

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

SAFE ENVIRONMENT OFFICE, DIOCESE OF NELSON

### **Isn't this really about making the rest of us pay for the "sins of the fathers" – those priests who have abused children?**

The undeniable fact is that some clergy have hurt innocent children, and some Bishops have badly mishandled their responses to these crimes. We cannot run or hide from these events; they need to be squarely faced with the Gospel principles of healing, truth, light and repentance. We are also called to take active measures to prevent abuse of any kind in the future. Other environments in which children have been abused – including schools, sports organizations, and youth groups such as the Scouts – have recognized the real need for protective measures to prevent abuse, and the Church is no different.

### **My work or service in ministry has little or nothing to do with children; why do I have to take this training?**

All of us need to be aware of the potential for abuse and the preventive measures being taken in the Diocese; the more people are aware of warning signs, the less likely it is for abusers to succeed.

### **I have been volunteering with my parish for 20 years and am trusted by my pastor and the people I serve. Why do I now have to get a criminal record check?**

The Church is a trusting environment, and adults traditionally have not been carefully screened or monitored in its ministries. Now we have come to understand that screening is the first opportunity to prevent would-be abusers from having contact with the children and vulnerable persons we serve. Screening, which includes the criminal record check, lets applicants know that we take the safety of our parishioners seriously. And screening can only be effective if it is applied consistently, to everyone who serves in ministry, whether they are veterans or newcomers.

### **Why do two Qualified Adults have to be present? We have a hard enough time getting volunteers. Now we need even more.**

Our goal as a Church is to spread the Good News. The best way to proclaim the Gospel is to live it. Jesus sent his disciples out two-by-two. When we minister in pairs, we are living Jesus' message. And interestingly enough, Jesus' message protects all participants. When two Qualified Adults are present, the risk of abuse and the risk of an allegation are both drastically reduced. Having another adult present protects you from false allegations. Good pastoral practice is good safe environment practice – for everyone!