

## **REFERENCES**

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[www.discipleshipresources.org](http://www.discipleshipresources.org)

Congregational Human Resources Manual, Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts

**POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
IN THE DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS**

**PREAMBLE**

The aim of this policy is to make our Church a safe place, safe for those who worship, safe for those who minister, safe for those who come in need, safe for children and safe for all who seek or serve Christ. We believe that this policy helps us live out our Baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being.

**SCREENING AND SELECTION FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

The Diocese will do background checks on all clergy who are deployed or licensed to officiate within the Diocese. The Diocese will also do background checks on any diocesan employees or volunteers who regularly work with children or youth.

Parishes are encouraged to do background checks on all employees and any volunteers who regularly work with children or youth.

Background checks should include the following:

- a. a written application
- b. a public records check
- c. an interview
- d. reference checks.

The more access an individual has to children and youth, the more detailed a background check should be.

Volunteers should not be permitted to work with children or youth until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months.

**BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH**

Adults shall never, under any circumstances:

- a. provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs or pornography,
- b. consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children's or youth event,
- c. be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs at any children's or youth event,
- d. engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior,
- e. engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth, with
- f. discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies children or youth.

Firearms and concealed weapons are prohibited at any church activity. Rectors may make special exceptions for off-duty police officers or others required to carry firearms.

## **MONITORING PROGRAMS AND INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Plans for all events and ministries for children and youth should include at least two, unrelated adults present at all times. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youths, that adult shall immediately report those circumstances to the Bishop's Office if it is a diocesan event or the Rector, or Senior Warden, if it is a parish event. It may be appropriate for a Sunday School class to have only one teacher so long as at least one other adult can maintain visual contact with the teacher.

Any new programs, trips or events that involve children or youth should be given prior approval by the Rector and the Vestry.

No event for children or youth shall take place in a private residence without prior approval by the vestry.

Adults who work with children or youth within a congregation should be discouraged from having a separate and private relationship with any unrelated child from the church away from sanctioned church, youth activities. Each parish is encouraged to have a Safe Church Minister who is current on safe church issues and training and is not otherwise an employee of the parish. The Safe Church Minister should be consulted by the Rector, Vestry members or others on safe church matters, and should report all questionable or non-standard arrangements to the Rector or a Warden. It is recommended that the Safe Church Minister and the Vestry regularly conduct a "safe church audit" to review practices and policies within the congregation.

Parishes should adopt safe church policies, consistent with the requirements in this policy. The policies should be clear, should be posted in areas where activities for children and youth take place and should be given to all adults who regularly work with children or youth and to parents. Parish policies should include the names and phone numbers of the Rector or priest, senior warden, parish safe church officer, and contact person in the Bishop's office.

Parish computers should have adequate password protection. Parishes should have clear guidelines and adequate supervision (by parish staff or authorized person) of anyone using a parish computer to access the Internet. Such guidelines should make clear that any activity on a parish computer is not considered private and may be accessed by authorized persons.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Parishes shall direct clergy, lay employees and volunteers who work with children or youth to attend training on how to prevent child abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings. Each parish shall maintain a record of those who have attended such training.

The Diocese shall require all clergy and employees and volunteers who work with children or youth at diocesan events to attend training on how to prevent child abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings and will maintain records of those who have attended the training.

The Diocese will offer the requisite training. Individuals should attend re-training every three to four years. The Bishop's office will approve curriculum and trainers for the requisite training. Current training should be available for those who screen, train or supervise those who regularly work with children or youth.

## **RESPONDING TO CONCERNS**

Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in a parish environment shall immediately

report the violation to the Rector or priest and senior warden. Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in a diocesan environment or by a clergy person shall immediately report the violation to the Bishop's office.

Anyone who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place, whether at church or away from church, shall report it to the appropriate civil authority.

Rectors hearing reports of violations shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or volunteer ministry with the church.

The Bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy, or by adults at diocesan events, shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action, up to and including canonical disciplinary action.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Specific details about how to do background checks, norms for various types of youth events and how to supervise compliance with this policy can be obtained at training events offered by the Diocese, your parish safe church minister or the Diocesan Safe Church Officer.

The Safe Church Officer for the Diocese is the Reverend Canon Sarah Shofstall:  
(413) 737-4786 x 11. [sshofstall@diocesewma.org](mailto:sshofstall@diocesewma.org)

The phone number to report suspected child abuse in Massachusetts is: (800) 792-5200 or you can call the Department of Social Services in your area.

January 1, 2006

**On Parish Letterhead**

**Application to Participate in Ministry with Children or Youth**

Employee/Volunteer/Applicant who will regularly work with children or youth should complete all relevant information and sign and date this form.

Full Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

For what position are you applying? \_\_\_\_\_

What interests you about the position for which you are currently applying? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What has prepared you for the position for which you are currently applying? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When did you start attending (NAME OF PARISH)? \_\_\_\_\_

**Professional/Civic Reference:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Reference:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

**Family Reference:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

**Present Employer:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Job title \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Duties performed \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of a felony?      Yes      No.      If yes, explain.

Within the last five (5) years have you been convicted or been released from incarceration for a misdemeanor which was NOT a first offense for drunkenness, simple assault, speeding, a minor traffic violation, affray or disturbing the peace?      Yes      No.      If yes, explain.

