**VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

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AVONDALE UNITED CHURCH

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**AVONDALE UNITED CHURCH**

**Volunteer Handbook**

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**WHY DO WE HAVE THIS HANDBOOK?**

At the Avondale United Church Council Meeting of March 2021, a Committee was assigned the task of establishing safety and screening procedures for church activities involving volunteers. The project of creating this handbook began. To understand why screening and safety concerns suddenly became a point to address, it is important to understand where the direction came from, and why.

The United Church of Canada has been addressing the issue of creating and maintaining a safe environment for some years now and has had a national policy on sexual harassment since 1985. In 1997, the 36th General Council of the United Church of Canada mandated the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education and the Human Resources Committee to develop policy, protocol and educational resources for screening people in positions of trust and authority. The aim of the mandate is to extend to all reaches of the church the responsibility to uphold our duty of care to all who participate in programs, ministries and services offered in the name of The United Church of Canada.

The United Church of Canada recognized that violations of trust (financial, physical, emotional and sexual abuse) sometimes occur within the church. It was also recognized that we have not always been proactive enough to prevent them from occurring.

Therefore, with the help of the guidelines available from The United Church of Canada’s Handbook and brochures, our handbook was created to inform and support all parts of our church in creating safe places for work, service, worship, and personal growth.

Services offered in the name of the United Church need to be held to high ethical standards. To be acting in the name of God among vulnerable people demands great integrity and trustworthiness. Adopting stringent and consistent screening

measures is an important way to communicate some key values of our faith:

✔ Protection of all in our care



✔ Honouring the image of God in each person

✔ Being a trustworthy community

**AVONDALE UNITED CHURCH AND VOLUNTEERS**

There are **four** ways that Avondale United Church is working toward strengthening its stewardship of volunteers:

**1. EDUCATION**

Development of this handbook for all volunteers within the church; volunteers are asked to sign off that they have reviewed the material.

**2. ASSESSMENT**

Assessment of the various volunteer roles within the church is done to determine the level of risk for both volunteers and participants.

**3. SCREENING**

Depending on the risk level of various initiatives volunteers will be asked to participate in a screening process. The level of screening may vary depending on the nature of the volunteer role. Volunteers who work with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and seniors) with minimal supervision will be asked to be a part of a more detailed screening process such as record checks.

**4. ONGOING TRAINING**

As our congregation becomes more educated about the opportunities and challenges of volunteers, we trust that training needs will emerge. Every effort will be made to offer annual training events that support volunteers to be the best they can be. The Executive Team assumes the responsibility to designate a council member to oversee the process.

**WHO CAN BE A VOLUNTEER?**

All members and adherents of Avondale United Church, ages 13 and over, can become a volunteer in some form of meaningful work, service, worship, and personal growth opportunities offered by Avondale United Church or the United Church of Canada.

When the task involves work with children, youth and seniors there is need to ensure that the nature of the volunteer work is appropriate and that volunteers are not placed in situations of risk without guidance and support.

Exceptions can be made for leaders of groups who have been screened through other organizations. These exceptions will be discussed with the Executive Team in consultation with the Chair of Faith Formation.

**SCREENING VOLUNTEERS**

A record of volunteers and the role(s) in which they offer their time and talents will be maintained. The annual education process will occur each year at the changeover of Council members and will include a review of the handbook and the responsibilities of being a volunteer.

Should a volunteer role be deemed one in which a screening process would enhance the protection to work with children, youth and/or other vulnerable populations the following reference checks will be completed as a part of the decision-making process.

**Required Documentation**

1) A log will be retained by the Council member designated to provide oversight to volunteers. The log will include the name of all volunteers, the role(s) in which they offer their time and talents, date of handbook review and the status of any screening requirement.

