



Volunteers

Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

Building up the Church

Protectors of Children

Behold, children are a heritage from the lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. (Psalm 127:3)

This document explains the new volunteer requirements under the diocesan *Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors by Church Personnel* in the Diocese of Springfield of Illinois effective July 1, 2012.

Article III – Definitions -Church Personnel is defined as:

- All religious and lay persons 18 years of age or older; serving in any volunteer capacity in the parishes, schools, agencies and other institutions of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois; to include volunteers in ministries of the liturgy (i.e. Eucharistic/Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Lectors, Ushers, Greeters-Hospitality, Choir Members, musicians and equipment technicians), volunteering in the parishes schools agencies and other institutions of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

Article IV of the policy states “On a regular basis, educational programs on the methods of recognizing and preventing sexual abuse of minors will be offered to Church personnel. Individuals who have not completed the educational programs will not be permitted to serve as church personnel in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois”.

Article VI of the policy states “All Church personnel must complete a Certification Document agreeing to its statements and complete an appropriate Criminal History Background Search before beginning or continuing service, including volunteer service in the parishes, schools, agencies, and institutions of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois”.

The Decision to Change the Policy

The opportunity to discuss this issue was brought about by circumstances within our diocese that resulted in the consideration of taking such action. The decision to revise the definition of Church personnel with regard to volunteers in the diocese was made in consultation with various consultative bodies of the diocese over a period of more than a year. Members of the Presbyteral Council, the Diocesan Review Board and members of a Consultation Focus Group consisting of lay representatives from each deanery of the diocese were all involved in the decision-making process. A majority of those consulted expressed their strong support for the revisions made.

Why include all volunteers and ministries of the liturgy?

Our safe environment training has taught us that as adults we are ALL responsible for the safety of children. But not all adults are provided with the knowledge to know how to keep children safe.

Consider that the church is a place where families gather. The presence of children in the church is not limited to church programs that serve the religious education needs of minors. Parish social activities such as church fund raisers, festivals and picnics where children are present can provide opportunity for child molesters to harm children.

Providing all volunteers with the proper training increases the safety of children. These volunteers are around the parish and are visible and would be the extra “eyes and ears” in our communities.

Ministries of the liturgy are included because they are viewed by others as leaders in the parish by their service. They are also around the parish and are visible and would be “extra eyes and ears” in our church communities.

Why is it the responsibility of all volunteers to ensure the safety of children on church property?

The parent’s presence with their child on parish property might not absolve the parish from being as vigilant as possible.

Consider if a child is abused while on parish property by clergy, employee, or volunteer and the proper training and criminal history background evaluation were not conducted. It could be said that the parish was negligent in not doing as much as reasonably possible to ensure the safety of children.

Who might the parent hold responsible for allowing the “known volunteer”, but undiscovered sex offender, to harm their child?

Even though the parent is the ultimate protector of their child the parish would most likely be held responsible....responsible for not checking public and easily accessible information about a person volunteering at a church event especially if the perpetrator had a discoverable record in their background that could have been identified.

Child Sex Abuse - “It’s not my fault why should I have to comply with these standards? This is just a clergy problem.”

Adults who assume this is an issue only pertaining to clergy would be misinformed about the subject of child sexual abuse and the purpose of the Bishop’s *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. What we know about sex offenders is that they groom the community, the parents and the child using methods that on the surface seem genuinely good intentioned and helpful.

- Child molesters don’t identify themselves
- 60% of molesters are known to the child and trusted by the child and parent.¹
- In 2010, there were 63,527 reports of child sexual abuse.²
- In the 28 counties of the diocese there are 1854 registered sex offenders, most convicted of child sexual abuse.³

- Studies tell us that 2-3% of priests in the U.S. have abused children and that 2-3% of adult males have abused children.⁴
- A survey of 1700 churches of all denominations revealed that of all the cases reported 50% of the abuse was committed by volunteers.⁵
- Studies also tell us that women account for 5-20% of cases when the victim is male and 18-19% of cases when the victim is female.⁶
- Sometimes it takes years before a child molester is caught. A background check may not reveal any issues....the main reason why safe environment training is so important is because it educates adults about ways to be aware and to maintain a safe environment.⁷
- 1 out of 5 females and 1 out of 10 males will be abused before they reach the age of 18.⁸

Why Apply Both the Training and Background Check Requirements to All Volunteers?

Training is required to provide the opportunity to every adult volunteer to learn how to protect children from child sexual abuse. If we are counting on all adults to protect children we must provide the education they need to know how to protect children. A criminal history check is required as a necessary component of providing a safe environment.

How soon does a volunteer have to meet these requirements?

The Criminal History Search must be completed before volunteer service.

The attendance of the Protecting God's Children Program must be completed within 60 days of volunteer service.

For those currently in a volunteer capacity the requirements must be met by January 1, 2013.

