

# PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH **PROGRAM** **AND GUIDELINES**



## **Office for the Protection of Children and Youth**

**St. Thomas SyroMalabar  
Catholic Diocese of Chicago**

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# The Handbook

## 1. PREAMBLE

*PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE CHILDREN OF ST. THOMAS SYROMALABAR CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CHICAGO IS A PRIME FOCUS OF OUR SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES. THE CHILDREN ARE TREASURES OF OUR FAMILIES AND OF OUR CHURCH. THEY ARE GIFTS FROM GOD THAT WE ARE CALLED TO PROTECT AND WE MUST ENABLE THEM TO DEVELOP INTO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL, AS GOD SEES IN THEM. AS A DIOCESE WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A HEALTHY, LOVING AND AN UP-BUILDING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE CHILDREN THAT WE, ALONG WITH THEIR PARENTS, ARE FORMING INTO THE FUTURE ADULTS OF OUR DIOCESE AND SOCIETY.*

Everyone who enters our churches, schools, or facilities must experience an environment of prayer and comfort. Not one child or young person should suffer from abuse while at Church. As Christian adults, we have a moral and legal responsibility and are entrusted by God with the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of minors and vulnerable adults.

In order to assure the safety of our children and young people, the Catholic Diocese of St. Thomas SyroMalabar has enacted a complete program of protection. As part of this program, this diocese will

provide appropriate, just, and pastoral care for anyone who has suffered the crime of sexual abuse of a minor at the hands of diocesan clergy or church employees or volunteers. This diocese will report any and all allegations of abuse reported to it to the authorities and will cooperate fully with those authorities.

St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese is committed to these promises and continues to reach out to victims and to respond to allegations. One of the primary means by which this is done is the Safe Environment Program which calls us to integrity, transparency and fidelity. All priests, religious, deacons, employees, and volunteers who work with children, including me your Bishop, undergo background checks and screening. Further, all are required to attend a Safe Environment Program offered in various locations throughout the Diocese. The training of the Safe Environment Program addresses the increased awareness needed regarding abuse and the gravity of sexual abuse. The Diocese also has a policy for the Protection of God's Children and Vulnerable Adults that provides all information regarding the reporting, processing and dealing with allegations.

St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese is a diocese of God's People empowered by the Holy Spirit to promote God's reign in the world. Nourished by Word and Sacrament, we will grow together in faith, in hope, and in passionate love of God and neighbor. In our families we will teach and learn the love of Jesus Christ. In our various occupations we will make

decisions and set priorities in accordance with the values of the Gospel. And in the world around us we will stand always for justice, compassion, and peace.

As Christians, we know that God’s image in each person, and God’s call to holiness form the basis for human dignity. Our duty is to protect this human dignity, especially in the most vulnerable among us, our children. It is essential that they find a safe environment in our homes, in our schools, in our worship communities, and in the general community. Sexual abuse of a minor is a sin and a criminal act, which causes enormous pain, anger, and confusion. In order to protect the children and young people of the Diocese of St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic, from such abuse on the part of personnel acting in the name of the diocese, this policy addresses the need for prevention, reporting and investigation of allegations of sexual abuse of minors. It endeavors to provide a means of outreach to those who have been abused and the communities who are harmed by the abuse.

## **There are four focus areas:**

1. To promote healing and reconciliation with victim survivors of sexual abuse.
2. To guarantee an effective response to allegations of sexual abuse of minors.
3. To ensure the accountability of our procedures.
4. In order to protect the faithful in the future, Article 12 of the Charter states:

“Dioceses/eparchies will establish ‘Safe Environment’ programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Dioceses/eparchies will make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to sexual abuse.” This guideline, which mandates that all dioceses create a safe environment for children and young people who pray, study and worship in our schools and churches, is the basis for our diocesan safe environment programs.

## **PREVENTION**

St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago’s efforts for prevention will focus on screening and education.

1. All Diocesan clergy, religious, seminarians, lay employees, and regular volunteers who have contact with minors must be screened according to diocesan guidelines.
2. All such personnel will participate in education through the diocesan sexual abuse awareness and prevention training program.
3. Education of minors and adults will be offered throughout the diocese.
4. The Criminal Background Screening is an online application through eApps that must be filled out in its entirety and submitted during the work/volunteer application process. Criminal background checks conducted for other purposes cannot be accepted. No one can begin to work/volunteer until the background check is completed and approved. An access code is needed to complete this application and can be retrieved from the location where you work/volunteer. For any questions or concerns regarding this process please contact your primary site (parish or school).
5. A criminal background check will not be processed on a minor (under the age of 18 years old) who is hired or wishes to volunteer. Those 18 yrs. or younger should not be left alone with children. They must be supervised by an adult who is in full compliance.



## REPORTING

Anyone sexually abused as a minor or who knows about a case of sexual abuse of a minor should immediately report it to the civil authorities. When such sexual abuse has been committed by a cleric, religious, seminarian, diocesan or parish employee or a diocesan or parish volunteer it also should be reported to the Bishop of St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese through the Commission for protection of Minors and Young adults Complaints division 630-474-5172 Reporting can be made at any hour of the day.

## INVESTIGATION

The diocese/parish will cooperate with investigations by appropriate civil authorities. In addition, all cases of sexual abuse of a minor committed by diocesan/parish personnel will be investigated by the diocese in order to provide the Bishop with the necessary information to determine the appropriate course of action. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality so as to protect the rights of all parties concerned.

## RESPONSE

The diocesan response to both victim and alleged offender will be to pursue justice with tenacity while also pursuing mercy with love and compassion.

- Victims: The healing of victims, their families, and their community from the effects of sexual abuse by church personnel begins when the allegations

of such abuse are received. Victims of sexual abuse experience a profound sense of loss and betrayal by someone from whom they had the right to expect protection and guidance. This is even truer when the offender represents spiritual authority and one's connection with God. As a result, victims frequently have difficulty trusting others, fearful that they will be blamed for the abusive acts. When victims decide to disclose the abuse they can be assured of receiving a welcoming reception that is compassionate and non-judgmental. To accomplish this outreach, they will be contacted by the Victim Assistance Coordinator.

