

Volunteer Reference Checking Guide

As part of the interview process, employment and character references are to be requested and confirmed with the volunteer applicants being interviewed. Where feasible, at least three (3) references are to be obtained, preferably a minimum of two related to employment (current/past) or related to other volunteer organizations (current/past) the volunteer applicant was involved with. Only those references identified by an applicant are to be contacted.

Where feasible, employment references are to be obtained from an applicant's immediate supervisor or volunteer leader and not obtained from a co-worker, colleague, friend, or relative. If the applicant was previously employed or volunteered in another parish or diocese, it is mandatory that one of the references provided is from this source.

The Parish Volunteer Coordinator would normally conduct the reference checking. Depending upon any direction from the Pastor, it may be more appropriate for the ministry volunteer leader to conduct the references. References should be done by phone or in person.

Reference check information is used to corroborate, clarify or add to information that has already been gathered through the interview process. As a general rule of thumb, if the reference information is positive and consistent from two different references, the references are complete. However, if those two references are inconsistent or giving conflicting information, the third reference will help determine which one is more accurate or establishes a consistent trend.

If there is still some uncertainty about the references, the Pastor will be consulted. In some instances, the concern may not be relevant if it does not impact the effectiveness of the volunteer applicant in the particular ministry applied for. For example, if the reference information indicates the volunteer may not be good at organizing events but the ministry is not involved in organizing events, then the volunteer should be successful in that ministry.

Reference information/documentation about applicants must be used in a confidential manner and is only used to confirm appropriate fit for the ministry(ies) the volunteer applicant has applied to.

Reference information/documentation, other than letters of reference provided by an applicant/employee and who is subsequently selected, must be destroyed and are not to be retained. Prior to the reference materials being destroyed, a note should be placed on the volunteer's file documenting the date when the reference(s) were obtained, including the names of the references and their position.