

# Screening Tips for Interviews for Safeguarding Churches

It is important to ask directly, in an application and/or an interview if an applicant has ever abused a person or been accused of abusing another person.

These resources and any questions here are illustrative examples that you may consider using when screening candidates.

Source: Victor I. Veith, *Suffer the Children: Developing Effective Church Policies on Child Maltreatment*

An oral screening is not a panacea and, similar to a background check, will not catch most sex offenders. This is because many sex offenders understand the “right” answer to many questions and are more than happy to say whatever it takes to get near children. Nonetheless, an oral screening will assist in at least three ways.

- First, it sends the message that the church is serious about its child protection policies.<sup>28</sup> This may deflect some sex offenders to the extent they realize that a church serious about child protection will be more difficult to operate in than a church which only gives lip service to the protection of children.
- Second, it may take away an offender’s excuses when a church seeks to discipline or remove him for violating policies. For example, if the screener makes it clear that making sexual jokes around children is prohibited, the offender can no longer say “I didn’t realize that” when confronted for violating the rule.
- Third, an oral screening may help screen out those applicants who may not be child abusers but who will not be vigilant in enforcing the child protection policies.

## Types of Questions to Ask

**Asking the candidate if he has reviewed the church child protection policy and what his thoughts are about the policy.**

*Candidates who don’t believe such policies are necessary or express any hesitancy in abiding by the policies may not be child abusers, but they are also less likely to be vigilant in keeping children safe.*

**Asking a candidate interested in working with children the basis for that interest.**

*Locate workers and volunteers who understand their role is to help children and not the other way around. Offenders are often ego-centric and seek children who meet their needs (i.e., “Children are non-judgmental and make me feel good about myself.”) as opposed to what they can do for children.*

**Asking a candidate whether they have any adult friendships.**

**Give the candidate a hypothetical case of potential child abuse and ask how she would handle the situation.**

*If the candidate expresses any reservation in following the church child protection policy in response to a hypothetical case, it is a fair assumption that he or she will also hesitate when confronted with an actual case.*

## ***Further Resources and Sample Screening Questions***

- [Sample Screening Questions](#) from the ACNA Diocesan Child Protection Sample Policy
- [Sample Interview Questions – Diocese of Peterborough](#)
- [RSH Safeguarding interview and reference check questions](#)
- [Volunteer Screening – Questions to Ask and Not Ask](#)
- [Developing Effective Church Policies on Child Maltreatment](#) – Excellent resource for screening questions and strategies, policies for known offenders, reporting and responding guidelines (Victor I. Veith, *Suffer the Children: Developing Effective Church Policies on Child Maltreatment*)