

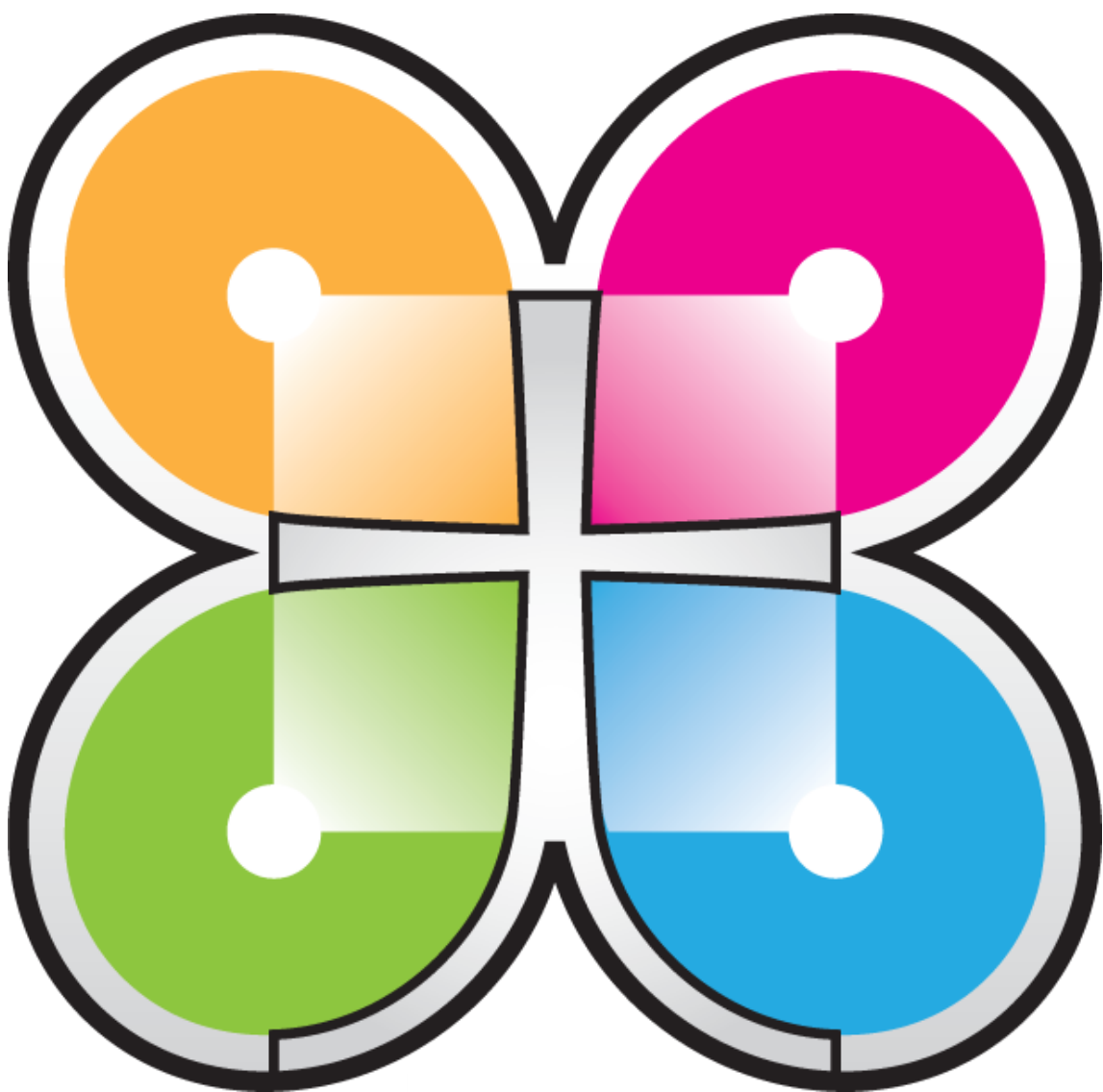
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# Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Policy

What You Need to Know

The Diocese of Victoria

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# Foreword

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In September 2011, the Diocese implemented its *Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Policy* (RMSE). The policy was revised in January 2017. This short-form document has been developed to help you understand the RMSE process and the expectations for clergy, religious, staff and volunteers in the Diocese.

