

# Pastor's Protocol

## Police Records Check

### **Background Information:**

- Most people assume that this whole initiative equates to Police Records Check. This is *not* the case. The Police Records Check (PRC) should never be the first, the last or the only screening measure used.
- There are significant limitations to the PRC. For example: they are only good up to the day of checking; the individual may be using a false name; some sex offenders and abusers have never been convicted.
- PRC are important because it signals to potential predators how seriously we care for our vulnerable, it *can* provide important information about a potential volunteer ministers and because of changes in legislation, police departments can give more information about an individual than in the past (eg. pardoned sexual offenses).
- Your *Called, Gifted & Sent* Team can update you on how PRC can be administered in your parish.
- There are two areas in which police departments now provide information:
  - Criminal Convictions
  - Concerns the police have about a particular individual who is/will be involved with vulnerable people.
- Local police forces database show: convictions and charges; information on plaintiff, suspect and witness. CPIC database shows: criminal charges and convictions; probation; related court orders (ie. possession of firearms etc)].

### **Protocol: If an individual has a criminal conviction:**

The information received will only state whether or not the person has a police record. It will not disclose for what the individual was convicted. Therefore, the role of the pastor is to meet with the individual and,

- encourage him/her to volunteer in another ministry that is not working with vulnerable individuals **OR**
- ask the individual to release further information about the exact conviction. Note: The individual will be asked by the police department to be fingerprinted to positively ensure that this record belongs to him/her. The individual will then receive this information and can disclose it to his/her pastor.

It is the responsibility of pastors to ensure that specific information about a criminal record is obtained to confirm that the conviction in no way puts vulnerable people at risk. This information must remain confidential.

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**Protocol: If the police have concerns:**

The information received will only state that the police have concerns. It will not disclose the exact concerns that police may have. Therefore, the role of the pastor is to meet with the individual and,

- explain that the police have concerns about he/she being involved with vulnerable people and encourage him/her to volunteer in another ministry that is not working with vulnerable individuals OR
- ask the individual to release further information about the concerns of the police. Note: This may require both of you to meet with an individual from the police department to hear about the concerns.

The issue of concerns becomes more important since “Pardoned Sexual Offenses” can now be released by police departments. In some instances a pardoned sexual offense would be flagged under “concerns”.

**Protocol - Determining if the conviction/concern is relevant:**

1. This initiative is about formalizing a process many of you instinctively do. Follow the same prudent, good judgment and common sense approach that you use if you find out about a conviction in a less formal way. Consider asking yourself the following questions:
  - what types of offenses are relevant for that specific ministry?
  - what is the nature of the offense?
  - what efforts have been made toward rehabilitation?
  - what achievements has this person made after his/her conviction?
  - is the conviction so grave that it would not warrant taking the risk of having this individual involved in a high risk ministry?
  - can you encourage this individual to volunteer in another ministry?
2. Consider contacting the *Personnel Office* to consult regarding the nature of the conviction and the suitability of the specific ministry.

Note: Just because a person has a conviction does *not* automatically exclude them from participating in a high risk ministry. The nature of the conviction and the type of ministry has to be considered. Contacting the *Personnel Office* may provide you with the support and backup you need in making this decision. You do not need to disclose the name of the person. His/her privacy and confidentiality can be maintained.

3. Make a decision and write a report on how you came to the decision. Place this in a sealed envelope with the person’s name and marked confidential. File it in his/her record.
4. Inform the *Called, Gifted & Sent* Team as to whether or not they should continue with Orientation without revealing anything regarding the content of the PRC report.