

[Click Here for Policy for Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors](#)

Charter compliance will be accomplished by:

- Insuring a thorough background screening is completed for all clergy, paid employees and volunteers that have direct contact and routine interaction with children. Routine interaction is defined as regular and repeated contact that is integral to a person's employment or volunteer responsibilities. **Background checks for employees are valid for three years. Volunteer background checks are valid for five years.**
- Providing training in recognizing and reporting any sign of child abuse to appropriate civil and Church authorities.
- By holding all clergy, all paid employees and all volunteers accountable to a Christ-centered, pastoral code of conduct

Background Checks

Background checks are conducted to meet the requirements for the Charter and to comply with Pennsylvania law. The background screening is limited to a search for:

- Verification of a person's identity
- Existence of a prior criminal record
- Listing on the state sex offender registry

Background checks are needed for:

All clergy and religious

All paid employees having direct contact and routine interaction with children***

All volunteers who have direct contact and routine interaction with children

Do not forget to include coaches, field trip chaperones, cafeteria and religious education aides.

****Employees having no direct contact with children need an employment screening/background check obtained through a private vendor*

VIRTUS

Interested in supporting and protecting our children's future? Then please consider attending the diocesan-sponsored **VIRTUS: Protecting God's Children for Adults Program**.

During the three-hour training, a facilitator, who will teach you the tools and show you the resources to maintain a safe environment for all children, will incorporate techniques in a discussion-format to help you recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and how to respond to it appropriately and effectively.

Please consider joining your community at one of the locations listed on our VIRTUS page to take part in this vital program to help safeguard our most vulnerable and precious gifts: our children.

Thank you for your cooperation and your willingness to protect all our children and to keep them safe.

[Click Here for the VIRTUS Training Session Schedule](#)

For the Safe Environment requirements, please refer to the following charts:

Diocese of Scranton – Safe Environment Program

CLERGY/ PARISH EMPLOYEES:

Category of Personnel	Requirements
<p>Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Diaconate Applicants</p> <p><i>Effective December 31, 2014</i></p> <p>Clearances renewed every 36 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PA State Police Criminal History Check ▪ PA Dept. of Human Services Child Abuse History Certification ▪ Federal FBI Fingerprinting ▪ Protecting God’s Children VIRTUS Training ▪ Signed Code of Pastoral Conduct <p>****Effective July 25, 2015 the cost for the PA State Police Criminal History Check and the PA Child Abuse History Check for employees will be \$8.00 each.</p>
<p><i>Parish Employees 14 years of age or older who apply for a paid position where they have direct contact or routine interaction with children</i></p> <p>**Minors between the ages of 14 and 17 who are employed in a paid position in a children’s program or activity and either supervise or have direct contact with children will be exempt from the FBI check requirement if they have resided within PA for the previous 10 years. The minor and his/her parent must swear or affirm in writing that the minor is not ineligible for employment.</p> <p>IF the minor employee has not resided in PA for the entire 10 year period, they will need to present an FBI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PA State Police Criminal History Check ▪ PA Dept. of Human Services Child Abuse History Certification ▪ Federal FBI Fingerprinting ▪ Protecting God’s Children VIRTUS Training (age 18 or older) ▪ Signed Code of Pastoral Conduct <p>****Effective July 25, 2015 the cost for the PA State Police Criminal History Check and the PA Child Abuse History Check for employees will be \$8.00 each.</p>

<p><i>clearance that was processed at any time after becoming a PA resident.</i></p> <p>Effective December 31, 2014</p> <p>Clearances renewed every 36 months</p>	
<p><u>Parish Employees</u> 18 years of age or older who apply for a position where they</p> <p>DO NOT have direct contact or routine interaction with children</p> <p>Clearances renewed every 36 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Background check by the Diocese thru Sterling BackCheck ▪ Protecting God’s Children VIRTUS Training ▪ Signed Code of Pastoral Conduct

**Diocese of Scranton – Safe Environment Program
Volunteer Requirements**

******* PA Law applies to all volunteer activity regardless of the number of hours therefore the 20 hours/year policy is no longer valid.**

Category of Personnel	Requirements
<p><u>Volunteers</u> 18 years of age or older who apply for an unpaid position as a volunteer where they have <u>direct volunteer contact</u></p> <p>AND</p> <p>Have lived in Pennsylvania continuously for the previous 10 years</p> <p>Effective August 25, 2015</p> <p>Clearances renewed every 60 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PA State Police Criminal History Check ▪ PA Dept. of Human Services Child Abuse History Certification ▪ Volunteer Affidavit ▪ Protecting God’s Children VIRTUS Training ▪ Signed Code of Pastoral Conduct <p>****Effective July 25, 2015 the PA State Police Criminal History Check and the PA Child Abuse History Check are no cost to volunteers.</p>
<p><u>Volunteers</u> 18 years of age or older who apply for an unpaid position as a volunteer where they have <u>direct volunteer contact</u></p> <p>AND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PA State Police Criminal History Check ▪ PA Dept. of Human Services Child Abuse History Certification ▪ FBI Federal Check with Fingerprinting ▪ Protecting God’s Children VIRTUS Training ▪ Signed Code of Pastoral Conduct

HAVE NOT lived in Pennsylvania continuously for the previous 10 years

****Volunteers that are current residents of PA but who have not been residents for the entire previous 10 year period, will need to obtain the FBI check only once since establishing residency in PA.**

Effective August 25, 2015

Clearances renewed every 60 months

******Effective July 25, 2015 the PA State Police Criminal History Check and the PA Child Abuse History Check are no cost to volunteers.**

Direct Volunteer Contact – defined as “The care, supervision, guidance or control of children and routine interaction with children. “Routine interaction with children” defined as “Regular and repeated contact that is integral to a person’s employment or volunteer responsibilities

BACKGROUND CHECK PROCEDURES:

To complete the required background checks, fill out the Diocese of Scranton background application on the link located in the top box and follow all instructions listed on the application. By submitting the diocesan application, the individual provides consent to the Safe Environment office to process the PA State Police clearance on their behalf. They will then receive instructions for the PA Child Abuse Certification and FBI Federal check (if applicable). For information on requirements for new school employees, please refer to the Catholic Schools Home Page on the diocesan website.

*****Individuals may also access the websites directly to complete the clearances. The following link will direct you to the Clearances page from the PA Department of Human Services:

<http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/findaform/childabusehistoryclearanceforms/>

The results of the completed clearances should be turned in to the parish/school where the applicant performs their work or volunteer service. All employees and those volunteers directly working with children must also sign a Pastoral Code of Conduct and attend the VIRTUS, *Protecting God’s Children for Adults* training session. Both the code and the training information can be found in the boxes above.

All of the clearances, signed pastoral codes and VIRTUS training records will be kept in the parish or school compliance binder. The binders will be updated with current clergy and religious, paid employees and volunteers. A separate inactive file will be kept for individuals no longer working in that parish or school.

[Click here for more information on the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#)

To report child abuse or neglect, the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare offers an around-the-clock, toll free hotline: ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313.