

Diocese of Knoxville

Safe Environment Program FAQs For Parents and Volunteers

The Diocese of Knoxville's Safe Environment policies are in conformance with requirements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, which governs the use of background checks.

Who must comply with the Safe Environment Program?

All employees and volunteers. Volunteers are defined as those who have the opportunity to be alone with or in proximity to either a minor (below 18 years of age) or a vulnerable adult. Examples could include:

- Catechists
- Choir members but only if they have a member(s) who is below the age of 18
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion if they serve the home/hospital bound, who are "vulnerable adults"
- Ushers if they could be alone with a minor during Mass, e.g., escorting or assisting a sick child in the restroom
- Youth Ministers and Coordinators
- Interns and students (18 yrs and above)
- Teachers
- Chaperones
- Scout leaders and volunteers
- Coaches
- Drivers
- Others in similar capacities, i.e., those who have the opportunity be alone with or in proximity to either a minor (below 18 years of age) or a vulnerable adult

Do diocesan and church employees or contract services staff have to be checked even if their responsibilities do not involve regular contact with minors?

Although these individuals may not be involved on a regular basis with minors, their presence in the Church or diocese implies trust and recognition, simply by their involvement with the parish or diocese. In view of this implied trust, background checks are required for them.

What are the components of the Diocese of Knoxville's Safe Environment Program?

According to the Diocese of Knoxville Policy and Procedure Relating to Sexual Misconduct, all employees and volunteers (volunteers are defined as those who have the opportunity be alone with or in proximity to either a minor (below 18 years of age) or vulnerable adult) are required to:

- Consent to a background check which requires completing and signing an "Authorization and Release for the Procurement of an Investigative Report"
- Sign a "Fair Credit Reporting Act Disclosure Regarding Consumer Reports and Investigative Consumer Reports" (required by federal law)
- Read the sexual misconduct policy document and sign Appendices D, F and H
- Attend a three-hour training session called Protecting God's Children and complete periodic continuing education online.

NOTE: Children who are enrolled in our schools and/or participate in our CCD programs must comply with the diocese's Keeping Kids Safe Program. Ongoing training of children using age-appropriate material is done annually in class by the catechist or Catholic school teacher.

When are Protecting God's Children sessions offered?

Sessions are scheduled periodically, but at least once a month in each deanery. The most important thing to remember is that they are offered only periodically, so you should attend as soon as possible because you will not be allowed to volunteer until you do.

How do I register for Protecting God's Children?

1. Go to www.virtusonline.org.
2. In the green box, click "Registration"
3. Follow prompts.
4. On day of training: SIGN IN on the paper roster at the site and attend session.
5. When you have done all of above, you will receive an email activating you in the system.

**If you do not create an account online,
there will be no certain record of your training.**

How do I complete online training bulletins?

1. After your account has been activated by the VIRTUS system administrator, you will begin receiving emails from "system@virtus.org" announcing a new bulletin and giving a link to the site. Either

- a. Click on the link in the email or
- b. Log on with your already-established username and password.
2. Click on the green "Training" tab.
3. Click on "Click here to see your complete report" on the far right, in the light green box titled "Training Bulletin Report."
4. Read the bulletin and answer the multiple choice question to get credit for the bulletin.

If you have difficulty receiving notices of training bulletins sent from the VIRTUS site, be sure your e-mail address is correct and/or you do not have a spam filter that is discarding the notices.

I have a new email address. How do I change that information on the VIRTUS website?

To change your e-mail address (or any other information) on the VIRTUS website, do the following:

1. Log into your account at www.virtusonline.org.
2. Click on "Update my Account" on the green bar at left.
3. After changing your personal information, click "Save."

I participated in the Safe Environment Program at my parish. I want to volunteer at my child's school. Do I have to go through all the steps again?

You don't have to attend another PGC session but you are expected to keep your profile updated. You will, however, have to undergo a new background check at the school where you are volunteering and re-sign Appendices D, F and H of the Diocese of Knoxville Policy and Procedure Relating to Sexual Misconduct and the FCRA disclosure.

What does my Safe Environment file contain?

Every parish, mission and school must have in each employee or volunteer's Safe Environment file the following documents:

1. The original Authorization and Release form for the background check
2. The Confirmation page that the order was submitted to Mind Your Business, Inc. (MYB).
3. The Fair Credit Reporting Act form.
4. A copy of MYB's Daily Status report. (After a period of 48 to 72 hours, log back into the MYB website to see if an applicant's record "Meets Criteria" and print and file the Daily Status Report.)
5. Appendices D, F & H of the diocesan sexual misconduct policy
6. Proof of attendance at a Protecting God's Children class.