SUGGESTED PRACTICES FOR HIRING EMPLOYEES
AND
SELECTING PEOPLE TO ENGAGE IN MINISTRY
WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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INTRODUCTION

Four Components of Background Checks

The Diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth states, in part, as follows:

Background checks will include the following four components:
- *a. a written application*
- *b. a public record check conducted by a company recommended by the Diocese*
- *c. an interview*
- *d. reference checks*

The Diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth in its entirety can be found on page A-2 of the appendix as well as the diocesan web site at www.diocesewma.org.

These four components are the same as those set out in a resolution passed at The Episcopal Church's General Convention of 2003 which requires every diocese to adopt a policy for screening and selecting people to work with children and youth in their ministries.

The purpose of the four components of the background check process is to answer one question: is this person (the applicant) suitable to serve in ministry with children and youth based on the objective information as well as subjective information (listen to your gut) gathered in the screening process? All the information gathered in this process and questions asked, should be focused on answering this one question.

Who at the parish should conduct each component of the background checks?

Ultimately, the priest who has primary responsibility for the life of the parish is responsible for seeing that background checks are conducted for all persons who regularly work with children and youth.

The priest can choose to delegate some of the screening tasks, but should do so with great care. In most parishes, the public record searches, which can reveal very sensitive and confidential information, would best be handled only by the priest. Other parts of the process such as interviewing church school teachers could be delegated to a director of Christian education or church school director. Someone other than the priest can distribute applications and consent forms for the public record check.

About These Guidelines

These training materials highlight some suggested practices for screening and selecting people to work with children and youth in our ministries and parishes. These materials do not address all issues regarding employment and labor issues. They should not be relied on to replace advice from a competent professional regarding legal and tax issues that can arise in employment settings.

BACKGROUND CHECKS:
GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTED PRACTICES

1. Standard (Written) Application

Who needs to complete a standard written application: All people working with children and youth should complete a standard written application.

Best Practice: All people currently engaging in ministry with children and youth should have a completed application on file. This may require people who are already serving in ministry to now fill out an application.
Note: A next-to-best-practice is to use a short registration form instead of the full application if a parish is unable to complete the entire application process with people who are already currently serving in ministry with children and youth. The registration form should include the person's name, address, contact information, as well as a listing of all parish ministries in which the person participates, and the date when the person last attended safe church training. Completed registration forms should be reviewed and kept on file.

Bottom Line: Anyone about to enter ministry with children and youth should complete an application which is kept on file.

Choosing an application form(s): A parish may use any application form that it chooses. Two sample forms are provided in the appendix. The first is a short one-page form appropriate for use with volunteers seeking to work with children and youth. If this form is used for a paid position, be sure to gather additional information required by employment law. The second sample application is more extensive.

Although a parish can use different application forms that seek relevant information to different positions, it is important not to have too many different forms. Applicants should be treated fairly in this process. You want to seek similar information from all applicants seeking similar positions, whether paid or volunteer.

Content of application form:

CAN include:
- Current address
- Experience that qualifies the applicant for this position
- Felony convictions
- A variety of references
- Statement that all information provided by the applicant is true

CAN NOT include:
- Arrest or allegations of criminal activity
- Any material that relates to protected classes under the Civil Rights Act. (race, gender, marital status, etc.) There is a fuller discussion of these issues in the material about interviews, below.

Practical tips for distributing application forms:

- At the time a person indicates an interest in participating in ministry with children and youth (either paid or volunteer) explain that the written application is a required part of the screening process. Provide the applicant with the standard application form. Decide beforehand who is responsible for ensuring that applications are completed by each person who seeks to enter ministry with children and youth.

- At the beginning of the program year each volunteer could be provided with a packet of information that includes the parish policy for the protection of children and youth, the safe church training schedule, the standard application form, a consent and disclosure form for the public record check, the statement of rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, and a cover letter welcoming and thanking the volunteer for their interest in ministry.

Review of application:

- Be sure that the application form is filled out in its entirety. Check to see that the applicant has provided all references requested.

- Look for gaps in dates of employment (if the application requests such dates)

- Look for patterns that indicate the applicant is overly involved with children and youth to the exclusion of healthy peer relationships

Storing the application:

- Each application should be kept in a confidential personnel file that is stored in a locked file cabinet.

2. Interview

Best Practices: It is best if two people conduct the interview together using a standard set of questions. The applicant's responses should be recorded on a form designed to record such responses (not word-for-word). Any gaps or issues arising from responses on the written application should be questioned.