- **Alleged Offenders:** An accusation of sexual misconduct is personally devastating. Should an allegation of sexual abuse be made, compassion will be exercised toward the accused and every effort will be made to protect his/her civil and canonical rights; understanding there is a presumption of innocence under both civil and canon law.

The Eparchy of St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholics is committed to providing safe environments and fostering continuous improvement in every organization that sponsors activities and/or provides services to children and youth. Through a series of workshops, educational materials, classroom instruction and background checks, the diocese is:

- Increasing awareness of potentially harmful situations through the VIRTUS training workshops.
- Empowering adults and children to act before abuse occurs through the Child Lures Prevention for

Catholic School and Religious Education students and in Youth Ministry with an Inter-Generational Program for families.

- Evaluating background checks for relevance to the employee's or volunteer's position.
- Implementing a Pastoral Code of Conduct which outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for all clergy, employees and volunteers.
- Providing continuing education through the VIRTUS Web site
- Providing other internet resources.

## **2. General Policy**

Sexual misconduct, in all of its forms including pornography, is wrong and will not be condoned. The SyroMalabar Diocese will take appropriate decisive action on all accusations of sexual misconduct in accordance with the applicable provisions of civil and canon law.

## **3. Structure**

### **3.1 The Commission**

#### **3.1.1 Responsibility of the Commission**

The commission is responsible for all deliberations regarding the protection of minors and youth and all sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual misconducts and sexual exploitation of anyone who is perceived

as vulnerable and submit reports, decisions, recommendations, production and approval of all teaching material, syllabus etc. to the Vicar General for approval by the Bishop. The commission is also responsible to assure all the policies and procedures are followed without change. It is also responsible to keep abreast of the changes in this field and make recommendations for changes in policies and procedures. It is also responsible for the annual review/audit of the program/s. The commission also acts as the judicial body in deciding on complaints and recommend disciplinary measure, recommendations for remunerations and rehabilitation of the victims and other procedural recommendations when necessary to the bishop. The commission shall recommend steps for rehabilitation of anyone who is falsely accused or found not guilty. The commission shall meet at least once a year in person and 4 times a year through teleconferencing for approval of all teaching material, syllabus etc.

### **3.1.2 Appointment**

A 5 member Commission is appointed to oversee, direct and evaluate the program along with the responsibility of evaluating complaints and claims on the subject. The Executive director will be an ex-officio, non-voting member of this body. The chairman and the other 6 are appointed by the Bishop for a period of 5 years in consultation with the chairman with the right for reappointment.

### **3.1.3 Commission Chairman Responsibilities**

3.1.3.1 The Commission Chair represents the laity to protect their interests and work closely with the diocesan staff to assure fair, equitable and transparent handling of all complaints and to assure transparency. This position is also responsible for all preventive aspects of the program.

3.1.3.2 As the Judicial head, he/she is responsible for conducting investigations, hearings and recommending a suggested outcome to the bishop while adhering to the USCCB guidelines. He /she is authorized to appoint a subcommittee of 3 or more Commission Members to hear the level one hearing of any cases presented to the Commission.

3.1.3.3 In the event of an appeal, he/she will be the head of the jury with equal votes and a vote to break the tie.

3.1.3.4 He/she can ask for deposition from witnesses that he finds required to get to the truth

3.1.3.5 As the legislative head, he is to review all new policies and procedures presented by other commission members or the Executive director to improve, clarify or correct any deficiencies in the policies or procedure.

3.1.3.6. As the chairman of the commission, he/she will approve and sign all procedures, policies and guidelines that are approved by the commission before submitting to the Bishop for final approval.

3.1.3.7 He/she has the option of sitting in any or the Committee meetings of the organization

3.1.3.8 He/she can be demanded by the bishop to provide input in any curia meetings and he/she may ask permission to appear before the curia for approval of the budget or other matters of importance.

3.1.3.9 He/she shall present an annual budget to the Bishop and defend it in the Curia.

## **3.2 Executive Committee:**

### **3.2.1 Purpose of Executive Committee.**

The Protection of Children and Young Adults is of prime importance and we are bound to create a safe environment for our children. USCCB has published a Charter for the Protection of Children and Young Adults and every diocese is expected to implement it with utmost care. Since our diocese is very extensive and the matter is very serious, we need to have an administrative structure to put into practice the USCCB guidelines and our diocesan instructions.

### **3.2.2 Job Description of the Executive Committee:**

The Executive Committee has to work with the Special Commission set up for the Protection of Children and Young Adults that has a Chairperson and General Convener of the program. Specific function:

3.2.21 Support the Vicar General and the Commission for the Protection of Minors and Youth by providing:

3.2.22 Gathering all complaints and come to a preliminary determination of having “at least the

semblance of truth” and forward those to the chairman of the Commission and the Vicar General

3.2.23 Recommending preliminary protection of minors by sequestration and support for the accused

3.2.24 Providing support and counseling to the alleged victims

3.2.24 Recommending and following up on all supportive services for the victim and accused.

3.2.25 Reporting the complaints to state authorities when indicated and required by law

3.2.26 Providing training for priests, religious, volunteers and employees in the matter of protection of minors

3.2.27 Gathering and maintaining data regarding, complaints, screenings, evaluation, training, and submitting the necessary support for both victims and alleged perpetrators

3.2.27 Provide assistance to the Commission.

### **3.2.3 Appointment**

The 6-member Committee is appointed by the Bishop for a period of 4 years, in consultation with the Commission chair and the Vicar General for child protection, headed by the Executive Director. Members may be reappointed for maintaining continuity.

