



Policy for Background Check Requirements 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, including Eucharistic Ministers and anyone who ministers to the homebound. Also, complete criminal background checks on all 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 list at the end of this document.



All diocesan employees (persons on the diocesan payroll), regardless of their level of contact with minors, are to have their background checks and safe environment training completed before they begin their responsibilities. Note: Some steps in the procedure will vary for employees who are adults and for employees who are under 18 years of age.

If an applicant for employment worked for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend previously, the diocese **may** use the background check that was conducted earlier and is on file. The background check on file will be accepted only if it is the correct background check for the new position and the background check results are ***dated within one year*** of the hire date for the new position. The local SEC must contact the Diocesan Safe Environment Database Specialist to confirm acceptance of a previously completed background check. At that time, the Diocesan Safe Environment Database Specialist will run a free search at the *Indiana Courts and Clerks Access Site* and share the results with the local SEC.

All Volunteers who will have regular contact with minors are to have their background checks and safe environment training completed before they begin their responsibilities. Note: Some steps in the procedure will vary for volunteers who are adults and for volunteers who are under 18 years of age.

Reference checks for volunteers are not required for volunteers of the diocese. However, a parish/school may include reference checks as part of its process if desired.

Employees and Volunteers in any Daycare/Childcare Program

All employees and volunteers of Daycare/Childcare programs within the diocese are required by the state of Indiana to have an expanded criminal background check to include the Indiana state sex offender registry and Child Protection Index.

To meet this requirement, we will need to receive a copy of any letter/notification from the state confirming that the employee/volunteer has met this requirement. If no confirmation is provided, the employee/volunteer must complete the School Employee Background Check through Selection.com.

Parish and non-school employees, parish volunteers, and school volunteers (Age: 18 years and older) *This does not include high school volunteer coaches.*

All must complete the appropriate training in the Catholic Mutual Group (CMG) learning platform and complete the basic background check through Selection.com during the same step.



All School employees, all school coaches, Youth Ministry personnel and volunteers, Directors of Religious Education, and Religious Education catechists (Age and 18 and older)

All school employees, all school coaches, Youth Ministry personnel and volunteers, Directors of Religious Education, and Religious Education catechists must complete the School Employee training in CMG and the School Employee background check through Selection.com during the same step.

All employees, volunteers, all school coaches, Youth Ministry volunteers, and Religious Education catechists (under the age of 18)

Local SEC runs Dru Sjodin NSOPW (www.nsopw.gov) search; step by step instructions are found on diocesan Youth Protection website, Coordinator's Resource tab.

All minors and their parents/guardians must sign the *Code of Conduct while Interacting with a Minor*.

Local SEC will create a profile in CMG for each minor employee/volunteer and scan/send a copy of the NSOPW search signed Code of Conduct to the Safe Environment Database Coordinator at safe@diocesefwsb.org

No one under 18 years of age is to access CMG. No person under the age of 18 is to create an account in the CMG Connect database. The local SEC will create an account for anyone under the age of 18. No person under the age of 18 is to complete safe environment training using the CMG Connect curriculum.

Flagged Background Checks

Diocesan Safe Environment staff will send the pastor, local SEC, and principal (if applicable) an email message when any applicant has a flagged background check. When a decision is made, the pastor will reply to the Diocesan Safe Environment staff as to whether they approved the applicant for service.

Documentation in Diocesan Database

The Diocesan Safe Environment Database Specialist will update the diocesan Safe Environment Program database at the Catholic Mutual website – CMG Connect. This database contains information on adults and minors who have completed safe environment requirements for the diocese. The Database Specialist confirms certification.



When a volunteer or employee who is under 18 years of age reaches his/her 18th birthday, the local SEC must start the training and background check process through CMG.

Maintain all files for 26 years after the employee or volunteer terminates service.

Required School Employee Background Checks

An expanded criminal history search and an expanded child protection index are required for all school employees hired after July 1, 2016. Both requirements are included in the School Employee Background Check.

If an employee on the parish payroll spends at least 40% of his/her time working in a school, the employee will be required to have a School Employee Background Check.

- Indiana state law requires this expanded criminal history search and expanded child protection index for all school employees. This includes employees under the age of 18 if they have direct contact with minors in their work.
- As of July 1, 2019, the state of Indiana requires the expanded criminal history search on all high school coaches who serve as volunteers.
- A principal may request permission from the Superintendent in conjunction with the Human Resources Director to allow a prospective employee to begin work if:
 - All criminal searches are completed on the School Employee Background Check
 - No convictions are found on any of the searches
 - Applicant has submitted the required KidTraks link for the DCS search
 - All Safe Environment training is complete

The request must be made in writing to the Superintendent by the principal. A written response must be received.

College Students who must complete Student Teaching, and Students Completing a Practicum (Field Study)

To fulfill the safe environment requirements of the diocesan program, student teachers and students completing a practicum (field study) will complete the appropriate training and background check through CMG. The expanded searches are not required.

The background check may be waived by the Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator if the sending university submits a criminal background check for the student that meets the same criteria. The Diocesan Safe Environment staff will review all background checks and approve those that meet the diocesan standard.

Contact Safe Environment Database Specialist for a list of approved college and university programs.



School Contractors and Vendors

It is the responsibility of each school principal to determine when contractors/vendors and their employees are required to have a criminal background check. Diocesan School Policy 3720 identifies the type of contracted employees who are required to have expanded searches because of their direct and ongoing contact with minors.

Note: Contractors, such as counselors or therapists, who are employed at another school corporation and are providing services to minors in a diocesan school may provide a **Testimonial of Suitability** (diocesan provided) for this purpose to verify that the person has successfully completed an appropriate background check performed by that school corporation. If the contractor did not have an appropriate background check conducted by his/her school corporation employer, then one would need to be conducted by the school at which the person is providing services.

For other contractors who do not fall into the category who may use the Testimonial, diocesan schools must request a School Employee Background Check. If the employees of an outside contractor/vendor will be on school property on a regular basis but will not have **direct and ongoing** contact with minors, the school may first ask the company to provide verification that it has obtained its own criminal history on each employee and that no employee has arrests or convictions which would pose a safety risk to minors.

If the company does not conduct its own background checks, then the school should ask for a list of names of the employees who will be regularly on the school grounds. Each school should conduct a search at the National Sex Offender Public Website on each name.



Training Procedure

1. All priests, deacons, candidates for ordination, employees, and those volunteers who will have regular contact with minors in their volunteer responsibilities must complete the safe environment training program before they begin their responsibilities.
2. Adults (age 18 and over) must begin their safe environment training by completing the INITIAL Priest, Employee or Volunteer Training Module at the Catholic Mutual Group website, CMG Connect, (<https://fortwaynesouthbend.cmgconnect.org>). Human Resources will provide newly hired employees with information as to how to access this site and begin the correct training. The local SEC will provide this information to all volunteers. Subsequent training modules will be assigned to adults per the diocesan curriculum schedule.
3. Young person employees and volunteers (under the age of 18) must complete the Commitment to the *Code of Conduct and Authorization* which can be found at www.diocesefwsb.org on the forms page of the Youth Protection tab. Parents of the young person must sign this two page form.
4. No person under the age of 18 is to create an account in the CMG Connect database. The local SEC will create such accounts. No person under the age of 18 is to complete safe environment training using the CMG Connect Curriculum.
5. Training must be completed before the employee/volunteer begins his/her responsibilities.



Determining 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.
- Eucharistic Ministers 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 classroom project and will be in the presence of other adults throughout the event, that person 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.

*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.