

## **Frequently Asked Questions Background Checks in the Diocese of Ogdensburg**

- 1. Why are we involved in background checks?**  
In its *Charter for the Protection of Children* the bishops of the United States directed that there be a background check on all those in contact with youth in a church-sponsored environment.
- 2. Who is responsible for conducting the background checks?**  
The place (parish, school, church-sponsored program) where the person volunteers or is employed is responsible for conducting the background check.
- 3. How will parishes, schools, and institutions do their background checks?**  
The diocese has specified certain regions and authorized regional persons to submit requests to ADP for background checks. If anyone has a problem they may contact Kim Snover, Diocese of Ogdensburg – Human Resource Director.
- 4. Who is paying for the background checks?**  
The parishes, schools, and institutions will be responsible for the cost. The parish may pass on the cost to the employee or volunteer.
- 5. Which employees and volunteers have to agree to a background check?**  
All current and future employees in all parishes, schools, and institutions, all who volunteer to work with youth, and all priests, deacons, religious, and seminarians will have background checks.
- 6. Doesn't the *Charter* only talk about those who minister to youth? Why is a background check also necessary for others?**  
The *Charter* only speaks about youth. However, in the Diocese of Ogdensburg, just about every employee at some time or another has some kind of interaction with young people. In addition, many of our employees have positions of trust, involving confidentiality, finances, and access to personal parish records. The Diocese of Ogdensburg believes that due diligence demands that all persons, whether paid or volunteering with youth, in the parishes, schools, and institutions be above reproach as they carry out their responsibilities for the People of God. A background check is a verifiable method of providing the best personnel in this regard.
- 7. Could other volunteers ask to have a background check done on them?**  
Certainly, if other volunteers wish to participate in the background check program, the parish, school, or institution could certainly conduct such a check.
- 8. What happens to the results of the background checks?**  
The results become a part of the individual's personnel file. No one, except the person in charge of the church, school or institution, has access to the personnel file. In addition, the employee/volunteer may request a copy of his/her background check.

- 9. What kind of information is being collected in the background checks?**  
No personal information about the person is being collected or stored. *The background check searches publicly available files and databases.* Reports of felonies or misdemeanors, including any negative sex offender status, are made back to the diocese, and eventually the parish, school, or institution.
- 10. I have heard that credit histories are being checked. Is this true?**  
Absolutely not. No credit history is searched or stored. However, credit bureau information is searched in order to verify addresses of residence. The credit bureaus often have the most accurate address information.
- 11. Why is one form used for volunteers and employees?**  
The diocese tried to use one form for all situations. In some parishes a particular position may be filled by a paid employee while in another parish a similar position is filled by a volunteer.
- 12. What will happen if there is a record of a misdemeanor or felony in my past?**  
The employer will contact you about the finding to verify the accuracy of the information. The employer is directed to notify the diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator for further determination as to whether or not the finding is relevant to the position that you are now in. For example, if there is a DWI conviction on your record, it would be better that you not be a volunteer driver for the Catholic school.
- 13. It sounds as if background checks are simply verifying information about a candidate or current employee or volunteer.**  
That is correct. A background check is an independent verification of the suitability of a person for a position of trust in the Church. Our intent is not to unearth any information about a person that is not available in already accessible databases.
- 14. Who will have access to any negative findings in my background check?**  
The diocese is committed to guarding the privacy of all employees and volunteers. Likewise all parishes, schools, and institutions in the diocese share in that commitment. Any negative finding is shared only between the employer and the employee or volunteer. The findings of a background check are kept confidential.
- 15. Who will see the information that I provide on the release form?**  
This information is shared with no one. At the current time, there are designated regional persons who receive these forms. As a matter of fact, the information provided on the release forms is already in the employee's file. The release simply gives the diocese (and eventually the parish, school, or institution) the right to engage the services of a third party on their behalf to search databases for any misdemeanors or felonies.