2) For some volunteer positions, members who are 18 years of age or older will be asked to provide a current (within 30 days) Full Criminal Reference Check (CRC) including a vulnerable persons screen (VPS). If there is continuous volunteer service, an attestation process will be completed yearly as part of re-education which states no charges or convictions have taken place since the last CRC/VPS was completed. A member may use a CRC completed with another organization if they have remained in active service and can attest there has been no change to their record since the time of the last CRC. The designate responsible for the process reserves the right to determine the need to update a CRC. The cost for the CRC or VPS will be reimbursed.

A CRC is required for non-ministerial staff as a condition of employment.

A Full CRC including a Vulnerable Persons Screen is required for ministerial staff as a condition of employment, the Sunday School Superintendent, Youth Group Leaders, any volunteers who may be providing transportation (i.e. GO Project volunteer drivers) and Pastoral Care Team members who do home visits.

**Review of Reports**

Only the Executive Team and/or a designated council person will confidentially review CRC and report to committee and council chairs as necessary.

The final decision about the acceptance or refusal of applicants whose records check contains convictions or incident reports are determined by the Executive Team and/or a designated council person.

**Retention of Records**

The volunteer records including the results of any record check and decision will be stored in a locked file in the office of the FT Minister who will maintain the roll of the Privacy Officer. The office administrator will receive incoming information and file or signal need for designate to follow up with any action. CRC/VPS documentation is collected when a volunteer role requires this specific screening. It is not required if a member switches volunteer roles within the church. However, if a volunteer is not active for a period of over 12 months, a current CRC will be required.

*Be assured that information you share with us is kept confidential. Please continue reading carefully as it deals with this most important and sensitive subject.*

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

**A Position of Trust**

**Avondale’s Commitment to Volunteers**

Avondale United Church is a faith community that values the:

✔ Protection of all in our care

✔ Honouring the image of God in each person

✔ Being a trustworthy community

Part of the commitment is ensuring that all volunteers accepted have been prepared for the role and the responsibilities they assume as an integral part of our faith community. Part of that commitment is a respect for any personal information gained as a result of our relationship with others.

Avondale is committed to supporting its volunteers and will undertake various efforts to support the recruitment, screening and continuous training efforts.

As a part of that commitment Avondale United Church respects the rights of all with regard to any personal information obtained as a result of its relationship with others. In keeping with our values and to incorporate all changes in law that helps us to protect you, your privacy matters to us.

**What Information do we collect and retain?**

We maintain full legal name, contact information, record of role(s) you play within Avondale United Church and details of any screening processes in which you consented to participate.

**How do we use this information?**

The information we collect and retain as a permanent record is used:

* To maintain contact with you throughout your time with us as a volunteer (list is shared with those members who will need to contact you)
* As part of our volunteer screening process.
* As a part of public record the names of volunteers and their achievements may be noted in Annual Reports and other such documents that acknowledge the work of volunteers

*We don’t share any detailed information about you without your written consent.*

As a volunteer to Avondale United Church we are grateful for your contribution work of our congregation and its work in the broader community.

If you have any questions or concern about how we collect and use your personal information, contact the FT Minister who serves as the Privacy Officer for Avondale United Church at 519.271.7946

In the course of your volunteer work, you may have access to personal and private information concerning members. At the conclusion of your time in this role, all such information is to be returned to the church for shredding.

**GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Leaders plan activities of various kinds for the benefit and enjoyment of those who sign up to participate. Good leadership attends to both the fun and faith aspects of the experience as well as the safety of both volunteers and participants. This handout offers leaders ways to ensure that activities are safe for all who partake.

