



Section 4. Compliance Policies, Requirements and Procedures

A. Compliance Policy for church personnel.

1. The following adult individuals must maintain compliance throughout service in ministry:
 - a. clergy;
 - b. seminarians and deacon aspirants and candidates;
 - c. religious brother and sisters;
 - d. employees of any parish, Catholic school, or other diocesan agency;
 - e. independent contractors who regularly provide services where minors, elderly adults, or adults with disabilities may be present;
 - f. members of any Catholic school board;
 - g. pastoral council members;
 - h. finance council members;
 - i. lay review board members;
 - j. any person who is considered to be a leader of a ministry, program, or organization;
 - k. members of any independent Catholic organization, or lay ecclesial association (in a parish, Catholic school or other diocesan agency) that may serve youth or vulnerable persons, even if the group's primary function is not necessarily to serve youth or vulnerable persons (e.g., Catholic Daughters of America, Knights of Columbus and Knights of Peter Claver and Lady's Auxiliary, Guadalupanas,, ACTS, and Marriage Encounter);
 - l. individuals who volunteer in the following types of ministry, programs, or organizations which provide services to, or at which minors, elderly adults, or adults with disabilities may be present, including, but not limited to:
 - 1) Catholic schools;
 - 2) religious education and faith formation (Elementary-High School);
 - 3) parish nursery and childcare, and mother's day out or pre-school programs;
 - 4) parish or school sponsored scouting groups, and other youth-focused programs (e.g. vacation bible school, youth sports, and similar activities);
 - 5) homeschooling organizations that use church property;
 - 6) RCIA;
 - 7) retreat ministry leaders;
 - 8) liturgical ministries (e.g., adult server/acolyte, hospitality/usher, children's liturgy, lector, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, and choir/music ministry);
 - 9) homebound ministry (to nursing/assisted-living facilities and parishioner homes);
 - 10) hospital ministry;
 - 11) parish office or grounds;
 - 12) St. Vincent de Paul Society conferences;
 - 13) community service and one-on-one support ministries and groups (e.g. Gabriel Project and Stephen Ministry);
 - 14) restorative justice/prison ministry;
 - 15) thrift stores operating on parish or school property or under the auspices of a parish or school;
 - 16) food pantry and food distribution programs (e.g. Mobile Loaves & Fishes and Meals on Wheels);
 - 17) elder or respite-care ministry;
 - 18) transportation ministry;
 - 19) parish men's and women's groups that provide parish service; and
 - 20) parish event coordinators (e.g. festival/picnic/Jamaica leadership).
 - m. Schoenstatt Shrine volunteers;

- n. personnel of independent organizations which operate on parish properties (e.g. Sacred Heart Clinic); and
 - o. individuals in any ministry or group as specified by a pastor, principal, or director of a diocesan agency.
2. The following adult individuals need not maintain compliance:
- a. parents who solely observe programs and activities in which their children are involved, and who do not volunteer or otherwise serve in ministry for their children's programs and activities (e.g., join their child for lunch once or twice per year, attend class parties, Mass and school/athletic performances); and
 - b. employees and contractors of companies that provide intermittent, non-ministry services (e.g., plumbing, electrical, and janitorial services) and who are supervised when on parish or school property and segregated from minors.

B. Compliance Policy for Persons from other Dioceses doing Ministry within the Diocese of Austin.

1. Individuals who wish to participate in a temporary, occasional ministry or program which requires EIM compliance must provide verification of compliance (including a cleared background check and EIM/safe environment training) from their home diocese for review and approval by the parish, school or diocesan organization responsible for the program. "Temporary" and "occasional" mean no more than 2 or 3 times a year. Examples include, but are not limited to:
- a. restorative Justice Ministry in TDC facilities located in the diocese;
 - b. retreat-type programs such as adult ACTS, Conquistandos de Cristo;
 - c. FOCUS and NET Ministry teams;
 - d. visiting grandparents wishing to volunteer at their child's school or VBS program.
2. Lay presenter approval is completed through the EIM Office. Persons applying for lay presenter approval must provide verification of EIM/safe environment compliance from their home diocese. If such verification is not provided, applicant may be approved for a one-time presentation in the diocese but would need to provide verification to participate in future events.

C. Compliance Policy for Minors.

Minors are not required to maintain compliance; however, high school seniors who will turn 18 during the course of the school year may submit EIM registration and attend a workshop while still 17 years old in order to continue service in ministry once they turn 18 years old. Upon turning 18 years old, compliance is required to remain eligible to serve in ministry.

