



## **Policy for Criminal Background Checks and Safe Environment Training**

As part of its effort to protect all minors\* from harm as well as a desire to create safe environments in all diocesan ministries and facilities, the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will:

- Complete criminal background checks and regular rescreening for all diocesan clergy engaged in active ministry and all candidates for ordination according to diocesan procedure as part of the Safe Environment Program. This includes diocesan clergy from outside the diocese, including those from outside the USA. Additionally, these persons will be required to complete diocesan safe environment training and regular updates according to diocesan procedures. The diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator (SEC) will ensure that this is accomplished with assistance from the Vicar General and the Vocations Office.
- Ensure that criminal background checks and regular rescreening and safe environment training and regular training updates are completed on all clergy who are members of religious congregations and present in the diocese in active ministry. This includes religious order clergy from outside the USA. The religious congregation may assist the diocesan SEC with these requirements for their members as well as for candidates for ordination in their communities who are present in the diocese.
- Complete criminal background checks and regular rescreening on all paid personnel, lay and religious, regardless of their level of contact with minors, prior to the employee beginning his/her work. Regular rescreening is required per diocesan procedure. All personnel will complete the diocesan safe environment training before they begin their work responsibilities. Regular training updates are required per diocesan procedure. Their supervisor will ensure these requirements are met.
- Complete criminal background checks on all volunteers, lay and religious, who will have regular contact with minors as part of their duties before they begin their volunteer responsibilities. Regular rescreening is required per diocesan procedure. These same volunteers will complete the diocesan safe environment training before they begin their volunteer responsibilities. Regular training updates are required per diocesan procedure. Their supervisor will ensure these requirements are met. For assistance in determining who is a volunteer with regular contact with minors, see the attached

***Guideline for Determining Who are Volunteers Who have 'Regular Contact' with Minors.***

- Any criminal background check with reportable issues found for an applicant for employment or for volunteer service with minors will be given to the pastor immediately for his information and review or to the Vicar General in the case of diocesan curia level employees. The pastor and central office staff will use the Criminal Records & Eligibility for Service Chart to determine if the applicant will be accepted.
- Provide annual safe environment training to all students enrolled in diocesan Catholic schools and parish religious education programs using the approved training resources. The pastors, school principals and Directors of Religious Education will ensure this is accomplished. The parish/school will notify the parents of these students prior to the annual training and provide the training materials to parents if requested. After review, parents may refuse to have their student(s) participate in the annual training by formally opting them out. Parents must sign a refusal form to do so.
- The diocesan procedure for completion of criminal background checks and training in the safe environment program will be overseen by the diocesan SEC and provided to each parish and school for their adherence.

\*A minor is defined as anyone under the age of eighteen years; or a person regardless of age who habitually lacks the use of reason and is to be considered equivalent to a minor.

Policy located on the diocese's youth protection webpages.



## **Guideline for Determining Who are Volunteers Who have 'Regular Contact' with Minors**

The Diocese of Fort Wayne – South Bend has established that its volunteers who have 'regular contact' with minors\* as part of their volunteer duties must undergo a background screening and participate in safe environment training. To determine which volunteers this includes, the following criteria and questions serve as guidance. The determination is left to each parish and/or school. The diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator is available for consultation at any time.

### Criteria to consider in determining whether 'regular contact' with minors exists:

- **Recurring nature of contact** → Will this person repeatedly be around minors during the school year?
- **Duration of contact** → Will this person have an extended time with minors?
- **Directness of contact** → Will the person work one-on-one with a minor or with a small group of minors? Will another adult be present at any time?

A volunteer meeting only one of these criteria should be considered to have 'regular contact'.

### Types of volunteers who always meet the standard for regular contact (this list is not exhaustive):

- Religious education catechists, aides and substitutes
- Sports team coaches, trainers and assistants
- Youth Choir directors/leaders
- Vacation Bible School teachers
- Instructors for sacramental preparation and RCIC instructors
- Youth group leaders, aides, and chaperones
- Overnight chaperones, regular drivers
- Altar server trainers
- Adults volunteering for minors' events
- Nursery workers
- Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop leaders and helpers
- Junior Achievement instructors
- School tutors and assistants
- Those who assist in Catholic schools in a variety of ways and as such the service adds up to ongoing contact: field trip drivers & chaperones, classroom project helpers, classroom party helpers, library volunteers, etc.

- Extraordinary ministers of Communion to the homebound who are not their family members
- St. Vincent de Paul Society members of the parish who make home visits
- Parish volunteers who serve adults with disabilities

Note: If a parent or family member of a Catholic school student is truly attending ONE event such as a field trip or classroom project and will be in the presence of other adults throughout the event, that person does not have to complete the program. Example: An out-of-town grandparent wants to attend the second-grade field trip to the zoo with the child's parent. The minors will always be in the presence of two or more adults. This grandparent does not have to complete the program.

Types of volunteers who **may not** meet the standard for 'regular contact':

- Administration and organization volunteers when contact with minors is not expected
  - Office envelope stuffers, telephone assistance, etc.
  - Committee work – finance, school board, parish council
- Adult program participants and leaders when contact with minors is not expected
  - Bible study
  - Retreats
  - Adult sacramental preparation
- Events when minors will be present with their families and contact will be limited, sporadic, and not the only focus of the service
  - Parish festivals, breakfasts, picnics

Whether to include these volunteers may depend upon whether the service takes place in a parish or school during hours when minors are usually present. If a person performs one of the functions listed above but does so repeatedly in a school during school hours, that person may then be considered to have 'regular contact'. This is recommended as the person may have access to the students in the building.

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