

POLICY 5.1.2 Responsible Ministry Policy for Clergy, Lay Employees and Volunteers

SUMMARY

1. Members of clergy, lay employees and volunteers in pastoral, administrative and liturgical ministries are all required to complete a screening process before ministering in the Archdiocese.
2. Ministries are assessed for the level of risk: High, Medium and Low or None.
3. Archdiocesan and Parish Screening Coordinators (ASC and PSC respectively) are responsibly for Collecting the required screening documents as described in this policy.
4. The screening documents include Vulnerable Sector Checks, child welfare checks, and several archdiocesan forms.
5. Vulnerable Sector Checks and child welfare checks must be periodically renewed.
6. Archdiocesan and Parish Screening Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the screening records for clergy, lay employees and volunteers are current and complete.

FORMS

- 5.1.a Personal Information Form
- 5.1.b Covenant of Care
- 5.1.c Code of Conduct Acknowledgement
- 5.1.d Personal Reference Check
- 5.1.e Checklist for Volunteer Screening

RELATED POLICIES

- 5.1.1 Safe Environment Policy

The Responsible Ministry Policy of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan provides for a screening process for clergy, lay employees and volunteers who minister in the parishes, quasi-parishes and missions of the Archdiocese. The principal objective is to safeguard minors and vulnerable adults, and all members of our communities.

1. The ministries

The Archdiocese has three categories of ministry: Liturgical, Pastoral and Administrative.

a. Liturgical ministries

The liturgical ministries are those ministries performed at Mass, including; presider or celebrant, concelebrant, homilist, sacristan, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, gift bearer, music ministry, commentator, ~~and~~ lector, ushers and altar servers.

Most liturgical ministries do not require screening for their volunteers, except those involving children, adolescents and vulnerable adults.

b. Pastoral ministries

Pastoral ministries are those ministries which “build the parish as a living Christian community”. (*The Parish Pastoral Council: Guidelines for the Development of Constitutions*. CCCB. Conacan, Inc., 1984). The most common pastoral ministries in the parishes, quasi-parishes and missions of the Archdiocese are: Taking Holy Communion to the sick and homebound, altar server trainer, Liturgy of the Word with Children, sacramental preparation, adult faith formation and OCIA, youth ministry, and prayer and bible study groups.

All pastoral ministries require screening for their volunteers.

c. Administrative ministries

Administrative ministries are those ministries concerned with the stewardship of the temporal goods¹ of the Church. The most common are: Those with signing authority, collection counter, key holder, maintenance and facilities management, or any other administrative duties.

All administrative ministries require screening for their volunteers.

2. The level of risk

In making assessments of risk level of ministries, the Archdiocese has identified three levels: High-risk, medium-risk and low- or no-risk. (see Appendix A for a complete list)

a. High-risk ministries

High risk ministries are those where any **potential for harm to an individual** being ministered to is present. In particular, high-risk ministries are those which:

- i. Minister directly to minors (children and adolescents) and/or vulnerable adults²;
- ii. Have opportunities for developing relationships of trust that can be carried over to other locations or interactions; and/or

¹ Temporal goods: material or property owned by the Church or religious organization to support their spiritual mission such as buildings, land and funds. Governed by Canon Las 1254-1310

² Vulnerable adult: a person 18 years of age or older who, because of a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, is in a position of dependence on others or is otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person or persons in positions of authority or trust relative to him/her.

- iii. Have an inherent power imbalance, whether real or perceived, between the minister and the person ministered to.

b. Medium-risk ministries

Medium-risk ministries are those with any **potential for financial loss** or other mishandling of temporal goods. In addition to screening of ministers, parishes must also ensure that they comply with the policies in Section 3 of the *Policy Manual*, especially Policy 3.1.1 *Parish Financial Procedures*.

c. Low- or no-risk ministries

Low-risk ministries are those with minimal potential for harm to individuals or for mishandling of temporal goods.

3. Mitigating the risks

The Archdiocese, and for the purposes of this policy, there are three categories of people who perform ministry:

- a. Clergy (priests and deacons)
- b. Lay employees
- c. Volunteers

A certain amount of personal information has to be collected from the people performing ministry to ensure that all risks of harm are identified and mitigated. The Archdiocese respects that this information is personal and this policy provides for the protection of that information (see 6. Screening Coordinators)

The screening results for people in high- and medium-risk ministries are reviewed by delegated people in the parish and the chancery.

The purpose of the screening is **not** to exclude people from ministry. It is to ensure that any risk of harm to people and goods is mitigated.

