

Strengthening the Caring Community

- Step 1, Determining Risk -

The nature of the ministry and the inherent level of risk involved dictate the degree of screening required. There are four FACTORS which we consider in order to determine whether a Position is High or General risk.

1. The Participant

The vulnerability of the person(s) served needs to be taken into account. Small children, at-risk teens, the physically, socially or psychologically challenged, and the frail seniors are the most vulnerable. A vulnerable adult is someone who does not have full use of her/his faculties or who is experiencing extreme trauma or abuse and is unable to function and reason normally.

Consider factors such as:

- Age
- Emotional distress
- Maturity
- Isolation
- History of abuse
- Language and communication skills
- Disability
- Dependence
- Physical ill health
- Mental ill health
- Current crisis/trauma

2. The Setting

The circumstances of the delivery – alone or with others, in a safe or in a questionable location – needs to be taken into account. Where will the activity take place? In someone's home, a car, the parish hall, a campsite, in isolation, publicly? Consider these questions:

- Does this position require work in an isolated location?
- Does this position require unsupervised contact with a vulnerable participant?
- Might someone else have access to the participant while with this volunteer?
- Does the position involve transportation of vulnerable participants?
- Is there heightened potential for contact with bodily fluids, infectious diseases and illnesses?
- Does the position take place in an intrusive or unsafe environment?

3. Intensity of the Activity

The “perceived authority” of the volunteer delivering the service is vital. The frequency and intimacy of encounters is very important. One-to-one grief counselling is a much more intense activity than the preparation and delivery of Christmas hampers. Consider these questions:

- Does the position involve physical contact?
- Does the position involve working with young children in a setting where touching, lifting, toileting, etc. are intrinsic to the position?
- Does the position involve helping participants change clothes, bathe, move around?
- Does the position require physical exertion or endurance, such as helping someone transfer from a wheelchair?
- Does this position involve working with extremely emotional or traumatized participants?
- Is this a position with expected high levels of stress, emotional strain, and burnout?
- Does this position involve access to confidential participant or organisational information?
- Does this position involve handling or managing funds, chequebooks or donations?
- Are specific knowledge or skills required to fulfil this position?
- Will staff typically experience emotional stressors such as loss, grief or bereavement?

4. The Supervision

The issue of serious supervision must be considered in determining the level of risk involved in a ministry position. Consider these questions:

- How well is the person in this position supervised?
- Does the volunteer have access to their supervisor when needed?
- Is feedback on performance regularly sought and given?
- Are participant consulted regarding the volunteers performance?

Note: As a matter of policy, all ministry positions are examined in the light of the relevant factors to determine the degree of risk involved. When there is doubt as to the degree of risk, a position is categorized as high risk.