

# Diocese of Prince George

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## Developing a Safe Parish & Community

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# 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 Policy”. The standards of this Policy 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 five 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
- Part Two:** Procedural guidelines for creating a safe parish and community for children, adolescents and vulnerable adults
- Part Three:** Use of Social Media
- Part Four:** Roles, responsibilities and requirements to ensure the successful implementation of this policy
- Part Five:** Master copies of forms referred to in this policy:
  - Volunteer Application
  - Safe Parish & Community Pledge
  - Ministry letters of reference
  - Ministerial risk assessment for parishes
  - Screening requirements reporting form
  - Suitability declaration of (Arch)Bishop or Religious Superior – visiting Clergy
  - Suitability declaration for visiting Religious
  - Suitability declaration for visiting Lay Person

# **Part 1: Mandatory screening procedures for all who minister in the Diocese**

## ***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
- Recommendation by a priest overseeing the candidate's pastoral year(s), 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 priest's good character and history (Form 6).

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 (Form 7).

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 children, youth, vulnerable adults and finances are not at risk
- Attend a mandatory orientation session: "Developing a Safe Parish & Community"
- Sign and submit the "Safe Parish & Community Pledge"

## ***Visiting Clergy/Religious/Lay Persons: short term/temporary ministry***

Before a priest, deacon, Religious Brother or Sister or a lay person is invited to minister in the Diocese of Prince George, permission must be obtained from the Bishop. They must also meet the following requirements which depend on the length of time they are in the Diocese:

For 1-30 days:

- Letter of suitability from their (arch)bishop or Religious superior - use Form 6, 7 or 8 as appropriate\*

For more than 30 days:

- Letter of suitability from their (arch)bishop or Religious superior – use Form 6, 7 or 8 as appropriate\*
- Complete a Criminal Record Check and it indicates children, youth, vulnerable adults and finances are not at risk
- Attend a mandatory orientation session: “Developing a Safe Parish & Community”
- Sign and submit the “Safe Parish & Community Pledge”

\* The letter of suitability for lay persons may be signed by the person in charge of the safe environment policy for their (arch)diocese.

## **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 children, youth, vulnerable adults and finances are not at risk
- 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.

Those who volunteer regularly must satisfy the requirements of the risk level pertaining to their ministry or service. Those who volunteer for an annual one or two-day event prior to the event must read and sign the “Safe Parish & Community Pledge” and, if the ministry/service is categorized high risk, undergo a Criminal Record Check and it indicates children, youth, vulnerable adults and finances are not at risk. There are no requirements for those who offer “on the spot” help while at an event, but they are not to take a supervisory role.

Procedure for volunteers undertaking a ministry or service designated General Risk:

- The volunteer completes a Volunteer Application form and provides two references from parish members
  - The pastor and/or parish staff may serve as references for a long-time parishioner of good reputation who has volunteered previously in the parish
- Named references complete and submit a Ministry Letter of Reference form to the pastor
- If there are any concerns expressed on the reference form, the pastor or his delegate follow up
- The volunteer reads and signs the “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

Procedure for volunteers undertaking a ministry or service designated High Risk:

- **The volunteer completes the requirements of the General Risk volunteer, as noted above, and in addition, is required to**
- Complete a Criminal Record Check and it indicates children, youth, vulnerable adults and finances are not at risk
- 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

## ***Criteria for determining risk level***

Ministries are assigned a risk level of either General Risk or **High Risk** based on four criteria as outlined in the following chart.

**If any ONE of the criteria applies, the position is considered High Risk; if none apply, it is considered of General Risk.**

<b>Participant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a child under 19 years of age</li> <li>• a physically/mentally/emotionally vulnerable person</li> <li>• a non-able-bodied senior</li> </ul>
<b>Setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an isolated place (private home, cabin, tent, etc.)</li> <li>• a room without windows</li> <li>• an automobile</li> <li>• a private one-on-one setting</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visits in a home, hospital or nursing home</li> <li>• overnight events</li> <li>• activity that is of high physical or emotional intensity (for example: coaching or counselling)</li> <li>• direct handling of money</li> <li>• access to church buildings, offices, computers, files or property (includes those entrusted with a key to parish buildings)</li> <li>• access to confidential information</li> </ul>
<b>Supervision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• little or no direct supervision</li> <li>• no documentation of meetings or events</li> </ul>

**Note:** Young people **under the age of 16** are never given tasks that would categorize their ministry or service as **High Risk**. As volunteers or employees they are **ALWAYS** under supervision and therefore categorized as **General Risk**.

