

Duty of Care at ESG

Volunteer Handbook for those working with the Vulnerable Sector

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1. Preamble

The United Church of Canada, and Eglinton St George's in particular, have a legal, moral, and spiritual duty to care for and protect staff and participants in our church programs. At ESG we take this responsibility seriously and expect all who work with vulnerable individuals to do so in a responsible manner, creating a community of trust and safety for everyone.

2. Definition of the Vulnerable Sector

Vulnerable members of society are defined in the *Criminal Records Act* as persons who, because of age, disability, or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent are:

- In a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of authority or trust relative to them

This includes children, youth, senior citizens, people with physical, developmental, social, emotional, or other disabilities, as well as people who are victims of crime or harm. The vulnerability may be a temporary condition or permanent.

3. Volunteer roles at ESG working with the Vulnerable Sector

- Working with children or youth in any programs or activities
- Visiting seniors as part of our Pastoral Care Team
- Performing any services with clients in our Wellness Centre, such as Reiki or Therapeutic Touch
- Meeting with clients in our Thursday Outreach Program
- Working with the Lawrence Heights Outreach team at Baycrest Public School

4. Overview of risk management policies and procedures

At ESG we are taking care to consider the possibility that something could go wrong, and taking steps to minimize, prevent or eliminate the circumstances that could lead to injury, abuse or harm to program participants and our volunteers. This includes the following practices:

- A review of all volunteer activities to identify risk levels relating to work with the vulnerable sector
- Job descriptions for all activities where volunteers interact with the vulnerable sector
- Police checks for anyone working with the vulnerable sector
- Annual training workshops or briefings with each of these groups, using situations and scenarios that are specific to each group

(i) Volunteer Positions working with the Vulnerable Sector

Pastoral Care	Pastoral Care Team Leader
	Pastoral Care Team Visitor
Children’s Programs	Librarian
	Teachers
	Toddler & Infant Room Volunteers
	Volunteers helping in any capacity
Youth Programs	Parents supporting programs or events
Wellness Team	Wellness Team Coordinator
	Wellness Practitioners
Outreach Initiatives	Thursday Afternoon Drop in
	Baycrest School Volunteers

(ii) Police Record Checks Procedures

It should be noted that all church school and youth positions and those working with other vulnerable sector groups are considered roles with high risk designations. These volunteers will fill in the form to have a Level 2 police record check, paid for by the church, and the forms will be mailed to Toronto Police Services from the church office. When the Level 2 check report is received at home by the volunteer (*note: the church does not receive it*), it should be given immediately to the Lay Ministry Coordinator who will record it in our system. Annually in September, the volunteers will sign the *Annual Offence Declaration*. At least every six years, a Level 2 will be done. As with staff, volunteers may begin their

duties after a satisfactory Level 1 is done. It should be noted that this means that it will cost ESG \$44 for every volunteer in a high risk position.

If a volunteer lives outside of Toronto, then they will need to request a letter from the Lay Ministry Coordinator and take it to their local police detachment to complete the vulnerable sector check. In this case, the volunteer will be asked to pay for the police check and then submit the receipt for reimbursement.

In some cases when a volunteer's gender and birth date match a person on the list of "pardoned offences," they may be asked to go for RCMP fingerprinting to confirm their identify. The Lay Ministry Coordinator will provide a letter asking that the additional fee be waived.

There will be ad hoc situations, such as a parent wishing to stay at the church school with his/her child because, for example, the child is anxious, or is new to the class. This is allowed as long as a person who has a Level 2 acts in a supervisory role, and the parent or other person is never alone with another child or other vulnerable person.

(iii) Workshops or Briefings

All volunteers in positions that are designated high risk will take part in a workshop, or a briefing, and sign that they have read the Handbook on Duty of Care which includes the steps to mitigate risk specific to your area. Workshops or briefings will be scheduled when needed, normally as part of a regular team meeting, and new volunteers informed of the timing.