### **3.3 Executive Director:**

#### **3.3.1 Purpose:**

The Executive Director has to work with the Commission for the Protection of Children and Young Adults, through its Chairperson. The Executive Director will support the Vicar General and the Commission for the Protection of Minors and Youth. He/She will coordinate the functions of the coordinators. The Executive Director of the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth in the St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago has final responsibility to ensure that the diocese deals effectively, comprehensively and promptly with allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy, lay employees, and volunteers. He/She will also negotiate contracts with outside agencies when needed in consultation with the Commission Chair and the Procurator of the Diocese and submit the same to the Bishop for final approval

#### **3.3.2 Responsibilities:**

3.3.20 Be resource for clergy, educators, and diocesan employees and volunteers seeking assistance or information on reporting child abuse.

3.3.21 Complete the Annual USCCB Audit compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

3.3.22 Offer outreach for victims-survivors of clerical sexual abuse and monitor priests removed from public ministry



3.3.23 Assist pastors and principals to monitor compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in preparing for the Annual USCCB Audit.

3.3.24 Receive and review allegations of abuse against clerics, laypersons, and volunteers working in St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago

3.3.25 Attend parish, school, and community meetings to provide information and/or speak about child abuse prevention.

3.3.26 Educate adults about child sexual abuse and how children are placed at risk in our society, and educate children about how they can protect themselves from people and circumstances that place them at risk of abuse.

3.3.27 Monitor the changes in the Protection of Minor's guidelines and implementation strategies and suggest changes in the policies and procedures to the commission.

Prepare an annual budget for the program and present it to the commission. The approved budget from the commission with changes will be presented to the bishop for action

### **3.4 Compliance Coordinator**

#### **3.4.1 Purpose:**

Children and young people can learn, thrive, and grow. The office oversees the training and background checks for all diocesan clergy, , and volunteers. It also

disseminates the diocesan standards of behavior for individuals working with children and young people, provides safe environment training for children, young people and adults, and trains parish and school staff to monitor compliance with diocesan policies and the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (*USCCB*) *CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE*. Compliance Guidelines have been created outlining what is required of parish/mission employees, parish/mission volunteers, priests, deacons, and seminarians. This position is responsible for assuring compliance to this goal, the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth is committed to protecting all of God's children and providing a safe environment

**3.4.2 Duties:** The Compliance Coordinator will oversee the following:

3.4.21 Virtus/Protecting God's Children for Adults™ training

3.4.22 Virtus/Protecting God's Children for Adults™ Facilitators training

3.4.23 Safe Environment training for children

3.4.24 Site Administrator training

3.4.25 Monitoring of the Criminal Background Check System

3.4.26 Keep up with the progress of the safe environment programs in various areas.

3.4.27 Record keeping of all correspondence related

to screening of clergy, employees, volunteers of chancery, parishes and missions

3.4.28 Preparation of documents for annual audit directed by USCCB Chapter for Protection of Children and Youth

### **3.5 Communication Coordinator**

#### **3.5.1 Purpose:**

Ensure a well-publicized communication regarding the policies and procedures of the diocese by using modern technology. Per Article 6 of the USCCB Chapter for the Protection of Children and Youth, St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago is to maintain a clear and well-publicized diocesan standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other paid personnel and volunteers of the Church in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people. In addition, Per Article 7, St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago is to be open and transparent in communicating with the public about sexual abuse of minors by clergy within the confines of respect for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved. This is especially so regarding informing parish and other church communities directly affected by sexual abuse of a minor. This position is not responsible to release any information about the program or its confidential activities to the public except through approved spokesperson.

#### **3.5.2 Responsibilities-Duties:**

3.5.21. Incorporate the publication of the Safe Environment for the Children and Youth Program and related material on the St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese website. Ensure the information meets the diocesan standards and keep it current. Assist the Executive Committee in composing of Safe Environment for Children and Youth publications.

3.5.22 Maintain the toll-free number for complaints and keep it up-to-date.

3.5.23 Utilize the social media to support the goals of this program

### **3.6 Training Coordinator**

#### **3.6.1 Purpose:**

Educate clergy, employees and volunteers in the St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago on how to prevent child sexual abuse, how to recognize sex offender behaviors, and how to create safe environments for children and young people in our parishes, schools and community through appropriate training and retraining as per the prevailing policies.

#### **3.6.2 Duties:**

Be in compliance with Article 12 USCCB Chapter for Protection of Children and Youth. Per the Article 12 St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago is to maintain “safe environment” program, which the bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively

with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, volunteers, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people. This Diocese is to make clear to clergy and all members of the community, the set standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to children.

3.6.21 Provide age appropriate safe touch training prescribed by the commission, currently through VIRTUS to children in the parish

3.6.22 Provide training for the parents of minors about the various aspects of child sex abuse, regulations about pornography and safe use of social media as prescribed by the Commission, currently through VIRTUS

3.6.23 Provide safe environment training for new employees, volunteers and clergy before they start their services to the diocese as prescribed by the commission, Currently through VIRTUS

3.6.24 Keep record of all the training in the parish/mission office and then reporting to the central office.

### **3.7 Screening Coordinator**

#### **3.7.1 Purpose:**

The Safe Environment Office of the St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago was created in January 2004 to ensure compliance with

Articles 6, 12, and 13 of the USCCB CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE. The Charter set forth that all dioceses/eparchies were to have clear and well-publicized standards of behaviors and boundaries (Article 6), maintain safe environment programs for all children and adults (Article 12), and evaluate the background of all lay employees, clergy, and all volunteers who would have contact with children (Article 13). The Safe Environment Office will fulfill the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People—namely, the promise to protect children and promote healing of victims-survivors of clerical sexual abuse. To accomplish this, the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY) has signed a contract with Austin Computing Solutions and Integrated Screening Partners to help the diocese to complete the background screening of clergy, employees and volunteers.

### **3.7.2 Duties:**

Per Article 13 of the USCCB Chapter for Protection of Children and Youth, St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago should evaluate the background of all incardinated and non-incardinated priests and Religious who are engaged in ecclesiastical ministry in the diocese and all paid personnel and volunteers whose duties include ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors. Apply evaluative techniques in deciding the fitness of candidates for ordination. Specifically, they are to utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies. In order to accomplish these tasks the screening coordinator is equipped with

the following:

3.7.21 Assure that all employees and volunteers fill out an application in the prescribed format and completes the initial training program, with the assistance of the Training Coordinator. A record of this will be kept in the parish/mission office.

