

# Background Check Review Board

Information and Work Checklists



Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America  
Youth & Young Adult Ministries

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# Memo to Background Check Review Boards

May 24, 2019  
Saint Symeon the Stylite

Dear Background Check Review Board Member,

Christ is Risen!

It's a blessing to welcome you to our Youth Safety Team.

As we know you appreciate, ministry is about introducing young people to Christ and helping them live out their relationship with the Lord in His Church. And, in order to do that, we need to create ministry environments that are physically and spiritually safe and healthy.

The new **Policies for the Safety of Children and Youth** do exactly that.

And you're going to play a critical role in this important work. As a member of your Metropolis Background Check Review Board, your job will be to review the flagged background screens of potential Youth Workers and determine who can be eligible to participate in Youth Ministry Programs and Events.

We have developed a comprehensive, step-by-step plan to begin implementing the Policies this year.

As a Church, our goal is to ensure that Youth Workers are the only ones participating in Youth Ministry Programs and Events. Youth Workers, as you know, are people who have been registered, trained, and screened under these Policies.

In short, you're going to help us make sure that the people who are leading our youth ministries are prepared and vetted: that we have the right people in place

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to undertake this critical work. And, in order to do that, you need to become a Youth Worker yourself.

In the pages that follow, you'll find a checklist with everything you need to do as part of your important role.

We're both incredibly grateful that you've joined us in this groundbreaking work in the life of the Church.

Together, we can keep our kids safe. Glory to God!

In Christ,

Steven Christoforou  
Director, Y2AM

Father Earl Cantos  
Director & Youth Safety Compliance Officer

# Key Highlights from the Policies

## **What are the Policies for the Safety of Children and Youth?**

Approved by both our Holy Eparchial Synod of Bishops and our Archdiocesan Clergy Laity Congress in 2018, the Policies are the new framework for keeping our kids safe at Youth Ministry Programs and Events across the entire Archdiocese.

The Policies mandate two basic things:

1. Only Youth Workers can participate in Youth Ministry Programs and Events;
2. Youth Workers must report all Abuse and Suspected Abuse, as well as other violations of the Policies; and

In addition, the Policies offer best practices that can be tailored for the needs of particular Youth Ministry Programs and Events.

## **Who is a Youth Worker?**

A Youth Worker is the only person who is eligible to participate in Youth Ministry Programs or Events. In order to become a Youth Worker, a person must:

1. Register with his or her Parish Administrator (and re-register annually after that);
2. Complete the required online video training once per year; and
3. Successfully pass a background screen every two years.

# Highlights (continued)

## **What is a Youth Ministry Program or Event?**

A Youth Ministry Program or Event is any program or event in the Archdiocese that is designed to primarily serve Children or Youth.

This includes everything from youth groups (like HOPE, JOY, and GOYA) to educational programs (like Sunday School) to athletic programs (like Parish basketball and volleyball teams) to cultural programs (like Parish Greek school or Greek dance programs), in addition to youth retreats and camping programs.

## **What is mandated reporting?**

Mandated reporting is something required by law in jurisdictions across the United States. Youth Workers must report to state authorities all instances of:

1. Abuse of Suspected Abuse of a Child or Youth;
2. Neglect or Suspect Neglect of a Child or Youth; and
3. Any imminent dangers to the life of a Child or Youth.

## **How do Youth Workers file such a report?**

**Our partners at Childhelp National Abuse Hotline are available to answer your questions and help direct you to the appropriate state authorities.**

**Call them at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453).**

# Highlights (continued)

## **What else should a Youth Worker report?**

Whenever a Youth Worker makes a mandated report to state authorities, the Youth Worker should must file a Notice of Concern with his or her supervisor to ensure that Church leadership is also informed.

(A template Notice of Concern is included in this PDF for your reference.)

However, Youth Workers may also encounter violations of the Policies that do not rise to the level of a mandated report that needs to be made to state authorities. For example, a Youth Worker might observe someone engaging in inappropriate behavior (such as Bullying or Verbal Abuse) with a Child or Youth, or someone who has failed to uphold an appropriate boundary in an interaction with a Child or Youth that doesn't rise to the level of Abuse. These could include behavior between an adult and child or youth or between peers.

In such cases, the Youth Worker must file a Notice of Concern with his or her Supervisor. This is not about pointing fingers: it is about ensuring that boundaries are maintained and that potentially inappropriate conduct is addressed before it turns into something more serious.

## **What does it mean to be in compliance with the Policies?**

A Parish's compliance with the Policies includes two basic items:

1. Youth Workers are the only people who are allowed to participate in Youth Ministry Programs and Events; and
2. Youth Workers follow the requirements of the Policies when it comes to conduct, mandated reporting, etc.