Bottom Line: Some type of face-to-face interview with the applicant should be conducted. The date, time, and name of person conducting the interview should be recorded in the personnel file.

Before the interview:

- Review the application for any gaps in information or other matters you might want to follow up on. If there is any detrimental information, you can ask questions about it during the interview.
- Have a clear written job description or at least be able to give a clear verbal description of the position/ministry including all the responsibilities and time commitments required for that ministry.
- Have a standard list of questions to be asked of all applicants.
- Have a form or some mechanism for recording responses. A sample interview summary form is provided on page A-10 of the appendix.

During the interview:

- Explain the nature of the position. You can give the applicant a copy of the job description. Be sure to include the responsibilities, time commitment and supervision structure for the position. (For example, church school teachers may be supervised by the parish director of religious education.) Ask whether the applicant has any questions about the position.
- Explain the steps that the church takes to enhance the safety of children and youth. This includes the screening process, safe church training and policies, as well as the six-month hospitality rule. (The six-month hospitality rule, as stated in our diocesan policy, provides that "[v]olunteers should not be permitted to work with children or youth until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months." The diocesan "Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth" can be found in the appendix starting on page A-2.
- Explain the next steps in the selection process—public record check and reference checks.

- Make some notes as the interview proceeds so that you will remember the applicant’s responses. Do not write down so much information that you get distracted from listening carefully to the applicant’s responses to your questions. The responses may lead to more questions regarding a particular matter.

Sample interview questions:

1. Why do you feel called to this ministry, or what interests you about this ministry?
2. What experience has prepared you for this ministry?
3. What is your greatest achievement at work or in a volunteer position?
4. What do you consider to be your greatest challenge?
5. Have you ever worked or volunteered where you have disagreed with something you were told to do? How did you handle that?
6. Can you explain how you handle interruptions and changes in plans?
7. Have you ever worked/volunteered somewhere where there was conflict? How was the conflict handled and how did you feel about that?
8. What types of hobbies or interests do you have outside of work?
9. What other volunteer positions do you hold?
10. Present a hypothetical situation that could arise in the ministry and ask the applicant how she or he would respond in such a situation.
11. Ask any other questions needed to ascertain whether this person is qualified and able to meet all of the specific requirements of the job description.
12. Have you ever been fired from a job?
13. Has your driver's license ever been suspended or revoked?
14. Are you a registered sex offender?
15. Have you ever been convicted of a felony?

For Paid Positions:

16. Are you authorized to work in the United States? (Ask this of all candidates for paid positions. You do not want to appear to treat applicants who may seem to be from a foreign country differently from other applicants.) You will then need to obtain the required documents as indicated in the INS I-9 form should you decide to hire the applicant.

Questions not to ask:
DO NOT ask questions regarding an applicant's:

1. Age or date of birth

    Note: If a parish does not want to employ minors, it can ascertain the age of the applicant before the interview by including the following language on the standard application. *"Are you over 18 years of age? Yes___ No____ (If not, employment is subject to verification that you are of minimum legal age and that you are able to supply any required work permit.)"*
    [From "What Every Church Employer in Connecticut Should Know: A Seminar on Proper Employment Practices, page 15.]

2. Citizenship, place of birth, national origin and ancestry
    Note: If you decide to hire a person for a paid position, you will need to obtain documentation requested by INS I-9.

3. Martial status, pregnancy, number of children, or child care

4. Arrest records
    Note: It **IS** permissible to ask about felony convictions and misdemeanor convictions within the past five years or from which the person has been released from incarceration within the past five years which are NOT a first offense for drunkenness, simple assault, speeding, a minor traffic violation, affray or disturbing the peace.

5. Personal financial status, which includes funds in bank accounts or sources of income such as welfare
    Note: It is appropriate to conduct a credit report for applicants who will be handing and responsible for money. All steps to comply with the Fair Credit Reporting Act must be complied with in such cases. These requirements are set out in the section regarding public record checks, below.

6. Height and weight

7. Disability, handicap, and physical and mental health

8. Smoking

In the course of the interview an applicant may volunteer information regarding an impermissible area of questioning. For example, in response to a question about experience an applicant may share that she has three children and two of them have asthma. DO NOT RECORD THIS INFORMATION ON THE RECORDING FORM. YOU MAY NOT TAKE THIS INFORMATION INTO ACCOUNT WHEN DETERMINING WHETHER THIS PERSON IS SUITABLE FOR THE POSITION.