Assessing the potential of any risks involved in activities also helps to ensure that all participants are safe. Good leadership takes the time to consider the possibility that something could go wrong either by accident, carelessness or even deliberate harm. On page 14/15, there is some useful reference material on determining the level of risk involved in leadership/volunteer roles as well as activities. As well there are some specific guidelines offered for activities that are viewed to have a higher risk for potential harm. Some general guidelines to support the safety of all are offered below:

* Become familiar with the church facilities. This helps to support safety and we refer you to page 9 on use of the facility and equipment.
* Have knowledge of and access to first aid supplies, particularly when working with children who can easily injure themselves while playing or using various materials. Avondale maintains a First Aid Kit located in the kitchen and leaders are also welcome to provide their own first aid materials. Volunteers using the Avondale First Aid Kit are asked to advise the Church office if there is only one of an item left or if they have used the last of any item.
* Be aware of allergies within your group and take action to protect those with allergies. Exceptions may exist in life-threatening situations (such as an Epipen) for severe allergic reactions) or as directly instructed by the parent/guardian. All such uses should be documented and reported to the parent/guardian.
* Supervise group activities with a minimum of two volunteers and/or a roving volunteer who can offer random supervision and assist in any emergency that may arise. Do not leave children under 12 without some level of supervision.
* In situations of a 1-1 nature, use space that offers a window, an open door or some public supervision. In cases where a volunteer may be visiting someone's home, advise someone of your plans to visit.
* Have access to a phone in the event of any kind of emergency or need for additional assistance.
* Use permission forms and/or involve parent(s)/guardians(s) to supervise for any excursions off church property. This ensures parent(s)/guardians(s) are informed and can be involved in the decision to allow their child/youth to participate. Group leaders are responsible for the collection and management of permission forms. Permission forms are recommended for the following:
* Trips off of Church Property
* Arranged Transportation
* Overnight Activities
* Photographs of Participants \*

Due to privacy laws all persons need to be able to give consent for the use of any personal information (which includes photos). Where consent has not been obtained, this person is not able to participate in a group photo.

* Review additional reference material provided to support you to handle situations of a higher risk such as driving others, swimming and overnight events/trips.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT**

**Room Booking**

Reserve your room in advance. Rooms must be booked through the Church Office.

**Using Church Owned Equipment**

Equipment must be booked through the Church Office.

Training is done periodically for use of equipment and use of the kitchen facility. Please attend these sessions to help reduce damage to equipment.

You can register in advance for the next training by leaving your name and phone number at the Church Office. You will be contacted when the next training date is planned.

**MANAGING FUNDS AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Several volunteer roles involve the handling of money and financial information. Church members such as the Team Captain and other volunteers count the offering each Sunday; committees and groups for which funds are received handle money; members of the Stewardship and Finance Committee and Church Trustees receive some personal information about individual donations as a matter of planning for church financial management. The potential risks involved in all of these activities should be considered when these roles are assessed for the need for safeguards. Three ways to protect oneself and the resources entrusted to you include:

* Always count funds in the presence of at least one other individual.
* Report counted funds in writing and signed off with a witness.
* Handle all personal information received about others with the utmost care and respect for privacy.

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Emergency telephone numbers are posted by phones in the building. Always remember to also contact a member of the Ministry Team or the Church Office in the event of any of the following situations:

* Police on premises
* Ambulance response
* Fire on premise
* Media Attention on premise

Whoever is contacted about an emergency should immediately after the incident advise the rest of the staff and the Chair of Council and Trustees.

Incidents involving the building itself should also involve the Chair of Property. Any further action will only be taken in consultation with the elected Church officers.

Ministerial staff will determine what other personnel need to be informed or involved in any follow-up to an emergency.

**TRANSPORTING OTHERS**

Private transportation is so common that the risks involved in taking responsibility for transporting others may be overlooked. When planning to transport others, know that:

* Leaders assume the risk when confirming volunteer drivers for activities.
* Drivers must have celebrated their 18th birthday and have a valid driver’s license.
* It is recommended that a driver’s insurance coverage should include a minimum of $2 million liability coverage.
* Informed parental consent is vital when taking those in your care off site.

It is recommended that leaders refer often to the “Guidelines for Assessing Risk” when planning activities and programming events. Consider the following suggestions to reduce the risks involved in the transportation of others.

