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| **Monty & Eltham**  **The Catholic Parishes of St Francis Xavier & Our Lady Help of Christians** |

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Human Resources Policy**

**Selection, Recruitment and Screening**

***Date of policy: 1 March 2021 Version 2***

**Selection, Recruitment and Screening**

# **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish selection, recruitment and screening processes that consider the suitability and appropriateness of all employees and volunteers being engaged to undertake work in St Francis Xavier Montmorency and Our Lady Help of Christians Eltham (referred to as “both parishes” in this document). In addition, the steps in the process help to prepare the applicant for work and ministry in relation to children and young people by introducing them to parish organisational culture and expectations with regard to safeguarding children and young people.

# **Scope**

This policy is applicable for the engagement of all employees and volunteers within both parishes.

# **Role/Position Description**

A role/position description is established for all roles in the parishes. They outline the key duties and responsibilities of a role and provide an opportunity to communicate expectations about child safety. A role/position description establishes the boundaries of a role and forms the basis for managing the behaviour and performance of employees and volunteers. Role descriptions are important and required for both paid and voluntary roles.

# **Advertising Employee and Voluntary Roles**

Advertising or promoting the availability of employee and volunteer positions (e.g. via Bulletins, websites, Facebook or online employment sites) assists in broadening the pool of people who may have an interest in working or volunteering in our parishes. As a minimum requirement, advertisements need to include the following statement:

“The parishes are child safe environments, committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children, young people and vulnerable adults. Where there is no tolerance for child abuse”.

This statement helps to communicate to applicants that the organisation is not a ‘soft target’ for the perpetrators of abuse and that action will be taken to safeguard children and young people.

**Please note**: advertising of employee positions is facilitated through the Archdioceses of Melbourne.

# **Application Process**

An application processes provides transparency and clarity for applicants wishing to apply for a position. When recruiting for an employee position, a letter of application and a résumé are important sources of information to support decision-making about the suitability of the applicant.

In relation to a voluntary position, an expression of interest process is an important first step in gathering information about an applicant. It is recommended, for child-related volunteer roles, that the applicant provides a résumé or a summary of their work history or experience.

All applicants will be required to provide 3 Referees and their contact details. (See 9. Referee Checks)

Successful applications or expressions of interest will be retained as part of the employee or volunteer’s personnel file, to demonstrate that reasonable steps have been taken to gather information about prospective employees and volunteers.

In addition, applicants will be requested to either provide a copy of their current Working with Children Check and or Police Check or to indicate a willingness to obtain a Working with Children Check and or Police Check, as required.

# **Screening**

Screening processes are used as an important mechanism for gathering additional information about a prospective employee or volunteer to assist in making recruitment decisions.

For employees and volunteers within both parishes, it is a requirement that the following screening measures be undertaken:

* an interview
* referee checks
* an identity check
* a qualification and professional registration check (if applicable)
* a Working with Children Check
* a national criminal history record check (Police Record Check) for all employees or volunteers engaged in specific contact activities.

# **Interview**

Interviews for employee or volunteers provide an opportunity for our parishes, as employer, and the applicant to exchange information relevant to determining the applicant’s suitability to the role.

While formal interviews are usual practice when recruiting employees, informal interviews may be acceptable when recruiting for volunteer roles. A series of standard questions could be developed and utilised. Care should be taken to assess the following when working with children and young people as part of the interview process:

* the applicant’s beliefs and values
* relevant and applicable experience and skills
* relevant qualifications (if applicable)
* awareness and understanding of the importance of child safety in our parishes context.

It is expected that interviews will be conducted by more than one interviewer. This avoids any potential for bias and reduces risk. It also allows for an additional perspective in assessing the suitability of the applicant to work with children and young people, and assists in taking notes about the applicant’s responses.

It will be helpful to consider the role that children and young people might play in a selection process. Seeking the input and/or the involvement of children and young people in recruitment and selection processes serves to empower children and young people and demonstrates that their opinions matter.

(How the interviewee responds to children and young people in the interview is often a good measure of how well that person would work with children and young people.)

# **Interview Notes**

Interview notes will be retained as they provide an important record of the applicant’s responses. Interview notes should be kept as a record to demonstrate that the parishes have taken reasonable steps to select suitable persons to work with children and young people. **Please use the “Interview Question Suggestions”** document that is intended to provide guidance in addressing our child safety focus, during an interview. Interview notes form part of the employee or volunteer’s personnel file.

# **Referee Checks**

A referee check provides an opportunity to obtain independent information about the applicant’s previous performance and behaviour. This information can assist in corroborating the information that the applicant has provided in their interview and/or application, and help to build a picture of how they are likely to perform within the advertised role. Specifically, in relation to child safety, a referee check enables the parishes to assess the candidate’s capacity to undertake the requirements of the role and their suitability to work with children and young people.

The following guidelines apply to referee checks:

* Request details of three referees from the applicant and make contact with at least two referees.
* The list of referees must include the current, or most recent, employer or organisation where the person has volunteered.
* The list of referees must include a direct supervisor, if possible.
* Priority will be given to referees who are able to provide information about the applicant’s work or engagement with children and young people (if the applicant has previously worked or volunteered in a child-related role).
* The list of referees must not include any person who has a personal relationship with the applicant (e.g. spouse, relative).

