

# Newsletter

## THIS ISSUE

- Promoting a Safe Environment Using Background Checks
- Background Checks—Frequently Asked Questions



Dear Friends,

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People\**, established a comprehensive set of procedures for the protection of minors. For the purposes of this newsletter, I would like to talk about Article 13 of the *Charter*. This Article focuses on the requirement of background checks and states:

*"Dioceses/eparchies are to evaluate the background of all incardinated and non-incardinated priests and deacons who are engaged in ecclesiastical ministry in the diocese/eparchy and of all diocesan/eparchial and parish/school or other paid personnel and volunteers whose duties include ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors. Specifically, they are to utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies."*

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee promotes a safe environment for all its children, youth, employees, and volunteers. In order to maintain this safe environment, the Archdiocese conducts background checks, both state and national, on all employees and those volunteers who have regular contact with minors.

Volunteers are important to our children, youth, and our ministry. It is important that we guarantee that the adults who assist with our children do so with their best interests in mind. Background checks help provide the necessary information to parishes and/or schools and allows them to make decisions on which adults can provide the positive support for our children. In order to accomplish this, background checks are completed on individuals prior to any employment or volunteer service as a requirement of the *Charter*.

I have received many questions regarding background checks and why they are required. I hope that this newsletter provides the necessary answers to those questions.

As always, I thank each and every one of you who works hard to create and maintain safe environments for our children and young people.

Blessings,  
Patti Loehrer  
Safe Environment Coordinator  
Archdiocese of Milwaukee

\*A copy of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/charter.shtml>

## Background Check Frequently Asked Questions

### Who is required to have a background check?

The policy of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee is that all employees (including clergy, religious, and lay employees) and those volunteers who have regular contact with minors are subject to a background check.

Regular contact is defined as follows:

1. Any individual who works, volunteers, or has contact with minors within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's parishes, schools, or institutions **more than once a semester**.
2. Any individual who goes on a field trip (or any outing away for the parish, school or institution) within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee **even once a year**.

### How are background checks conducted?

The Archdiocese requires that parishes and/or schools utilize the services of the State of Wisconsin (Crime Information Bureau) and a reputable national data base provider (Intellicorp is used by the Central Offices and many parishes/schools) when conducting background checks.

The state of Wisconsin is an "open records" state, that means that most records maintained by the state and local government agencies are open to the public for inspection and do not need permission of the individual. However, a social security number and birth date of an individual aids in insuring an accurate match.

Checking records in states outside of Wisconsin will involve the use of a third party investigative agency and will necessitate getting written approval as well as information such as a birth date and social security number.

### Does the background check include a credit check?

No. The information collected on the Background Check Form is used solely to conduct a background check.

The governing law on background checks by third parties is the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). While the FCRA does regulate both the collection and use of credit information, it also regulates the collection and use of "consumer reports." Background checks fall under the category of "consumer reports." The word "consumer" simply means "individual" (a report on an individual).

### How often is a criminal background check conducted?

The Archdiocese requires that parishes, schools, and institutions within the archdiocese repeat background checks on all employees and volunteers a least every five (5) years.

### Who reviews the criminal record results and how confidential are they?

The pastor, along with the appropriate supervisor, (principal/ DRE/ youth minister) would normally see the results of the check and make the appropriate decisions. In those parishes and/or schools that employ a Director of Administrative Services, this person could conduct the record check if personnel matters are part of their position responsibility.

These records, including those that are public, should always be treated with a high degree of confidentiality and shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know.

**Criminal record check results should be treated like other personnel records and must be stored in locked cabinets.**

In addition, background check information on individuals is not allowed to be shared between other parishes, schools or institutions. This safeguard is put in place to insure that an individual's personal information is not distributed without their knowledge.

### What if a volunteer refuses to authorize a background check? Are there any exceptions?

If an individual refuses to allow a background check for any reason they will not be allowed to volunteer in a capacity that allows them contact with minors. There are no exceptions.

### What if a criminal conviction shows up on an individual's record? Does this mean they are not allowed to volunteer?

No, as with employees, convictions or pending charges will be considered in the placement process only to the extent they substantially relate to the volunteer assignment. Many people have in one way or another made mistakes in their lives, and they should be allowed to move beyond those mistakes.