## ***Diocesan Categorization of Risk Level***

Based on these four criteria, the most common ministries in the Diocese of Prince George are categorized as indicated below.

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 High Risk.

Each parish is to use the form “Ministerial Risk Assessment for Parishes” as a guide to complete the “Screening Requirements Report”; the report is to be submitted annually to the Diocese. The Diocese can be contacted for advice in completing these forms.

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. Bereavement Team Coordinator – High Risk
6. Bereavement Team Member – High Risk
7. Bible Study Coordinator – General Risk
8. Bible Study Coordinator – Youth – High Risk
9. Building Maintenance Committee – General Risk
10. Catechism/Children’s Religious Education Coordinator – High Risk
11. Catechism/Children’s Religious Education Teacher – High Risk
12. Catechism/Children’s Religious Education Assistant – High Risk
13. Catechist of Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (RCIC) – High Risk
14. Children’s Liturgy of the Word Coordinator – High Risk
15. Children’s Liturgy of the Word Volunteer Helper – High Risk
16. Children’s Liturgy of the Word Volunteer Teacher – High Risk
17. Choir Director – General or High Risk\*
18. Choir Member – Adult – General Risk
19. Choir Member – Child/Youth – General Risk
20. Collection Counter – High Risk
21. Collection Counter Coordinator – 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 Grand Knight – High Risk
30. K of C Treasurer – High Risk
31. K of C District Deputy – 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. Outreach Program Coordinator – High Risk
38. Outreach Program: Cook – General or High Risk\*
39. Outreach Program: Visitor – High Risk
40. Outreach Program: Meal Delivery – High Risk
41. Outreach Program: Server – General Risk
42. Parish Finance Council Chairperson – General Risk or High Risk\*\*
43. Parish Finance Council Member – General Risk or High Risk\*\*
44. Parish Pastoral Council Chairperson – General Risk or High Risk\*\*
45. Parish Pastoral Council Member – General Risk
46. Parish Social Ministries Committee member – General Risk
47. Parish Volunteer Screening Committee Member – High Risk
48. Parish Volunteer Screening Coordinator – High Risk
49. Prayer Group Coordinator – High Risk
50. RCIA Catechumenal Catechist – General Risk
51. RCIA Catechumenal Director – General Risk
52. RCIA Sponsor – General Risk
53. Religious Articles Purchaser – General Risk or High Risk\*\*
54. Religious Articles Vendor – High Risk
55. Sacramental Preparation  
(Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage) Coordinator – General or High Risk\*
56. Sacramental Preparation  
(Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage) Team Member – General or High Risk\*
57. Sport's League Coach – High Risk
58. Volunteer Driver – High Risk
59. Wedding Coordinator – General Risk
60. Youth Ministries Coordinator/Director – High Risk
61. Youth Ministries Assistant – High Risk
62. Youth Ministries Team Member – 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 person has a key to church buildings, access to confidential information or handles money/cheques/credit card or banking information, this ministry position is High Risk

