

Police Record Checks for Ministry Personnel

January 2026



Office of / Bureau de la
vocation

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada



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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource expands on the policy found under Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline, section J.2.2 of *The Manual*. Please refer to the current edition.

This resource contains

- policy and procedures that must be followed
- information and guidance to support committees working to receive and review police record checks from ministry personnel, candidates, and admission applicants.

It replaces the January 2019 edition, and is in effect as of January 1, 2026. Section numbers of *The Manual* references have been updated.

Please refer as well to *Appendix A of the Office of Vocation: Structure and Responsibilities* resource, found on united-church.ca.

Theological Statement

“You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:13–14)

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... and your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37–39)

As people who follow the Way of Jesus, each one of us is called to affirm the inherent giftedness of each person and to serve each other in life-giving ways. Such service includes ensuring that policies and procedures are in place that seek the protection of the most vulnerable in our midst.

Background

Ministry and religious leadership is by nature a position of sacred trust. Services offered in the name of The United Church of Canada need to be held to high ethical standards. To be acting in the name of God among vulnerable people demands great integrity and trustworthiness. Adopting stringent and consistent screening measures in our church communities is an important way to communicate some key values of our faith: protection of all in our care, honouring the image of God in each person and being a trustworthy community.

Policy

The United Church is committed to providing a safe environment for worship, work, and study in all pastoral charges, congregations, institutions, agencies and organizations, or other bodies that operate under its name.

—*The Manual*, section J.12.1

The policy about police record checks may be found under Oversight, Conflict Resolution and Discipline in section J.2.2 of *The Manual*. This resource includes changes to procedures that must be followed.

The policy on police record checks for ministry personnel applies to

- members of the order of ministry;
- designated lay ministers;
- candidates; and
- those seeking admission or readmission to The United Church of Canada or ministry partner status.

The policy for police record checks with respect to volunteers can be found in *Faithful Community: A Duty of Care Approach for Programs*.

The policy and procedures in respect to police record checks rely as well on the requirements set out in section J.7.2 of *The Manual*, which states: “A ministry personnel who is charged with a criminal offence must inform the regional council and the Office of Vocation immediately.”

Procedures

Upon Entering the Candidacy Pathway

When an individual applies for candidacy, the applicant shall provide a level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check to the body responsible for their formation.

If the applicant is under the age of 25, only a Level 2 Criminal Record and Judicial Matters Check is required. (A Level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check provides information about pardoned sexual offences. No one under the age of 25 has a pardoned sexual offence.) Upon reaching the age of 25 the applicant/candidate (or ministry personnel) will provide a Level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check to the body responsible for their formation.

Upon Admission, Readmission, or Application for Ministry Partnership Status

When an individual applies for admission or readmission to The United Church of Canada or requests status as ministry partner, a level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check must be provided to the body responsible for the individual's admission, readmission, or granting of status.

Upon Entering Ministry

In all cases, a Level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check is to be shown to the body responsible for the formation of the candidate, the admission or readmission of the individual, or the ministry partner. The police record checks must be dated within six months of the review.

The chair of the body responsible will consult with the Office of Vocation as needed.

The Office of Vocation will make a notation within the individual's personnel file that the required police record check has been seen.

Annual Filing

By April 30 of each year, all candidates or ministry personnel will declare whether criminal charges have been filed against them in the preceding year. This declaration will be done online using ChurchHub.

Failure to provide such declaration annually will require that the ministry personnel or candidate provide a Level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check dated within the last six months, to bring them back into good standing.

Failure to provide such declaration above may affect the person's standing and may result in a recommendation from the Remedial Committee that the individual's name be placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary).

At Other Times

The Office of Vocation or designate may at its discretion and expense require that a candidate or ministry personnel provide a Level 1 Criminal Record Check, Level 2 Criminal Record and Judicial Matters Check, and/or Level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check, dated within the last six months.

How to Obtain a Police Record Check

A Level 1 Criminal Record Check, Level 2 Criminal Record and Judicial Matters Check, and Level 3 Vulnerable Sector Check may be obtained from a local police authority. The local police authority (local police, provincial police, or RCMP) will vary depending on where you live. Any fee is the responsibility of the individual. The police record check remains the property of the individual.

Best Practices for Discussion of Criminal Charges/Record

We all hold biases and values from our own life experiences that affect our perceptions of criminal convictions.

Some behaviors that may result in criminal convictions have been applauded and supported by the church. Political and social activism on environmental issues, support of First Nations communities, involvement in the civil rights and peace movements, and activism on many other issues have earned people within the church community a criminal record.

We acknowledge that we all make mistakes and that we all learn differently. Convictions acquired at an earlier stage of life may have led to significant personal learning, growth, and transformation, which now may be helpful tools for an individual in pastoral ministry.

When a criminal charge or conviction is disclosed or discovered it is expected that there will be a further clarifying conversation and discernment about what, if any, other action is necessary.

To be responsible in relation to duty of care and clarification of risk assessment, the conversation needs to focus on the type of conviction and when it occurred. Again, this is to be a clarifying discussion, exercising diligence, compassion, and wisdom. The conversation should focus on how the nature of the conviction would affect their ability to perform all the duties of ministry.

If You Have a Criminal Charge or Record

“You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world...” and yes, we humans make mistakes and together we are the church, “to reconcile and make new” (A New Creed). As you prepare to discuss the charge or conviction with the Office of Vocation,

you may wish to consider the following:

- What is the nature of your charge or conviction?
- How recent is your charge or conviction?
- Is your conviction for a pardonable offence?
- Have you applied for a pardon (record suspension) or been denied a pardon?
- How have your actions impacted the community?
- What have you learned of yourself?
- What systems do you have in place to ensure healthy community engagement?
- How have you attempted, or what steps have you taken, to repair any harm caused?
- Are there any restrictions on your conduct as a result of the conviction that may affect your ability to perform all the duties of ministry? How can those issues be addressed?

You may find it beneficial to be in conversation with your Vocational Minister.



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