

**DATE:** March 13, 2008

**TO:** Pastors, Principals, Youth Ministers, DREs, CTS Teachers and Facilitators, Business Managers, Music Ministers, Athletic Directors, Christian Service Coordinators

**FROM:** Mary Eckert, Office for Safe Environments

**SUBJECT: POLICIES FOR TEENS - BACKGROUND CHECKS & TRAINING**

The policies for teen background checks and training along with the Teen Code of Conduct & Background Certification form for grades 9-12 are attached. This same info is posted on the AOD website and on the extranets of principals, DREs and YMs.

#### CHANGE IN BACKGROUND CHECKS REQUIREMENTS

1. Effective May 1, the Michigan State Police ICHAT will not be used for a background check on anyone under 18 years of age. Juvenile records are sealed by the courts and, thus, the ICHAT provides no information. The new form puts the responsibility for disclosure on the teen and his/her parents.
2. Effective May 1, anyone in grades 9-12 (under age 18), who is an employee of a church or school, or who volunteers with children, the elderly, or persons with disabilities, must complete a **Teen Background Certification Form** on which the teen is required to disclose any misdemeanor or felony convictions. If you have already done ICHATs on current teen employees/volunteers, you have until August 31, 2008 to get the new Background Certification completed.
3. The employer (parish or school), or supervisor of the volunteer is responsible for ensuring teens complete the Background Certification. This was clarified in a memo dated February 7, 2008.
4. Our standard is to pair any teen in service with an adult or another teen and regularly supervised by an adult. Thus, teen volunteers should always be supervised by an adult; never left alone with children, elderly or persons with disabilities.
5. Teen Background Certifications shall be maintained in a secure database and hard copies in restricted-access files by the employer or supervisor of volunteers.
6. Response to disclosures of misdemeanors or felonies:
  - a. It is vital in introducing the Background Certification that parents and teens understand that information disclosed will:
    - ◆ Remain strictly confidential; discussed only with the service supervisor and pastor,
    - ◆ Not jeopardize a teen's ability to remain in the school or participate in parish activities,
    - ◆ Affect the type of service they are allowed to perform.
  - b. A pastoral response keeps the teen involved in the faith/school community and allows the teen to be of service in places and with conditions that reduce potential risk to those served.
7. At 18, the teen is legally considered an adult. Within 6 months of turning 18, the individual must complete the authorization form for an ICHAT to continue in any employee or volunteer capacity.

#### REITERATE TEEN TRAINING POLICY & CODE OF CONDUCT

1. The attached policy was distributed in October, 2007. All Catholic high schools and parish employees and volunteers must have completed the *Called to Serve*® workshop no later than June, 2008.
2. The attached Code of Conduct is distributed on bookmarks in Catholic High Schools and parishes as part of the *Called to Serve*® program.

Please contact me with any questions/concerns at [eckert.mary@aod.org](mailto:eckert.mary@aod.org) or (313) 237-4815.