5. Steps to Reduce Risk in each group

i) Children's Programs

- Vulnerable Sector Police Checks are completed for church school volunteers and employees
- Key members of the Children's Ministry Working Group have first aid training and a first aid kit is stored on the wall in the kitchen area
- Fire drill procedures are practiced during the year, posted in various locations throughout the Church School, and directions to parents are printed in the weekly bulletin
- Parents are asked about allergies or other conditions for the leaders to be aware of during annual registration
- Volunteers are never alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom. A door is left ajar or two volunteers and/or staff accompany the child
- The Christian Education Administrator checks in on each of the program areas during the Sunday morning service
- Children are signed out by their parents at the end of the worship service
- Responsible Ministry policies and concerns is a standing item during our Working Group meetings so we proactively raise and address areas of risk or concern.

ii) Youth Programs

- Vulnerable sector police checks are completed for Youth Leaders, volunteers, and other employees working with youth.
- Parents are asked to communicate information about allergies or other conditions for the youth leaders to be aware of.
- Youth Leaders will not run a program if only one youth is present.
- For events such as sleepovers and/or retreats, a male and female leader and/or volunteer must both be present at all times.
- Responsible ministry is a standing item during our Working Group meetings so we proactively raise and address areas of risk or concern.

iii) Wellness Practitioners

- Complete Vulnerable Sector Police checks
- Complete an annual *Covenant Statement of Ethics for Wellness Ministry Volunteers* and attend regular training sessions organized by the group coordinator
- Are instructed to keep discussions in the strictest confidence and encourage clients to speak with the Minister of Worship and Pastoral Care if it appears they would benefit from pastoral support
- Refrain from diagnosing, verbally assessing, advising or prescribing in respect of any client

iv) Pastoral Care Visitors

- Complete Vulnerable Sector Police checks
- Receive training when joining the team in ethical practices and understanding boundaries
- Have a team coordinator and a Minister available for bi-monthly meetings and enquiries or support at any time
- Report on each visit and submit brief summary to the team coordinator

v) Outreach Volunteers—Thursday Afternoon Drop in

- Complete a Vulnerable Sector Police Check
- Receive training and overlap with someone experienced until they feel comfortable in the role
- Are given a binder with instructions and additional information is on the desk
- Meet with our guests in a private office in the staff wing with the door left ajar and a large window visible in the office, allowing privacy for the guests sharing confidential information and security for our volunteers
- Work on day when most staff members are on site and available to offer support
- Have access to a panic button in case of emergency which sounds an alarm in the building and notifies the security company, who contact emergency services

6. Documents to complete and sign

**Eglinton St. George's United Church
Annual Offence Declaration**

Name: _____

Volunteer Position(s) _____

Date of Birth: _____

This form is to be completed by anyone in a position working with the vulnerable sector.

I DELARE, since the last criminal background check collected by Eglinton St. George's United Church, or since the last Offence Declaration given by me to Eglinton St. George's United Church, that:

I have no convictions under the Criminal Code of Canada since my Criminal Background Check up to and including the date of this declaration for which a pardon has not been issued or granted under the Criminal Records Act Canada.

OR

I have the following conviction(s), up to and including the date of this declaration, for offences under the Criminal Code of Canada for which a pardon under the Criminal Records Act (Canada) has not been issued or granted.

List of Offences

1. a) Date: _____

b) Conviction: _____

2. a) Date: _____

b) Conviction: _____

3. a) Date: _____

b) Conviction: _____

Dated at _____ this _____ day of _____, 20

Signature of Volunteer

7. Other Resources

Faithful Footsteps: Screening Procedures for Positions of Trust and Authority in the United Church of Canada, www.united-church.ca/files/handbooks/faithfulfootsteps.pdf

Screening Faith: A National Education Campaign on Screening Resource from Volunteer Canada, www.nspeidiocese.ca