

# Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth

## Policy on Background Checks

**Policy Number: A-5**

**Adopted: December 8, 2012**

**Revised: May 17, 2014**

### **Purpose:**

To describe

- What lay persons need to have a background check
- What the background check should cover
- How and when background checks will be administered
- How the costs of background checks will be paid

### **Canonical Reference**

Diocesan Canon 17.6 Risk Management Committee

General Convention Resolution B008 (2003)

Church Pension Fund's Safeguarding God's Children and Safeguarding God's People projects

### **1.0 General Provisions**

1.1 Our churches, schools, and ministries must be safe places, especially for all youth, children, the elderly and those with physical or mental disabilities ("Vulnerable Persons"). The Diocese uses a combination of training and screening to help confirm that we have qualified people serving in the ministries of the Diocese and to support the Safeguarding God's Children and Safeguarding God's People programs.

1.2 This policy deals with background checks of lay persons and members of the clergy to evaluate basic fitness for these ministries and to document that process.

1.3 This policy applies to the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth, its Institutions, diocesan and parish schools, parishes, missions, mission stations, and their institutions, respectively, in the Diocese ("Church Entities").

### **2.1 Persons required to have background checks**

2.1 Acceptable background checks are required for the following categories of persons selected to implement ministries in Church Entities, respectively:

- Those whose church positions require that they work directly with Vulnerable Persons.
- Employees and long term contractors.
- Those who handle or control church money.
- Vendors who provide long term services on the premises will be required to provide evidence of background checks
- Any person who drives a motor vehicle (their own or church-owned or rented) in doing their ministry / work

- Any person in active ordained ministry who is canonically resident in the diocese or licensed by the diocese.

### 3.0 Scope of background checks

Tier	Required for . . .	Areas Checked
Tier 1 –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons working in a ministry to children/youth or vulnerable persons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-state criminal background check</li> <li>• National sex offender registry check</li> <li>• Alias search</li> <li>• Social Security number trace</li> </ul>
Tier 2 –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons with unsupervised access to funds or financial records</li> <li>• Members of the Standing Committee</li> <li>• Trustees of the Diocesan Corporation</li> <li>• Clergy in active ministry who are canonically resident in or licensed in the diocese</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-state criminal background check</li> <li>• National sex offender registry check</li> <li>• Alias search</li> <li>• Social Security number trace</li> <li>• Credit check</li> </ul>
Tier 3 –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees and long term contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-state criminal background check</li> <li>• Individual county background check</li> <li>• National sex offender registry check</li> <li>• Alias search</li> <li>• Social Security number trace</li> <li>• Credit check</li> <li>• Motor vehicle check</li> <li>• Employment or volunteer verification*</li> <li>• Reference check (typically, 3)*</li> </ul> <p><i>*Employment verification <b>may</b> be done either by the background check agency (@ \$10 per employer) or by the Church Entity. Reference checks <b>must</b> be done by the Church Entity</i></p>
DMV Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any person who will drive a motor vehicle (their own or church-owned or rented) in doing their ministry/work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motor vehicle/driving record check</li> </ul>

#### **4.0 Background checks required**

4.1 The background check must be completed before a person is finally selected for a position and begins to serve.

4.2 Persons taking on new responsibilities do not need new background check unless their new responsibilities move them into a higher tier or their previous check was done more than 3 years prior.

4.3 Persons working in a ministry to children/youth or vulnerable persons need to have a new background check every 3 years.

4.4 Persons driving for church business/functions need a motor vehicle check at least every 3 years and must provide proof of adequate Personal Injury Protection insurance.

#### **5.0 Cost of the background checks**

5.1 The Diocese will be responsible for the cost of obtaining and maintaining required background checks for persons serving in positions for the Diocese or any of its Institutions.

5.2 Each Church Entity will be responsible for the cost of obtaining and maintaining required background checks for persons serving in those entities.

5.3 It is appropriate for each Church Entity to request but not require that each person required by this policy to have a background check to help defray the cost of that person's background check and to accept other donations specified for this purpose.

#### **6.0 Background check Process**

6.1 If a background check report raises questions about the person's appropriateness for the church position, the Bishop and the President of the Standing Committee (for issues involving diocesan positions) or other requester (for issues involving congregational positions) shall confidentially investigate and evaluate the available information and make a decision about whether the person will be authorized to serve in the position.

6.2 When the Diocesan office receives a report with a red flag, the report shall be immediately forwarded to the requester.

6.3 The Diocesan office will make a note that a red flag was indicated on the report and if the Church Entity is not the Diocese, the Bishop will be informed that a red flag was indicated and the report sent to the original requester.

6.4 A requester receiving a red flagged report will inform the Bishop of the results of the evaluation of the report and any decisions made.

6.5 A person whose report generates a red flag has the right to know of the red flag and to respond to it.

#### **7.1 Records and Confidentiality**

7.1 Each Church Entity shall maintain a Background Check Roster, a current list of the name, address, and church position of each person required to have a background check and the date that the last background check was completed.

7.2 By December 31 each year, each Church Entity shall submit its updated

Background Check Roster to the Diocesan office and will provide a current Background Check Roster to the Risk Management Committee upon request at other times. In addition, each Church Entity will submit its initial Background Check Roster no later than March 1, 2013.

7.3 The data and records gathered for background checks will be maintained with security and confidentiality by the Diocesan office and/or the Church Entity requesting the background check.

- “Security” is defined as being in a locked filing cabinet, with access to the file permitted only to the Bishop or his/her designee, in the case of the Diocesan office, or permitted only to the pastor of the subject of the background check in the case of the Church Entity requesting the background check.
- “Confidentiality” means that information will be shared in written, electronic, or verbal form only by the Bishop or his/her designee, in the case of the Diocesan office, or by the requester in the case of the Church Entity requesting the check; and that information will be shared only for the purpose of adhering to this policy or furthering the pastoral care of the subject of the check.
- The subject of the background check may provide for exceptions to the security and confidentiality of the data and records through express written consent.

## **8.0 Vendors**

8.1 The Diocese shall maintain a contract with an outside security firm qualified to perform and contract with others to perform the required background checks.

8.2 It is required that all background checks be completed by the Diocesan vendor or by a comparable provider that the Risk Management Committee has approved.

8.3 The Diocese and each Congregation will investigate any discrepancy in a person’s address if notified by the credit bureau that the person’s address substantially varies from the address the credit bureau has on file for that person and will advise the credit bureau of the accurate address if that address is different from the one provided by the credit bureau.