3.7.22 Assist the parish to complete online criminal background check (eAppsDb) for all clergy, employees, and volunteers of chancery, all parishes, and missions as per items 8.1. A record of this is to be kept in the central office

3.7.23 Take necessary action on applications with criminal reports as procedures listed in Appendix C

### **3.8 Service (Victim Assistance) Coordinator**

#### **3.8.1 Purpose:**

The Office of Victim Assistance Ministry recognizes that for many victims-survivors it is difficult to imagine finding the courage to let officials of the Catholic Church know that they were sexually abused by a priest or church personnel. Therefore, after a formal allegation is made, the office offers a variety of services to assist victims-survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones in their effort to achieve psychological, emotional, and spiritual healing. Some of these services include counseling, spiritual direction, support groups and other social services agreed upon by the victim and the Office of Assistance Ministry. This position is also required to provide services to the accused in helping

them to go through the processes and to rehabilitate them in the event of false accusations or if and when the accused is reintroduced to the ministry.

### **3.8.2 Duties:**

3.8.21 Achieve psychological, emotional, and spiritual healing, the service coordinator will provide pastoral care, support, and resources to victims-survivors of clerical sexual abuse and their loved ones.

3.8.22. Provide pastoral care, support, and resources to the accused in their efforts to achieve psychological, emotional, and spiritual healing and reintroduction to the community when possible.

3.8.23 Collect, contact and maintain information about legal, psychological, psychiatric, and social services across the diocese. Since the diocese is spread across the whole United States, it is very important to have such a resource directory.

## **3.9 Complaints Coordinator**

### **3.9.1 Purpose:**

Per Article 2 of the USCCB Chapter for the Protection of Children and Youth, St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese is to have policies and procedures in place to respond immediately to any complaint. Document the complaint and assist in processing the complaint promptly as per the procedures to any allegation where there is reason to believe that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred. This Diocese appoints



a competent person or persons for this purpose. He/she will also coordinate, in cooperation with the Service Coordinator to assistance with the immediate pastoral care of persons who report having been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other church personnel. The procedures for those making a complaint are to be readily available in printed form in the principle languages in which the liturgy is celebrated in the diocese and be the subject of public announcements at least annually. Anyone sexually abused as a minor or who knows about a case of sexual abuse of a minor should immediately report it to the civil authorities. When such sexual abuse has been committed by a cleric, religious, seminarian, diocesan or parish employee or a diocesan or parish volunteer it also should be reported to the Bishop of St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese and through the Commission for Protection of Minors and Young Adults Complaints Division. The phone number is 630-474-5172. Reporting can be made at any hour of the day.

### **3.9.2 Duties:**

3.9.21 Monitor the complaints hot line number 630-474-5172. Respond to any call received at the complaints hot line immediately, normally within 24 hours. Prepare an in-take report on the call received. Obtain maximum information from the caller and report to the appropriate authority as in attachment K of this guide. In unreachable circumstances, notify Victims Assistance Coordinator to provide necessary assistance to the caller.

3.9.22 Complete and submit the Intake document to the Executive Director with all the available information about victim/s, witnesses and others who could be affected by the complaint or the incident.

3.9.23 Every effort should be made to protect children from further harm by removing the alleged perpetrator from the services where he/she could be a risk for others. And provide him/her with a safe and supportive environment.

3.9.24 Assist the Executive Director in further investigations in a confidential manner.

3.9.25 Assist the Review Board in providing services to the victims and the accused as per policies.

3.9.26 Keeps record of all complaints and reports this to the compliance coordinator when required.

## **4.10 Parish/Mission Site Administrators**

**4.10.1 Purpose:** Functions of a Virtus Facilitator and Local Site Administrator are intersected. Because of this, the diocese recommends and most facilities choose to have one person undertaking both tasks. The sole purpose of this position is to integrate and implement policies and procedures established by St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago in each parish/ mission and report to the Executive Director.

This position will also work closely with the Pastor/ Mission Director and the DRE in the local institution in implementing the USCCB (United States Conference

of Catholic Bishops) Chapter for Safe Environment for Children and Youth as applied to this diocese.

### **4.10.2 Duties of Local Site Administrator**

4.10.21 Local Site Administrator of a parish/mission sustains a significant role in launching and supporting the Safe Environment Program in his/her faith community, coordinating with the pastor/mission director, DRE and the parish committees.

4.10.22 The local site administrator is to be knowledgeable of defining child sexual abuse, screening, and selection of employees and volunteers, and victim advocacy. This requires ongoing training which the diocese will provide.

4.10.23 The local site administrator will handle all confidential documents related to background checks and training records of the church members, volunteers, and children.

4.10.24 It will be the responsibility of this person to ensure compliance of Safe Environment program for their respective church and preparing all documents needed for the annual audit and perform all duties as requested by the diocesan office.

### **4.10.3 Appointment**

Each parish/mission needs a Local Site Administrator. This person, designated by the pastor/director, and approved by the Commission, for a period of 5 years. Members may be reappointed for maintenance of continuity. They should meet the

qualifications and duties included but are not limited to the following:

#### **4.10.4 Qualifications:**

4.10.41 This is a volunteer position with Facilitator Certification

4.10.42 An adult member of the parish and/or mission – must be an adult member because of access to personal and sensitive material, and out of concern for the privacy of individuals.

4.10.43 Computer experience including data entry and use of spreadsheets

4.10.44 Demonstrated organizational skills and Detail oriented

4.10.45 Ability to maintain confidentiality

4.10.46 To ensure the integrity and preserve the confidentiality of the criminal background check database, the User ID and Password is only released to the person designated by the pastor/director to manage the site database.

#### **4.10.5 Duties:**

4.10.51 Keep an accurate record of volunteers and employees serving in all ministries of the church community that involves the presence of Children and Youth.

