

Office for Protection of Children & Youth

Thank you for all that you are doing to create safe environments in our parishes, schools and Catholic institutions. The safety of our children is a priority in the Diocese of Cleveland. Keeping our kids safe is a privilege and a responsibility that we all share – clergy, staff, and volunteers throughout the eight-county region of our diocese. The Bishop, his staff and specifically the Office for the Protection of Children & Youth are here to offer guidance and support in these endeavors.

The procedures to follow in making sure all children are safe in our communities can be found in two documents: the *Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse*, which is now Revised and will be Promulgated 15 June 2016 and made effective as of 31 December 2016; and the *Standards of Conduct in Ministry*, also revised and promulgated as noted above. All clergy, staff and volunteers who have access to children will be required to read the two revised documents, sign the new Acknowledgment forms, and turn the forms in to your parish, school or agency.

Some of the pertinent changes to the documents include provisions on Social Media, its use, and the governing practices of its potential misuse. This is an important section in the revised document. Also, there will now be a requirement that the background check on all employees and volunteers who work with children be repeated every five (5) years. Additional information on the process of implementation of this requirement will be forthcoming.

In an effort to update everyone on the importance and impact of the revisions to the policy and the standards, a team of diocesan leadership staff will be facilitating workshops and webinars for all clergy, staff and volunteers to highlight some of the most pertinent changes to our procedures. We will schedule a variety of sessions throughout the diocese in an effort to make attendance as convenient as possible. We will give notice of these workshops as they are scheduled via the website at www.dioceseofcleveland.org, via notes in the Diocesan Memorandum, and with email blurbs to targeted groups of people, such as pastors, deacons, pastoral ministers, educators, and many others. Every employee and volunteer is expected to participate in these orientation sessions and to submit the Acknowledgment form to his or her supervisor by the effective date of 31 December 2016. Reproducible copies of these forms can be found at the back of each document, which are available on the Diocesan website.

If you have any questions before or after the training sessions, feel free to reach out to Sharon Minson, Director in the Office for the Protection of Children & Youth, via phone or email (216-696-6525 x 1157; sminson@dioceseofcleveland.org) and we will make every effort to respond in a timely fashion.