

Safe Environment Program

As we continue to grow as a parish and with many of the ministries looking for volunteers, I wanted to continue with my explanation of the Safe Environment Program. If you volunteer in any capacity of the parish, you must meet the safe environment criteria outlined by the Diocese.

What types of clearances do I need?

FBI Clearance (needs renewed every 5 years): This clearance checks on any criminal history. If you've lived in Pennsylvania for the last 10 consecutive years you just need to read, sign, and date a two page document. If you've lived outside of Pennsylvania during the last 10 years you will need to get fingerprinted.

Child Abuse History Clearance (needs renewed every 5 years): This clearance is a background check and requires you to write down previous names and addresses you've been associated with since 1975 as well as any household members since then. You may complete this form online or by filling out a two page document.

Protecting God's Children (needs renewed every 3 years): This is an online class through Virtus that trains adults about the dangers and warning signs of abuse and the ways to prevent it. It also teaches the methods of properly reporting suspicions of abuse and responding to allegations of abuse. You complete it by watching a series of videos and answering multiple choice questions where you choose the best answer until you get it right – you can't fail. It takes about 75 minutes to complete.

Declarations/ Code of Pastoral Conduct/ Reporting of Child Abuse and the Child Protective Services Law of Pennsylvania (does not expire): These are 3 documents to read, sign or initial, and date. This is completed during the registration process of setting up your Virtus account.

Mandated Reporter Training (does not expire): This is not required of all volunteers but mostly those working directly with minors. This is an online class that reviews the elements of child abuse, including the legal definitions and indicators of abuse. The training provides an overview of mandated reporting obligations, including how to make a report, protections for those who report, and liabilities for failing to report. It takes about 4 hours to complete.

Is my personal information at risk?

No, each volunteer has their own file folder for their clearances and certificates. The folders are stored and locked up in the file cabinets at the parish office.

How do I complete my clearances?

Go to: <https://john23.org>

Click on the Safe Environment tab at the top of the page. Scroll down to the steps for obtaining clearances.

You can still complete your clearances even if you don't have a computer or if you need help using one. Reach out to me, and I'm more than happy to help you through the process.

If you have any questions or need help obtaining your clearances, please contact Jennifer Bunnell at jenniferb@john23.org or 724-941-9406 ext 106.