

April 17, 2002

TO: Pastors, Pastoral Coordinators, Principals  
RE: Screening of Employees and Volunteers

Dear Friends,

With the current focus on sexual abuse of minors by clergy, I write to urge you to be vigilant also over the possibility of such abuse by any employee or volunteer.

Recently one of our pastors discovered someone volunteering to work with youth who had a past record of sexually abusing a minor. That situation accentuates the absolute necessity to screen all who work in our parishes and schools, whether paid or not.

Our *Diocesan Regulations for the Response to Claims of Sexual Abuse of Minors* set out procedures for dealing with claims and for screening employees. Those procedures are mandatory in every parish and school of the diocese. With this letter, the procedures for screening volunteers outlined in our *Regulations* become mandatory as well.

These screening procedures must be carried out in all our parishes and schools. The safety of children and youth depends upon their effective implementation. The mandatory screening procedures (cf. Sec. IV, C of the *Regulations*) now stand revised as follows:

#### C. PREVENTION

1. Screening Employees and Volunteers: Lay and religious diocesan employees and volunteers must be screened at the time they are hired or at the time they begin their ministry.
  - a. Parish employees - All lay and religious parish employees are screened through the Central Criminal Records Exchange (CCRE) of the Virginia State Police (Personnel Policies for Lay and Religious Employees as revised August 7, 1994).
    - (1) Applicants must agree to a criminal background check.
    - (2) Before hiring, diocesan and parish employees who work with minors are to be screened by Child Protective Services (CPS) or the Department of Social Services (DSS).
  - b. School employees - School employees hired since July 1, 1997 are fingerprinted and screened through the FBI Criminal Records and the Central Criminal Records Exchange of the Virginia State Police (VA Code Ann. §22.1-296.3). Note: this screening, which is required by Virginia statute, is not available for non-school employees.
  - c. Daycare or childcare centers - Day and childcare employees shall be screened by CPS or the DSS.
  - d. Volunteers - Volunteers who work with minors in any of the ministries of the Church (for example, catechists and school aides, nursery workers), or who are with minors in an unsupervised setting (such as chaperones at overnight retreats and drivers), shall be screened by CPS or DSS and CCRE (Under VA Code Ann. §19.2-392.02) .

Please remember as well your obligation to report to me immediately any knowledge or suspicion that sexual abuse of a minor has taken place. You should remind all your employees and volunteers of their obligation to do the same. You should also inform them again that reporting to me does not relieve anyone from reporting to the proper civil authorities, as mandated by law.

With my thanks for your continued assistance in preventing and reporting the sexual abuse of minors, and for your dedicated service to our people, I am

Yours sincerely,



Walter F. Sullivan  
Bishop of Richmond