If a volunteer does have a criminal conviction and does not feel that it would interfere with volunteer responsibilities, he/she should talk to the pastor. In making the decision, the pastor will consider facts such as type of crime and how it relates to the volunteer position, the circumstances, time since conviction, the volunteer's history of the behavior since and the volunteer's openness and honesty.

A past conviction does not automatically exclude service as a volunteer. But clearly, those individuals who have abused children, sold drugs to minors, or other criminal convictions that may put children at risk, should not be put in assignments where they are working with or around minors.

## ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE

Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Services  
1501 S Layton Blvd., P.O. Box 3087  
Milwaukee, WI 53215-3087

Amy Peterson  
Victim Assistance Coordinator  
414-758-2232—petersona@archmil.org

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Safe Environment Coordinator  
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A copy of this Newsletter can be found on the Archdiocese of Milwaukee website [www.archmil.org/safeguarding](http://www.archmil.org/safeguarding) under the heading, Resources.

## **St. Sebastian Education Committee Meeting Minutes for December 1, 2009 and Comment Form**

**Present:** Paul Hohl, Lisa Pieper, Joe Viste, Clair Mitchell, Terese Shelledy, Chris Marcoux, Mary Beth McBride-Doyle, Melinda Runnoe, Sherri Walker, Kristin Koch, Shelley DePalma – Home & School liaison

**Excused:** Kristina Snapp – Parish Council liaison, Christopher Zollicoffer, Alfredo Cintron

### **Principal's Report**

Paul provided an update on two programs that arose from earlier Education Committees. The first is the Tardy Policy which has a progressive disciplinary procedure. If a student is tardy 3 or more days in a month, a letter is sent to the parents through school mail. If a student is tardy 10 or more days in a grading period, the student serves a Saturday detention that lasts from 1-3 hours at a cost of \$10-\$20. Subsequent tardiness results in a phone call to the parents and suspension. The second program is the Effort Grade for Middle School students. If a student receives an Unsatisfactory (U) as a grade in a class and an Unsatisfactory (U) for effort in a class, the student is on probation which bars a student from sports and extracurricular activities in order to focus on their academics. At midterm, the student meets with Paul to come up with a plan for success. If a student receives another (U) in the next quarter, they will have to find a new school.

The AED machines have been installed in the school lobby and the church gathering space. 8 staff members have been trained in CPR and AED usage. 10 more staff members will be trained this week.

School Social Worker/Counselor Position – Paul is speaking with potential candidates this week in order to bring the selectee on as soon as possible. The funding for the position was approved by the finance committee.

Character Education – The Pastoral staff will conduct classroom visits this week.

Math Computation Improvement Plan – The teachers have been working very hard on math computations in the classroom. The Math Computation Improvement Plan is an additional source to help students improve their skills. The plan consists of three parts

- A. a voluntary school computer program that earns students in the Math Achiever Club
- B. monthly written contests that earns students on the Math Wall of Fame
- C. an at-home web-based program.

### **Committee Connections**

Terese attended the Finance Committee meeting and reported that pledge cards were sent November 30<sup>th</sup> and are due at the end of the year. Tim Heeley will speak from the pulpit on December 6<sup>th</sup>. The pastoral staff will meet to discuss the \$84,000 gap in the projected budget. JoAnn will conduct a study on pay scales for clergy, faith-formation and education staff.

There wasn't anything to report from Parish Council and the Home & School meeting will be held on December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **New Family Calls & Exiting Families interviews**

Committee members obtained feedback and questions from new families. Topics included the status of the band. Information should be coming out soon. Another concern was middle school

teacher availability for students who need extra help. Paul said most of the teachers are available upon request - morning before school, resource, or after school. There is also some student to student mentoring/tutoring. Other schools in our cluster receive Title I or NESI money for after school tutoring. Paul is contacting principals in these schools about funding for these programs. There was a question about testing for reading levels. Dr. Cintron tests incoming 1<sup>st</sup> graders. Title I qualified students are tested at the beginning and end of each year.