4. Screening Process

a. For new members of clergy

Fidei donum priests will have provided to Immigration Canada proof that they do not have a criminal record. The issuance of a Temporary Resident Visa to these priests is considered to meet the requirements of this policy.

After three years of ministry in Canada, priests from abroad will complete a Vulnerable Sector Check and a Child Welfare Intervention Record Check (see 5. Screening Documents). They will then enter the normal application of this policy.

Priests and deacons who come from Canada or who have completed studies in Canada will be screened as new employees of the Archdiocese.

b. For new archdiocesan and parish lay employees and archdiocesan volunteers

The person responsible for engaging new archdiocesan or parish lay employees, or volunteers in the Archdiocese will inform the Archdiocesan Screening Coordinator (ASC). The ASC will provide the responsible person or the applicant for employment or volunteer position with instructions for completing the required screening documents and a letter to the local RCMP detachment for the appropriate vulnerable sector check certificate.

Employees are charged a fee for a vulnerable sector check. The applicant can submit a receipt for the charge to the Archdiocese or parish, which will reimburse the amount paid.

c. For new parish volunteers

The person responsible for engaging new volunteers in the parish will inform the Parish Screening Coordinator (PSC). The Parish Screening Coordinator will provide the responsible person or the volunteer with instructions for completing the required screening documents and a letter to the local RCMP detachment for the appropriate vulnerable sector check certificate.

All of the required screening documents must be submitted to and reviewed by the appropriate screening coordinator **before the person begins to serve in ministry.**

Provision of all the above-named documents is mandatory. Nobody in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan has the authority to waive any of these requirements for any clergyman, lay employee or volunteer.

5. Screening Documents

The principal screening documents are:

- a. Personal Information form (Form 5.1.a)
- b. Covenant of Care form (Form 5.1.b) **OR** Code of conduct Acknowledgement form (Form 5.1.c)
- c. Vulnerable Sector Check (from the RCMP or other relevant police agency)
- d. Child Welfare intervention Record Check (from Alberta Child & Family Services)
- e. Confidential Character &/or Performance Reference Checks (form 5.1.d) **except:** volunteers who have been members of the parish for at least five years.

	Form 5.1.a	Form 5.1.b	Form 5.1.c	VS	IRC	Form 5.1.d
Clergy		•		•	•	
Employees		•		•	•	
High Risk	•	•	•	•	•	•
Medium Risk	•		•	•		•
Low and No Risk	•		•			

a. Personal Information Form (Form 5.1.a)

The personal information collected on this form will be used only to meet the insurance and organizational requirements for verifying the identity and contact information of volunteers. Members of clergy and lay employees already provide this information in other formats.

Every volunteer in every ministry in a parish is to provide a completed Form 5.1.a to the Parish Screening Coordinator. “Every ministry” means high-risk, medium-risk and low- and no-risk ministries.

b. Covenant of Care form (Form 5.1.b)

As a church community, at the archdiocesan and parish levels, we are obliged to meet certain standards of behaviour in that community. The Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan’s *Code of Conduct* provides minimum standards (c.f. Policy 5.1.1 *Safe Environment*) that must be met by everyone. Those who minister to minors and vulnerable adults are asked to provide further assurances of their suitability to provide this ministry.

Every member of clergy, lay employee and volunteer in high-risk ministry is to provide a Form 5.1.b to the Archdiocesan or Parish Screening Coordinator. The cleric, lay employee or volunteer completes and signs the form after reading the *Code of Conduct* (c.f. Policy 5.1.1 *Safe Environment*).

c. Code of Conduct Acknowledgement form (Form 5.1.c)

As a church community, at the archdiocesan and parish levels, we are obliged to meet certain standards of behaviour in that community. The Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan’s *Code of Conduct* provides minimum standards (cf. Policy 5.1.1 *Safe Environment*) that must be met by everyone.

Every volunteer in medium- and low- and no-risk ministry is to provide a Form 5.1.c to the Parish Screening Coordinator. The volunteer completes and signs the form after reading the *Code of Conduct* (cf Policy 5.1.2 *Safe Environment*)

d. Vulnerable Sector Check (VS)

The Vulnerable Sector Check is a specialized Police Information Check provided by Canadian police agencies, which provides information about any records of sexual and violent offences.

Every member of clergy, lay employees and volunteer in high-risk ministry will provide a Vulnerable Sector Check from the RCMP. The Archdiocesan or Parish Screening Coordinator or the parish priest, in some parishes, will give the volunteer a letter of request (c.f. Appendix B – Letter Template). The volunteer uses the letter to make the application at a local detachment of the RCMP.