## Part 2: Procedural guidelines for creating a safe parish & community for children, adolescents and vulnerable adults

- Have at least two adults present for a ministry or program. Where possible, the two adults should be unrelated.
- Have all one-on-one meetings with a child, youth or vulnerable persons in a public area either in a parish or organization's facilities, where both people can be seen by 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. Notify and ask permission of a parent before any proposed one-to-one meeting with a child/youth, e.g., in a mentoring relationship.
- Have two adults transport children, youth or vulnerable persons in a vehicle, ensuring the driver has a valid driver's license and insurance, liability insurance coverage of at least \$2 million.
- Have a volunteer leader or office, parish, camp staff member present when a child is dropped off at a ministry or program location. The child must be picked up by the parent/guardian or their designate. If a child is not picked up within a short or reasonable period after the scheduled end of the activity, the volunteer leader or staff will first contact the parent/guardian, and if no contact can be made, he or she is authorized to contact the appropriate children's services agency.
- Encourage parents/guardians to participate with their children in a ministry or program. Any other adult wishing to be present needs the permission of the volunteer leader or staff.
- Have any changes to a ministry or program be approved by the pastor, director or volunteer leader.
- Ensure the design of facilities can protect children, youth or vulnerable persons. Segregated change rooms and washroom facilities should be provided for males and females.
- Have a sufficient quorum of employees:

0-18 months	2 adults to 6 children
19months-2 yrs	2 adults to 10 children
3-5 yrs	2 adults to 12 children
6-14 yrs	2 adults to 15 children/youth
15-18 yrs	2 adults to 15 youth
Vulnerable persons 19+	2 adults to 10 vulnerable persons
- Ensure fire extinguishers and emergency exits are known to volunteer leader or staff.

### ***Ministers and volunteers***

- Should not be alone with a child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult in a rectory, automobile or other private spaces.
- Should not spend off-site time with children/youth.
- Will set and keep appropriate boundaries with those to whom they minister.
- Should not help children with toileting. Toileting assistance for children should be taken care of by a parent or guardian.
- Should not accept 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 sex, ethnic background, age, religion, sexual identity or social-economic status.
- Shall respect others

## **Part 3: Use of Social Media**

*“The issues are not principally technological...It is important to know how to dialogue and, with discernment, to use modern technologies and social networks in such a way as to reveal a presence that listens, converses and encourages.” ~ Pope Francis*

### ***Definition of Social Media:***

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows end users to engage in multi-directional conversations in or around the content of the website. Social media includes but is not restricted to Facebook, MySpace, Nigh, Twitter, Second Life, YouTube, blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, podcasts, forums, content communities, email and messaging.

### ***Introduction***

The policy regarding social media is based on the Catholic Independent Schools of the Diocese of Prince George (CISPG), Policy 414 in the Education Policy Manual. Employees of CISPG are required to adhere to this policy which is specific to Catholic Schools.

The Diocese of Prince George recognizes the importance of providing priests, religious, employees and volunteers with a clear understanding of the impact of using social media and its appropriate use. In an ‘online world’, the lines between public and private, personal and professional can become blurred. Even when employees and volunteers are social networking on their own time, they may be identified as working for and sometimes representing the Diocese in their online communications.

We recognize the use of social media and networking as one means of communicating in the online world. However, we also recognize that the inadvertent misuse of social media by priests, religious, employees and volunteers has the potential to put the reputation of the Diocese volunteers its people at risk. The following policy has been established to ensure best practices and to mitigate that exposure to risk.

# ***Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers***

## **General Procedures:**

1. Use good judgment. Think about the type of image or information you want to convey. You are responsible for your online communications.
2. As role models and a representative of the Diocese and/or your parish, you must ensure that your use of social networking, even on your personal time,
  - does not reflect negatively on your reputation or that of the Diocese
  - is not contrary to the teachings of our Church
3. Use only appropriate sites and tools when communicating on Church related matters; all communication should be courteous and respectful.
4. Respect the law when communicating online. Protect the confidentiality of information regarding parishioners and their families. Ensure compliance with copyright requirements. Do not make comments online which are defamatory of others.

