

***We are God's handiwork, created in  
Christ Jesus to do good works, which  
God prepared in advance for us to do.  
Ephesians 2:10***

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.



Archdiocese  
of Toronto

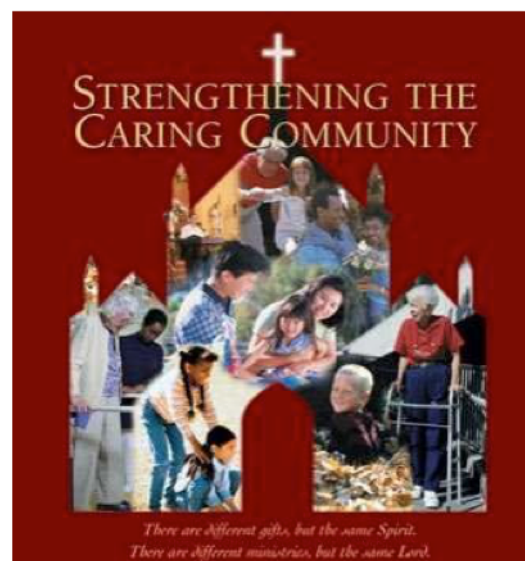
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## **PARISH VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROGRAM**

### ***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 a process designed to foster and maintain a safe environment and ensures the most appropriate match is made between persons wishing to volunteer and ministry positions. This is also known as volunteer management.

Organizations are responsible for diligently evaluating volunteers and identifying activities that by virtue of position could put any person and those most vulnerable at risk.

A vulnerable person is one who has difficulty protecting themselves from being exploited or harmed temporarily or permanently and is at risk because of age, disability, illness, or emotional distress due to crisis or trauma.

Why Screen?

We screen to protect our participants, volunteers, staff, and clergy, and to be prudent in ensuring that the appropriate people are assigned to the correct ministry.

“Strengthening Our Caring Community” covers the mandatory screening that volunteers undergo to adhere to our moral and legal obligation and heightened liability when dealing with the vulnerable, and “duty of care” for all participants and volunteers in our programs and ministries.

Screening is not only the right thing to do but it is a legal requirement.

The below was taken from a letter written September 2009  
by Archbishop Thomas Cardinal Collins

“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 2001 the Archdiocese has had a policy of screening its volunteers to ensure the protection and safety of the most vulnerable. This practice has now become a standard for most organizations seeking to exercise due diligence and responsible volunteer stewardship.

Our diocesan Volunteer Screening department 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.

I wish to thank those responsible for coordinating these activities at both the diocesan and parish level.

To all volunteers who are truly 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."

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Thomas Card. Collins

Thomas Cardinal Collins,  
Archbishop of Toronto

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

- 1. To safeguard, in all respects, those we minister to, and the most vulnerable.
- 2. To support parish volunteers and clergy in preserving their safety, integrity, and reputation.
- 3. To ensure that we fulfill our “duty of care” and moral and legal obligation as a faith community.

Ten Safe Steps of Screening

Screening begins before any person is permitted to volunteer and ends only after the person leaves the ministry position. The Ten Safe Step process that the Archdiocese of Toronto has adopted was developed by Volunteer Canada and is divided into 3 sections:

Before selecting volunteers

- 1. Determine the Risk
- 2. Ministry Position Description
- 3. Recruitment Process

The selection process

- 4. Volunteer Application Form
- 5. Interviews \*
- 6. Reference Check \*
- 7. Criminal Record Check \*

Managing the volunteers

- 8. Orientation & Training (and Acknowledgement & Agreement)
- 9. Supervision/Evaluation
- 10. Participant Follow-Up \*

\* High Risk psitions ONLY