The volunteer must provide the certificate before beginning ministry. This certificate must be updated every five (5) years.

For all clergy, lay employees and volunteers joining ministry after the effective date of this policy: A Criminal Record Check must be completed and provided as part of the application process and prior to onboarding. **For international applicants:** A Criminal Record Check must be provided from the individual's most recent country of residence, covering a minimum of three (3) years. A Canadian Criminal Record Check must be obtained within three (3) years of commencing ministry in Canada.

e. Child Welfare Intervention Record Check (IRC)

The Child Welfare Intervention Record Check provides information about any history of intervention by provincial agencies for child welfare.

Every member of clergy, lay employee and volunteer in high-risk ministry involving minors will provide a Child Welfare Intervention Record Check from Child and Family Services in Alberta. The application must be made in person at a local office of Child and Family Services.

This certificate must be updated every three (3) years.

For all clergy, lay employees and volunteers joining ministry after the effective date of this policy: A Criminal Record Check must be completed and provided as part of the application process and prior to onboarding. **For international applicants:** A Criminal Record Check must be provided from the individual's most recent country of residence, covering a minimum of three (3) years. A Canadian Criminal Record Check must be obtained within three (3) years of commencing ministry in Canada.

f. Standard Form for Confidential Character &/or Performance Reference checks (Form 5.1.d)

Reference checks are to be completed by the parish priest when they are required. They are required for people whose identity is not well-established in a parish. The Parish Screening Coordinator will prepare the Form 5.1.d using the names of references provided by the volunteer. The parish priest completes the checks and returns the forms to the Parish Screening Coordinator.

6. Screening Coordinators

The delegated people for administration of this policy in the Archdiocese and its parishes are the Archdiocesan Screening Coordinator and each Parish Screening Coordinator (this includes all parishes, quasi-parishes and missions).

The Screening Coordinators have a two-fold mandate:

- a. To ensure that all ministry personnel have provided the required personal information and background screening documents for review before beginning ministry; and
- b. To ensure that the personal information collected on the forms of this policy and in the background screening documents is protected in compliance with archdiocesan norms and the *Personal Information Protection Act of Alberta*.

a. Parish Screening Coordinator

The Parish Screening Coordinator will:

i. Collect screening documents

At the request of the parish priest, or other parish ministry coordinator, the Parish Screening Coordinator will:

- Provide the appropriate forms (5.1.a and 5.1.b or 5.1.c, with a copy of the *Code of Conduct*) to volunteers to complete.
- Provide the letter to the local RCMP detachment to do a Vulnerable Sector Check.
- Provide the address of the appropriate office of Child and Family Services to volunteers who need a Child Welfare Intervention Record Check.
- Instruct the volunteers to return the completed forms and checks only to the Parish Screening Coordinator.
- Provide the parish priest with Form 5.1.d, which lists the names of the three references provided on Form 5.1.a, where reference checks are required (c.f. 4. *Responsible Ministry Policy – Screening Documents*).

ii. Review screening documents

- Receive the completed archdiocesan forms.
- Receive the original Vulnerable Sector and Child Welfare Intervention Record Checks from volunteers.
- At the request of the person named in the checks, the Parish Screening Coordinator may return the originals after making copies. The Parish Screening Coordinator signs and dates each copy, and indicates that the originals have been verified.
- Review the information in the screening documents and bring to the attention of the parish priest any potential risk factors.
- Receive the completed forms 5.1.d from the parish priest.

iii. Protect personal information

- Forward completed documents to the Archdiocesan Screening Coordinator ~~of~~ as soon as they are received. Completed documents, whether original or copies, are **not** to be kept in parishes.

iv. Ensure completeness of screening process

- Compile a record of ministries and volunteers in the parish and update it annually (Form 5.1.e)
- Forward a copy of the Form 5.1.e each year to the Archdiocesan Screening Coordinator
- Follow the instructions of the Archdiocesan Screening Coordinator regarding any missing or incomplete information related to the volunteers listed on Form 5.1.e.

b. Archdiocesan Screening Coordinator

The Archdiocesan Screening Coordinator will:

- i.** Ensure all members of the clergy in the Archdiocese are properly screened, pursuant to this policy;
- ii.** Ensure all archdiocesan and parish lay employees have provided the required forms and screening information;
- iii.** Ensure that the reference checks have been completed for parish and archdiocesan lay employees and volunteers;
- iv.** Provide information and support for parish training and orientation sessions related to this policy;
- v.** Ensure the safekeeping of the forms and documents forwarded by the Parish Coordinator in every parish;
- vi.** Review all screening documents for parish and archdiocesan employees;
- vii.** Ensure parish compliance with these policies and related requirements;
- viii.** Keep informed on developments and changes to policies and practices related to Responsible Ministry-type programs in dioceses across Canada and make recommendations to the Archbishop and the College of Consultors on the basis of these;
- ix.** Ensure adoption of and compliance with any changes required for complete coverage by liability insurers;
- x.** Ensure those named on parish lists of volunteers have been properly screened for the ministry they are doing (Form 5.1.e)

Promulgated on 25 October 2016

Amended on 15 June 2020

Amended by the Council of Priests on 19 October 2023

Reviewed by the Curia on 6 March 2026

Appendix A**List of Ministries and Risk Level**

High risk ministries	
Ministry	Risk level - reason
Member of the clergy	Minister to children, vulnerable adults; opportunity to build relationships of trust; inherent power imbalance in relationships
Employee of the Archdiocese or a parish	Opportunity to build relationships of trust
Taking Holy Communion to the sick	Minister to vulnerable adults
Altar server trainer or coordinator	Minister to children
Liturgy of the Word with Children leader	Minister to children
Hospital ministry/pastoral visitor	Minister to vulnerable adults
Sacramental preparation leader or presenter	Minister to children
Youth ministry	Minister to children
Children's choir leader	Minister to children
Bereavement team member	Opportunity to build relationships of trust
Spiritual director, retreat leader/facilitator	Opportunity to build relationships of trust; inherent power imbalance in relationships
Medium risk ministries	
Collection counter	Opportunity to mishandle temporal goods
Usher	Opportunity to mishandle temporal goods
Key holder	Opportunity to mishandle temporal goods
Maintenance and facilities management	Opportunity to mishandle temporal goods
Bookkeeper	Opportunity to mishandle temporal goods
CWL Officer (President, Treasurer)	Opportunity to mishandle temporal goods
Knights of Columbus Officer (equivalent of President, Treasurer)	Opportunity to mishandle temporal goods
Music ministry	Opportunity to build relationships of trust
Adult faith formation and RCIA	Opportunity to build relationships of trust
Prayer groups	Opportunity to build relationships of trust
Low or no-risk ministries	
Sacristan	No apparent risk related to this ministry
Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion (at Mass)	No apparent risk related to this ministry
Lector, commentator	No apparent risk related to this ministry

Form 5.1.a

Personal Information Form for Employees and Volunteers for Ministry

Name	
Address	
Phone	
Email	
Date & Place of Birth	
Sex	☐ Male ☐ Female
Marital Status	

Position	
Risk level	☐ High risk ☐ Medium risk ☐ Low or no- risk

For high risk and medium risk positions: Please provide the names of three unrelated persons whom we can contact as personal references:

1) Name _____ Phone _____

2) Name _____ Phone _____

3) Name _____ Phone _____

I affirm that the above information is true and correct. I permit the collection of this personal information, including that provided by the reference checks solely for use in managing ministry in the parish and the Archdiocese.

(Signature) (Date)

Amended by the College of Consultors on 28 September, 2011
Amended by the College of Consultors on 25 October 2016

Form 5.1.b

Ministry Suitability Form and Covenant of Care

This form is to be filled out by anyone employed by the Archdiocese or a parish, or as a volunteer in a high risk ministry (as defined in Policy 5.1.1 of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan's Policy Manual).

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town/City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

Have you ever been **accused** of abuse or inappropriate behaviour with children, adolescents or vulnerable adults?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Have you ever been **charged** with abuse or inappropriate behaviour with children, adolescents or vulnerable adults or with any other crime?

☐ No

☐ Yes

I agree to abide by the Code of Conduct of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan (see attached or Policy 5.1.2) as my commitment to serve and to be seen to serve all persons with purity and unselfish love in a Covenant of Care that honors the intrinsic worth of each person, and I acknowledge that any breach of the Code of Conduct on my part will result in appropriate disciplinary action.

Signature

Date

Amended by the College of Consultors on 25 October 2016

Form 5.1.c
Code of Conduct Acknowledgement

*This form is to be filled out by volunteers of the Archdiocese or a parish, to a ministry that is **not** considered to be a high risk ministry (as defined in Policy 5.1.1 of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan's Policy Manual).*

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town/City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

I have read and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan (see attached) as my commitment to serve and to be seen to serve all persons with purity and unselfish love in a Covenant of Care that honors the intrinsic worth of each person, and I acknowledge that any breach of the Code of Conduct on my part will result in appropriate disciplinary action.

