

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is "For the Sake of God's Children"?

For the Sake of God's Children is the comprehensive plan developed by the diocese in response to the Charter adopted by the bishops at their semi-annual meeting, held in Dallas, Texas in June 2002. Among the aspects of the program are:

- a process of assessing suitability for ministry through criminal background checks

- Ethical and Behavioral Standards for all Church Personnel

- Guidelines for establishing a safe environment in the parish communities and institutions of the diocese

- Educational information for training.

Who is affected by the program?

Parishes and other institutions will be responsible for the execution of many aspects of the Program. Diocesan offices will assist the parishes in the process and parishes will be held accountable for the timely implementation of the Program at the local level. Parishes will be held accountable for the timely execution of various aspects of the program. When the process is fully in place, all professional Church Personnel and all non-compensated personnel who have regular recurring contact with children and youth (five hours or more a year) will be required to participate in the training and have the appropriate background checks completed before beginning their ministry.

How is the program implemented?

Each parish/school should annually conduct an orientation, training program for all employees/volunteers within the respective areas of ministry. During this session those engaged in ministry will review the program, receive training relative to Safe Environments and if necessary complete the forms for background checks, volunteer covenant or /and Ethical Standards. Diocesan Offices with responsibility for ministry over site are available to assist parishes and other programs with this process.

What if we do not have a professional staff for a specific parish ministry?

You may designate someone from your various ministries to become the person accountable for overseeing the implementation of the Charter in your parish. This person would be the compliance coordinator for the parish.

Why are we doing this?

In the wake of the scandals that were brought to light in the last few years, the bishops of the United States examined all of their policies and procedures relating to the protection of children and youth particularly with regard to sexual abuse. They determined that these new times demanded a much stronger and more comprehensive approach throughout the Church to ensure the protection of children and youth.

What about criminal background checks?

All Diocesan personnel and parish personnel who have contact with youth will be required to have a criminal background check as a requirement for employment. Volunteers who interact on a regular or ongoing basis with children or youth will be required to have a criminal background check prior to being eligible for service.

How do I explain this to our volunteers?

We are taking these steps to do all that we can reasonably do to make sure our environments are safe and our children and youth as well as the adults engaged in activities at the parish or diocesan level are protected.

What if someone does not have a background check done?

Only cleared adults will be eligible for service in a leadership role with young people.

How long does it take to have a check done?

If the person has lived in Delaware or Maryland for the last seven years, the background check can be completed in less than two weeks. If the person has lived in several states over the last several years, the process may take a little longer. It is up to the parish or institution to provide training and complete the local process.

What if I have had a background check at work or for another diocese?

If the background check has been completed by a state agency within the last five years and you can provide the report from the agency who conducted the investigation it will be accepted as a substitute for the Diocesan process. You will still be required to complete the parish/institution's requirements for placement. However, it is important to note that only reports issued by a state or the agency identified by the diocese are acceptable, not security clearances. If another Diocese has provided you with a certificate which indicates you have complied with the requirements of the charter, that will be accepted provided the Diocese providing the certificate is in compliance with the Charter.

Will the background check have to be repeated every year?

No. However, every five years individuals will be asked to renew the process. The Behavioral Standards for Church Personnel require all individuals report any changes that may prevent their continued work with youth or young people.

What are the Ethical Standards?

The Standards for Church Personnel are clear and concise statements that set forth behaviors which are appropriate and acceptable in our ministerial environments. The Standards are specific and clear, are expected to be part of ongoing supervision with employees and will be a part of annual evaluation for employees. The Volunteer Covenant is a set of behavioral Standards which detail expectations of our volunteers as they engage in ministerial activities in our communities. These are renewed annually.

Aren't our environments already safe?

We are confident the programs held at our parishes and schools provide adequate supervision and an environment in which no child or young person is intentionally harmed. This new document, however, provides guidelines, requirements and a framework for insuring environments that meet or exceed policies in place in the Diocese of Wilmington.

What kind of education is available for adults and young people?

Adults:

We have created three brochures for use with our adults, one for parents and parish /school communities, one for volunteers and one for employees. Additionally there is a Power Point Presentation that is available for use with our adult communities as well as the video : Child Abuse, How to See It, How to Stop It.

Children:

The Diocese developed a pre-K thru 12 curriculum entitled : Keeping Our Promises, which is utilized in all of our schools, religious education programs and other ministries with young people as appropriate.

When did the provisions of the Charter go into effect?

September 1, of 2003 was the date that the background check policy was implemented in all parish and institutions of the Diocese. The provisions of the Charter went into effect at that time. Training for parish leadership and subsequent training on the local level began in May 2003. New personnel will be required to have a background check as part of their initial screen for employment or participation in a parish or school program

Parishes and institutions began implementing other aspects of the plan during this same timeframe. Each year the Diocese monitors the implementation of the various parts of the program to develop a report which is required by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops.