

Protecting God's Children Background Check and Workshop FAQs

Q: We're a small school community. Is this really necessary?

A: While the risk may be small, it was felt that this workshop participation and background checks were a small price to pay where the children of our school are involved.

Q: Did something happen that caused the school to take this action?

A: No. No specific event occurred to bring about this decision, but the environment around the country was such that the board felt it was prudent to require this of our volunteers.

Q: Do the teachers and administration have to take this? What about after-care staff?

A: All school staff, extended day staff, and summer program staff, whether they are working directly with children or not, already participate in the sexual abuse workshop and are screened via background checks.

Q: Do other schools do this?

A: Yes. A growing number of private and public schools as well as other volunteer organizations are requiring this of their volunteers.

Q: Who has to take "Protecting God's Children"?

A: Anyone who has "care, custody, or control" of children is required to take the class and be fingerprinted. This includes, but is not limited to, room parents, class volunteers, field trip drivers, scout leaders, coaches, Children's Carnival volunteers, etc.

Q: How long is the workshop?

A: The "Protecting God's Children" workshop lasts about three hours. It consists of a multimedia presentation and facilitated discussion. You may preview the program at: http://www.virtus.org/virtus/preview_pgc.cfm

Q: I'd like to take the class with people I know, is SJMS going to host a workshop?

A: Yes, please check the school calendar at www.sjms.net. In addition, there are many classes offered throughout the Columbus area.

Q: Can I get it at my own parish?

A: Yes. If you would prefer to take the course at your own parish, you may. Your attendance at the workshop can be verified via a database kept by the Catholic Diocese. It is imperative that you register before taking Protecting God's Children. You may still need to complete a background check separately.

Q: How do I register for the "Protecting God's Children" workshop?

A: You can register online at www.virtus.org, and click on the yellow "Registration" button. Select the "Columbus, OH (Diocese)" location and follow the instructions from there. If you do not have personal access to a computer, ask the school office personnel for assistance.

Q: Do I have to be fingerprinted before I attend the "Protecting God's Children" workshop?

A: The two requirements are separate, and you may fulfill the requirements in any order.

Q: Can I get fingerprinted at the “Protecting God’s Children” workshop?

A: The fingerprinting/background checks are separate from the workshop. Some host locations provide the opportunity to be fingerprinted before or after a session. Call ahead to your host location.

Q: Where do I get fingerprinted?

A: You can also go to your local law enforcement agency. Only inkless Webcheck prints are acceptable. There are more than 450 WebCheck locations in Ohio, listed by county on the attorney general’s website: <http://www.ag.state.oh.us/business/fingerprint/data/index.asp>

When fingerprinting is done, be certain to: 1) identify “care and custody of children” as the reason, and 2) designate “Diocese of Columbus, Regina Quinn” as the recipient of the results.

Q: Is there a cost for the fingerprinting/background checks?

A: Yes. The cost will vary depending on location.

Q: What kind of events would preclude my volunteering?

A: Each case is handled individually based on guideline in place by the Diocese. Generally, only offenses of a violent or sexual nature would prevent you from being approved to volunteer with children. Some examples would include assault, domestic violence, or corruption of a minor.

Q: What if my background check reflects an offense from my college days?”

A: While there are serious offenses that would absolutely prevent someone from volunteering with children, not everyone with an offense is precluded from volunteering. These are handled confidentially on a case-by-case basis. Also, there are also many opportunities to volunteer where children are not involved, such as Winter Festival, Adult Fundraisers, etc.

Q: Will teachers know about my past?

A: Absolutely not. Teachers will only be given a list of approved volunteers and will not be aware of specific offenses or whether or not you chose to undergo a background check and training.

Q: Do I have to do this every year?

A: Present policy requires that each person complete the course and background check upon entering the SJMS Community or before becoming a volunteer for the first time. It is the expectation that the Head of School be notified of any incidents arising after a background check.

Q: How long to I have to complete this?

A: We expect everyone to be in compliance at the earliest by the first day of school and **no later than 2 weeks before your first volunteer activity.**