*This synopsis should not be considered a complete account, legally or descriptively, of the RMSE Policy.* Its intent is to provide basic information you may find useful on a day-to-day basis. The complete RMSE Policy is available from the Diocese of Victoria at the address or email address below, or on the Diocesan website: ([www.rcdvictoria.org/responsible-ministry-safe-environment.php](http://www.rcdvictoria.org/responsible-ministry-safe-environment.php)).

Please do not hesitate to consult your parish priest, Parish Responsible Ministry Coordinator (PRM), or the Diocesan Responsible Ministry Office with any questions or concerns that are not addressed here or in the complete Policy.

Office of Responsible Ministry & Safe Environment  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria  
1 - 4044 Nelthorpe Street  
Victoria BC V8X 2A1

Email: [rmse@rcdvictoria.org](mailto:rmse@rcdvictoria.org)

General Enquiries: (250) 479-1331 Ext. 237

Confidential Voicemail: **1 877 237-7233 (Toll Free)**



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# Introduction

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As a local faith community of the Catholic Church, the Diocese of Victoria upholds and promotes the values expressed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in the teachings and laws of the Catholic Church. This means, among other things, that the Diocese takes a stance of deep respect for the dignity of all persons and commits itself to the wellbeing of all persons.

The Diocese upholds the fundamental goodness of all that God has created. The Diocese holds, further, that through the death and resurrection of Jesus all humanity has been redeemed, lifted up, and transformed. We are also deeply aware of the continuing weakness of human beings and the sinfulness present in humanity. We acknowledge that we must take seriously the possibility of misconduct—even among our own clergy, religious, employees and volunteers—and so the Diocese has put in place the *Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment (RMSE)* policies and procedures outlined in this document. These guidelines are designed to assist the Church in responding with charity and justice to situations that involve such misconduct.

Through the Office of Responsible Ministry & Safe Environment, the Diocese offers assistance and protection to vulnerable persons (children, youth or vulnerable adults) and to Diocesan clergy, religious, employees and volunteers. It also offers assistance to communities in which alleged abuse may have occurred.



In every situation or allegation of misconduct by clergy, religious, a staff member or a volunteer of the Diocese of Victoria, the Diocese will respond swiftly and compassionately, investigating all allegations, providing assistance to those in need of healing and reconciliation, and taking any and all means to prevent a future occurrence of misconduct. Adhering to civil and canon law, working together with the Responsible Ministry Advisory Committee, psychological counsellors, the Chancellor of the Diocese, and the Diocesan insurer and legal counsel, the Diocese will provide a thorough and comprehensive response to resolve allegations of misconduct. The primary concern will be the well-being of all persons involved—both the one(s) who suffer the effects of misconduct and the one(s) who might be guilty of misconduct. The Diocese has a particular concern about the health and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults who might be affected.

The Diocese will always act in accordance with the laws of Canada and of the Province of British Columbia. This Policy reflects the existing law of the Province of British Columbia, the laws of Canada, and current canonical norms. The Policy applies to all clergy, religious, employees, and volunteers of the Diocese.



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# What Is RMSE Policy?

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Responsible Ministry & Safe Environment (RMSE) Policy is intended to keep everyone in the diocese safe from misconduct. It is an objective, accountable, transparent and compassionate response to all who may be involved in a misconduct allegation. It sets out instructions and procedures (civil and legal) to be followed by the Diocese, its clergy, religious, employees or volunteers in the event abuse or where abuse is suspected.

If you suspect a child may be in need of protection—as defined under the laws of the Province of British Columbia—you are required to report this to civil authorities. Clergy, religious, employees and volunteers of the Diocese are expected to be familiar with and to comply with applicable child protection reporting requirements in the Province of British Columbia.

In addition, we have a similar legal and moral obligation to vulnerable adults; that is, persons above the age of majority with disabilities (mental, emotional or physical) and/or the elderly. If you suspect an adult may be in need of protection, you must report your suspicion to the appropriate authority (see page 7).

Abuse of children and vulnerable adults will not be tolerated. Any person under investigation for, or found guilty of abuse of children shall be removed immediately from any ministry.

Those under investigation for abuse of vulnerable adults may be removed from ministry until all investigations are completed. If proven guilty, the offender may not return to active ministry.

