

## ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR OBTAINING A POLICE RECORDS CHECK

In the Diocese of Niagara it is mandatory that all Licensed Clergy and Active Honorary Assistants and people ministering to vulnerable groups in high-risk situations to obtain a Police Records Check. If you are uncertain whether or not your position requires a Police Records Check, refer to the position description or speak with your supervisor.

#### **OBTAINING A POLICE RECORDS CHECK (PRC):**

You must obtain a PRC from the local police department or OPP detachment that polices the city or town in which they reside (regardless of where their church is located). There many police jurisdictions covering the Diocese, and each has slightly different requirements and slightly different charges associated with obtaining a PRC.

All departments require personal attendance at the police station, filling out an application form, two pieces of government issued ID, (at least one with a picture), and payment of the appropriate fee. Fees vary depending on the local police department and whether the position is a volunteer position or a paid position.

Many police departments require a letter from your church requesting the PRC. Hamilton and Niagara Regional Police require a completed application form that you need to obtain from the Diocese or your Regional Archdeacon before going to the station. All jurisdictions will require some time to process the application and supply the information to you. Some are willing to mail it to you, but most require you to pick it up in person, and present the same ID that you used when making the application. It may be worthwhile to double-check the requirements of your local police office prior to showing up for your PRC.

#### **PROPER PROCEDURES WITH REGARD TO PRC's**

- Individuals will be responsible for obtaining their Police Records Check from their local police department or OPP detachment
- A Police Record Check that is older than three years is no longer deemed to be valid and must be updated.
- The original Police Records Check must be presented for review. Photocopies are not acceptable
- The Police Records Check shall be reviewed by one or more supervisory persons to ensure that it does not reveal anything that may bring the suitability of the individual for the position being considered into question
- After review, the supervisory person(s) shall return the Police Records Check to the individual, sign a PRC declaration stating that the Police Records Check has been reviewed, that on the basis of the Police Records Check the person is either suitable or unsuitable for the position being considered, and place the form in the individual's file

- The number of people responsible for reviewing Police Records Checks within a parish should be kept to a minimum. The following people are deemed most suitable for this task: The Rector, and/or A Warden, and/or The Volunteer Manager, and/or The Parish Administrator

## **PROPER USE OF INFORMATION**

- With regards to criminal convictions, it is acknowledged that we all make mistakes and that we all learn differently. Convictions acquired at an early stage in life may lead an individual to significant personal learning, growth, and transformation that may prove useful when ministering to others. It is further acknowledged that some behaviours that have resulted in criminal convictions such as political and social activism around the environment, First Nations issues, civil rights, and the peace movement have been applauded and supported by the church.
- It must be recognized then, that the existence of a criminal record does not necessarily exclude someone from a position as staff or in lay ministry. The information contained in a Police Records Check should become part of a further conversation to determine the suitability of the individual for the position under question. However, it needs to be clearly understood that where an individual's past behaviour indicates that a vulnerable group could be put at risk should the individual be assigned to a position of trust, the Church must err on the side of caution and direct that individual away from such a ministry.

## **OWNERSHIP OF PRC's**

The PRC shall remain the property of the person for whom it was produced, and he or she shall retain possession of it after having it checked by the appropriate supervisory person(s). Once a PRC is obtained, a person may choose not to show it to others, but this will exclude him or her from the position for which it is required.

## **NEW LEGISLATION WITH REGARDS TO PARDONED SEXUAL OFFENDERS**

New legislation makes it possible to check a database of pardoned sexual offenders. This is called a Vulnerable Sector Check. Under normal circumstances, if a person receives a pardon for a criminal offence, his or her record is clean; it's as if it never happened. With this new legislation, sexual offenders can be identified even after they've received pardon. However, there are a number of additional requirements that must be met before this additional search will be carried out:

1. The search will only be carried out for people who have continued and direct contact with a vulnerable group and therefore will not be necessary in all circumstances. Typically, positions such as parish administrator or caretaker would not be classified in this way. However, a youth ministry worker or in-home visitor may be.
2. The search requires a specific request beyond filling out a regular application form. Some police departments include this request on their application form, while others require a letter requesting the additional check.