# Description of Role

The following is a description of the general role and responsibilities of the Metropolis Background Check Review Board under of our Policies for the Safety of Children and Youth.

## **Eligibility**

The Metropolis Background Check Review Board is selected by the Hierarch to oversee and review the criminal background check review process for the protection of our children and youth.

## **Requirements**

1. The Metropolis Background Check Review Board shall protect the confidentiality of the Youth Worker applicants
2. The Metropolis Board shall be made up of at least three individuals. It is suggested that one member be a clergyman, one member be an attorney (preferably on the Metropolis Legal Committee) and one member be a lay person. They may be employees of the Metropolis or volunteers
3. The Board must become familiar with their local and state laws
4. The Board Members shall go through the process of becoming Youth Workers

## **Responsibilities**

1. Adjudicate cases
  - The Metropolis Background Check Review Board shall review all flagged background screens of Youth Worker applicants to determine who is eligible and who is not eligible to be certified as a Youth Worker
  - Reviews reports which have been flagged by the original background screening in order to adjudicate, based on Archdiocesan guidelines, which potential Youth Workers may be disqualified from service
  - The status and relevance of all crimes should be considered on a case-by-case basis
  - Manages the Adverse Action process, based on Archdiocesan guidelines, for all background screenings that do not meet the Policies

# Description of Role (continued)

2. Interfaces with Parish Youth Safety Administrator, Metropolis Youth Safety Administrator, and the Archdiocese Department of Youth Safety Compliance
  - Communicates with the Parish Youth Safety Administrators and Youth Worker applicants as part of the Adverse Action process
  - Works with the Archdiocese Department of Youth Safety Compliance and the Metropolis when identifying an applicant that does not meet the criteria of the Policies

## **Review Guidance**

1. In general, blanket rules (e.g., no felons allowed, no convicts allowed) are not advisable. The nature and gravity of any offense, the amount of time passed since the offense occurred, and the nature of the position sought would all be part of the consideration before the Board
2. Additionally, offenses within the last seven or ten years involving violence against third-parties, theft, fraud, a lack of honesty, or public indecency would likely be considered job-related as to most positions. However, this is not a blanket rule, nor is it all inclusive
3. Make sure to understand applicable state laws regarding the use of conviction records
4. For example, California employers are prohibited from considering certain types of marijuana offenses, and Massachusetts employers cannot consider various misdemeanor offenses
5. Note that arrests that do not produce a conviction should not be considered in any state



# Work Checklist for Background Check Review Board Member



**1**

**Submit your full legal name, email address, and phone number to your Metropolis Youth Safety Administrator**

- It's important that both the Archdiocese and your Metropolis know who you are, and how to contact you, as part of your youth safety responsibilities
- Open and clear lines of communication are key to this work

**2**

**Successfully become a certified Youth Worker under the Policies**

- Consult the Youth Worker packet for details about this process

# Work Checklist (continued)

**3**

## **Successfully complete training specifically for Metropolis Background Check Review Board members**

- Our youth safety vendor, Praesidium, will offer this specialized training
- This training will include both instruction on using the Armatus system and more general instruction on how to review cases

**4**

## **When individual cases are referred to the Background Check Review Board, consider each case individually**

- Follow the guidelines established in the Background Check Review Board Policies
- Work collaboratively with your fellow members on the Background Check Review Board to give each case the attention and consideration it deserves
- Where necessary, followed Archdiocesan guidelines regarding the Adverse Action process

**Thank you very much for your desire and dedication to ensuring the well-being and safety of our Children and Youth.**

Please direct any questions or concerns to:  
Email: [youthsafety@goarch.org](mailto:youthsafety@goarch.org) | Phone: 480.440.2277

# Exhibit 6: Notice of Concern

Individual(s) of Concern: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Concern:

- Inappropriate behavior with a Child or Youth
- Policy violation with a Child or Youth
- Possible risk of abuse
- Other concern

Describe the situation: What happened, where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, who was present, who was notified? Attach additional sheets if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_

If reported to the State, what was their recommendation about investigating? Attach additional sheets if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_

Has this situation ever occurred previously? Attach additional sheets if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_

What action was taken? How the situation was handled, who was involved, who was questioned, were police or other authorities called? Attach additional sheets if needed. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the follow-up plan? Does anyone else need to be notified? Will the situation need monitoring? Would you like someone to call you to discuss this situation? Attach additional sheets if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by: (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Location and address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Once completed, please keep a copy for your Youth Ministry Program or Event files and forward to your local Metropolis/Direct Archdiocesan District Youth and Young Adult Ministries Department.