After the interview:

Immediately after the interview fill out a form that captures your impressions and evaluation of the applicant's qualities and skills with respect to the position he or she seeks to fill. A sample interview summary form is provided on page A-10 of the appendix.

3. Public Record Check

***Best and only practice**:* A public record check should be conducted for all employees and all people who regularly work with children and youth or have opportunity for regular CONTACT with infants, toddlers, children or youth in our ministries. This includes:

1. Sextons
2. Organists
3. Choir Directors
4. Director of Christian Education, Church School Director, Sunday School Coordinator
5. Director of Youth Ministries
6. All adults engaged in music with children or youth
7. Nursery care providers
8. J2A leaders, youth group leaders and assistants
9. Church school teachers
10. Confirmation mentors
11. Acolyte trainers
12. All adults, including parents of children or youth, who regularly assist in ministry with children or youth (After-school programs, Christmas pageant, Vacation Bible School)
13. All chaperones on overnight events such as mission trips, pilgrimages, lock-ins, camp programs.

Public record checks should not be conducted for youth under the age of 16. Any record of convictions are sealed pursuant to state law and are not accessible. However, reference checks should be conducted for youth under 16 years old.

How to conduct a public record check

Step 1: Set up an account with a testing company. Check the Diocesan website for the contact information for the companies recommended by the Diocese.

Step 2: Follow the process designed by the company you have chosen. This will involve getting signed consents from any individual whose background is being checked and notifying the individual of his/her rights. The testing company will provide you with forms and guide you through the process.

Step 3: Receive the reports back from the testing company.

Step 4: Print out the reports from the testing company and keep them in a locked file that is separate from other personnel information.

Step 5: You may send a letter or email to the applicant letting them know that the public record check is complete. A sample letter is provided on page A-10 of the appendix.

If there is an “alert” indicating that something has come up on the public record check

Step 6: You may contact the office of the Safe Church Officer.

Step 7: Follow up on the information revealed in the “alert.” The vast majority of alerts is from social security number traces and indicate nothing more than a typo in the applicant's name or date of birth in a credit data base. In some cases, the social security number trace will reveal an additional last name connected to that social security number. Some alerts will be for minor criminal convictions that do not preclude a person from serving in ministry with children and youth under the diocesan guidelines.

If there are criminal convictions and the diocese recommends that the applicant not serve with children and youth

Step 8: The Safe Church Officer will make recommendations as to whether people with criminal convictions can serve in ministry with children and youth based on the following guidelines.

People with any of the following in their criminal history should not engage in ministry with children or youth:

1. A felony conviction
2. Two or more misdemeanor convictions
3. A single misdemeanor conviction involving violence, sexual activity, drugs, or dishonesty
4. A pending criminal case. (In this situation, the person should not be permitted to engage in ministry with children or youth until the pending case is brought to conclusion. Then a determination can be made based on the standards set out above.)

Step 9: The ultimate decision as to whether a person serves in ministry with children and youth is left to the parish priest.

Step 10: If a priest decides to prohibit an applicant from serving in ministry with children and youth due a criminal conviction, the priest must provide the applicant with a copy of the conviction report as provided by your background testing company and a pre-adverse action notice, which your company can provide. It is a form that allows the parish priest to insert specific information that pertains to the individual applicant.

Step 11: Provide the applicant with an opportunity to refute the conviction record (it may not be his or her record) or to provide you with an explanation. This can be done by conducting a second, follow up interview. For further information regarding second interviews, see the discussion below.

Step 12: If after taking the above steps, the parish priest decides to preclude the applicant from serving in ministry with children and youth, the priest must provide the applicant with an adverse action notice. This form is also available from your background check company.

Step 13: If the parish priest decides to permit an applicant to serve in ministry with children and youth when the applicant has one or more of the factors listed in Step 8, the priest must inform the parish wardens of the situation.

Step 14: Keep a copy of all letters and reports in a confidential locked file that is separate from the general personnel file that may also be kept for an applicant.

A parish priest may contact the office of the Safe Church Officer for additional information at any time.

A congregation may choose to use other than the recommended companies engaged in the business of conducting background checks. The company chosen should supply the congregation with a detailed explanation of the process and should include all of the parts of the check: social security number trace, which locates each address used when any type of credit has been applied for; a check of the county criminal court records; a search of the criminal nationwide date base; and a check of the sex offender registry for the state of residence.

