



# Diocese of Trenton Volunteer Code of Conduct

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Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As a volunteer, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Volunteer's Code of Conduct as a condition of my providing services to the children and youth of our *[parish, school, facility, diocese, etc.]*.

**As a volunteer, I will:**

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration and conduct myself and live a lifestyle which is in conformance with Catholic teachings.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth at Church activities.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth or their parents without prior written approval from the pastor or administrator.
- Refrain from giving expensive gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
- Report suspected abuse to the pastor, administrator, or appropriate supervisor and *[the local Child Protection Services agency]*. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is, according to the law, a misdemeanor.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

**As a volunteer, I will not:**

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children and/or youth (i.e., no fevers or other contagious situations).
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children and/or youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children and/or youth.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and/or youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.

I understand that as a volunteer working with children and/or youth, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in my removal as a volunteer with children and/or youth.

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Volunteer's Printed Name

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Volunteer's Signature

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Date

## **Background Checks**

### **Policy of the Diocese of Trenton Regarding Criminal History Background Checks For Employees and Volunteers who have Contact with Children and Young People**

As its June 2002 General meeting, the full body of the United States Catholic Bishops approved the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The Charter was finalized at the Bishops' November 2002 General Meeting. Article 13 of the Charter instructs each Diocese to evaluate the background of all diocesan and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors. As part of its commitment to implement the Charter and in furtherance of its commitment to protect our children and youth, the Diocese of Trenton adopts this Policy of Criminal History Background Checks.

The Policy mandates criminal history background checks for all priests, deacons, and seminarians even if during the course of their ministry they have no contact with minors. It mandates criminal history background checks for all religious, employees, volunteers and third-party vendors who during the course of their work or volunteer activity at any Diocesan entity, have direct contact with minors. This applies even to those who have one isolated contact with minors if that contact involves an overnight activity.

Background checks will be obtained through fingerprint analysis conducted by the New Jersey State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Fingerprints will be taken by MorphoTrak. The program will be administered by the Diocesan Office of Administrative Services and coordinated on the local level by designated diocesan, parish, and school representatives.

The policy provides that persons who were convicted of, or plead guilty to, crimes and offenses involving sexual misconduct or physical violence will not be permitted to work with, or volunteer in the presence of minors. Persons who were convicted of, or plead guilty to, lesser crimes and offenses cannot work with, or volunteer in the presence of, minors unless express written permission is given by the Diocese after an investigation into the facts surrounding the conviction or plea. The same holds true for persons who are charged with committing a crime, but were not convicted or did not plead guilty.

All investigation will be implemented by the Director of Administrative Services and the Chief Administrative Officer of the Diocese of Trenton.

The Policy is effective throughout the Diocese of Trenton as of January 1, 2004

**Revised 5/1/2010**

Diocese of Trenton - Background Checks  
Policy Outline

**Who must be checked?**

- All Priests, seminarians and deacons regardless of their ministry
- All candidates for the ILEM and the Diaconate
- All religious and all Diocesan employees and volunteers who during the course of their employment or volunteer activity have ongoing, un-supervised, consistent contact with a minor on an ongoing basis or will have contact with a minor on one occasion involving an overnight activity. These include but are not limited to the following:
  - Parish catechetical leaders and staff
  - Religious Education teachers, aides & support staff
  - Directors and staff of Youth Ministry Programs
  - Athletic Coaches
  - Directors of children's and youth choirs
  - Adult scout leaders
  - Summer camp personnel
  - Maintenance Staff including contracted staff
  - Altar Server coordinators

**Criminal History Background Check Updates**

In October of each year, parishes, schools, and each department of the Diocese of Trenton and every other entity affiliated with the Diocese that deals with minors must review its list of volunteers and employees who are required to have criminal history background checks. Anyone who completed a criminal history background check, through the Diocesan Process **more than four years prior must have an updated check through the MorphoTrak process.**

For example, in October, 2010, updated criminal history background checks must be performed on anyone who has a completed criminal history background check, anyone who has an incomplete criminal history background check or anyone who was passed on an appeal, during the years of 2006 and earlier.

All criminal history background checks and updates must be performed through the new MorphoTrak process **on a yearly basis.** Please make sure that all volunteers/employees use the new 4.0 version of the Universal Applicant Form with correct coding in box 7 for your parish.

