

There are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord.

Through the Sacrament of Baptism, we are all called to share our gifts with one another and with the world. Given the importance of this call from God, it is essential that we, as a community, do all we can to assure 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 ensure a richer, stronger, more vibrant and safer community of faith.

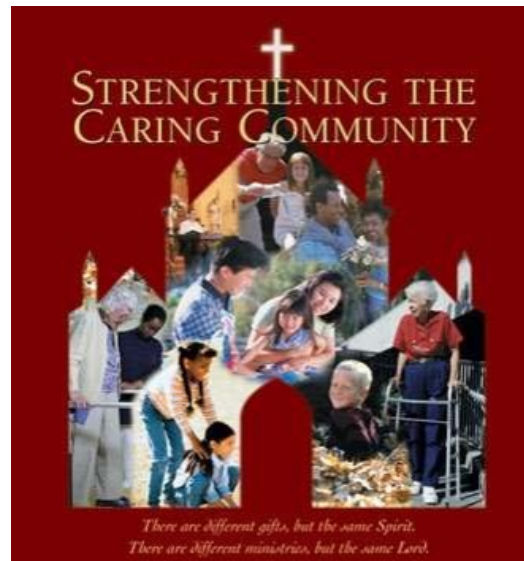


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2023



***PARISH
VOLUNTEER SCREENING
PROGRAM***

***The History of the Ontario Screening Initiative
and the Archdiocese of Toronto***

In 1999, the Government of Ontario initiated a project called the Ontario Screening Initiative. This Project was directed at all organizations within the Province, which work in any way with volunteers. The Government, through an organization called Volunteer Canada, the national voice for volunteerism in Canada, initiated this project in an effort to establish procedures designed to protect, as much as possible, those who are vulnerable among us.

All Church groups within the Province as well as all sports groups and other community organizations were invited to participate in this initiative. Along with the Anglican, the United, and the Unitarian Churches within the Province, the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops agreed to participate. Thus, this project was mandated within the Archdiocese of Toronto in 2001.

Through this initiative, we, as a Church, have committed ourselves to carry out a formalized process of screening all volunteers who assist in our parishes.

All of us are only too aware of the issues that have manifest themselves in the forms of sexual abuse, assault, and misconduct. Added to this have been other forms of breach of trust such as financial mismanagement, theft, and abuses in leadership. Therefore, society has become more acutely aware of these realities and is much less tolerant of them and rightly so!

Within the Archdiocese of Toronto, we are focusing on the idea of "Strengthening the Caring Community". The program has been initiated by this title to help parishioners recognize and understand the positive side of screening and the benefit to both the vulnerable and the volunteers within the communities.

At all times, our goal, which is the protection and safety of our vulnerable people, our volunteers, and our Church, will guide our intentions and actions as we fulfil this initiative in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

What is Screening?

Screening is simply a process designed to create and maintain a safe environment.

The process is used by organizations to evaluate volunteers and to identify any activity, which by virtue of the position could put children, youth, or other vulnerable persons at risk.

A vulnerable person is one who has difficulty protecting her or himself from harm temporarily or permanently and is at risk because of age, disability, handicap, or emotional distress due to extreme crisis or trauma.

The screening process also ensures the most appropriate match is made between the person wishing to volunteer and the ministry position. This is also known as volunteer management.

Why Screen?

We screen to protect our program participants, our staff, and our volunteers. We also want to ensure that the appropriate people are assigned to the correct ministries.

Every organization has a responsibility to appropriately screen its staff and volunteers. It is not only the right thing to do but it is a legal requirement.

The below was taken from a letter written May 2023, by Archbishop Francis Leo

Volunteers across the Archdiocese of Toronto have a long-standing tradition of giving generously of their time and talents to strengthen our community. We must never underestimate the tremendous contribution of these individuals and the critical role they play in providing care, compassion, and ongoing support to our family of faith.

As part of our mandate to foster a safe and caring community, since 2000 the Archdiocese of Toronto has had a policy of screening its volunteers to ensure the protection and safety of the most vulnerable.

Our diocesan Volunteer Screening Program oversees this important work conducting the appropriate checks and balances to ensure a safe environment for all those engaged in a variety of important ministries. The pages of the Volunteer Guidelines and Code of Conduct will provide additional insight and helpful information for those engaged in volunteer services to the community.

I wish to thank those responsible for coordinating these activities at both the diocesan and parish level. To all volunteers who are following the gospel call to serve, be assured of my prayers and ongoing gratitude.

May your outreach with the Archdiocese of Toronto enhance your own faith journey.

Yours sincerely in Jesus with Mary,



Most Reverend Francis Leo
Archbishop of Toronto

The Primary Goal of “Strengthening the Caring Community” is three-fold:

1. To safeguard, in all respects, all of those to whom we minister.
2. To support parish volunteers and preserve their safety, integrity and reputation.
3. To ensure that we fulfill our duty and obligation as a faith community.

Ten Safe Steps of Screening

Screening begins before any person offers themselves for volunteering and ends only after they leave the ministry position. The Archdiocese of Toronto’s Ten Safe Step process was developed by Volunteer Canada and is divided into 3 sections:

1. Before selecting volunteers
2. Determine the Risk
3. Ministry Position Description
4. Recruitment Process

The selection process

1. Volunteer Information Form
2. Interviews
3. Reference Check
4. Criminal Record Check *

Managing the volunteers

1. Orientation and Training
2. Supervision/Evaluation
3. Participant Follow-Up *

* *High Risk positions ONLY*