

CENTRAL OKANAGAN UNITED CHURCH
POLICY ON CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECKS

PURPOSE:

To identify situations where COUC will require employees and volunteers to undertake a criminal records check to ensure their safety and security and that of participants in church ministries having potentially high-risk circumstances.

PRINCIPLES:

1. COUC recognizes that we take seriously our obligation to provide a safe and nurturing environment to our communities engaged in study, service, worship, and personal growth. Moreover, the church has a legal, moral, and spiritual obligation to protect all individuals who receive our services and participate in our programs.
2. We have a primary duty to care for those who are marginalized, less powerful, or more vulnerable in our community, and all persons have a right to be treated with respect and protected from harm.
3. This duty of care is applicable to all COUC employed and volunteer personnel, participants in our programs and services, and persons who handle our financial resources.
4. The principles and practices adopted by COUC are guided by the handbook titled *Faithful Footsteps: Screening Procedures for Positions of Trust and Authority in the United Church of Canada*. This source emphasizes various ways of managing risks. The COUC policy is also informed by Section J.2.2 of the UCC Manual and by the B.C. Criminal Records Review Act.
5. “Risk management” means accepting the fact that harm is possible, either by an intentional abusive act or through carelessness or accident. Several factors are considered in determining risk including the vulnerability of the participants, the physical setting of the activity, whether the activity is carried out in a group or individually, the supervision provided, and the nature of the relationship between participants and leaders.
6. Employees and volunteers should be aware of any potential risks involved in their activities and take steps whenever appropriate to avoid or minimize those risks.
7. Where the risk is deemed to be high, with opportunities to be alone with or exert influence over children or other vulnerable people, COUC will require that volunteers undertake a B.C. Criminal Records Review Program (CRRP) check every five years via an online application. Examples of such high-risk activities are shown in Appendix A. Other activities deemed to be high-risk that are not included in this list may occasion a request that a volunteer undertake a CRRP check.
8. Criminal records checks for ministers are determined by United Church of Canada Office of Vocation policies which require an initial criminal records check conducted by the RCMP and annual declarations by June 30 in every year thereafter regarding whether or not any criminal charges have been laid. Other employees are required to have a criminal records check by the RCMP at initial employment and every five years thereafter.

9. Any costs associated with criminal records required by COUC for employees will be borne by the church. The checks required of volunteers are free to the participants.

PRACTICES:

1. Every employee except ministers will undertake a criminal records check upon entering employment with COUC and within three months of every fifth anniversary date of first employment.
2. Ministers will undertake a criminal records check upon entering employment with COUC and will file an annual declaration by June 30 stating whether or not any criminal charges have been laid against them.
3. Volunteers in high-risk circumstances as listed in Appendix A will undertake a CRRP prior to beginning their activities and within three months of each fifth anniversary date of beginning their volunteer activities.
4. Criminal Records Checks should follow the on-line procedure provided by the provincial Criminal Records Review Program of British Columbia. Detailed information regarding access to this process is obtainable from the Bernard site office.

BOARD APPROVAL: April 26, 2023

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLES OF HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS REQUIRING CRIMIINAL RECORDS CHECKS

1. Participants in the activity are disabled or infirm adolescents or seniors; or children or infants.
2. Setting for the activity is tents, cabins, participant's or other's home, meetings with youth or children, in a vehicle.
3. Activity involves a youth sleepover; Sunday School class with one teacher; one-on-one home visit, counseling, or educational situation.
4. Supervision of the activity is minimal or non-existent; or there is no documentation of the event.
5. Relationship between leader and participant is as a support person, mentor, counselor, or spiritual advisor.
6. Financial responsibility involves signing authority for church funds or receiving or disbursing cash funds.