Developing a Safe Parish Community" before I will be able to volunteer. If required, I will complete a Criminal Record Check form provided by the parish and I will take it to the local RCMP detachment for completion. I understand that any false statements, omissions, or other misrepresentations made by me on this application may result in my immediate dismissal.

Name (printed)	
Signature	
Date	

Parish Ministry – Approval Requirements (choose General or Higher Risk)

Parish Office Use

	Date Completed	
	General Risk	Higher Risk
1. Safe Parish Community Pledge – read and signed	_____	_____
2. Reference letters – received		
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. Criminal Record Check –		
- given to volunteer	N/A	_____
- returned by government agency		
4. Developing a Safe Parish Community orientation session – attended	N/A	_____
5. Approved by Pastor	_____	_____

Safe Parish Community Pledge

Name: _____ **Place of Ministry:** _____
(Please print)

I understand the importance of my role in ensuring a safe environment for those for whom I minister. Having read and understood all the directives below, I pledge to observe them and to do all that I can to encourage others to do the same. If I become aware that any of these directives are being violated, I will notify my pastor or the Diocese of Prince George.

- All religious instruction of children and youth is to be done in a public, group format with at least two adults present at all times. One-on-one instruction in a private place as well as in-home religious instruction is to be avoided.
- One-on-one counselling, interviews and discussions are to be conducted in a space that is visible to others. All rooms used for these purposes should have clear glass windows or doors or the door should be left open when the room is in use.
- The celebration of Reconciliation with children is to be done in a space that is visible to others (clear glass windows and doors or open doors) or in a traditional confessional.
- Overnight trips, camps, parish picnics and socials, are to be carefully planned so as to ensure privacy, modesty and safety. Ministers and volunteers are never to be alone with children and adolescents during an overnight trip but are always to work as teams of at least two. Parents are to be closely involved with the preparations, planning and execution of all overnight trips and camps. A sufficient quorum of employees, volunteers and/or parents should be present to ensure child safety.
- Segregated change areas are to be provided for males and females.
- Ministers and volunteers
 - Should not be alone with a child, adolescent or vulnerable adult in a rectory, automobile or in private living quarters.
 - Should not seek out opportunities to spend off-site time with children to whom they minister.
 - Will set and keep appropriate boundaries with those to whom they minister. Hugs and kisses for younger children and physical “rough-housing” with older children should be appropriate and should occur in public. The adult is the responsible party in ensuring due discretion.
 - Should not routinely help children with toileting without explicit permission from parents/guardians. Toileting assistance for children should normally be undertaken by two adults.
 - Should not take any money or property in return for their ministry apart from contractual salaries or approved stipends.
 - Shall use appropriate language and show no bias based on gender, ethnic background, skin color, intelligence, age, religion, sexual orientation or social-economic status.
 - Shall respect others

Date: _____ **Signature** _____

Ministry Letter of Reference

On parish letterhead

Today's date

Reference's name and address

Re: Developing a safe parish community reference letter

The Diocese of Prince George and its parishes are asking their volunteers to provide references. This is done to assure the safety of children, the elderly, vulnerable adults and the volunteers themselves. The information on this form stays in a confidential file and is not shared with any outside organizations or institutions.

_____ (name) is interested in volunteering at this parish and has chosen you as a reference. The current, accurate information about this person that you provide will be an important tool in our decision-making process.

Please complete the enclosed form and return it in the enclosed envelope. Your participation in this process is appreciated.

Sincerely

Priest's name

Enclosures

Developing a Safe Parish Community

Reference Letter

Page 1 of 2

Please provide a reference for: _____

Your Contact Information

Name		
Street Address		
City, Postal Code		
Telephone	Home:	Other:
E-Mail Address		

1. What is your relationship to the person named above? How long have you known this person?

--

2. How would you describe this person's ability to work alone? Or with others?

--

3. How would you describe this person's character, personality and temperament?

--

4. What would you describe as this person's strengths?

--

5. If you could suggest some areas of improvement what would they be?

--

Developing a Safe Parish Community

Reference Letter cont'd

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6. On a scale of 1 to 4 indicate by circling the appropriate number, how well does this person exhibit the following traits?

Trait	Very little			Very much
Dependable	1	2	3	4
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4
Honest	1	2	3	4
Considerate	1	2	3	4
Emotionally Stable	1	2	3	4
Tolerant	1	2	3	4
Respectful	1	2	3	4

7. Would you recommend this person as a church volunteer? Please explain.

--

Signature

Signature	
Date	

Please return this reference form in the addressed envelope provided. Please seal the envelope.
You may be contacted at a later date by a parish representative if clarification is required.

Ministerial Risk Assessment for Parishes

Parish Name: _____ Date: _____

Pastor: _____

I have categorized all of the ministries in my parish as either general or higher risk according to the criteria outlined in the document, "Developing a Safe Parish Community." The most common ministries are listed below. Please add any others that your parish has. Place check marks in the appropriate blank spaces. The ministries (staff and volunteer positions) active in my parish and their rating are as follows:

Ministry Title	Active in my parish		General risk	Higher risk
	Yes	No		
1. Adoration Coordinator				
2. Altar Server – Adult				
3. Altar Server – Child/Youth				
4. Alter Server Coordinator				
5. Baptismal Preparation Coordinator				
6. Baptismal Preparation Team Member				
7. Bereavement Team Coordinator				
8. Bereavement Team Member				
9. Bible Study Coordinator				
10. Building Maintenance Committee				
11. Catechumenal Catechist of Children's Initiations				
12. Children's Liturgy of the Word Coordinator				
13. Children's Liturgy of the Word Helper/Volunteer				
14. Children's Liturgy of the Word Teacher				
15. Choir Director				
16. Choir Member – Adult				
17. Choir Member – Child/Youth				
18. Collection Counter				
19. Collection Counter Coordinator				
20. Coordinator of Children's Initiation				
21. Custodian/Maintenance Person				
22. Extraordinary Minister of Communion				
23. Extraordinary Minister of Communion Coordinator				
24. Extraordinary Minister of Communion to Homes/Institutions				
25. Lay Pastoral Visitor				
26. Lay Pastoral Visitor's Coordinator				
27. Lector				
28. Lectors' Coordinator				
29. Liturgical Environment Planner				
30. Liturgical Hospitality Coordinator				
31. Liturgical Hospitality: Greeters and Ushers				

Ministerial Risk Assessment for Parishes cont'd

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Ministry Title	Active in my parish		General risk	Higher risk
	Yes	No		
32. Marriage Preparation Coordinator				
33. Marriage Preparation Facilitator				
34. Outreach Program Coordinator				
35. Outreach Program: Cook				
36. Outreach Program: Friendly Visitor				
37. Outreach Program: Meal Delivery				
38. Outreach Program: Server				
39. Parish Finance Council Chairperson				
40. Parish Finance Council Member				
41. Parish Finance Council Vice Chairperson				
42. Parish Pastoral Council Chairperson				
43. Parish Pastoral Council Member				
44. Parish Pastoral Council Vice Chairperson				
45. Parish Social Ministries				
46. Prayer Group Coordinator				
47. RCIA Catechumenal Catechist				
48. RCIA Catechumenal Director				
49. RCIA Sponsor				
50. Religious Articles Purchaser				
51. Religious Articles Vendor				
52. Sacramental Preparation Coordinator				
53. Sacramental Preparation Team Member				
54. Social Committee Coordinator				
55. Social Committee Member				
56. Sport's League Coach				
57. Sunday School Religious Education Assistant				
58. Sunday School Religious Education Catechist				
59. Sunday School Religious Education Coordinator				
60. Volunteer Driver				
61. Volunteer Screening Committee Member				
62. Volunteer Screening Coordinator				
63. Youth Minister – General				
64. Youth Ministers' Assistant				
65. Youth Ministers' Director				
66.				
67.				
68.				

Pastor's name: _____ Signature: _____

[illegible]

Screening Requirements Report cont'd

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Parish name:

Higher Risk Ministries

[illegible]