CORI Checks

The Criminal Offender Records Information (CORI) is not yet integrated into the national system. Consequently, it has to be checked separately. The Massachusetts CORI system is supposed to waive the fee for religious institutions and non-profit organizations where there are more volunteers than paid staff.

All of the forms and processes you need can be accessed at www.mass.gov/chsb. Download the "CORI CERTIFICATION APPLICATION." That will get you started.

You have to request the fee waiver, on Church letterhead, stating that you are a religious institution, you provide service to children and vulnerable adults, primarily through volunteers, and that you do not charge a fee for the services that you provide.

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BACKGROUND CHECKS

What if an applicant has had a background check done by a school or other employer?
The CORI system and any company doing background checks is very clear that the results may not be shared. That is done to protect the rights of the person being checked. But as a result of that, schools and employers are not allowed to share the results of the checks. Checks must be done by the congregation, even when a similar check has been done on the person by another entity.

What is included in a public records check?
The basic package includes a Social Security Number Trace (which will reveal the name(s) affiliated with a particular social security number and everywhere that social security number has been used in the last seven years) a county court record search in the county where the applicant lives, sex offender registry search for the state in which the applicant currently resides. For an additional fee the following can be provided: a driving record check, a check of criminal records in additional counties where the applicant has lived or worked or the Massachusetts CORI check, once a congregation has received certification from the CORI system.

Who at the parish should conduct the public records checks?
It is strongly recommended that the rector or priest with responsibility for the parish be the person to conduct the public records checks. This is because of the highly sensitive and confidential nature of the information involved. Generally, a parishioner should not have access to another parishioner's criminal record. If there is a parish staff person responsible for personnel matters, that person could be charged with conducting the public records checks, but this would be for the rector to decide.

How is a request for a public records check submitted?
The appropriate person from the parish can submit requests for public record checks online. If the parish does not have internet capacity, the requests can be faxed.

How will the result of public records check be provided?
Upon completion of the public records check the appropriate contact person at the parish will receive an email stating that the check has been completed. The actual results will not be provided in this email. The appropriate contact at the parish will then need to log into the system to view the actual results of the records check. (This process is to ensure that the confidential information contained in the results will not inadvertently be viewed by anyone other than the authorized person.) Upon logging in, the results will indicate whether the record check was all clear, or whether there is some question which will be indicated by an "alert." Should there be an "alert," further information regarding the status of the record check can be obtained from the Safe Church Officer. Please keep in mind that sometimes an "alert" will indicate that there is some question as to the spelling of a name or whether records are truly those of a particular person. An "alert" does not necessarily indicate that there is a criminal record.

How much will this cost?
Generally the fee for a basic public records check is $16 or under. If the applicant has resided in certain counties or certain states there may be an additional fee, but this should be the exception.

How does a parish pay for this?
There are a number of ways to pay for this expense. Parishes can build this in as an ongoing expense in the annual operating budget. Some parishes might consider asking parishioners to pay a portion of the cost for their own public records check.

When should a Motor Vehicle Record Check be conducted?
Anyone transporting youth in a vehicle should have a Motor Vehicle Record Check regardless of whether the vehicle is privately owned or owned by the parish.

Can a parish add a Motor Vehicle Record Check or Credit Check to their package?
Yes, both are available as an add-on to the basic package.

Where should a parish keep the paperwork regarding public records checks?
The public records check consent form, any notices of adverse action, and any results of the public record search are to be kept in a confidential file to which only the priest has access. The Application for Ministry with Children and Youth can be maintained in a regular personnel file. Both types of files are to be treated as confidential. There are laws that govern how information from public records checks can be used or shared. THIS INFORMATION IS HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL and must be kept for a very long time. All personnel files and files containing any information regarding public records checks should be maintained in a locked file cabinet. The priest should be the only person with access to the locked file cabinet which contains the public records search documents.

What does a parish priest do if a person does have a criminal record?
Some alerts will be resolved once it becomes clear that a criminal record does not belong to the applicant in the parish. If it turns out that the applicant does have a criminal record, the parish priest may contact the Safe Church Officer.