* **Modify the activity**.
* Consider the advantages of making the activity a family event. Invite parent(s)/guardian(s) and siblings to participate in the activity.
* Rather than transporting children/adults to the activity, investigate the possibility of the activity coming to the children/adults. (i.e., rather than a visit to the police station, consider having a police officer visit your group.)
* **Transfer the liability**.
* Change the venue of your meeting and have participants dropped off/picked up from the alternate venue.
* Consider making arrangements to use public transportation. (Note: extra supervision may be required in the case of a large group of children. Note also the need for informed consent/signed permission forms.)
* **Assume the risk.** 
  + The use of permission forms that include the names of individuals who will be providing transportation on an outing is a way for parent(s)/guardian(s) to demonstrate informed consent as well as providing parent(s)/guardian(s) with an opportunity to express any concerns about or to make their own transportation plans.
* **Minimize the risk you assume**.
* The presence of a second adult in the vehicle adds additional supervision when transporting children.
* Informed consent (as above) will help minimize your risk.
* **Eliminate the activity.**
* Carefully consider the benefits of the activity. The benefits may not outweigh the risks, in which case the activity can be eliminated.

**SWIMMING/WATER ACTIVITIES**

**Supervising children in swimming pools is a major responsibility for all adults involved.** Permission from parent(s)/guardian(s) is required and the permission form created should specify the kind of water activity taking place: wading pools, privately owned swimming pools, a public pool, or a beach outing. Swimming apparel and sunscreen is always the responsibility of the parent. Note; a minimum of 2 adults must be present for all water activities.

**Wading Pools:** (Supervision Ratio: 1:5, minimum 2 adults)

A wading pool is defined as any pool that is capable of holding less than two feet of water.

* A wading pool will be disinfected according to public health regulations and

emptied after each use.

* If well water is used, a safe water sample must be secured before any water

activity takes place.

* Sprinklers may be used.

**Privately Owned Pools:** (Supervision Ratio: 1:3, minimum of 2 adults) At least one adult in the supervising team must hold a current First Aid and CPR certificate. Any child who cannot swim the width of the pool independently must wear a life jacket.

* Lifesaving equipment must be on hand.

**Public Pools:** (Supervision Ratio: 1:3, minimum 2 adults)

A lifeguard must be on duty. Non-swimmers must wear life jackets.

**Beach Outing:** (Supervision Ratio: 1:3, minimum 2 adults)

A lifeguard must be on duty in a designated swimming area. Non-swimmers must wear life jackets.

**OVERNIGHT EVENTS/EXCURSIONS**

* There must be a minimum of two adult volunteers in attendance at all times.
* Ensure a sufficient number of adults are present for your activity. This is the most effective way to maintain control of group activities, reduce accidents, and minimize allegations of abuse.
* Use signed consent/permission forms. The use of permission forms is a way for parents(s)/guardian(s) to demonstrate informed consent and also an opportunity to express any concerns about the details of the excursion.
* Use our rules for transporting others. (See the previous section in this manual.) Asking that drivers are over 18, with valid license and current insurance, is an effective way of planning for safe transportation with any excursion.

**DEALING WITH CHILD ABUSE**

* If you have cause to suspect that a child (under age of 16) is being abused or neglected, you should call the Huron-Perth Children’s Aid Society at 519.271.5290 to make a report.
* In the event of alleged abuse by a volunteer, the volunteer will be asked to remove themselves from active service until an investigation by proper authorities can determine any risk. One of the Ministerial staff should be informed and will determine if additional action is required by the Church.
* Any further investigation will be in the hands of the Children’s Aid Society of Stratford and police as appropriate.

