

Diocese of Hamilton Volunteer Screening Initiative

Summer Update 2004

I am sure by the time you read this, summer will be coming to an end. I hope you have enjoyed your summer. It has been a busy year. I have visited a number of parishes to make presentations to their volunteers and provided additional training to parishes that have just started the screening initiative. It has been very rewarding to see a number of new parishes begin the Volunteer Screening Initiative. Unfortunately, some parishes that had begun implementing the screening initiative have experienced difficulties maintaining it. I plan to be in contact with each parish during the coming year to provide additional support. Part of the purpose for my call or visit to your parish screening committee will also be to find out what works well. I am hoping to be able to draw on these strengths to help create a “best practise file”. By finding out what works best, I will also find out what doesn’t work and possibly be able to streamline some of the paper work.

During the workshops that took place in May and June, one of the suggestions I received through a number of evaluation forms was the need for regular meetings, at least once a year for the parish screening committees to meet with other parishes and me. This will give the parishes the ability to share their triumphs and trials. Another parish, after examining our Parent Consent Form for Youth Volunteers felt that it contravened some of our laws. I reviewed it with our lawyer and did rewrite it. Included with this update are the corrected form as well as Manual changes and additions. This type of feedback from these meetings and training sessions help mould this program, make it more relevant to the needs of the parish and ensure a safer environment for our vulnerable participants and our volunteers.

In June the annual progress report was sent to the screening contacts or the pastor in each parish. I have already received a number of them back. The completed report is to be returned by the end of August. If anyone hasn’t returned last year’s report they may do so with this year’s report. Last year I asked that you complete a Parish Ministry Summary. The summary included the number of volunteers involved in each ministry. Thirty-one percent of the parishes responded. From these parishes, there are a total of 8178 volunteer positions, 27% are in high risk, 6% are in medium risk and 67% are in low risk. I found these numbers to be amazing. Just think how many volunteers are actually sharing their time, gifts and talents in our entire diocese! When I receive the rest of the summaries, I will provide the new totals.

A number of parishes are in the process of recruiting new members for their screening committees. I will be providing training workshops in September and October for these new members. It is important for the newer members to attend so they may connect with others in the same position. Some of the experienced members are stepping down. I would like to thank all of you who have been given the task of implementing this new initiative. It is always difficult to start something new and get it accepted by our fellow parishioners. Keep up the good work; you are doing a great job.

Updated Policies and Procedures for August 2004

Police Records Check Policies

The policy changes for the police records check has been approved. Policy #21 has been replaced with Policy #22 with the change being that the police records check can be returned to the volunteer. A Police Records Check form is to be completed and held in the file in place of the police records check. Our lawyer has approved this form. A copy of the police records check form is included with this update. Any police records checks on file do not have to be returned to the volunteers unless they request it. For our purposes, a police records check must be an original, no more than 60 days old and requested by the parish. This is now policy # 21. An addition has been made to the policies to include the use of the Offence Declaration. This is policy # 27.

For the parishes in the Hamilton area

The Hamilton Police Services is currently reviewing their policy of providing police records checks free of charge to volunteers. They are considering a charge of \$10.00 for volunteers. The reason they are considering a charge is because of the number of requests they receive that are never picked up. Twenty per cent of the volunteers who request police records checks do not pick up their checks within thirty days. These are then destroyed. Many of these volunteers request a second check because it is still needed. If your volunteers have not completed their checks yet, they should do so as soon as possible before the charge is applied. We should all do our part to remind our volunteers to pick-up their checks on time. Maybe this way we can keep the cost from rising any higher.

Volunteer Drivers

A Volunteer Drivers form is included with this update. I first mentioned it in the Spring 2003 Update. It has been thoroughly reviewed and is ready for use. This should be used by anyone who drives as part of their duties as a volunteer of the parish. This is not for parents who drive their children and their friends to church or to the youth group meetings. This is when the parents are asked to help drive children to specific parish activities, such as driving members of the youth group to their annual retreat. This form is also to be used if a ministry includes driving seniors back and forth to church as part of its duties. Policies for Volunteer Drivers have been included with the form and a copy should be given to each volunteer driver.