D. Compliance Requirements.

1. To be compliant, an individual must:
- a. be 18 years of age or older;
 - b. prior to beginning service in any ministry which requires EIM compliance, complete the registration process through VIRTUS Online, the EIM database program;
 - 1) EIM accounts that were in full compliance as of January 1, 2023, were converted to VIRTUS Online.
 - c. authorize the diocese to obtain an initial criminal background check and to rerun a criminal background check at least every three years or more often as needed;
 - d. attend the in-person EIM Workshop no later than the 30th day after beginning service in ministry, and repeat attendance at least once every three year while serving;
 - e. adhere to the Diocese of Austin Policies on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry; and
 - f. be classified in the diocesan EIM database as

- 1) approved to engage in ministry; or
 - 2) approved with restrictions.
2. Compliance is required as set forth in this policy without regard to the mental or physical condition of the person serving in ministry.
 3. Compliance with safe environment requirements in another diocese does not qualify as EIM/safe environment compliance in the Diocese of Austin for ongoing parish, school or diocesan ministry.
 4. If the diocese, a parish, or other diocesan organization determines that an individual who must be EIM compliant is not compliant, the diocese, parish, or other diocesan organization will notify the individual that he or she may not serve in ministry until compliance is reestablished.

E. Compliance Procedures.

1. New applicants complete EIM registration through VIRTUS Online to initiate a background check and sign up for an initial EIM Workshop. Background checks and training history are processed and maintained through VIRTUS Online. Applicants requiring assistance with the registration processes may contact their parish or school EIM site administrator or the EIM Office.
2. Individuals are responsible for keeping their information current in the EIM database, including both personal information and ministry sites.
3. Background checks are rerun at least every three years and more frequently as needed throughout individual's service in ministry; applicant will be notified and required to login to account to consent to recheck. If applicant's background check expires, the account is archived, and applicant becomes ineligible to serve in ministry until background check is completed and approved.
4. New applicants must attend an in-person EIM Workshop no later than the 30th day after EIM registration, typically at the beginning of service in ministry. After the 30th day, if applicant has not attended a workshop the account is noted as non-compliant and applicant may no longer serve in ministry until they have attended a workshop.
5. To maintain compliance, individuals must renew/update training at least once every three years throughout their service in ministry. Applicant will be notified and required to login to account to complete online refresher training. If applicant's training expires, the account is archived, and applicant becomes ineligible to serve in ministry until refresher training is completed and approved.
6. The initial EIM Workshop, VIRTUS' Protecting God's Children®, and subsequent EIM refresher training, educates adults on how to become better protectors of children. Programs discuss sexual abuse of minors and other unethical behaviors, including reporting procedures for incidents of abuse or other unethical behavior, and related topics including warning signs of abuse, ethical behavior expected of those who serve in ministry and way to interrupt and prevent possible abuse or other unethical behavior.
7. *Persons who have experienced abuse may contact the EIM Office to arrange for an alternate EIM training option.*

8. EIM/safe environment/youth protection training completed in another diocese or youth serving organization does not fulfill DOA training requirements in most cases.
 - a. Persons who have attended a live VIRTUS Protecting God's Children® workshop in another diocese should request that their VIRTUS account be transferred to the Diocese of Austin.

F. Diocesan Procedure Regarding Registered Sex Offenders.

1. **Volunteering.** A registered sex offender is restricted from volunteering for any ministry which requires EIM compliance. The individual, with the full support of his/her pastor, may appeal this restriction to the Chancellor for review to determine if the individual may be approved to participate in a specified, limited ministry at the parish at a time when minors would not be present.
2. **Attendance at Parish or School Function.** Once a registered sex offender has been identified, the following must be applied by the pastor (parish) or principal (school):
 - a. Determine if the individual is on probation and communicate with the parole officer as needed to understand the conditions of probation which may limit activities individual may participate in.
 - b. Develop a safety plan for the individual if able to come to campus for particular activities (typically Mass and sacramental functions), to include the designation of an appropriate person to chaperone while on the parish or school campus.

G. Safety Education for Minors.

1. The diocese maintains appropriate education programs for children and youth to help them learn the basic concepts of personal safety regarding abuse prevention.
2. Each parish and Catholic school is required to provide diocesan approved abuse-prevention education every school year to meet the youth training requirements of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Article 12):

Empowering God's Children® (EGC) is a comprehensive program through which educators (teachers, catechists, and youth ministers) and parents provide children and youth foundational knowledge and tools to understand boundaries and boundary violation, and to help protect themselves if boundary violation occurs. The material is developmentally appropriate for each grade group (K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and high school), with content and activities that reinforce the message of each year's specific lesson.

3. Empowering God's Children® (EGC) programs do not train minors to be volunteers in ministry and do not include human sexuality education.
4. Students are not required to attend EGC in order to receive sacraments or participate in ministry, but attendance is strongly encouraged and should be promoted by the parish or school.
5. Parents who do not want their child to attend an EGC program may sign an opt-out waiver and assume the responsibility of educating their children about abuse prevention. Resources are provided through the parish or school.