

Positions of religious leadership are positions of trust. We must be explicit – with applicants for leadership positions as well as with participants in our programs – that appropriate safety procedures are in place, that all are valued and all are accountable. This makes it clear to everyone that we take seriously our responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing congregational environment for all that choose to join us.

TEN SAFE STEPS

1. Identify the volunteer or staff position and determine the nature of the risk (participants, setting, activity, supervision, relationship)
2. Write a clear job description for the position.
3. Recruit potential applicants, based on the job description and the skills required. Indicate what safe steps screening measures are part of the application process.
4. Use an application form to keep track of important information about the applicants.
5. Interview prospective candidates. The degree of formality will depend on the task and the level of risk inherent in the position.
6. Check all references.
7. Request a police records check if required for the highest risk positions – i.e. for those involving significant trust and vulnerable individuals.
8. Provide appropriate orientation and training.
9. Provide supervision and feedback regularly and formally, as appropriate to the position.
10. Check with participants in the program on how the volunteer or staff person is doing.

– 10 Steps Developed by Volunteer Canada

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

- Check the CUC website link, www.cuc.ca/safe for information and resources.
- Ask your congregation's Board of Trustees to establish a committee to look at the safe and

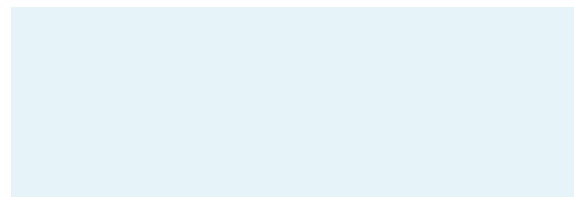
sound issues introduced here.

- Contact the Volunteer Bureau in your area and ask for a workshop on risk management and screening to be given for your own and perhaps nearby congregations
- Check the Volunteer Canada website: www.volunteer.ca/volcan/eng/content/screening/screening.php?display=3,2,3 for information, or for more about Director's Liability go to: www.volunteer.ca/volcan/eng/content/board/program.php
- Contact the police force in your area for information on their particular steps in conducting police checks in their jurisdiction.
- Be mindful of how human rights legislation in your province or territory affects what can be asked in job interviews and on application forms.
- Find out if there is a Child Abuse Registry in your area and how to arrange such checks when they are deemed necessary for the position.
- Look through the Lifespan Learning Library catalogue on line at www.cuc.ca/lifespan/lifespan_learning_library.htm for various resources on healthy congregations.

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CREATING SAFE AND SOUND VOLUNTEER COMMUNITIES

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SAFE AND SOUND

Creating Safe Faith Communities through Sound Volunteer and Staff Management Practices

Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists expect our inclusive congregations to be *safe* places for all people.

Just as we take all reasonable precautions against disease, accident or fire, we must also protect persons who might be at risk because of their youth or old age, their emotional, mental or physical ability.

We affirm our “duty of care” – the moral, legal, ethical and spiritual obligation we owe to care for and protect one another, especially those who are marginalized, less powerful or more vulnerable. This includes protection from harm such as interpersonal violence, sexual harassment, exploitation and assault.

SAFE AND SOUND

At any given time, our communities may hold a number of high-trust ministries. In order to provide, as much as possible, safety in community, our congregations must make every effort to follow sound, effective staff and volunteer selection, development and support. This includes screening measures appropriate to the level of risk inherent in a position. Screening is not about the person; it is about the position, the skills required and the level of risk involved.

THE CUC CAN HELP

Our religion is strongly based in congregational polity. In this type of denominational organization, individual congregations take on the authority and responsibility for their own policy development and governance.

Our association of Canadian congregations, the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), can suggest guidelines and procedures that a congregation may want to use in developing:

- Safer congregations
- Sound, effective staff and volunteer management practices
- Abuse prevention precautions



- Congregational wellness and vitality

The CUC strongly encourages incorporating sound human resources management practices within all of our congregations. It cannot enforce CUC-wide processes for our congregations, but will model safe and sound practices with its own staff and volunteers and at CUC-sponsored children’s and youth events.

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Each congregation develops its own policies and procedures. As incorporated groups, each congregation must accept its “vicarious liability” – the legal liability an organization takes on for the actions of those who function on its behalf. Each province has its own laws and statutes to be referenced and followed.

Excellent resources have been developed for information, reference and adaptation through the CUC’s association with the Ontario Screening Initiative. Look for “Safe Church” and “Screening in Faith” materials on the CUC website (www.cuc.ca/safe), as well as samples of comprehensive screening policies developed by some of our congregations.

OUR PRINCIPLES DIRECT US ...

We, the member congregations of the Canadian Unitarian Council, covenant to affirm and promote:

- the inherent worth and dignity of every person
- justice, equity and compassion in human relations

Because we intend to provide caring and trusting communities in which to learn, grow, worship and serve, we must ensure that everyone who joins us feels valued, safe and secure. We are always hoping to build upon our foundation of respect and love for one another.

CONTINUED ON REVERSE ►