**ALCOHOL USE ON CHURCH PROPERTY**

* The safety and enjoyment of all participants should be considered when planning social and fellowship events for the church. The use of the risk management tool may assist in the planning of the details of an event particularly when the sale of alcohol may be a part of the event.
* The sale of alcohol at Avondale United Church dinners, may be considered when the group/committee responsible for the planning of the event submit a written request to Council that outlines the following:
* Date and time of the event
* Period of time alcohol sales will occur including specifying a clear ending point at least one hour before the event ends
* Designates person(s) responsible for the decision to limit/refuse sales to any individual appearing to be intoxicated; “Smart Serve” training is required ⮚ Agreement to secure a liquor permit for the event
* Agreement to provide a written report back to council on any incidents requiring actions on behalf of the church

Council will consider all requests and indicate decision by motion at a council meeting held prior to the event.

**GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING RISK**

There are four ways that Avondale is offering to try to minimize the risk of any harm.

* Use this handbook.
* Evaluate the volunteer leadership role and using that information, determine the risk level of the role. As mentioned earlier in this handbook, for positions involving more risk there will be more steps in a screening process.
* Use the “Examples of Typical Risk Assessments” on the next page to assess the risk level of your activity.
* Continuing training on an as-needed basis, will be provided in order to support volunteers, one of our most valuable resources.

In order to reduce risk of any activity, keep in mind that you always have the following options:

● Modify the activity

● Transfer the liability

● Minimize the risk you assume

● Assume the risk

● Eliminate the activity

The above information contains excerpts from

Faithful Footsteps – Screening Procedures for Positions of Trust and Authority in the United Church of Canada: A Handbook.

**EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL RISK ASSESSMENTS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Examples | Low Risk  Minimal or no contact  with children or other  vulnerable people or  programs take place in large groups | Medium Risk  Activities with vulnerable people but no private or one-on-one sessions | High Risk  Positions present opportunities to be alone with children or vulnerable persons or exert influence over youth or seniors |
| Participant | Able-bodied adult | 15 year old | Disabled  Infirm  Child |
| Setting | Public space at church – open room, sanctuary  Off-site public space | Classrooms with windows in doors or open doors | Tents or cabins  Private Home  Vehicle |
| Activity | Worship  Adult Study Group  Sunday School Class | Youth Group  Hospital visiting  Nursing home visiting  Nursery with 1 adult and young helper over 13 yrs. | Youth sleepover  Sunday School Class/nursery with one teacher/adult  One on one home visits  One on one music  One on one religious instruction  Swimming Activity |
| Supervision | Supervisor present  Always in large group | Occasional supervision  Some documentation of meetings and events | Little or no supervision  No documentation |
| Relationship of leader to participants | Peers | Instructor  Group Leader | Support person  Mentor  Authority Figure |

**AVONDALE UNITED CHURCH**

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**VOLUNTEER PERSONAL INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

At this time we are requesting your written consent to collect the personal information as outlined for the purposes specified in Avondale United Church’s “Volunteer Handbook”.

In your role with us as a Volunteer,

*I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***Print Full Legal Name**

*Give my written consent for my personal information to be used for the purposes outlined in Avondale United Church’s “Volunteer Handbook”. If my information is needed for any other purpose, my specific permission will be requested first.*

*I understand that due to nature of the volunteer role in which I plan to offer leadership I require a Full Criminal Reference Check including a Vulnerable Person Screen for which I can request reimbursement from Avondale United Church.*

*For volunteers under the age of 18: The name and contact of the individual(s) who have agreed to act as a personal reference are required in lieu of a Full CRC.*

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Work/Alternate Phone/cell\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Full Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

For Volunteers under age 18 - Personal Reference(s) Provide name and contact of the individual(s) who have agreed to act as a personal reference.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Notes from the Review of Reference contact(s)**

 \_\_\_\_ A Full CRC has been provided and indicates no concern

\_\_\_\_ A Personal Reference has been completed and indlcates no concern

\_\_\_\_\_ Other relevant information

SIGNATURE OF DESIGNATED PERSONNEL \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_DATE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_DATE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Filed Under: Volunteer Handbook*