What about redemption and forgiveness for past criminal activities?
When it comes to the question of who will be allowed to work with children and youth in our parishes, a person's past criminal record may be relevant even if he or she has transformed his or her life. Adults engaged in ministry with children and youth are asked to do two things: one is to staff or run a particular program or ministry; the other is to be an example of how to live out the baptismal covenant in a world which often does not live out that covenant. In choosing adults to work with children and youth it is appropriate to consider a person's criminal record with respect to the type of role model this person will be.

Individuals who are not permitted to engage in ministry with children and youth due to their criminal history are welcome to worship in our parishes, receive ministry through our parishes and engage in ministry that does not involve children and youth, with the appropriate safe church precautions in place.

4. Reference Checks

Best Practice: Conduct reference checks for all employees and all people who regularly with children and youth, including those who are already serving in these ministries. Conduct reference checks by phone. Ask references a standard list of questions that are tailored to fit the type of reference provided. Document responses to the questions asked.

Bottom Line: Conduct reference checks for all people as they enter ministry with children and youth. If necessary you can conduct reference checks in writing through the mail. If you do not receive a response within a reasonable period of time, follow up with a phone call and document the responses in the file.

Types of references:

- **Employers:** This can include current and previous employers. If an applicant is concerned about having his or her current employer learn that he or she is seeking other employment, you can agree to not contact the current employer until you are about to offer the job to the applicant, but then do be sure to make that call before actually making the offer.

- **Personal and civic references:** These include family-friends and persons known through civic and volunteer activities. Be sure that these references are people from outside of the parish.

- **Family member:** Most sources recommend that you avoid asking for family members as a reference. However, at least one source recommends including family member references because family members probably know the applicant well, want to prevent the applicant from getting into difficult situations, and will more readily tell the entire truth regarding an applicant than a former employer or community member.

Recommended types of references for specific situations

- **Applicants seeking paid employment** should be asked to provide a former or current employer as a reference. You may want to ask for both and talk to both.

- **Minors** who regularly work with children and youth should have references checked. It is appropriate to modify the types of references requested so as to include teachers, coaches, family members and people for whom the youth has worked as a babysitter or in other part-time employment. For youth less than 16 years of age references can be checked while public records can not be accessed due to state law.

How to conduct a reference check:

Step 1: Call the reference and explain who you are, the parish you are calling from, and why you are calling. If this time is not a convenient time for the reference, set up another time when you will call again.

Step 2: Describe for the reference the type of position the person is applying for. BE SPECIFIC. Don't just say "youth group leader." Explain some of the responsibilities such as, meeting regularly with children and youth (provide the ages), planning activities for children and youth, taking children on trips which will include weekend and over night travel.

Step 3: Ask questions and record responses. A sample telephone reference check form can be found on page A-11 of the appendix.

Sample questions for all references:

1. How or in what capacity do you know the applicant?
2. How long have you known the applicant?
3. Did the applicant follow the rules at work or in the volunteer position?
4. Did anyone ever raise concerns about how the applicant interacted with children or youth?
5. Does the applicant do other volunteer work with children or youth?
6. Can you think of any reason the applicant should not work with children or youth? (You can modify this question to cover vulnerable adults, elderly, financial matters, etc.)

Additional sample questions for personal/civic references:

1. Did you and the applicant ever work or volunteer together?
2. Where did you work or volunteer together?
3. What was your relationship at work or in volunteer positions? Peers? Did one report to the other?

Additional sample questions for family and personal/civic references

1. How reliable is the applicant?
2. What can you say about the applicant's honesty and integrity?
3. How organized is the applicant?
4. How well does the applicant get along with others?
5. What are the applicant's hobbies and skills?
6. What job do you think the applicant is best suited for?
7. What words or phrases best describe the applicant?

Additional sample questions for employer references:

1. Why did the applicant leave your employment?
2. How would you describe the applicant's performance while employed by you?
3. What would you say are the applicant's strengths?
4. What would you say are the applicant's weaknesses/challenges and areas that could be further developed?
5. How does the applicant respond to change?
6. How does the applicant respond/work under pressure/stress?
7. Describe how the applicant does when working with other people?
8. Would you rehire this applicant?

Additional questions if the reference is from another parish: Take advantage of this and ask some questions that relate directly to parish life and ministry.

1. How did the applicant relate to others in the parish, including clergy, parishioners, parents, children, and staff?
2. Did the applicant follow safe church guidelines?
3. In what way was the applicant an asset to the life of the parish?
4. In what ways could the applicant's skills be further developed?

These lists of sample questions are just that, sample questions. Add questions to best ascertain the skills needed to best fit the position you seek to fill. Be aware that you should avoid the areas of questioning that you avoided during the interview process.

