



The Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem

The Right Reverend Sean W. Rowe, Bishop Provisional

The Venerable Richard I. Cluett, Archdeacon

June 15, 2015

Dear Rectors and Priests-in-Charge of congregations,

Effective July 1, 2015, Pennsylvania law will have new requirements for the clearances necessary for employees and volunteers who work with or come into contact with children. The new law also requires that employees and volunteers are considered mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. Enclosed is a packet breaking down the basics of what clearances and training are required by the state and the diocese for clergy, lay employees and volunteers. Instructions on how to report suspected child abuse is included. Also enclosed are verification forms provided by the chancellor for certain volunteer and employee groups, as explained in the packet.

New volunteers and employees have to be in compliance beginning July 1, 2015. By law, current clergy, lay employees, and volunteers have until July 1, 2016, to come into compliance. The diocese is asking that current clergy and employees come into compliance by December 31, 2015.

Clearances need to be renewed every 36 months. Congregations are required to see original documentation and maintain records of their volunteers' and lay employees' 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. The diocese will track and maintain record of clergy compliance with the clearances.

Beginning July 25, 2015, under a new program just announced by Governor Tom Wolf, PA State Police (PSP) and Child Abuse clearances for those volunteers who work with children will now be provided free of charge. The cost for the PSP and Child Abuse clearances for employees will drop from \$10.00 to \$8.00 each. The cost for FBI fingerprint checks is \$27.50. Congregations will need to decide if volunteers and employees are paying for their own or if the congregations are paying for them. There are proposed changes to these requirements that just passed the state House's Children and Youth committee. These changes are designed to make the requirements less of a burden. The diocesan office will track these amendments as they move through state government and will alert you to any changes that become part of the law.

If you have any questions, please contact me at jo@diobeth.org, 610-691-5655.

Sincerely,

Jo

Jo Trepagnier
Canon for Administration and Communication