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 taratemplin@shambhalaglobal.org.

2. Scope

Shambhala Global Services (SGS) will cover the cost for each background check (up to a maximum of $30 USD/$30 CAD 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 federal 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 Canada and the USA

Volunteers/applicants are encouraged to use the approved provider “Stirling Backcheck” to perform background checks. Stirling Backcheck will perform an “Enhanced Police Information Check” (EPIC) search in Canada, which includes national and local police database searches. In the USA, Stirling Backcheck will perform a Social Security Trace (SS Trace), a 7 year county/state criminal search and a National 50 State Sex Offender Registry Search. If applicants need information about or a copy of their background checks, they should contact the Stirling Backcheck privacy team at 1-866-455-5671 to request a form to submit their request.

Procedures to follow by Centre or Group leadership if using Stirling Backcheck:

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

4.2 The local designate contacts the applicant/volunteer to request their full name, email address as it appears in the Shambhala Database, current location, country(ies) of residence for the last five years and duration of residence, and position for which they applied. The local designate then sends that information to tara.templin@shambhalaglobal.org, who will request the provider to perform a background check. The email address of the volunteer/applicant MUST correspond to the email address in the database.

4.3 The volunteer/applicant will receive an email from the provider requesting further information in order to perform the BC. The volunteer/applicant will have approximately 10 days to review and complete the questions, before the process times out. Check spam folders for the email!

4.4 The CC Director will receive notification of the results of the background check and will then forward them to the applicant and the local designate.

---

1 At the time of publication, 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).
4.5 The CC Director records the results of the BC and date submitted into the shambhala database.

4.6 The applicant may now assume their role.

4.7 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.

If the volunteer/applicant already has a background check or wishes to provide one obtained directly from their local authorities

4.8 The local designate checks for authenticity. (The issue date of the BC must have been within three months of receipt.)

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

4.10 CC Director inputs results of BC and date submitted into the shambhala database (see footnote 2).

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

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 may disqualify them from a volunteer role:

---

2 Once the Shambhala Database has been updated to account for Background Check information, the CC Director will input BC information directly into the Shambhala Database.
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 CC Director updates the Shambhala Database as necessary (see footnote 2).

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).

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