1. Purpose

Shambhala is a network of centres committed to building compassionate, sustainable, and just human societies. In Shambhala, the well-being of its community members, the vast majority of whom are volunteers, is of the utmost importance. To reduce risks to the community, particularly risks to children, specific groups of prospective, and as applicable, current volunteers/applicants of Shambhala will undergo a criminal background check (BC).

This protocol sets out separate guidelines for performing background checks in Canada and the United States. Any questions or special considerations should be directed to Shambhala’s Director of Community Care and Conduct (CC Director) at tara.templin@shambhalaglobal.org.

2. Scope

Shambhala Global Services (SGS) will cover the cost for each background check (up to a maximum of 20€ or $30 USD for each check) for the groups listed below. Local centers are expected to cover the difference, if the cost exceeds the maximum paid by SGS. This protocol will be reviewed Fall 2020 to determine if SGS will continue to cover the cost beyond 2020 and whether to include additional groups of volunteers/applicants as suggested by the community and as required by SGS policies. Currently, this protocol applies to:

2.1 All prospective and current volunteers/applicants who are assigned responsibility for activities with children (children’s programs and childcare activities). Rechecks are required every two years for individuals assigned responsibility for activities with children. For volunteers/applicants having moved in the last five years from a location where a background check is not possible, then a global background check through Stirling Backcheck will be arranged in coordination with the Director of Community Care and Conduct. ***Please note, this protocol applies to volunteers/potential volunteers ONLY. In the case of employees responsible for activities with children, please refer to your local, regional or national employment laws.

2.2 All Shambhala Global Services Employees will be screened by the CC Director.

2.3 All Shambhala Global Services Board Members will be screened by the CC Director.
3. Requirements

Volunteers/applicants will be informed that selection, retention, and reassignment are subject to meeting the requirements of a background check. Volunteers/applicants will be contacted by local centre or group leadership to indicate if they are required to have a background check. It is the responsibility of the volunteer/applicant to notify the local centre of any new developments (ie arrests, convictions, etc) that would affect a background check after an initial check is completed.

4. Background Check Procedures for Shambhala Global: Europe, Asia, Pacific, and Latin America regions

Volunteers/applicants are required to provide background checks to the local centre, or facilitate that a background check be sent to the local centre. If the volunteer cannot access a feasible background check process, then a global background check through Stirling Backcheck or an alternative verification process will be arranged in coordination with local leadership and the Director of Community Care and Conduct.

Procedures to follow by Centre or Group leadership:

4.1 Local leadership designates a person(s) responsible for the background check process.\(^1\)

4.2 Local designate reviews the BC and checks for authenticity of Background Check. (The issue date of the BC must have been within three months of receipt). The local designate reimburses the applicant/volunteer for the amount paid, up to a maximum of 20€/30 USD with receipt. When the price is higher than 20€/30 USD, the local center is responsible for covering the difference.

4.3 Local designate sends CC Director a copy of the BC.

4.4 Local designate or CC Director inputs results of BC and date submitted into the Shambhala database.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) At the time of release of the CPP, the Code of Conduct Facilitator (CCF) role is not yet in place. In the absence of a CCF, the local centre temporarily designates a qualified person (local designate).

\(^2\) Once the Shambhala Database has been updated to account for Background Check information, the local designate or CCF will be able to input BC information directly into the Shambhala Database.
4.5 In the event of a participation agreement resulting from the background check (see section 5), the local designate sends a copy of the agreement to the CC Director, who then reviews and files the agreement.

4.6 The local designate returns the original BC to the individual or shreds the document. The volunteer may now assume their role.

4.7 Local centre leadership sends an invoice to the SGS Director of Finance at david.maclellan@shambhalaglobal.org, including the number of background checks performed and associated amounts, accompanied by receipts. The Director of Finance will reimburse centres on a quarterly basis.

5. Participation Agreements and Disqualification Criteria

In the event that the applicant/volunteer’s background check shows a criminal conviction, local centre leadership in coordination with the local designate or Code of Conduct Facilitator will review the report together with the applicable code of conduct policy, and determine if any negative information has a direct connection with an applicant’s ability to fulfill duties with competence and integrity, or to fulfill their duties in a manner that would not raise concerns about the well-being of the people affected by those duties. The background check report should also be carefully reviewed for any omissions or inaccuracies when compared to a volunteer application or interview. If there are any doubts or concerns regarding this determination, particularly in the case of sex offenders, centre leadership and/or the local designate should contact the Director of Community Care and Conduct.

In the case that an applicant/volunteer’s background check reveals matters that disqualify them from a volunteer role:

**Procedures to follow by Centre or Group leadership:**

5.1 Before disqualifying an applicant/volunteer, notify the person that a negative report has been received and that the information may be used to disqualify them for the volunteer position and invite them to respond.

5.2 Wait for a reasonable period of time to find out what, if any, explanation is offered by the applicant.

5.3 If the applicant does not respond at all to the notification within a reasonable period of time (1-2 weeks), then proceed with the decision to deny the volunteer role. If the applicant responds, then consider the new information, and make a decision accordingly. If there are any doubts or concerns regarding this determination, particularly in the case of sex offenders, centre
leadership and/or the local designate should contact the Director of Community Care and Conduct.

5.4 Inform the CC Director of the disqualification, who will then provide the applicant with a written notice of the disqualification and the name, address and telephone number of the Background Check company.

5.5 The local designate or CC Facilitator updates the Shambhala Database (see footnote 2), marking the box “disqualified” in the BC section.

6. Background check renewal

When the background check is expired, after two years for category 1, and after five years for categories 2 & 3, the individual will receive an email notice. If they plan on continuing to volunteer, they will be prompted to submit a request for a new background check to a local centre (category 1) or CC Director (categories 2 & 3).

An individual will have three months to complete a new background check from the time of expiry, during which time they will still be able to volunteer. After the extension period, the individual will need to complete or request a new background check before they are eligible to volunteer again.

Record Retention
All documents related to the background check process will be retained for at least 10 years. Background check status will be retained on an individual’s profile page on the Shambhala Database (see footnote 2 bottom of page 2).

Protocol Effective Date: March 31, 2020
The protocol will be reviewed annually.
Approved By: Director of Community Care and Conduct