**All criminal history background updates must be completed no later than December 31<sup>st</sup> of each consecutive calendar year.**

## **Identification Cards**

- All employees and volunteers (including unpaid coaches) who have completed a Diocese of Trenton Criminal history background check, will be issued a Diocesan Identification Card, which must be worn at all times during the performance of their respective jobs or volunteer duties for the Diocese. This includes, but is not limited to, Scout meetings, sporting events, and Religious Education classes. Failure to wear and display the ID card could result in the temporary removal of the individual(s) from an event, activity, or school.
- Diocesan ID Cards will not be issued for anyone who has undergone the NJDOE criminal history background check process and clearance, all ID's will be issued by their respective school.
- School employees, staff and volunteers must wear any school issued ID during the course of their employment or volunteerism. Failure to wear and display the ID card could result in the temporary removal of the individual(s) from an event, activity, or school
- Temporary ID Cards will be issued for new parish volunteer and employee for a 30 day period only. All criminal history background checks must be completed within thirty days of onset of volunteerism or employment. Failure to adhere to this time line could result in the temporary removal of the individual(s) from an event, activity, or school.

## **Who will administer the Process?**

- The program will be administered by the Diocesan Office of Administrative Services/Child & Youth Protection.
- The Diocese and the New Jersey Department of Education will use the New Jersey State Police State Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the individual's criminal history.
- Costs for the program are the responsibility of the parish or the diocesan department where the subject works or volunteers.
- Background checks include: fingerprint identification; state and federal crime records.

### How will the Diocesan Process work?

- Consent forms and MorphoTrak application forms will be handled at the local Parish level.
- All school staff and volunteers must utilize the NJDOE criminal history background check process and forms. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- A copy of the completed MorphoTrak form, for each volunteer or employee **must be retained at parish level and must be submitted** to the Office of Child and Youth Protection to the attention of Margaret Dziminski, upon request.
- Results of the background checks are returned to the Office of Child and Youth Protection, who will then forward them to the appropriate parish coordinator.
- Notification regarding disqualified applications is handled in a confidential manner and will be sent directly to pastor, president/principal and/or Superintendent of Catholic Schools.
- Disqualified candidates may request an appeal meeting with the Diocesan Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of Administrative Services.
- Disqualified grandfathered education personnel may also request an appeal meeting.
- The Director of Administrative Services will notify the appropriate pastor, president/principal and diocesan administrator, in writing, when a disqualified candidate can be reinstated as a result of the appeal process.

### What is the cost of the Criminal history background Check Process?

- MorphoTrak
  - Employees - \$60.25
  - Volunteers - \$26.25
- Costs will be paid by the volunteer/employee. The parish will reimburse the volunteer/employee on the return of the completed application form.
- Volunteers and employees will be reimbursed regardless of the results of the criminal history background check.

Note: All fees are subject to change without notice

## School Staff & Volunteers

- Criminal History Background Checks will be conducted on employees, support staff and **unpaid school volunteers** of all Diocese of Trenton Schools according to the background check program presently administered by and under the guidelines issued by, the New Jersey State Department of Education within 30 days of hire or onset of volunteerism.
- New hires and current employees (printed after 2/2003) that have already completed a criminal history background check must present a copy of their clearance letter. If the school they are presently employed by is not listed on their criminal history clearance letter and they were printed after Feb. 2003, they must submit to the archival process, so that their current school is listed on their criminal history clearance letter. This process is also administered through the NJDOE.
- All school employees and staff hired between Jan. 1992 and Dec. 2002 must submit to a new criminal history clearance **only** if their current school is not listed on their criminal history clearance letter. Prints taken during this time frame were not archived so they are unavailable for the archival process.
- All disqualifications as a result of the NJDOE process will be sent directly to the president/principal and applicant from the NJDOE – with subsequent recommendations.

### **Grandfathered personnel**

- Those school staff members that were hired prior to 1991 are **legally grandfathered** through the Department of Education are required to have their criminal history background check done through **the diocesan process** and in turn are subject to the 4 year update process.
- Disqualifications as a result of the Diocesan process will be sent directly to the Pastor, Principal/President and diocesan administrator.
- All fees are the responsibility of the staff member or volunteer – are not subject to reimbursement from the parish or school – unless otherwise stated by said parish/school.

**These processes are in direct accordance with Diocesan Policy 4040.2. If you are unfamiliar with this policy it is located in the Catholic Schools Yellow Binder.**