4.10.52 Verify the accuracy of the list of volunteer and employees at the beginning of the school year and during administrative changes in the church.

4.10.53 Keep records of all training and input training records on the Virtus Web Site using “administrator” function.

4.10.54 Monitor eAppsDb for the background checks database at least bi-weekly and Review the background check status of each new application that has been approved, restricted, or rejected at the “Organizational” level.

4.10.55 Assist those who are not computer literate with criminal background checks and Virtus online applications.

4.10.56 Inform the Vicar or DRE immediately of any rejection or restrictions listed at the Organizational level in the eAppsDb system.

4.10.57 Provide full support to prepare a transparent annual audit when requested by the diocese.

4.10.58 Inform the pastor/director immediately of any rejections or restrictions listed at the Organizational level. Contact Thomas Moolayil at the diocese if no explanation is provided.

4.10.59 Perform all duties as required by the diocese as relevant to the position.

#### **4.10.6 Responsibilities**

4.10.61 Monitoring and updating the online databases for eAppsDb criminal background checks and Virtus training for all parish employees and volunteers on a regular basis;

4.10.62 Keeping the pastor/mission director informed regarding the compliance of all employees and volunteers;

4.10.63 Maintaining compliance files for employees and volunteers. The file should contain a signed application form, the signed Code of Conduct Acknowledgment Form(renewed every year), signed acceptance form from the Program Guide, copy of the VIRTUS certificate, (a copy of DCFS's Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking form or similar form mandated by respective State, and a Mandated Reporter certificate, if applicable.)

4.10.64 Entering completed workshop dates to eAppsDb.

4.10.65 Collecting completed CANTS Forms annually at the beginning of the school year, and mailing them in "bulk" to DCFS (Department of Child and Family Services) or designated agencies.

4.10.66 Attend a 4-hour Local Site Administrator Training at a facility authorized by the diocese.

The Local Site Administrator is appointed by the Executive Director, upon recommendation of the respective Pastor/Mission Director, for a period of 5 years. Members may be reappointed for maintenance of continuity.

## **4.11. Facilitator for Virtus Protecting God’s Children for Adults**

4.11.1 Purpose of a Facilitator is to be knowledgeable of defining child sexual abuse. He/she is to administer training for employees, volunteers, parents, and children. A facilitator is certified after completing a two days training authorized by the diocese. The purpose of the facilitator training is to prepare designated people to conduct Virtus training for volunteers, teachers, parents, and children in their own parish/mission centers. These facilitators will become VIRTUS CERTIFIED on the prevention of child sexual abuse. The facilitators incorporate policies and procedures into the training defining child sexual abuse, addressing the reporting of child sexual abuse, the screening and selection of employees and volunteers, and victim advocacy. The facilitators are supplied with resources and accessories for conducting the training.

4.11.2 This person should be able to prepare and schedule the following training at the parish/mission and document them accurately:

4.11.21 Protecting God’s Children for Adults Training for catechists, volunteers, employees visiting pastors, and religious, who may become in contact with the children.

4.11.22 Safe Environment Awareness training for the parents

4.11.23 Age-appropriate Virtus training for the Children.

## **4.12. Educators:**

These are members of the Community hired by the parishes/missions for providing services for those who will be under the definition of “minors” They would be screened, background-verified and supervised by the Coordinators.

## **4.13. Forane Administrator**

Considering the physical extent of the diocese and the number of parishes and missions (87 at this time) the diocese has reorganized its activities by dividing the diocese in to 14 Foranes with number of parishes and missions with in local jurisdictions. The Commission is organizing the structure with corresponding Forane administrators with added responsibilities.

4.13. 1 The position is designed to allow coordination of training, background checks and public relations for the Commission.

### **4.13.2 Duties**

4.13.21 Coordinate the training activities in the locality so that training sessions could be shared by the other members of the Forane.

4. 13.22 Assists in background checks and other governmental relationship for the region.

4.13.23 Publish region-wide training schedules in the beginning of the academic year. (June)

4.13.24 In accordance with the goal of compliance to the Diocesan guidelines, they will coordinate retreats and other church activities



4.13.25 Conduct informational sessions on a regional basis

4.13.26 Collect regional data for annual audit

4.13.27 When requested they will conduct local audit of the parishes and missions under the Forane jurisdiction

4.13.28 Maintain a resource list for the Forane.

### **4.13.3. Appointment**

This position is appointed by the executive director in consultation with the Coordinators, pastor and the commission chair.

### **4.13.4 Qualifications**

4.13.41 Should have completed Virtus Facilitator training and Site Administrator training.

4.13.42 Should be registered with the eAppsDb program

4.13.43 Would be willing to travel to different locations for updated training

\$.13.44 Should have internet and computer skills.

## **5. Definitions**

The following definitions are specifically and only applicable to this policy. They are not to be construed as having any other application in the operation of the SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago.

**5.1 SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:** Refers to any conduct that includes sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and sexual molestation, all of which is civilly unlawful and /or contrary to the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.

**5.2 SEXUAL ABUSE:** As defined by the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, refers to a sexual assault on, or the sexual exploitation of a minor.

**5.3 SEXUAL ASSAULT:** Refers to unwanted attempted physical acts of a sexual nature, threatened against an adult, vulnerable person or a minor.

**5.4 SEXUAL BATTERY:** Refers to unwanted physical acts of a sexual nature, including rape, incest, oral copulation, sodomy, and lewd touching taken upon a non-consenting adult, a vulnerable person, or a minor.

**5.5 SEXUAL EXPLOITATION:** Refers to conduct related to child pornography or other activities that are intended to subject minors and/or vulnerable persons to harm of a sexual nature.

**5.6 SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** Refers to conduct which includes, but is not limited to explicit sexual propositions, sexual innuendo, suggestive comments, sexually oriented “kidding”, “teasing” or “practical jokes”, jokes about gender specific traits, lewd or obscene language or gestures, display of sexually explicit printed or visual material, and physical contact including all forms of inappropriate and unwelcome touching.

