



**Diocese of St. Petersburg**  
**Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults**  
(Revised and Approved November 2009)

Summary of Revisions

**Part I - INTRODUCTION**

Paragraph 1 – Points out that Covered Volunteers must complete a Covered Volunteer Application as part of their registration as a volunteer.

**Part II - POLICY AND SCOPE**

Paragraph A. **Policy to Protect** – Points out that this policy applies to *all contractors and vendors*.

Paragraph B. **Policy to Respond to Allegations** – Provides a hyperlink to How to File an Abuse Report

Paragraph C. **Policy to Report** - Points out that:

Subparagraph 1 - Actual or *suspected* child abuse must be called in to law enforcement or the Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline

Subparagraph 2 – Under Florida law *everyone is a mandatory reporter* and that “professionally mandatory reporters” are subject to jail and fines if they do not report actual or suspected child abuse.

Paragraph I. – **Policy on Background Screening** Points out that:

Subparagraph 1 – All church personnel *to include contractors and vendors* must undergo a FBI/FDLE Level 2 Background Check and meet the Minimum Standards of Moral Conduct requirement.

Subparagraph 2 - All employees to *include those who are 14-17 years of age* must complete a Level 2 Background Check as a condition of employment.

Subparagraph 3 - The diocese *will not accept FBI background checks or certification of a FBI/FDLE background check from other entities except:*

- i. Other Qualified Entities within the FBI/FDLE VECHS system
- ii. Florida Department of Education Authorities

Subparagraph 4 - Level 2 FBI/FDLE background checks are good for five years.

Subparagraph 5 – Church personnel who wish to transfer their background screening report from one entity to one or more entities must put their request in writing to the Safe Environment Program Office. Requests sent by email, fax, or US Postal Service are acceptable.

Subparagraph 6 – Transfers of background checks from outside of the diocese must come from Qualified Entities of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s Volunteer, Employee Criminal History System (VECHS) or from the Florida Department of Education’s background screening system – no exceptions.

Subparagraph 7 – All background screening reports and associated paperwork must be kept under lock and key at all times when not in use.

Paragraph J. **Policy on Diocesan Safe Environment Program (SEP) Training** Points out that:

Subparagraph 1 - Safe Environment Program Training *must be face-to-face initially*. Re-certification must take place every 5 years starting from the initial training session. Re-certification can be accomplished online or by attending another face-to-face SEP Training workshop.

Subparagraph 2 – Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) to the sick and shut-in and Pastoral Care Providers (PCP) must attend the EMHC/PCP Safe Environment Program training workshop, which is specific to their ministry. The training is good for 5 years and may be renewed online or in face-to-face live sessions.

Subparagraph 3 – The diocese *does not* accept safe environment training from other dioceses. Individuals transferring into the diocese must attend a face-to-face training session initially.

Subparagraph 4 – Contractors and vendors must attend a diocesan safe environment training workshop appropriate to the protected class being served, i.e. children/youth or vulnerable adults.

Paragraph K. **Definitions (See End Notes)**

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**End Notes:**

2-1 **Adult:** *Redefines* who an adult is. Note that the change is *from 21 years of age to 18 years of age and no longer in high school*.

2-4 **Church Personnel shall mean all of the following:**

2.4.2 – **Employee** - Points out that employees between the ages of 14-17 years must also be background screened as a condition of employment. According to Florida law, parental consent *is not required* to sign the FDLE Agreement/Waiver form.

2.4.3 – **Contractors and Vendors** – Definition added. Points out that these individuals, for the purpose of this policy, are considered church personnel.

2.4.4 - **Covered Volunteer** – Points out that a Covered Volunteer is 18 years or older and are not in high school. Volunteers younger than 18 years of age *cannot* have the care, responsibility, and or supervision of children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

2.5 – **Care, responsibility, and or supervision** – Points out that “care, responsibility, and or supervision” is *synonymous* with “unsupervised access” to children or vulnerable adults.

2.6 - **Criminal History Background Screen** - Additional reasons for running background checks added.

2.7 – **Pastoral Care Providers** – Definition added

2.8 – **Qualified Entity** – Definition added