

Screening Clergy

Procedures for ensuring effective screening of clergy in the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa

We must morally, legally, and spiritually do all we can to make sure that our church, clergy, paid and lay workers, and the participants in our church-sponsored activities are as safe as possible.

The overall aim of this policy is to ensure that there is a safe environment in every parish, ministry, and activity.

In the Diocese of Ottawa, we have many policies and procedures in place to ensure that we are effectively screening our clergy. Because the Diocesan Bishop is the employer of clergy, the Bishop's Office takes responsibility for the ongoing screening of all clergy in our Diocese.

Ten safe steps for clergy

1. Determine the risk

The work of the clergy clearly involves situations with many vulnerable people. Visiting the sick, counselling, working with youth; all of these are part of the work of bishops, priests, and deacons in our church.

2. With a clear ministry description

The Church describes ordained ministry in The Ordinal. The parish profiles, used in the appointments process, provide considerable detail from the parish's perspective on the expectations for parish clergy. The Diocese provides further resources in the Clergy Personnel Policy.

3. Establish a formal recruitment process

For ordained candidates applying for a position in the Diocese, there is a detailed written process to follow. Interviews, reference letters, resumes, and written responses are all part of this process. The process for the election of a Bishop is also clearly defined.

4. Use an application form

Those seeking ordination are requested to complete an application form. Those seeking a new position in the Diocese are asked to apply in writing, with comments on your suitability for the possible new ministry. Individuals applying for positions outside the Diocese must do so in writing, including a formal resume.

5. Conduct interviews

For those seeking ordination, a number of interviews are required through the years of the ordination process. For those clergy seeking a new appointment there is one formal interview. For those coming from another Diocese, there is at least one interview required with the Bishop.

6. Follow up references

Many written references are routinely required for those seeking ordination. Those providing references are asked to reply to a standard set of questions for the Diocese, and for the wider church discernment process. References are also requested for those seeking new positions in the Diocese and for those seeking to come to Ottawa from another Diocese. These references are all studied and checked.

7. Police Record Check

All those seeking ordination in this Diocese are required to have their records checked by police. In addition, every five years all clergy serving in the Diocese of Ottawa are asked to provide the Bishop with an updated Police Record Check.

8. Conducting orientation and training sessions

A post-ordination program with supervision exists for the newly ordained. Ongoing training is provided through the Episcopal Office. Clergy receive training on issues of sexual misconduct; a form stating this training has taken place must be signed at the end of each session.

9. Supervise and evaluate

Clergy participate in regular evaluation sessions conducted by their Archdeacon.

10. Follow up with program participants

Parishioners give feedback to the clergy on a regular basis through wardens, parish councils, and others.

Parishioners with serious complaints who feel they are not being satisfactorily handled in the parish can speak to their Archdeacon or the Bishop.

This policy has been prepared with the help of a coalition of faith partners and reflects a shared commitment among the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Unitarian Universalist and United Churches, and the Pentecostal Assembly. It also reflects that church coalition's cooperation with Volunteers Canada, Scouts Canada, Sports & Recreation Canada, and other caring partners.