

# DIOCESE OF ALEXANDRIA

## Policy and Procedures for Conducting Background Investigations

### Policy Statement

For the safety of children, the wellbeing of the community, the integrity of the Church and to hire the most qualified employees, it is the policy of the Diocese of Alexandria to conduct background investigations on all, but not limited to seminarians, clerics, religious and lay church workers, paid or commissioned volunteers, and certain subcontractors. (Cf. USCCB Charter, Art. 13)

### Policy Guidelines

- I. Background investigations cannot be conducted on employees/volunteers who are under eighteen (18) years of age.
- II. Types of background investigations are conducted:
  - A. Seminarians, clerics, religious and lay church workers, paid or commissioned volunteers Background Screening (conducted on all current and new employees not covered by Policy Guidelines II.B, and all current and new volunteers commissioned to work with children and youth).
    - a. Social Security Number Validation - Checks social security number against the Social Security Administration's Deceased file, verifies that the number is in a valid range and provides the state and year of issuance.
    - b. 7 Year Criminal Record Search - a search in every civil parish/county in which the person lived in the past seven years, traced by his/her social security number.
    - c. Sex Offender Search - State level search to access available subjects who are registered sex offenders.
  - B. All employees of Catholic Schools, daycare centers, and institutions serving vulnerable persons in the diocese will be fingerprinted and undergo criminal record searches as required by Louisiana civil statutes.
  - C. Additional screening may be conducted for selected employees and volunteers
    - a. Motor Vehicle Reports (MVR) – Reports on driver’s license validity, driving violations and suspensions. An MVR will be conducted on any individual that operates a diocesan vehicle; who drives any vehicle for parish, school, or diocesan business or activities; or who is insured under the diocesan auto insurance policy. This includes individuals who are using rental cars for business purposes.
    - b. Credit Reports – Provides a synopsis of the subject’s financial history and offers information on liens, judgments and bankruptcies and aids in verifying previous employment and address information. A Credit Report should be conducted on all individuals who work in any type of financial capacity.
- III. Appropriate background screening will be conducted on all current employees and volunteers commissioned to work with children or youth.
- IV. No applicants for employment may be hired or volunteers working with children may begin service until results of the background investigations have been received. A background investigation must be conducted for any employee/volunteer who is **rehired more than 90 days** after his/her termination regardless of his/her previous position with the Diocese of Alexandria.

- V. Background investigations will be conducted at least every five years for employees and volunteers with continuous service or who have had breaks in service of fewer than 90 days.
- VI. All diocesan locations will be requested to periodically confirm compliance with this policy. Failure to follow this policy will result in the loss of employment or volunteer position and may result in disciplinary action for supervisory personnel.

## Procedures

- I. The applicant completes the Diocese of Alexandria Application for Employment and the Employment Screening Release Form (Exhibit A).

The potential volunteer completes the Diocese of Alexandria Volunteer Application Form and the Employment Screening Release Form (Exhibit A).

The Interviewer reviews the Application for Employment or Volunteer Application for completeness. Incomplete applications are not processed and should be returned to the applicant.

- II. The interviewer thoroughly reviews completed applications.
  - A. If any misdemeanor or felony convictions are listed on the application and the candidate appears qualified in all other areas, the interviewer must contact the Director of Personnel to request that the applicant be considered for employment despite the criminal conviction(s). Note: an **arrest record**, as opposed to a **criminal conviction**, is not a factor that can disqualify an applicant from employment.
  - B. The Director of Personnel, Vicar General, and, as needed, Legal Counsel will consider the nature of the criminal offense, its job relatedness, and the timing in determining whether a criminal conviction disqualifies the applicant from employment or volunteer work with the Diocese of Alexandria.
- III. To complete the background investigation for both employees and volunteers, the interviewer must follow these procedures:
  - A. Upon completion of the Employment Screening Release Form, the interviewer will fax the completed form to the attention of the Director of Personnel at 318-445-2493.
  - B. The Director of Personnel or an assigned individual will submit the individual's identifying information to the contracted screening agency. In addition to the 7-year criminal search, additional screening for selected persons may be ordered.
- IV. Once the appropriate background screening has been fulfilled the Bishop of Alexandria will receive reports for clergy and the Director of Personnel will receive all reports for laypersons. Result procedures to be followed are:
  - A. **Clear:** If the result of the "Background Investigation" has no basis for denying employment or work as a volunteer, the Director of Personnel or an assigned individual will communicate to the interviewer that they may offer to the individual employment or work as a volunteer.

- B. **Hit:** If the result of the “Background Investigation” has basis for denying employment or work as a volunteer, the Director of Personnel or an assigned individual will send out a copy of the applicant’s report along with the “Summary of Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act” (information contained in Exhibit B), to notify the candidate of his/her legal rights. The consumer department of the consumer reporting agency will handle all disputes. If the individual provides information that some or all of the report is inaccurate, the initial decision to not hire the individual must be reevaluated based on the new information. No earlier than five days later, the Director of Personnel or an assigned individual will send out an Adverse Action Letter notifying the applicant of his/her ineligibility for employment (information contained in Exhibit C) or notifying the volunteer of his/her ineligibility (information in Exhibit D).
  
- C. **Each report** will be filed in a designated confidential “Background Investigations” file, which may be accessed only by the Director of Personnel, the Vicar General, the Bishop, or the bishop’s express designee. The information may be used only as permitted by the Fair Credit Reporting Act and the Code of Canon Law.
  
- V. If the background investigation of a current employee/volunteer reveals a conviction not formerly disclosed to the Diocese of Alexandria, the employee’s employment or the volunteer’s volunteer work may be terminated based on the timing and scope of the conviction. The Personnel Department, Vicar General, and, as needed, Legal Counsel will consider the nature of the criminal offense, its job relatedness, and the timing in determining whether the results of the background report disqualifies the individual from employment or participating as a volunteer with the Diocese of Alexandria. An Adverse Action Letter stating this reason is provided to the employee (information provided in Exhibit E) or the volunteer (information in Exhibit F).