Is this action required under the Bishop's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People?

The volunteer requirement of the diocese is above and beyond the requirements of the Charter. Many dioceses in the U.S. take additional actions beyond the requirements of the Charter in the effort to protect children.

Do other dioceses in the U.S. have such a requirement?

Yes. There are 15 other dioceses that apply this requirement in whole or part or are considering taking this action.

Criminal History Searches

Criminal Records Searched - For volunteers the search will include:

- A National Criminal History search to check the databases of 50 states for felony or misdemeanor records in the past 7-10 years.
- A check of the sex offender databases from all 50 states

- A search of the Department of Children and Family Services, (DCFS) Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System, (CANTS) to identify any Indicated Allegations of child abuse resulting from a DCFS investigation.

Who pays for the search and how much does it cost?

Effective July 1, 2012, the cost is \$5.00 and will be paid by the parish unless the parish has made other arrangements.

What if the volunteer has already had a criminal history search conducted by another entity or employer?

The results of criminal history convictions conducted by other entities or employers are not stored in a database for other employers or entities to view. In order to ensure the results of the criminal history search the diocese must conduct its own search. This would include even those individuals authorized to work in schools, or other public or government institutions or agencies where the criminal history check is part of the hiring process.

Disqualifying Convictions or DCFS Indicated Allegations

Volunteer service will be prohibited when an individual's criminal history search reveals one of the following convictions or DCFS Indicated Allegations.

- Convictions including Class X felonies in Illinois listed in Sections: 10-2, 11-6, 11-9, 11-14, 11-15, 11-15.1, through 11-21 and 12-4.2 (a)(1), 12-4.3, 12-11 (a)(1)-(2), 12-13, 12-14, 12-14.1(1), 12-16 18-2, 18-4 of the Illinois Criminal Code.
- An indicated allegation determined by a DCFS investigation to include allegation codes 19, 20, 21, 22, 22a, 22c,

The list is not all inclusive and any other conviction (felony or misdemeanor) or a child abuse indicated allegation will be considered. This would also include any offense committed or attempted in any other state or against the laws of the United States that, if committed or attempted in the State of Illinois would have been punishable as one or more on the list of the Illinois Criminal Code Offenses mentioned above.

What about Other Convictions or Indicated Allegations?

There may be other convictions that may be of concern depending on the volunteer position. In those instances the Director for the Office of Human Resources will contact the Pastor, Parochial Administrator, Priest Moderator or Parish Life Coordinator to discuss. In the past 8 years of conducting background checks for employees and volunteers the diocese has taken the action of prohibiting a person from employment or volunteering in very few instances.

Where are the criminal history results received and how confidential are these records?

Criminal history results are received in the Office for Human Resources and are recorded in a secured database at the diocesan office. A notice of the completion of the criminal history search and the fees charged are sent to the Parish Pastor, Parochial Administrator, Priest Moderator or Parish Life Coordinator. Reported are the name, and the date the background check is completed. Actual conviction results would not be communicated unless a disqualifying conviction or indicated allegation was reported that would disqualify an individual from volunteering or a discussion of another conviction that may be significant to the volunteer position. The online process also allows for the individual to request a copy of their criminal history report via email address.

Completing the Criminal History Application

Effective July 1, 2012 volunteers with internet access can log onto the diocese web site at www.dio.org, select the Safe Environment Tab and click on the link **Volunteer Criminal History Search**

The DCFS Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System form (CANTS) will be completed when the volunteer attends the Protecting God’s Children Training program OR a PDF of the document may be downloaded from the diocese web site under the safe environment tab by selecting DCFS CANTS form. This form must be completed and sent to the parish office or the Diocese Office for Human Resources. The form is currently not able to be completed on-line and must be printed out for completion. **For Those without Internet Access.** The Criminal History Application will be available also in a paper form for completion at your local parish office. Once completed an authorized staff member of the parish office will enter the information online to initiate the criminal history background check.

How much personal information must be provided to complete the application?

- Complete name, (Last, First, Middle) and any additional names the volunteer may have had.
- Date of Birth.
- Complete Address including zip code.

Will there be rechecks of my criminal history background at any time in the future?

Yes, currently the diocese conducts rechecks of the criminal history records and the DCFS CANTS records every 5 years. The criminal history check will be automatic if the member is still employed or volunteering in the diocese. At this time the DCFS CANTS check would be completed again in paper form.

Safe Environment Training

What is the training and how much time does it involve?

The diocese uses the *Virtus® Protecting God’s Children for Adults* program. This is a program developed by the National Catholic Risk Retention Group and it has been very helpful and informative in training Church personnel for the diocese in the last 9 years. The training raises awareness on the subject and provides adults with the knowledge to protect children. The training is a one time event and requires a maximum of 3 hours to complete.

What about retraining?

At this time the training is a one time event.

