

Harmony United Church

Criminal Record Check Policy

Approved at Harmony United Church Council June 11, 2026

Purpose

To protect vulnerable people, support safe ministry, and provide a clear, respectful process for requesting, reviewing, storing, and acting on criminal record checks in alignment with United Church of Canada guidance.

Scope

Applies to all **ministry personnel, paid staff, and volunteers in high-risk roles** including work with children and youth, pastoral care in private homes, driving or transporting vulnerable people, overnight supervision, and positions with financial responsibility.

Who requests, receives, and decides

- Requests are initiated at the time of hiring staff and by the relevant Committee Chair for volunteers.
- Results are submitted to a Designated Reviewer, normally the Ministry & Personnel Committee Chairperson. Council approves the named reviewer(s).
- Decisions about suitability are made by the Designated Reviewer in consultation with Ministry & Personnel for staff and with Council for volunteers. Decisions are documented.

Type and frequency of checks

- Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC) is required at the start for all ministry personnel, paid staff in contact with vulnerable people, and all volunteers in high-risk roles.
- Standard criminal record check may be used for low-risk roles.
- Renewal: VSC every 5 years with an annual signed Offence Declaration in intervening years. A new check is required if a role changes to higher risk.

What we look for

- Information that indicates a risk to vulnerable people or that directly affects the duties of the role, such as sexual offences, violent offences, or relevant fraud convictions for financial roles.
- Each case is assessed on relevance, context, time elapsed, and evidence of rehabilitation. The focus is safety, fairness, and pastoral care.

Costs

- Council will cover the cost of required criminal record checks for staff and volunteers.

Storage, confidentiality, and retention

- Original VSC documents are returned to the applicant. Harmony retains a secure record of receipt (date, type of check, reviewer).
- Any notes about content are kept in a locked personnel file with access limited to the Designated Reviewer and Ministry & Personnel.
- Digital copies are not retained unless legally required; if retained, they are encrypted and access is strictly limited. Records are retained in accordance with legal requirements and reviewed periodically.

If a satisfactory check cannot be obtained

- The Designated Reviewer consults Ministry & Personnel or Council and follows a documented review process. Possible outcomes include role reassignment, supervised participation, temporary suspension, or denial of the role. Decisions are communicated respectfully and include an explanation and an appeal route. Pastoral support is offered where appropriate.

Legal compliance and alignment

- Harmony will comply with applicable provincial and federal privacy and record-check laws and follow United Church of Canada guidance on screening and safe ministry.

Implementation and review

- Council appoints the Designated Reviewer(s) and publishes a short FAQ for applicants. This policy takes effect on adoption by Council and will be reviewed every three years.

Contact

Direct questions about this policy or the screening process to the Ministry & Personnel Chair or the Safe Church/Screening Officer.