

## Diocesan Policy Relative to Megan's Law

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**Purpose:** To protect children and young people in our parishes and schools from any possible dangers posed by individuals who are registered sex offenders or sexually violent predators.

**Applicability:** All parishes and schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh

**Definitions:**

*Megan's Law:* Act 24 of 1995, commonly referred to as "Megan's Law," became effective in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on April 21, 1996. Among other provisions, this law created a register with the Pennsylvania State Police of both sex offenders and sexually violent predators. Senate Bill No. 92 enacted in 2004 made significant changes to "Megan's Law," including making information on all registered sex offenders available to the public through the Megan's Law website (see <http://www.pameganslaw.state.pa.us>)

*Parole/Probation:* Generally, a release of a person convicted of a crime from prison provided that certain terms or conditions are observed. Often as conditions of release or early release from prison, a person may have certain restrictions imposed which restrict where parolees may be employed, volunteer, or be in settings with minors who are unaccompanied and where they have more than incidental contact or supervisory or disciplinary power over minors.

**Policy and Procedure:**

I.A. The Diocese of Pittsburgh is committed to the protection of children and young people through the creation of safe environments within our parishes and schools taking into account the information available through Megan's Law. Should a parish or school official become aware by any means, directly or indirectly, of the presence of a person registered under Megan's Law upon parish/school premises, they must immediately notify the pastor, principal or person directly responsible for the ministry to insure appropriate action is taken.

*I.A.1 Once notified, the pastor, and/or appropriate parish/school administrator, must meet with the registered person to ascertain the limits of parole or probation and the duration of the sentence and then determine what additional restrictions shall be imposed and the duration of those restrictions upon attendance at parish and school events where children are present.*

*I.A.2. Based on the conditions of parole or probation and any additional, appropriate restrictions, the pastor shall prepare a "Letter of Agreement" based on the template attached to this policy as Appendix A.*

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- I.A.3. All persons who are registered under Megan's Law and desire to come onto parish/school property for any reason including enrolling their child/children in the school or other parish programs or to participate in any parish/school activities are required to read and sign this Letter of Agreement.*
- I.A.4. A copy of this Letter of Agreement is to be given to the person registered under Megan's Law and a copy is to be kept in the parish office in a secure file accessible only by the pastor and his designees.*
- I.A.5. The pastor/principal shall inform appropriate persons within the parish/school of the parameters of the Letter of Agreement and how they pertain to the individual offender and their family.*
- I.A.6. A copy of the Letter of Agreement is to be forwarded to the Director of the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.*
- I.B. No person, including those who are registered under Megan's Law, shall be denied his or her right of access to the sacramental life of the Church.
- I. B.1. Pastors are to ensure that those registered under Megan's Law with the state police are not restricted from accessibility to the sacramental life of the Church and from attendance at Mass.*
- I.B.2. In rare cases, and for the welfare and protection of the parish community, it may be necessary for the parish to seek a temporary restraining order or even a permanent injunction against a particular individual. This can only be sought after consulting the diocesan office for legal services.*
- I.C. Any person guilty of sexual misconduct with a minor may not have any paid or volunteer ministerial assignment in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Additionally, such persons may not volunteer in any "non ministerial" activity or event where he or she has any possibility of more than incidental contact or supervisory or disciplinary power over minors.

Appendix A  
Template  
Letter of Agreement

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

We at St. \_\_\_\_\_ Parish/School are a community of believers committed to recognition that we are all children of God. We welcome you to our parish but are cognizant of your past serious personal difficulties as a registered individual on the Megan's Law website. Because of your previous conviction involving a sexual abuse of a minor your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of children and youth in our parish community.

We must request that you comply with the following directives and commit to faithfully adhere to them if you are to be permitted to participate in our parish/school.

1. As a registered sex offender who participates at \_\_\_\_\_ Parish/School and as a parent or guardian of a student at \_\_\_\_\_ Parish/School, you may not hold any position at the school or parish which puts you in contact with children other than your own.
2. You may not participate in any organization on parish property that would involve participation of children or young persons.
3. Your appearance on church/school property is limited to attending Mass, receiving the sacraments, participation in limited adult education/formation classes in which no children are present, and attendance at previously scheduled parent conferences where no children are present.
4. You are not permitted to attend any parish or school social events such as concerts, recitals, sporting events, open house, parish picnic, science fairs and events in the nature there of including field trips.
5. If you have children attending the parish school and there is a requirement of Service Hours, you are limited by your prior conviction as how you fulfill your service hours. No service can be done that involves the presence or supervision of children other than your own. All service activities must be those involving only adults.
6. When it is possible, the parish/school may be able to provide an adult "shadow", a person identified by the parish/school who has been fully cleared and qualified as a volunteer or employee according to the standards of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. This would be limited to those parish/school events agreed to by the pastor/school administrator in which you would be required to be with your shadow at all times.

7. Should you be the only means of transportation for your child, specific arrangements will be made to deliver your child to your vehicle if your child is unable to do this on his or her own with appropriate safety/security.
8. If anyone in authority questions your permitted presence on parish grounds or designated areas, you may show but not give them a copy of this signal letter. If anyone not in authority (example another parent or adult) questions your presence here, refer them to \_\_\_\_\_ to confirm your permission to be in that designated area.

We understand that these measures may seem harsh or severe but, in accordance with the Charter for Protection of Children and Young People promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Safe Environments for Children Policy of the Diocese of Pittsburgh we undertake these measures to protect all of our children.

We encourage you with our prayerful support as you walk this difficult personal path.

Sincerely In Christ,

Pastor

I have received, read, understand and  
commit to follow the conditions set forth in  
this letter.

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Parishioner/Parent

Date