The Virtus® Protecting God’s Children for Adults program does provide for continuing training via their online service at www.virtusonline.org. All Church personnel are encouraged to register with Virtus Online to set-up an account. Once the account is established the individual receives continuing education in the form of bi-monthly bulletins on the topic of child safety to include internet safety, bullying, child sex abuse, and many other topics concerning the safety and welfare of children.

What are the benefits from meeting the training requirements?

Regardless of your status, mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc. and regardless of whether you have any children of your own or have any direct contact with children the Virtus® Protecting God’s Children program provides valuable and useful information that anyone can appreciate and benefit from. You can share this information with your family your neighbors, and within your community for the protection of children.

Learning to be a protector of child also benefits the volunteer in having the knowledge of appropriate behavior when interacting with children and what to do if they notice behavior of another adult around children that makes them uncomfortable.

The ultimate Christian benefit is that this training might someday save a child from the harmful effects of experiencing child sexual abuse and therefore protect the dignity of life.

In Summary

Volunteers answer a call to stewardship to serve the needs of the Church by willingly sharing their skills and talents to foster a vibrant, active and welcoming community of faith in our parishes, and the agencies and institutions of the diocese.

The services and ministries carried out by our volunteers are both immeasurable and immense; they are blessed by God for their service. We ask for their support and understanding to ensure the dignity of human life by becoming protectors of children.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)

¹Russell, D.E.H. & Bole, R.M. (2000) *The epidemic of rape and child sexual abuse in the United States*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

²Reported maltreatment Types of Victims, 2010, Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2011) in *Child Maltreatment 2010*

³Illinois State Police Sex Offender Registry

⁴Briere, J. & Runtz, M. (1989). *University Males' Sexual Interest in Children: Predicting Potential Indices of Pedophilia' in a Non-forensic Sample, Child Abuse and Neglect*, Vol. 13, 65; *Cardinal's Commission on Clerical Sexual Misconduct with Minors: Report to Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago*, 1992: Connors, C., *Priests and Pedophilia: A Silence that Needs Breaking?* America, May 9, 1992, 400-401; Dr. Gene Abel, *CNN Specials: Thieves of Childhood*, February 5, 1995, Transcript #454; Greely A. , *A View From the Priesthood*, Newsweek, August 16, 1993, 45; Jenkins, P. (1996). *Pedophiles and Priests: Anatomy of a contemporary crisis*. New York: Oxford University Press; Keddy, P.J., L. Erdberg, P., Sammon, S.D. (1990). *The psychological assessment of Catholic clergy and religious referred for residential treatment Pastoral Psychology*, 38, 147-59; Loftus, J.A. & Camargo, R.J. (1993). *Treating the clergy. Annals of Sex Research*, 6,287-303; Plante, T. G. (Ed.) (1999). *Bless me Father for I have sinned: Perspectives on sexual abuse committed by Roman Catholic Priests*. Westport, CT: Praeger; Rossetti, S.J.(1999). *A Tragic Grace: The Catholic Church and Child Sexual Abuse*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press.

⁵Cagney, M. (1997). *Sexual Abuse in Churches Not Limited to Clergy. Christianity Today*, Vol. 41(11), 90.

⁶Snyder, H. & Sickmund, M. (1999). US Department of Justice, *National Report on Juvenile Offenders and Victims: September 1999*.

⁷Virtus® Protecting God's Children for Adults Awareness Program

⁸Finkelhor, D. (1993) University of New Hampshire, Family Research Laboratory, *Answers to Important Questions About the Scope and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse*.

For additional information contact Patricia Kornfeld, Director of the Office for Human Resources, 217-698-8500, Ext. #155 or email pkornfeld@dio.org.

A Volunteer Blessing

Our Heavenly Father...

We know that the power of one kind heart added to another and another gives birth to a legacy of love, and yields a harvest of commitment to the lives of others, which lives beyond this earthly day. So, in our prayers of thankfulness we lift our faces toward you and express much gratitude and praise for each and every volunteer. As we look out over our diocese and turn our faces toward this steady stream of love generated by thousands upon thousands of volunteer activities, we become aware that love has and is enriching our lives, the lives of our families and friends, the lives of those in our Church communities and the lives of our fellow citizens. We thank our heavenly Father for these grace-filled volunteers, and the rich blessings wrought upon our Church communities and ask your blessing upon the compassionate and giving hearts of our volunteers....Amen

Child Abuse Prevention Blessing

Dear Lord, We ask You to bless these Your holy people participating in the Church's efforts to help stop child sexual abuse. Open their hearts to Your call to be the "ears, eyes and voice of children and young people" everywhere. Give them the vision and grace needed to fulfill the special commitments that each of them has made to making their homes, churches, schools, communities and world a safer place for all God's Children. Amen

Courtesy of the USCCB Office of Child and Youth Protection