

Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem

Requirements for Clergy, Employees and Volunteers Under PA Law and Diocesan Policy

Volunteer Requirements

Effective July 1, 2015, Pennsylvania law requires that adult volunteers responsible for the welfare of a child, or having direct contact with children, must first submit adequate clearances relating to any potential criminal record or child abuse history. Beginning July 1, 2015, prospective volunteers must submit clearances prior to the commencement of service. Current volunteers approved prior to July 1, 2015, will have until July 1, 2016, to obtain clearances. Clearances will need to be renewed every 5 years. Congregations are required to see original documentation (which could have been obtained for another work or volunteer requirement) and maintain record of their volunteers' compliance with these guidelines. Any administrator or supervisor responsible for employment decisions who intentionally fails to require the submission of the required documentation commits a misdemeanor of the third degree. The chancellor recommends that these records be kept indefinitely.

There are different requirements depending on the volunteers' length of residency in Pennsylvania:

Volunteers (continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years)

1. Safeguarding God's Children training
2. Report of criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)
3. Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services (Child Abuse)
4. Review of Sexual Offender's registry
5. A verification that the volunteer is not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of any disqualifying offense in any other jurisdiction (form provided by diocese)

Volunteers (NOT a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years)

1. Safeguarding God's Children
2. Report of criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)
3. Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services (Child Abuse)
4. Review of Sexual Offender's registry
5. A fingerprint based federal criminal history (FBI) clearance

Clergy and Employee Requirements

Effective July 1, 2015, all clergy and paid employees must submit adequate clearances relating to any potential criminal record or child abuse history before employment commences. We are asking that clergy and current employees who do not have up-to-date clearances and trainings update both by December 31, 2015. Congregations are required to see original documentation (which could have been obtained for another work or volunteer requirement) and maintain record of their lay employees' compliance with these guidelines. The Diocese will maintain records of clergy compliance with these guidelines. Clearances will need to be renewed every 36 months. Any administrator or supervisor responsible for employment decisions who intentionally fails to require the submission of the required documentation commits a misdemeanor of the third degree. The chancellor recommends that these records be kept indefinitely.

There are different requirements depending on the length of time someone will be employed:

Clergy and Permanent Employees (ages 14 and up)

1. Safeguarding God's Children and Safeguarding God's People Training
2. Report of criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)
3. Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services (Child Abuse)
4. Review of Sexual Offender's registry
5. A fingerprint based federal criminal history (FBI) clearance

Provisional Employees (less than 90 days)

1. Safeguarding God's Children and Safeguarding God's People Training
2. Report of criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)
3. Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services (Child Abuse)
4. Review of Sexual Offender's registry
5. A verification that the volunteer is not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of any disqualifying offense in any other jurisdiction (form provided by diocese)

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Obtaining Clearances

The Child Abuse, PSP and FBI clearances can all be applied for and paid for online. Beginning July 25, Child Abuse and PSP clearances for volunteers working with children will be provided at no cost by the state. Employees' clearances will cost \$8.00 rather than \$10.00.

The FBI clearance, which costs \$27.50, also requires a fingerprint submission. Applicants are encouraged to apply for clearances electronically to avoid delays.

Clearances obtained within the last 36 months will be accepted provided the volunteer or employee presents the original clearances for verification.

PA Child Abuse History Clearance Instructions

Electronic Submission - Go to <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS> to apply online. Creating an account and submitting your clearance application online will give immediate access to your results or the status of your results if your results cannot be processed immediately, OR

Paper Submission – Paper submissions of the Child Abuse History Clearance application are still accepted for anyone who may not have access to the internet. Mail to: ChildLine and Abuse Registry, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, PO Box 8170, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8170

For questions related to the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance, please contact the ChildLine Verification Unit at 717-783-6211 or toll free at 1-877-371-5422.

PA State Police Criminal Record Check Instructions

Electronic Submission - Applicants can go to the Pennsylvania Access to Criminal History website and apply for their criminal record check online with the Pennsylvania State Police at: <https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp>

Paper Submission - Below is the link to the Pennsylvania Criminal Record Check form (SP4-164):
http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/form/s_001769.pdf

If you have questions about the Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Checks form (SP4 164), please call: (717) 783-9973 or toll free 1-888-783-7972.

The Sexual Offenders Registry can be accessed at www.nsopw.gov.

FBI Criminal Background Check Instructions

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services is utilizing Cogent Systems to process fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks. The fingerprint based background check is a multiple step process. For more information and to begin the registration process, go to www.pa.cogentid.com//index_dpw.htm. Registration is required before going for fingerprinting.

For questions about your FBI Clearance, please contact the FBI/Adam Walsh Unit at 717-783-6211 or 1-877-371-5422. For assistance accessing the online form, please contact the diocesan office at 814.456.4203.

Safeguarding Training

The diocese is reviewing the curriculum for the online Safeguarding training and will announce any changes to parishes of appropriate modules for employees and volunteers and how often these classes are required. Continue to follow our current guidelines and use submission forms found under Congregation resources, Safe Church on our website: www.diobeth.org

How to Report Suspected Child Abuse

All employees and volunteers are now considered mandated reporters and must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313. Anyone can call ChildLine if they are wondering whether they should make a report.

There is also a non-required course for Mandated Reporters in Pennsylvania available at www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu that could be helpful for those who train or supervise employees or volunteers who work with children and youth.