## **Specific Procedures**

1. Avoid impulsive, inappropriate or heated postings. Remember that what you post may be viewed and archived permanently online.
2. Monitor all content you or others post to your personal social media accounts to ensure that it is consistent with your role in the Church and professional standards. Remove any material which is inappropriate or contrary to this policy.
3. Online activities must not interfere with the performance of your job or your effectiveness as an employee of the Diocese.
4. Online communications should reflect the principles of honesty, respect, responsibility and consideration of others.
5. Do not disclose any confidential or personal information about parishioners or their families in online communications. Do not post photographs or videos of children without the written permission of the parent/guardian.
6. Social networking sites and online postings are not necessarily private. Never criticize parishioners, fellow employees and volunteers or the Diocese on online sites.
7. Do not request or accept any current or former minor parishioners (person under the age of 19 years) as 'friends' on social networking sites.
  - a. In the case of ministries which rely on social media for communication and promotion of activities (e.g. youth ministry), create accounts separate from your personal account for these purposes.
8. Do not exchange personal phone numbers, email addresses or photographs with students or minor parishioners except if they are your own relatives.
  - a. In the case of ministries which rely on social media for communication and promotion of activities (e.g. youth ministry), create accounts separate from your personal account for these purposes.
9. Ask friends not to tag you in any photos or videos without your permission and remove anything that is not appropriate to your role in the Diocese.

## **Part 4: Roles, responsibilities and requirements to ensure the successful implementation of this policy**

### **The Diocese is responsible for:**

- Overseeing compliance with the Safe Parish & Community Policy
- Developing and distributing orientation session materials to parishes, institutions and organizations in the Diocese
- Safe and confidential storage of Criminal Record Checks and Safe Parish & Community Pledges
- Reviewing the Screening Requirements Reports and notifying parishes if changes are needed
- Notifying parishes and organizations when Criminal Record Checks and Pledges for people under their jurisdiction are due for renewal

### **Parishes are required to:**

- Ensure all priests, religious, employees and volunteers serving in a High Risk category under their jurisdiction attend an orientation session, read and sign a Safe Parish & Community Pledge and complete a Criminal Record Check and it indicates children, youth, vulnerable adults and finances are not at risk
- Ensure all volunteers serving in a General Risk category under their jurisdiction are screened and approved for ministry and that they read and sign a Safe Parish & Community Pledge
- Undertake a Ministerial Risk Assessment in their parish and submit a Screening Requirements Report to the Diocese at the beginning of each calendar year (by January 15<sup>th</sup>)
- Send signed Safe Parish & Community Pledges and completed Criminal Record Checks to the the Diocese
- Provide safe and confidential storage for Volunteer Applications, Ministry Reference Applications and all documentation pertaining to the Safe Parish & Community Policy

Pastors are responsible for ensuring the Safe Parish & Community Policy is followed in their parish. They may appoint a delegate to undertake this task.

The Board of Directors of camps and other autonomous institutions/organizations of the Diocese are responsible for ensuring the Policy is followed within their jurisdiction. They may appoint a delegate to undertake this task. What applies to parishes also applies to these units.

## 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 is 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.

## *Responsibility chart summarizing roles and timelines*

Task	Person responsible	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ul>	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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a review of risk levels of parish ministries using the “Parish Ministerial Risk Assessment” form</li> </ul>	Pastor	October 1 of each year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure employees and volunteers have completed the screening process prior to beginning ministry</li> </ul>	Pastor	December 1 of each year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide oversight and supervision to ensure the guidelines for creating a safe parish &amp; community are followed</li> </ul>	Pastor	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete and submit the form “Screening Requirements Report” to the Diocese</li> </ul>	Pastor	January 15 of each year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review “Screening Requirements Report” of each parish; accept or return to the parish for improvement</li> </ul>	Bishop or his delegate	March 1 of each year

**Note:**

For priest, religious and lay employees of the Diocese of Prince George (including its parishes, schools, camps and institutions): contravention of the Developing a Safe Parish & Community Policy may result in discipline, up to and including dismissal.

For volunteers in the Diocese of Prince George (including its parishes, schools, camps and institutions): contravention of the Developing a Safe Parish & Community Policy may result in removal from all ministries and services.

## **Part 5: Master copies of forms**

The following forms are available on the diocesan website at

<http://www.pgdiocese.bc.ca/our-policies/>

1. Volunteer Application
2. Safe Parish & Community Pledge
3. Ministry Letter of Reference –  
(print on parish letterhead and send a self-addressed posted envelope)
4. Ministerial Risk Assessment for Parishes
5. Screening Requirements Report
6. Suitability Declaration of (Arch)Bishop or Religious Superior – Visiting clergy
7. Suitability Declaration for Visiting Religious
8. Suitability Declaration for Visiting Lay Person