5.7 DIOCESE/DIOCESAN: Includes the following entities of the SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese: The SyroMalabar Bishop of Chicago, a corporation sole; parishes, missions, societies, pastoral center of the SyroMalabar Diocese, school of Religious Education and Language; and all other entities as understood in civil law, over which the Bishop has legal supervisory responsibilities.

5.8 MINOR: Any person under the age of 18 years old or as defined by civil law.

5.9 REASONABLE SUSPICION: objectively reasonable for a person to entertain a suspicion, based upon facts that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing on his or her training and experience, to suspect sexual misconduct.

5.10 SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: Conduct which includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other physical, verbal or visual conduct based on sex, when (1) submission to the conduct is an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment; (2) submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for an employment decision; or (3) the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

5.11 VULNERABLE PERSONS: refers to minors and adults. All minors are considered vulnerable persons. Any person eighteen years or older is considered vulnerable when that person, because of

emotional, mental or physical impairment is unable or unlikely to report sexual misconduct unless assisted. An adult person may be considered vulnerable when that person stands in a position of lesser authority or status to the offender, and by reason of such lack of authority or status, is unable or unlikely to report sexual misconduct.

5.12 Pornographic behavior: Production, distribution, storage, display, electronic transmission, electronic reception, exposition and encouragement of the use of pornographic material communication of such material through social media and any other communication that could be encouraging the use of pornographic media

## **6. Policy Distribution**

The policy and the guide will be distributed to all parishes and missions, members of the commission, the executive committee and any other persons involved in the complaint/investigation process. This will also be available on the website of the diocese.

## **7. Approval of Procedural Manual**

The manual and the guidelines initially approved by the commission on May 30, 2014 will be re-approved by the commission and forwarded to the Vicar General and the Bishop for re-approval. These will be reviewed every year and revised every other year. The face sheet will document the dates of review and revision.

## 8.1 Evaluation of staff

8.1.1 Background Checks of Staff and Volunteers will be conducted prior to hiring/ initiating voluntary services, through programs approved by the Commission. The cost will be borne by the respective parishes/missions. To facilitate this, each employee / volunteer must submit an on line application for background check at the time of applying for employment/ voluntary service. The diocese strongly recommends the use of agency the diocese has signed contract with for background check for proper tracking and accurate record keeping.

8.12. Clergy (Including International Clergy) Priests, Deacons and Nuns shall have a background check conducted by the agency used by the diocesan office. International priests/ nuns would have obtained a statement in the prescribed form from their bishop where the priest is incarnated or the superior general of respective religious order, by request from the Chicago SyroMalabar Bishop using appropriate letter. The letter would clear the person of any sexual misconduct prior to migration and include all information about sexual misconduct complaints.

8.13. All staff members must have training and certification acceptable to the diocese prior to working in any programs of the diocese where minors will be involved. This training has to be completed prior to the beginning of the school year. A summary report in the prescribed form Appendix h, should be submitted to the diocesan executive director by October 1st each year.

8.14. These documents will be reviewed annually by the executive director.

## **8.2 Training for children and parents**

8.21 Age appropriate training programs as recommended by the commission will be recommended for each of the parish /mission. The SyroMalabar Bishop may request assistance from the local Latin diocese when necessary. If any parish/mission needs assistance in organizing training program, they should contact the executive director for assistance.

8.22 Each parish/mission will have two training programs conducted annually. Diocese, through the Executive Committee will produce, and distribute syllabus and teaching materials in both English and Malayalam for the training of parents, to the parishes and missions. Each parish/mission will have annual training for parents in September of each year. The parents have a right to refuse such training for their child/children. In this event, the parents will sign a release form (Appendix d) and will be provided learning material for their own use.

8.23 Each parish/mission will incorporate a training session in their Religious Education Curriculum, as prescribed by the Executive committee and approved by the commission chair of the diocese for each student group (grades) early in every school year. The training details should be documented in the prescribed form, Appendix j, which is to be submitted to the compliance office before October 15 of each year and the data should be entered at the Virtus website.

### **8.3 Handling of Complaints**

8.31 Any child/parent/member of the parish and member of the parish/commission can log on to the website and report their concerns to the commission through the “Notification” link, on any issue that is perceived as risking the safety of minors.

8.32 A formal complaint of sexual nature against clergy, employees or volunteers can be filed through the “Complaint” link at the website. A Telephone number is also published in the diocesan and parish/mission bulletin and website where one can record a formal complaint. This will be monitored by the executive member who handles complaints and a prompt response can be expected.

8.33 For those who have no access to a computer, a complaint notification can be made by using appendix 1 and that will be made available through the DRE/mission coordinator. This should be sent directly to the executive director.

8.34 Any complaints or notification will be responded to within 10 working days. The executive director will notify: the complaining party, the receipt of the complaint and the respective parish priest, if the complaint is not against that particular priest, the Vicar General and Chairman of the Commission. The parish priest/director will alert the alleged perpetrator of the complaint and ask for a written explanation. The Executive director or his designee will collect the necessary information regarding the circumstances of the complaint and after discussion with the vicar

general and the chair of the commission will refer all valid (should at least have the semblance of truth) complaints to the Commission. He/she will also contact the victim and parents of victims when necessary and assess the damages.

8.35 Executive Director may be obligated to report to the civil authorities about certain complaints by state law and he/she is expected to comply with those rules and regulations.

8.37 Executive director with the help of his/her staff will evaluate the victim and submit a report to the commission for consideration in the proceedings. In the event of a notification, the executive director will confer with the pastor/mission director and institute satisfactory solutions. There may be occasions where the commission chairman and the vicar general may need to be involved in the solution. When needed, the executive director should offer assistance to the victims even when the procedure is not complete. The executive director should make sure that the minors are protected from further harm by the alleged perpetrator, including measures to remove the potential offender from contacts.

## **8.4 Commission Proceedings**

8.41 The commission chair will constitute a committee (Review Board) of three members from the commission to study any particular complaint, collect evidence, conduct hearings and formulate recommendations to the Bishop regarding proper



disposition. Normally these proceedings should be completed within 90 days of the complaint.