Liability Insurance Coverage

The diocese of Hamilton has a new insurance provider, Catholic Mutual Canada. Screening committee members and volunteers acting on behalf of their parishes will continue to be covered with liability insurance. A new statement is included with your manual updates.

Record keeping and File Updating (question from a parish)

- Q. *We are concerned about the amount of paperwork required for each volunteer; it seems very excessive, in particular for those in low risk ministries since we are required to update the files annually.*
- A. There is some confusion about Policy # 13. It states “All forms are to be maintained in a confidential file and updated annually.” It defiantly is not very clear. By updating annually, it means that the files should be reviewed, not replaced. The ministry leaders should provide the screening committees with updated volunteer lists at least annually or more often if there are any changes. These will show who is still volunteering, who is no longer volunteering and who has just started.
- Of the volunteers who are still volunteering, review their files to find out if the information is current and correct. Do they still have the same personal information and are they still working for the same ministry(s)? The volunteers can be informed either through the bulletin, a pulpit announcement or from the ministry leaders that they are responsible for informing the screening committee of any personal information changes.
 - Of the volunteers that are no longer volunteering, their files should be pulled from the active files, dated as to the day they left active ministry (or as close to it as possible) and stored in an inactive file.
 - Of the volunteers that have just started, the review should check that all steps of the screening process have been applied.

Upcoming Events and Workshops

SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTEER IN THE PARISH SETTING

- There will be a special workshop focusing on supervision and volunteer feedback called, “**Supporting the Volunteer in the Parish Setting**”, with guest speaker Reva Cooper. Reva is a nationally recognized trainer, writer, speaker and consultant in the field of volunteer management. She will provide additional insight as to how supervision and feedback will be helpful to the ministries and volunteers. It is open to all screening committee members and coordinators of high risk ministries. This is a great opportunity for your ministry leaders to learn this step in Section Five first hand.
- Any parish that currently has tools or processes in place for supervision and volunteer feedback that they would like to share should contact me. We would like to add these to the workshop.
- This workshop will be offered in three locations in the diocese:
 - Hamilton- Cathedral auditorium, September 25, 2004,
 - Kitchener –St. Anne’s Parish Hall, October 30, 2004,
 - Hanover- Holy Family Parish, November 6, 2004
- Cost: \$15.00 per person includes resource materials and refreshments.
- For more information please see the enclosed brochure or contact Mary Catherine Ker, Diocesan Screening Coordinator, volscreen@hamiltondiocese.com or call 905-528-7988.

YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEERISM/DISCIPLESHIP WORKSHOP

WHEN: October 23, 2004, 8:30 a.m. –4 p.m.
WHERE: Resurrection Centre, Waterloo Ontario
WHO: C.Y.O. (Diocese of Hamilton) with Jane Hennig (Volunteer Action Centre, Kitchener)
WHAT: Explain the larger picture/framework of volunteerism/discipleship particularly for youth and those working with youth in the Church. Discuss the true meaning of volunteerism /discipleship from a Christian perspective. What is a volunteer resource person? Focus in on the advantages of having a volunteer resource person to work along with the parish screening committees.
REGISTRATION FEE: \$50.00/person (includes breakfast and lunch)
CONTACT: Jason Gould, C.Y.O. Resource Person - jasongould@cyo.on.ca, or call 519-578-3600, ext. 341

Volunteer Screening Committee Members Workshops

Any parish with new members on their screening committee should attend the diocesan orientation and training sessions. Two sessions are currently being offered. If any parish cannot attend these sessions, please contact me to make arrangements for workshops that are more convenient for your parish.

Phase One Training (Steps One to Seven)

Where: Chancery Office, 700 King Street West, Hamilton
When: Tuesday, September 14, 2004, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Pre-registration is required by September 8, 2004

Phase Two Training (Steps Eight to Ten)

Where: Chancery Office 700 King Street West, Hamilton
When: Tuesday, September 28, 2004, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Pre-registration is required by September 22, 2004

For more information please contact Mary Catherine Ker–Diocesan Screening Coordinator, email volscreen@hamiltondiocese.com or call 905-528-7988.