Signature

Date

Form 5.1.d**Standard Form for Confidential Character &/or Performance References**

(Interview to be carried out by phone or in person and this form completed by the interviewer)

Volunteer or Applicant	
Name:	Position:

Reference	
Name:	Relationship:
Phone:	Other contact information:

Where possible, the reference should be interviewed by telephone. Begin the interview by introducing yourself and explaining the purpose of the call. You should say something like:

[Name of Volunteer/Applicant] has supplied your name as a reference. This position involves interaction with children, adolescents and/or vulnerable persons. Your frank confidential assessment of his/her suitability in the following categories is appreciated.

How well do you know the candidate?: well () somewhat () very little ()
How would you describe his/her moral character?
Would you describe her/him as reliable?
How would you describe his/her ability to work with others?
Would you recommend this person for this position?

(Please use other side if you need more space)

Name of interviewer: _____

Date of interview: _____

Form 5.1.e

Checklist for Parish Volunteer Screening

INSTRUCTIONS:

- This form is to be completed once a year by the Parish Screening Co-ordinator or Parish Priest.
- The original is to be submitted to the Archdiocesan Screening Coordinator.
- Be sure to put the year, the page number and the total number of pages at the bottom of each sheet.

Parish		Parish Priest	
Address			
Completed by		Date	

- A copy of the **first page only** (1.) may be kept in the parish.
- A record of volunteer screening (2.) is to be completed **for each** of the volunteer ministries in the parish.

1. List of volunteer ministries in the parish

Ministry	Risk Level

2. Record of volunteer screening, by ministry

Parish: _____ Ministry: _____

Screening required for volunteers in this ministry? Yes ☐ No ☐

Volunteers	Start date	Form 5.1.a	Form 5.1.b	Form 5.1.c	Vulnerable Sector	Child Welfare IRC

[PARISH LETTERHEAD HERE]

Royal Canadian Mounted Police
[address of local detachment]

Date:

Re: Request for a Vulnerable Sector Check

As pastor/volunteer screening coordinator of the above-named Catholic parish, I am requesting a

☐ Vulnerable Sector check

for _____,

☐ as a condition of employment with the parish as
_____.

OR

☐ who is applying to volunteer with the parish as
_____.

This position will require working, either directly or indirectly, with:

☐ children

☐ adolescents

☐ vulnerable adults.

The RCMP Vulnerable Sector Checks information website page (rcmp.ca/en/criminal-records/criminal-records-checks/vulnerable-sector-checks) “the decision to request a vulnerable sector check is made by the hiring company or volunteer organization. If they determine that a position is one of trust or authority over children or vulnerable persons, they can request that an application for the position obtain a vulnerable sector check”. Therefore, to comply with our insurance company, we require that all of our volunteers and employees have a **vulnerable sector check**.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

[Name of Priest/Screening coordinator]
Pastor of [Name of Parish]

RCMP Detachments in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan

Beaverlodge 402 - 10 Street Beaverlodge	Fox Lake	McLennan 404 – 3 Avenue NE McLennan
Chateh (Assumption) ATCO Rd & Commercial Dr Chateh	Grande Prairie 10202 99 Street Grande Prairie	Peace River 9200 99 Street Peace River
Desmarais 861 Mistassiny Road Desmarais	Grimshaw 5002 50 Avenue Wilcox Road Grimshaw	Red Earth Creek 153 – Highway 88 Red Earth Creek
Fairview 10104 113 Street Fairview	High Level 10203 100 Avenue High Level	Slave Lake 1005 – 6 Avenue SE Slave Lake
Faust 13A 4th Street West Faust	High Prairie 5400 53 Avenue High Prairie	Spirit River 4501 50 Street Spirit River
Fort Vermilion 4302 45 th Street Fort Vermilion	Manning 304 – 6 Avenue NE Manning	Valleyview 4945 - 49 Avenue Valleyview

Alberta Child and Family Services Offices in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan

Fairview 10209-109 Street Fairview	Peace River 9715-100 Street Peace River
Grande Prairie Services for Children and Youth 214 Place South, Suite 200, 10130-99 Avenue Grande Prairie	Slave Lake 108, 101-3rd Street SW Slave Lake
High Level 9814-101 Street High Level	Valleyview Community Resource Centre 5112-50 Avenue Valleyview
High Prairie 5226-53 Avenue High Prairie	