**Worker Background Assessment**

***Use***

Whenever a director is interviewing a candidate for an assignment over one month in length for which VMMissions will be the primary agency (i.e., is either the employer or has the primary role in ministry supervision/coaching), this handout should be shared with the applicant and then, no sooner than 24 hours later (i.e., to allow time for reflection), discussed verbally with the applicant. For assignments less than one month in duration, VMMissions will, through the application and reference process, rely on the sending congregation to help us know and discern whether a worker’s past experience would make their participation in short-term assignment imprudent or unwise. Any sensitive information shared during this assessment will be handled discreetly by staff and shared internally only on a need-to-know basis.

***Preface***

Scripture tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We have all sinned, and we have all been sinned against. Yet, if we are in Jesus, we are forgiven (Romans 3:24), we are called to forgive others (Eph 4:32), and we are made new (2 Cor 5:17). Dealing with the consequences of past behaviors and hurts does not change these glorious truths.

Scripture also calls us to live lives worthy of the gospel and our calling. (Phil 1:27, Eph 4:1, 1 Thess 2:12) Living out this calling can be challenged by the brokenness or bondage we carry from our past, whether due to our own behaviors, or because of offenses committed against us. Unresolved issues may intensify under the stress of ministry and/or have a negative impact on the worker’s work, witness, teammates and partners.

At VMMissions, we are committed to becoming and making disciples of Jesus Christ. Becoming a disciple entails that we abide with the one who has called us his own; to know our primary identity as God’s beloved sons and daughters. Our identity secure in this knowledge, we are also called to bear with one another in love. The apostle Peter denied his Lord three times and yet the resurrected Messiah met him on the beach and invited him back into a relationship with himself (“Do you love me?”) and with His people (“Feed my sheep”). Jesus’ resurrection and victory over death give us the courage to live in the light, vulnerable to God and one another, forgiving and being forgiven. In all things, we are being made into the perfect image of the One who calls us His own and invites us into a life of fuller discipleship empowered by the Holy Spirit. This commitment to discipleship helps frame the discernment – the when-what-where-and-with whom – of placements for all workers, and particularly those who carry past hurts or ongoing struggles.

***Prior Experiences***

The selection, timing and length of a ministry assignment are among the factors relevant to a candidate who has participated in, or experienced, any of the following:

* Alienation from spouse or parents, family abandonment or child neglect
* Abuse of alcohol, drugs or other substances, or any addiction
* Sexual impropriety
* Pornography
* Fraud, stealing (including shoplifting), unethical financial conduct or fiscal mismanagement
* Demonic or occult activity or worship
* Non-Christian religious worship
* Sexual assault
* Bullying or harassment
* Physical abuse or violence, including abortion
* Intentional self-harm

***Surrounding Factors***

When any of the foregoing experiences are a part of an applicant’s past, the following factors should be assessed, whether by the director or qualified counselor or psychologist:

* Degree of personal responsibility or personal choice in the experience
* Intensity or frequency of the experience (i.e., pattern or single occurrence?)
* Level of healing that has occurred relative to the experience
* Elapsed time between resolution and application for ministry
* Evidence of spiritual conviction that motivated the resolution
* Evidence and history of godly patterns and emotional and relational health since resolution
* Impact of experience on applicant’s belief system and spiritual development
* Susceptibility to unhealthy coping patterns when under duress

***Positive Indicators***

In considering an assignment, the following positive indicators should be considered:

* Acknowledgement of the past experience and willingness to provide appropriate disclosure
* Evidence that confirms that the applicant’s beliefs and current lifestyle are in harmony with the Personal Covenant
* References from trusted sources that validate the readiness of the applicant for ministry
* An informed Ministry Support Team (except for assignments under three months) that recommends and is willing to support the applicant
* Team leaders or host partners who are prepared and equipped to require accountability and provide support for the applicant
* Communication plans to keep the director informed of the applicant’s wellbeing, including the applicant’s agreement to be transparent about his or her conduct and wellbeing
* The applicant’s comfort level with the possibility of either the applicant or VMMissions terminating the assignment early if it does not prove to be a healthy situation for the applicant, his/her colleagues and team, or the ministry in general.

***Ongoing Evaluation***

The director will follow the agreed-upon communication plan to track the worker’s health and well-being. Reappointments will be an occasion to assess the worker’s progress in healing and growth. If issues arise, the director will consult with the International Team, or US Team, as applicable, to identify the appropriate response.

***Invitation and Challenge***

Living into our identity as God’s beloved son or daughter, and as a disciple with other Jesus-followers, holds both invitation and challenge. As we engage workers in the questions and discernment inherent in this background work, we ask God to help us hold both in healthy measure.

Approved by Personnel and Program Committee 10/28/16