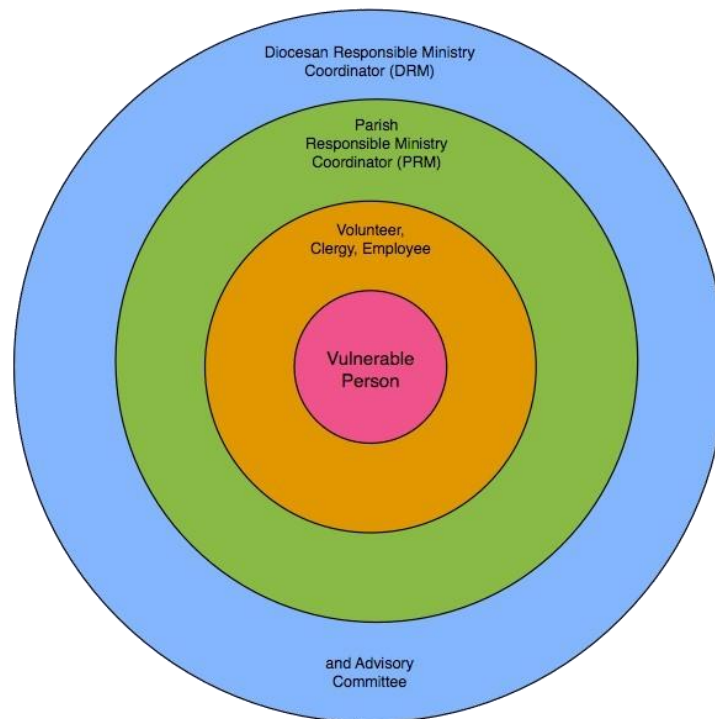
This policy also protects those working on behalf of the Diocese: clergy, religious, employees or volunteers. The Diocese is committed to providing an environment free from bullying/harassment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity. This type of misbehaviour hurts and embarrasses its victims and affects us all. Anyone who is subjected to bullying/harassment has the full support of the Diocese to stop such injustices from occurring.



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# How is RMSE Managed?

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The Bishop will appoint a **Diocesan Responsible Ministry Coordinator (DRM)** to administer the Policy and to represent him in receiving complaints of misconduct and conducting investigations of alleged misconduct (abuse). This person is responsible for the administration and implementation of the RMSE policies and procedures.

The Bishop will also appoint an RMSE **Advisory Committee** to oversee the implementation of the RMSE Policy in the diocese and provide strategic advice and direction to the DRM.

Each parish has a coordinator (PRM) who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the RMSE Policy. In the Island Catholic Schools the Principal acts as the PRM. The PRM works closely with the DRM and is responsible for managing volunteers in the parish or school.



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# How Do I Report Suspected Abuse?

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Any cleric, religious, employee or volunteer who has reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult may be abused, neglected or is for any other reason in need of protection, must first report this to a child protection social worker. Please refer to The Child, Family and Community Service Act ([www.mcf.gov.bc.ca](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca)) or the MCFD handbook: **“Responding to Child Welfare Concern: Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report”**.

Reports of suspected child abuse can be phoned in to: **1 800 663-9122**

If a child is in immediate danger call police at **911**.

If you are a child or youth call the Helpline for Children at **310-1234**.

Report suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult to police or Victim Link BC: **250-310-1234**.

Subject to the advice of the appropriate authorities, the person reporting suspected abuse should also report this information to the DRM, at **1-250-479-1331**, extension **223**. This confidential voice mailbox is checked regularly. An Incident Report Form must also be submitted. This form can be found on the diocesan website at: [www.rcdvictoria.org](http://www.rcdvictoria.org)

Should a priest or PRM become aware that anyone is reporting suspected abuse, they must follow up to ensure the appropriate agency or ministry as well as the DRM has been informed.

Both the person serving as your PRM and the DRM should be able to identify appropriate actions to be taken. If, for reasons of perceived conflict of interest, you are unable to discuss the matter with your PRM, you should speak directly to the DRM.

Complaints received by anyone else under this Policy shall be referred to the DRM. The Diocese, its employees or volunteers, where misconduct is suspected but no complainant has come forward, may also initiate a complaint.



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# What Are the Main Features of RMSE Policy?