8.42 When the commission determines that there is a need for compensation and or rehabilitation such recommendations should be made to the Bishop for approval and implementation

8.43 The deliberations and the recommendations are subjected to the superseding authority of the canon law and the state and federal laws.

8.44 The victim or the accused has the right to ask for an appeal to the full commission in which case the commission will meet and review the evidence and any new information and rule on the appeal.

8.45 The bishop can send the complaint back to the commission for reevaluating after adding his observations and comments. In this event the full board will re-review the case and submit final recommendations.

## **8.5 Reporting and record keeping**

All record keeping of the Commission will be the responsibility of the executive director and confidentiality, fairness and compassion should be the guiding principles of the operation. All records are the property of the diocese and should not be destroyed, mutilated or caused to be removed from office/computers. The commission will respond to legal subpoenas immediately after seeking legal counsel from the legal consultants

## **8.6 Remuneration and Rehabilitation**

Victims of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse where the diocesan clergy, staff or volunteers are determined to be the perpetrator, the rehabilitation section of the executive staff will recommend and organize appropriate treatment and rehabilitation plans when recommended.

## **9. Distribution of teaching material.**

The executive director is responsible for production of all educational material under the guidance of the commission, the Bishop and the Vicar General. All possible teaching material would be available for down load or link through internet. Copies of the forms as described in the appendix should also be made available in paper format for use by people who do not have access to the computer.

## **10. Data Gathering and Annual Summary Statements.**

Each Parish/Mission should submit yearly an upon request, the annual report before August 15 of each year to the Executive Director, in the prescribed form, Appendix k that includes details of the program for summary submission to USCCB.

## **11. Action Plan:**

Considering the wide spread nature of the diocese which contains two different structures namely parishes and missions which has different needs and demands, It is practical to address the programs and

monitor these differently. Parishes, always have CCD as a requirement with a DRE, and have Mass every Sunday while many of the missions meet once a month and usually do not have a Director of Religious Education. Moreover, these missions do not have permanent pastors and some priests have responsibility for multiple missions. Missions are being established faster than the capability of the diocese. The diocese is financially unable to support a paid office staff and depends on volunteers to achieve its goals. A big majority of the minors are included in the parish structure.

The Diocese intends to establish and maintain a website, which will include, Programs, Teaching material, Periodic bulletins, and Links to complaint procedures which will be monitored by the Executive Director and reported to the Chairman of the Commission in a timely manner.

The Commission will also conduct information sessions during the annual DRE meeting.

The commission also recommends that a session addressing the protection of minors issues be added to the Pre-cana training programs to extend the awareness of this problem.

The commission will encourage the pastors/mission directors to approve any programs conducted in their organization where minors and young adults are involved, with strict focus on protection of minors and young adults.

## **12. Internal Audit**

Each parish/ mission will submit the required audit form that will be reviewed by the Executive Director and the Chairman of the Commission and 25% of the parishes will be audited each year by an appropriate authority and results recorded. Any parishes that are not in significant compliance will be included in the audit the following year. At the end of three years 20 % of the missions will be added to the yearly audit.

The Diocese will maintain an annual audit report based on the submissions by the parishes/missions and based on its own in-person audits.

## **13. External Audit**

The USCCB Office for the Protection of Minors and Young Adults would periodically conduct an internal audit to assure that the program is in compliance with the regulations set in by the USCCB.

**St. Thomas SyroMalabar  
Catholic Diocese of Chicago**

Office for the Protection of Children and Youth  
372 S. Prairie Avenue, Elmhurst, IL 60126-4020

**Indemnity for Forane/Parish  
Extended Programs**

1. In consideration for receiving permission to participate in the (name of program)

\_\_\_\_\_, I hereby RELEASE, WAIVE, DISCHARGE, AND COVENANT NOT TO SUE (Name of Parish) \_\_\_\_\_ and or the St. Thomas SyroMalabar diocese or any of its subsidiaries, and hold harmless the program organizers or their heirs, sponsors, managers, or any officials associated to the institution where the event is organized, the institution itself or any other appointed supervisor from any and all claims, demands, or causes of action which are in any way connected with my participation in this activity or our use of the facilities contracted by (Name of Parish) \_\_\_\_\_  
REGARDLESS OF WHETHER SUCH LOSS IS CAUSED BY THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASEES, or otherwise and regardless of whether

such liability arises in tort, contract, strict liability, or otherwise, to the fullest extent allowed by law.

2. I am fully aware of the risks and hazards connected with the activities (Name of Program) \_\_\_\_\_, and I am aware that such activities include the risk of injury and even death, and I hereby elect to voluntarily participate in said activities, knowing that the activities may be hazardous to my property or myself. I understand that (Name of Parish) \_\_\_\_\_ and or the St. Thomas SyroMalabar diocese or any of its subsidiaries does not require me to participate in this activity. I voluntarily assume full responsibility for any risks of loss, property damage, or personal injury, including death that may be sustained by me or any loss or damage to property owned by me, as a result of being engaged in such an activities, WHETHER CAUSED BY THE NEGLIGENCE OF RELEASEES or otherwise, to the fullest extent allowed by law.

3. I further hereby AGREE TO INDEMNIFY AND HOLD HARMLESS the RELEASEES from any loss, liability, damage, or costs, including court costs and attorneys' fees that Releases may incur due to my participation in said activities, WHETHER CAUSED BY NEGLIGENCE OF RELEASEES or otherwise, to the fullest extent allowed by law.

IN SIGNING THIS AGREEMENT, I ACKNOWLEDGE AND REPRESENT THAT I have read the foregoing Waiver of Liability and Hold Harmless Agreement, understand it and sign it voluntarily as my own free act and deed; no oral representations, statements, or inducements,

apart from the foregoing written agreement, have been made; I am at least eighteen (18) years of age or am the parent/legal guardian of the participant(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ and fully competent; and I execute this Agreement for full, adequate and complete consideration fully intending to be bound by same. I hereby agree and affirm that by signing I acknowledge that this my sole identity and have not falsely signed under a different name.