It is advisable to use the referee check template, with relevant selection criteria listed from the role/position description and specific child-safety focused questions, and to document the referee’s responses about the applicant. It is important to add the completed referee check information to the personnel file of successful applicant. **(See attached Template)**

# **10. Identity Checks**

Once an applicant has been selected but before they commence, it is important to verify their identity by requesting proof of identity consistent with the 100-point proof of identity scheme used by the Australian Passport Office.

(One of the risks of identity fraud in relation to child safety is that an unsuitable applicant may assume the identity of another person for the purposes of evading detection through screening measures (e.g. Working with Children Check/ Police Record Check.)

Proof of identity information will be retained in the employee or volunteer’s file, as this demonstrates that reasonable steps to verify the identity of the prospective employee or volunteer have been undertaken.

# **Qualification and Professional Registration Checks**

Qualification and professional registration checks are important when a particular qualification or professional accreditation is deemed essential to an employee or volunteer role.

For example, if recruiting a Pastoral Associate to work in the parishes, the applicant would need to hold a current Certificate of Accreditation ratified by the Archbishop of Melbourne and have completed a graduate diploma or equivalent level based on the Lay Ecclesial Ministers Accreditation Standards.

There are a number of ways in which qualifications can be verified:

* Sight the original, or certified copies of, academic transcripts.
* Use a free online service offered by many universities and educational institutions to enable parishes to undertake a qualifications check.
* Use one of the private providers who offer qualification checking services for a fee.

Many professional bodies also issue accreditation documentation to those eligible to work within particular professions (e.g. the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and Victorian Legal Services Board). These bodies maintain registers of eligible persons, which can be checked online to verify an applicant’s professional standing.

Checks of qualifications or professional standing will be documented and retained in an employee or volunteer’s file.

# **Working with Children Check**

The Working with Children Check (WWCC) assists in protecting children and young people by ensuring that people who work with or care for them undergo a screening process.

The WWCC provides an assessment of an applicant’s criminal records and any other professional conduct findings to determine whether the applicant poses an unjustifiable risk in relation to child-related work.

The WWCC excludes persons from working with children and young people on the basis of their involvement in:

* serious sexual offences
* serious violent offences
* serious drug offences.

Throughout the duration of the WWCC, a person’s criminal record will be monitored in relation to these relevant offences and professional conduct findings in Victoria.

The WWCC is valid for 5 years.

Employees and volunteers are not permitted to work or volunteer within the Parishes without a valid WWCC.

Employees and volunteers are required to register their involvement with the parishes, within 21 days of commencement.

# **National Criminal History Record Check (Police Record Check)**

A national Police Record Check is required for all employees upon commencement and every 3 years. While all volunteers are required to undertake a WWCC, not all volunteers are required to undertake a Police Record Check.

The requirement for a Police Record Check is determined by those requirements of the role that extend beyond the scope of the WWCC (i.e. serious sexual, violent or drug charges or convictions) to other offences that may impact the safety of children, young people and vulnerable.

Some examples of activities within volunteer roles that may require a Police Record Check include:

* driving
* home visiting
* visiting special care facilities (e.g. refuges, hospitals, nursing homes)
* visits to community support agencies (e.g. disability support centres)
* overnight stays (e.g. camps, interstate or overseas trips)
* records and/or financial management with assess to personal information about families, children and young people (e.g. name, address, date of birth, family circumstances).

A register of national criminal record checks is retained, recording the reference number, the date on which the check is undertaken and the details of the organisation that has processed the check e.g. Victoria Police, Australia Post, and ensure that checks are undertaken for all relevant roles every 3 years.

All criminal history record information e.g. disclosable outcomes, will be treated in the strictest confidence and stored securely.

Disclosable outcomes that appear e.g. court charges, convictions, findings of guilt with no conviction will be referred to the CAM Professional Standards Unit, HR Department and/or the Vicar General’s Office to determine the suitability of the person for ministry or employment in the Archdiocese.

Employees and volunteer have an obligation to immediately inform their “manager” if charged or convicted with a criminal offence that may be considered relevant to safely working with children and young people and their ministry, work or volunteering role, in the intervening period prior to the next Police Record Check.

# **Probationary Period**

A probationary period for employees and volunteers enables the parishes to assess if the employee or volunteer is suitable to undertake their role and work with children and young people.

The probationary period for employees and volunteers will be in accord with the Archdiocese requirement which is usually **6 months**, in relation to child safety. A progress review will be conducted at the 3 month period. This provides an opportunity to identify employee or volunteer behaviour and attitudes that may compromise the safety of children and young people.

Activities to be undertaken during the probationary period include:

* induction including child safety responsibilities (See separate Induction Procedure)
* role/position orientation to ensure clarity in relation to duties and responsibilities
* child safety training
* supervision and monitoring of performance.

The probationary period allows the supervisor to work together with the employee or volunteer to shape their engagement with the organisation and their involvement with children and young people to promote positive outcomes and safe interactions.

**NOTE:**

Consistent with the expectations set out in the CAM Privacy Compliance Advice, our parishes, must comply with Australian Privacy Principles.

Our Parishes must take active steps to ensure the security of personal information and protect this information from unauthorised access, disclosure, misuse, loss, interference or modification. It is a requirement that any information gathered through the selection and recruitment process is securely stored and treated with the utmost privacy.

**History of Updates to Policy**

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| **Date** | **Comment (e.g. major review, minor review)** |
| June 2017 | Development of original documentation based on CAM requirements |
| March 2021 | Minor amendments to Policy |