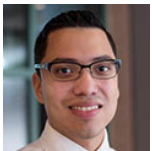





# Adventist Risk Management, Inc.



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## 4-Step Screening Process

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Young people are an essential part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's ministry. Keeping them safe should be one of the highest priorities for those involved in ministry. A necessary tool in protecting children and youth is the screening process that should be conducted on all volunteers and employees who work with young people.

The *North American Division Working Policy* indicates that “a screening process is required for all adults over the age of 18, involved in any capacity in children’s and youth ministries and activities, and all church ministry leaders and officers voted or appointed by the local church.” [\[1\]](#)

To keep children safe, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church has developed a four-step screening process for all volunteers. Those steps include:

1. Observe a six-month waiting period for new and transferred members
2. Collect essential information about each volunteer
3. Contact personal references of the volunteer
4. Conduct a criminal background screening, which comes with the training component

### The Six-Month Waiting Period

A six-month waiting period is required for all newly baptized and transferred members before they can begin serving as volunteers with children. This waiting period allows you to get to know the individuals before they take on critical volunteer roles with children.

The goal of this waiting period is to become familiar with the individual’s personality, talents, and temperament. Working with children requires patience and a willingness to protect those who are under our care, custody, and control. You want to be sure that volunteers are well suited to working with children and prepared to observe and enforce the church’s expectations and guidelines of caring for children.

Use this waiting period to have the potential volunteer learn about the *Chapter 8 Notes in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* that

explain how a church may proceed to safeguard children. Some of these Church Manual Notes include the two-adult policy, open door policy, volunteer screening, six-month policy, and training. [2]

Local church leaders should consult with the local conference to ascertain conference procedures and requirements, including local legal requirements for individuals working with children.

The Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM) website offers many [free resources](#) that describe these Notes.

The six-month waiting period also applies to members who transfer to your congregation from another Adventist church. Remember, you are trying to become familiar with the individual to determine if they are right for ministry involving children. Never assume that the newly transferred member was screened at their previous church.

## Collecting the Volunteer Information Form

Anyone over the age of 18 who has an appointed position at the local church should complete the volunteer information form. This form collects some basic personal information such as the volunteer's full name, birthdate, address, etc. ARM has a [Ministry Volunteer Information Form template](#), but check with your local conference to see if they have their own volunteer information form.

The volunteer information form needs to be completed before the volunteer can begin their duties. If the document is not fully completed, the volunteer should not be permitted to perform their duties at their local church. Because completed forms contain personal information, store them securely to protect the volunteer.

## Reference Check Process

The next step in the screening process is to contact the personal references of the volunteer. As part of the volunteer information form, candidates are asked to provide the name and contact information for a few personal references. This may seem unnecessary for a volunteer who has been in the local church for a long time. However, this is an important step in the screening process. It gives the pastor or ministry leader an opportunity to ask references if they would be comfortable entrusting their children with the potential volunteer.

If you are involved in contacting the volunteer's references, ARM has an article to assist you when conducting this process at your local church: [What You Should and Should Not Do When Checking References](#). When talking to the references, listen to the tone of voice and any concerns the individual may have about the volunteer. This process may be the most important because it helps identify any concerns about the volunteer based on personal experience.

## Conducting a Criminal Background Screening

The final step in the process is conducting a criminal background check. Most conferences within the North American Division use the [Adventist Screening Verification](#) to conduct their background checks. Still, you should confirm the process with your conference. It's important to remember that criminal background checks only identify individuals who have been charged with criminal activity. This is why the first three steps of the screening process are critical in determining red flags that may not show up on a background check.

Be sure that someone in your church is responsible for ensuring the four-step screening process is carried out for each volunteer.

The four-step screening process is vital because the church should be a safe place for children to worship and learn about God. The Bible places a high value on children, and your church should commit to providing a safe environment for all children.

### References

[1] NAD Working Policy 20 Child Protection and Volunteer Screening Policies for Children and Youth Ministries - section D Page 349 of 974 on the 2017-2018

[2] Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual – Chapter 8 Notes - page 175 on the 2015

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