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The RMSE Policy describes appropriate or necessary behaviour for clergy, religious, employees, and volunteers in the Diocese of Victoria. Following are the main features of the policy:

## ***Physical Contact***

- Always maintain clear boundaries in all situations involving vulnerable persons.
- All physical contact must be completely non-sexual and based only on the individual's needs.
- Never engage in corporal punishment of any person. Discipline problems will be handled in coordination with the immediate supervisor and the parents/care providers.

## ***One-to-one Contact***

- The "Rule of Two". Always ensure there is a team of at least two approved adult volunteers present during ministry work in a private residence. For example, when bringing the Eucharist to someone in their own home.
- The "Rule of Two" does not apply when working in a public or private residential facility/institution (ie: hospital or care home) provided that the approved volunteer is not alone in a private setting with an adult receiving services. Additional rules may apply subject to the discretion of the institution.
- Always ensure that there are two adults present when supervising children or vulnerable adults. The doors to rooms should be left open if one of the volunteers, clergy or employees has to leave the room temporarily. Examples of such activities include catechism instruction and youth group gatherings.
- Clergy, religious, employees and volunteers should never be alone with a child or vulnerable adult in a sleeping facility, locker room, dressing facility or any other closed area.
- In situations such as counselling sessions where one-to-one meetings are necessary, the sessions must take place in rooms and locations that are open to public view or provide transparency in some other way;





- No single child or vulnerable adult should ever stay overnight in the private accommodation or residence of a cleric, religious, employee or volunteer.
- never be alone with a child or vulnerable adult in a sleeping facility, locker room, dressing facility, or other closed area;
- do not allow a single child or vulnerable adult to stay overnight in private accommodations or residence;
- There should always be leaders/workers of the same gender(s) as the children/youth present during any type of ministry work.
- Overnight trips and other special events that occur require special planning and care by the leadership team and may require written permission from a parent or guardian for the individual who is attending.

### ***Photography***

- Verbal, and in some cases, written consent for taking photographs of children and vulnerable adults must be obtained from a parent or a legal guardian prior to taking pictures.
- Ensure no child or vulnerable adult is photographed in a way that diminishes his or her dignity.

### ***Provision of Substances***

- Children or vulnerable adults will never be provided with alcohol, tobacco, drugs or anything prohibited by law.
- Written parental/care-giver permission must be obtained before administering medication to any vulnerable person.

### ***Reporting Procedures***

- Clergy, religious, employees and volunteers who learn of danger to a child or vulnerable adult must act to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of the parties by reporting to the authorities as previously described on page 7.
- Clergy, religious, employees and volunteers will promptly report suspicious behaviour to the PRM and/or the DRM and complete an Incident Report Form.
- Further details of specific, individual obligations are detailed in the full RMSE Policy and in the Covenant of Care Agreement.



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# Frequently Asked Questions

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## **Why Do We Need RMSE Policy?**

Responsible Ministry & Safe Environment (RMSE) Policy is intended to keep everyone in the diocese safe from misconduct.

## **Does The RMSE Policy Apply To Everyone In The Diocese?**

The RMSE Policy applies to everyone working for or under the auspices of the Diocese of Victoria: clergy, religious, employees and volunteers.

## **How Are Volunteers Screened Under RMSE Policy?**

Volunteers are screened according to the level of responsibility and risk associated with their position.

## **Who Requires A Criminal Record Check?**

All clergy, religious and employees must complete a police criminal record check as part of their screening process. Medium/High risk volunteers must be issued a Clearance Letter from the BC Ministry of Justice, Criminal Record Review Program (CRRP) as part of their screening process. Volunteers apply for their Clearance Letter online. Teachers are approved by CRRP through the Teacher Regulation Branch of the BC Ministry of Education.

## **Is a Criminal Record Check All That Is Needed For Screening?**

A Criminal Record Check is only part of the overall screening process for clergy, religious, employees and Medium/High Risk volunteers. The Diocese subscribes to an 8 step safety process that includes a structured screening process comprised of interviewing, checking references, orientation, training, and supervision.

## **Who Must Complete Training In The Diocese?**

All clergy, religious, employees and volunteers must complete the RMSE online training program provided by Praesidium Inc. All clergy, religious, employees and volunteers must completed the training by the fall of 2019.