5. Second follow up interview if needed.

A second interview is used to clarify conflicting information or fill in gaps in information that you learned through the public record check and reference checks.

If the applicant indicated on the standard application and/or during the first interview that he or she does not have any criminal convictions and a conviction was revealed through the public record search, follow up on this. You can tell the applicant that, "Something came up on the public record search. Do you want to tell me about it?" You can ask this without disclosing *what* came up through the record search. This is another opportunity to ascertain the veracity and forthrightness of the applicant.

If you decide not to permit the applicant to serve with children and youth due to a criminal conviction, you can use this as an opportunity to present to the applicant a copy of the conviction report as provided by your background check company as well as the pre-adverse action notice. You need to be sure to allow the applicant an opportunity to respond to the conviction report in case an error has been made and the report does not belong to the applicant. This process is set out in steps 10-13 under the section on public record checks on page 11.

6. Making the Decision:

Although different aspects of the screening process may have been handled by different people (the interviewer may not have conducted the public record search), it is imperative that one person (this will usually be the priest who has primary responsibility for the life of a parish) takes responsibility to make the final decision as to whether a person may serve in ministry with children or youth.

The decision maker must be very familiar with all of the information gathered about the applicant from all four components of the background check process—the standard application, interview, public record check and reference checks. Then this person must answer the ultimate question, is the applicant suited to serve in ministry with children and youth?

The following eight reflection questions may be helpful in making this determination:

1. Does the applicant seek to live into the baptismal covenant and show outward signs of so doing?

   Part of serving in ministry with children and youth is providing an example of living a Christian life in accordance with the baptismal covenant in a world that often does not provide many role models for Christian living.

2. Does the applicant live a balanced life between work and play, relationships with adults and relationships with children and youth?

   Be wary of an applicant who spends too much time with children and youth or whose hobbies and interests all revolve around children.

3. Does the applicant possess the necessary skills for the position or demonstrate a willingness and capability to develop the skills and expertise?

   If you decide to engage someone in ministry who needs further skill development, be sure that the program will not be greatly impaired by the applicant's lack of experience.

4. Can the applicant meet all of the demands of the position, including time commitment?

5. Does that applicant appear to be a "lone ranger" or does the applicant appreciate the value of working in ministry with others?

   Be wary of applicants who seem to be able to do all things on their own and often in their own way.

Does the applicant appear to respect rules and guidelines and live his or her life in accordance with applicable rules?

> Be wary of applicants who present themselves as knowing more than others and thus not having to follow rules and procedures they disagree with. People who believe that the rules do not apply to them can be dangerous and difficult to work with.

7. Would you be comfortable having your own son or daughter (niece or nephew, godchild, grandchild) spend unsupervised time with the applicant?

8. Do you have any hesitation (gut feeling, voice inside, nagging sense of uneasiness, feeling that something is just not right) about letting the applicant serve with children and youth?

If the answer to either of the last two questions is "yes," pay attention to this. Review the information gathered to see if there is something giving rise to this hesitation. If not, seek out an appropriate person to talk this through with. If there is no one in your parish who would be appropriate to talk with, seek out a peer clergy person or contact the Safe Church Officer. Do not ignore your gut feeling.

7. Communicating with Applicants who are Not Hired

After you have received applications, interviewed applicants and contacted references, you will make a choice about who gets hired and who does not. Communicating with the applicants who were not hired should be done respectfully and carefully.

If an applicant was denied employment on the basis of information discovered in a check of public records, the applicant has a right to know. The handling of that is discussed in detail in Steps 10-13 in the Public Records Check section of this handbook. The forms to be used can be obtained from your background check company. Following those steps exactly is very important.

Apart from adverse action taken as a result of a public records check, an applicant is not entitled to an explanation or a reason for not being hired. If asked for a reason, the clearest and simplest thing to say in response is: "We had a number of qualified applicants and we chose the one who seemed to be the best overall fit for the position." Giving an applicant a specific reason why they were not hired is generally a very bad idea. It is most unlikely that you will come up with a reason that will really make the individual feel better about having been rejected. We assume that congregations will not discriminate against an applicant for any of the reasons that are prohibited by law. The more you say about why an applicant was not hired, the more likely it is that you might give the impression that the reason the individual was not hired was an inappropriate one. Comparing qualifications to those of other applicants may violate the privacy of other applicants.