An applicant for employment with a sealed record on file with the commissioner of probation may answer "no record" with respect to an inquiry herein relative to prior criminal court appearances or convictions. In addition, any applicant for employment may answer "no record" with respect to an inquiry relative to a prior, court appearance and adjudication in all cases of delinquency or as a child in need of services which did not result in a complaint transferred to the superior court for criminal prosecution.

I authorize you to speak with the references listed in this application and with my previous employers, and I release you and all other parties from all claims, liability, or damage that may arise from any such inquiries by you.

It is unlawful in Massachusetts to require or administer a lie detector test as a condition of employment or continued employment. An employer who violates this law shall be subject to criminal penalties and civil liability.

You may include in your employment history, any verified work performed on a volunteer basis.

I represent that all the information provided is true to the best of my knowledge and give permission for a representative from (name of parish) to contact the above listed references.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***This is a confidential document to be maintained in a secure location.***

**SAMPLE SECULAR EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION**

**[ Episcopal Church / Parish Name ]**

**NOTE:** If you do not understand part or all of any question contained herein, please ask your interviewer.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

Position(s) applied for (You must identify particular positions):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Full time: \_\_\_\_\_ Part time: \_\_\_\_\_

If part time, specify days and hours for which you are available: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to relocate? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you authorized to work in the United States? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever applied her before? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, specify the date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been employed here before: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, specify date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Give the names and relationships of any relatives you have working for [Episcopal Church / Parish Name]

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything that will prevent you from performing the essential functions of the position or positions for which you are applying with or without reasonable accommodation? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No. If yes, explain.

Within the last five (5) years have you been convicted or been released from incarceration for a misdemeanor which was NOT a first offense for drunkenness, simple assault, speeding, a minor traffic violation, affray or disturbing the peace? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No. If yes, explain.

**NOTICE:** An applicant for employment with a sealed record on file with the commissioner of probation may answer “no record” with respect to an inquiry herein relative to prior criminal court appearances or convictions. In addition, any applicant for employment may answer “no record” with respect to an inquiry relative to a prior, court appearance and adjudication in all cases of delinquency or as a child in need of services which did not result in a complaint transferred to the superior court for criminal prosecution.

Are you at least 18 years of age? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(If you are under the age of 18, employment is subject to verification that you are of the minimum legal age and that you are able to supply any required work permit(s).

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:** Start with your current or most recent employer.

1. Employer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Salary: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duties Performed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason for Leaving: \_\_\_\_\_  
May we contact this employer? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Employer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Salary: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duties Performed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason for Leaving: \_\_\_\_\_  
May we contact this employer? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

3. Employer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Salary: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duties Performed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason for Leaving: \_\_\_\_\_  
May we contact this employer? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

*If you need additional space, please continue on a separate sheet of paper.*

Have you worked under a different name for any of these employers? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If yes, please identify the employer and state the name: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EDUCATION**

	<b>High School</b>	<b>College / University</b>	<b>Graduate/Professional</b>
School Name			
Years Completed			
Diploma / Degree			
Honors Received			

**NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

\_\_\_\_\_ is an equal opportunity employer. This policy prohibits discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, age or status as a qualified disabled person. All employment decisions shall be consistent with the principles of equal employment opportunity (EEO).

I authorize you to speak with the references listed in this application and with my previous employers, and I release you and all other parties from all claims, liability, or damage that may arise from any such inquiries by you.

It is unlawful in Massachusetts to require or administer a lie detector test as a condition of employment or continued employment. An employer who violates this law shall be subject to criminal penalties and civil liability.

You may include in your employment history, any verified work performed on a volunteer basis.

I represent that all the information provided is true to the best of my knowledge and give permission for a representative from (name of parish) to contact the above listed references.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*This is a confidential document to be maintained in a secure location.*



## Sample Letter to parishioner re: Public Record Check

On parish letterhead

Date

Name

Address of parishioner

(Do a separate letter for each person, even if there are multiple people in one family having public record checks)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your willingness to serve in ministry with this parish.

As you may recall, a public records search is required for all people serving in parish ministry with children and youth. You gave permission for such a search. The public record search has been completed. The results do not interfere with your ability to participate in ministry.

Thank you for your cooperation with these efforts to as we seek to further enhance the safety of all engaged in our parish's ministries.

Yours in Christ,

Maintain a copy of this letter in the confidential file with the results of the public record search.

## Sample Telephone Reference Check Form

Applicant's name:

Position sought:

Reference's name:

Reference's contact information:

Phone conversation date \_\_\_\_\_

(If you don't reach the person on the first attempt, make notes of your attempt to contact this person. Similarly, indicate the time a telephone interview is scheduled if needed.)

Name of person conducting reference interview (your name):

Remember to describe to the reference the specific responsibilities of the position for which the applicant is applying.

Sample Reference Questions: (Add other questions that will help you determine whether the applicant is suitable for the position. You can consult the list of sample questions in the training materials.)

1. How or in what capacity do you know the applicant?
2. How long have you known the applicant?
3. Did the applicant follow the rules at work or in the volunteer position?
4. Did anyone ever raise concerns about how the applicant interacted with children or youth?
5. Does the applicant do other volunteer work with children or youth?
6. Can you think of any reason this person should not work with children or youth? (Can modify this question to cover vulnerable adults, elderly, finances etc.)

If the reference chooses not to answer specific questions or hesitates in answering a question, indicate so on this form.