



SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES



In accordance with Article 12 of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People: **“Dioceses/eparchies are to maintain ‘safe environment’ programs which the diocesan/eparchial bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for minors, parents, ministers, employees, volunteers, and others about the ways to sustain and foster a safe environment for minors. Dioceses/eparchies are to make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons with regard to minors.”**

Safe Environment Compliance

- **Required Documents**
 - **Code of Conduct**
 - **Application**
- **Background Checks**
 - **Fingerprint-based background check (Identigo)**
 - **Online background check (Selection.com)**
- **Training**

Anyone who interacts with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in their ministry must be safe environment compliant. All employees must be safe environment compliant. All these requirements must be satisfied **PRIOR TO THE ONSET OF VOLUNTEERISM OR EMPLOYMENT.** A Safe Environment card will only be issued when all the criteria are met. The Diocese of Trenton uses the VIRTUS platform to manage compliance.

Code of Conduct and Application

In accordance with Article 6 of the charter for the Protection of Children and Young People: **“There are to be clear and well publicized diocesan/eparchial standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other paid personnel and volunteers of the Church with regard to their contact with minors.”**

When creating their VIRTUS account, all employees and volunteers are required to read, acknowledge, and electronically sign a code of conduct, which they will be required to uphold during the course of employment or volunteerism. A paper copy of the signed document should be on file for each person.

- The signed code of conduct will remain in effect for the duration of their ministry.
- If the volunteer/employee should leave their ministry or position, a new code of conduct must be signed upon their return.

Application is a broad term that covers volunteer applications, employee applications, 3rd party contracts, etc. An application is an information sheet on a person (i.e., name, address, contact

information, etc.) and helps to ensure the person has the capabilities to fulfill the position for which they are volunteering or will be employed. Most schools and parishes have their own custom application. A simple fillable-PDF version of an application is available. (Visit [Policies & Forms](#))

Each parish and/or school at which a person serves must have an application and code of conduct on file for that person.

Background Checks

A criminal background check (CBC) is an investigation into a person's criminal history, searching public records for arrests, convictions, and pending charges (misdemeanors and felonies) at local, state, and federal levels. **All Diocese of Trenton volunteers and employees must have a fingerprint-based background check as well as an online background check.**

During VIRTUS account creation, users are directed to Identigo to schedule a fingerprint appointment. Fingerprint analysis will be conducted by the NJ State Police. Use of the correct Contributor Case Number is vital for the Diocese of Trenton to receive the results. In addition to a fingerprint-based background check, all volunteers and employees are required to complete an online background check via their VIRTUS account through a third-party vendor called Selection.com. This online background check provides continuous monitoring.

The online background check must be renewed every 4 years. (Refer to [Background Check Procedures 2025.pdf](#))

Training

All priests, deacons, seminarians, religious, employees, and volunteers, who during the course of their work or volunteer activity at any Diocesan entity, have direct contact with minors and/or vulnerable persons must complete either an in-person or an online training course entitled Protecting God's Children for Adults.

All individuals must re-certify their training every four years, either in-person or online. The full Protecting God's Children module does not have to be taken multiple times. There are shorter refresher modules available.

All elementary and religious education programs are required to implement the RCL Family Life Series or the Growing with God, Loyola Press Curriculum for all K-8 students. All high schools are required to implement the Teen Lures Prevention Program.

Parishes and schools are also required to notify parents/guardians about the training and provide them with an overview of the program. Parent/guardians are encouraged to speak with the Principal or Parish Catechetical Leader if they have concerns.