Parent feedback from families that left our school was varied but overall very positive. One family felt that the communication between the school and the families could have been stronger and that the administration was laid back. The activities, field trips and curriculum are very good and families also noted a strong sense of community.

### **2009-2010 Goals and Work Groups**

- **Best of Class** – Sherri and Kristin met with the K5 and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers about the new model. Early feedback indicates that it works well in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade except at the end of the day. The students in the other classroom sometimes forget their books and other items they need for the next day. Students have their own desks in both classrooms. The students switch teachers for science and social studies so all of the students have interaction with both teachers. The K5 transition has been a little more of a challenge. The more difficult subjects are taught in the morning when the classes are split so by the afternoon the student attention spans have dwindled. Mrs. Wellenstein assists Mrs. Spignola every afternoon. The addition of desks to the classroom so everyone has a place was suggested. The next step will be to contact the parents of these students to obtain their feedback and gather information. Clair and Mary Beth have been researching the criteria and timelines for different awards that are given to teachers. They recently found a website that is a clearinghouse by category.
- **Marketing and Promotion** – Open House is scheduled for January 31, 2010. A post card will be mailed to prospective families' right after the New Year. A volunteer sign up sheet will be ready before the next Ed Committee meeting in January. We will obtain a bid for yard signs not specifically for Open House so they can be used throughout the year. We have a budget of \$1500. Paul provided arch marketing materials to the committee to use in planning the Open House.

### **New Business**

Clair attended a "Young Author's Conference" at the Milwaukee Art Museum. The cost is \$60 per student and is open to students in 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This could be a potential activity next year if funds could be obtained through grant writing or maybe Home & School mini-grants.

Thank you to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade families for providing the lovely holiday treats for our meeting.

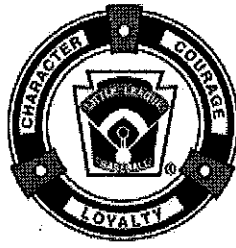
**Remember, the Education Committee would like to have ad hoc members to add their expertise or voice to our subcommittee/work groups. If you are interested in any of the above topics, please contact members of the work group or subcommittee.**

Next meeting: Jan. 19th. Clair Mitchell will cover prayer and snacks at this meeting. MaryBeth McBride-Doyle will attend the Parish Council meeting on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

Submitted by Chris Marcoux

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**As always, if you have any comments, return them to the School Office-c/o Education Committee. If you would like a response, please include your name. Thank you.**



## **You're Invited!**

It's not too late to sign up for Baseball at  
**North Central Little League**

**Saturday, January 16, 2010**  
**9:30 am – 1:30 pm**

Columbus Park Pavilion  
7301 W. Courtland Ave.  
(1 block south of Hampton Ave.)

For Boys and Girls Ages 5 – 16 years old

League Boundaries:  
Between N. 76<sup>th</sup> St. and N. 43<sup>rd</sup> St.,  
north to Mill Road and south to Capitol Drive

**OR**

Between N. 124<sup>th</sup> St. and N. 51<sup>st</sup> St.,  
north to Capitol Drive and south to I-94

All players new to the league are required to show a birth  
certificate and proof of residency at registration.

For more information call the NCLL hotline at 414-297-9775 or visit our web site  
at **ncllmilw.com**

Ticket Order Form

Marquette vs.  
DePaul

Wednesday, February 3

6:00

Bradley Center

Watch MU star players Lazar Hayward and Jimmy Butler in an important Big East game  
and a national TV audience on ESPN2

A great way to celebrate Catholic Schools Week

Hear the world famous St. Sebastian Middle School Choir  
sing the National Anthem before the game!

Special price for game tickets is just \$11. Price includes a 400 level game ticket and a  
free Marquette/Dwyane Wade drawstring bag. Fill out and return the form below by  
Friday, Dec. 18 to take advantage of this special deal.

Note – Choir members **must** have a game ticket

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Family Name \_\_\_\_\_ Room Number \_\_\_\_\_

Number of tickets at \$11 each \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_  
(checks to St. Sebastian)

Order forms due by Thursday, Jan. 14!