I have signed this Waiver and Agreement under seal on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

**PARTICIPANT / LEGAL GUARDIAN (IF THE PARTICIPANT IS UNDER 18 year of age.**

Circle whatever is applicable:

1. I have signed this Waiver and Agreement under seal on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_ on behalf of my Son/ Daughter
2. I understand that my son/daughter and the supervisors of the above program would strictly follow the guidelines set up by the Diocese
3. I hereby give permission to my son to act as a group leader, facilitator, referee, captains trainers or night supervisor
4. I permit my son/daughter to stay overnight in a public or private proprietary facility approved by the Diocese to house such gatherings under the public regulations

with proper supervision of minors by VIRTUS trained and background checked adults. Housing of the minors is subjected to the guidelines set up by the Protection of Minors program of the diocese as attached herewith.

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Full Name of Parent	Signature	Date
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Guardian of:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Full name of the Child)

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Full name of the Child)

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Full name of the Child)



# **St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago**

Office for the Protection of Children and Youth  
372 S. Prairie Avenue, Elmhurst, IL 60126-4020

## **Guidelines/Requirements for Overnight Accommodations for Programs Serving Minors**

1. Leadership shall:
  - a. Seek to assure that rooms at a retreat center or hotel/motel empty into interior halls that are lighted and secure.
  - b. Seek hotels/motels with security officers on staff.
  - c. House minors together according to gender.
  - d. Ensure no adult rooms with a minor unless the two are related.
  - e. Make rooming lists available to the chaperones and the hotel security officer.
  - f. Take care to ensure a safe environment for showering, bathing, and dressing. Adults and minors shall do these activities at different times and, when possible, in different locations.
  - g. Secure signed parent permission form, which outlines the exact nature of the activity and location prior to leaving on a trip. This includes day and overnight trips.

h. All drivers, (Volunteers or otherwise) would have to have a copy of their driver's license and insurance card on the vehicle submitted to the Leader of the program for filing. They are also expected to take an on-line safe driving course in the particular state

**i. All chaperones and room supervisors are VIRTUS trained and background checked as per the diocesan regulations for the protection of the minors and youth and have a signed copy of the Receipt of Diocesan Code of Conduct and acknowledgement of Indemnity for the specific event in file.**

**j. All children under the age of 18 will be instructed in age appropriate touch safety instructions at the beginning of the program, retreat, or other activities.**

k. For travel outside the country, it is highly recommended that worldwide travel insurance coverage is purchased 30 days prior to travel.

l. Maintain a roster of all the attendees with addresses, contact phone numbers, and health issues including the medications the minor will have to use during the program a copy of this will be made available to all chaperons. Other drugs and substances of abuse including alcohol is not allowed in the programs.

## **2. Dorm and Large Room Facility Settings**

In addition to the above, in dorms or other large room facility settings where multiple participants are lodging overnight, a minimum of two adults are permitted to lodge in the same room as same-gender minors. They are encouraged to use the beds closest to the door and farthest away from minors.

**3. Housing of a minor in a private home or facilities not approved for living for such purposes by the State Government and Federal Government.**

4. Indoor and outdoor courts swimming facilities Public bathrooms etc. shall be inspected prior to the start of the programs with the view of child safety and every morning.

**St. Thomas SyroMalabar  
Catholic Diocese of Chicago**

**Office for the protection of Children and Youth  
Background Check Procedures**

1. Scope: All employees and volunteers of SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago or related entities who, in the course of service to the Diocese, have ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors.

2. Purpose: Continue a pre-placement screening program and an ongoing evaluation process to protect the members of our community to whom the Diocese or related entities minister.

3. Policy: It is the policy of the Diocese to promote an environment in which children who receive the Church's ministry and services can expect to do so in safety and without fear, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Therefore, background screening will be completed on all those who serve the Diocese who have ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors (including those who participate in an overnight event).

If a criminal background check reveals adverse information or unfavorable results, the Diocese will conduct an individualized assessment using criteria designed to identify potential risk to minors. A prior conviction shall not automatically disqualify a person from participating in a program or activity. Except where

required by law, criminal background checks of the Diocese, conducted pursuant to this Policy will be used only for purposes consistent with this Policy and will otherwise be kept confidential. Records of background checks will be maintained separately from an individual's personnel file.

#### **4. Definition**

4.1 Minor: any individual under the age of eighteen (18); or anyone who habitually lacks the use of reason.

4.2 Those who serve the Diocese: Includes all persons, eighteen years or older, clergy, religious, or lay, who participate in the work of the Diocese or related entities, whether fulltime or part-time, paid or unpaid.

#### **5. Procedure**

All employees/volunteers who will have, as part, or all, of their ministry of service, ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors under the age of 18 must have the background screening completed satisfactorily before they begin to work with minors. Such employee/volunteers must be notified that a criminal background check will be necessary before they will be allowed to begin service in any activity involving minors. Employees/volunteers must submit name, Social Security number, and home address, employer if any, and acknowledge by signature their authorization to complete the background screening. Parishes will utilize Austin Computing Services (the eApps Db data base) to conduct background check investigations. Employee and Volunteer background

checks shall be conducted at the location of their service with the Diocese.

5.1 Each parish/mission center will set up an internet account with [www.eAppsDb.com](http://www.eAppsDb.com). All applicants will be supplied with the procedures to submit on line application for background check personally. Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of all information. If a volunteer has no record, the report can be viewed by the requesting location. However, if there is a conviction, that report cannot be viewed by the requesting location, but will be sent to the Diocesan Executive Director (or the coordinator for Background Check).

5.2. The steps in determining whether an individual should be approved based on their background check,

5.2.1 Once an individual submits a background check application to Austin Computing Services, International Screening Partners (ISP) runs the criminal record check. If there is nothing (criminal) on the record, it comes back approved from Austin Computing System, and that is good and acceptable for the diocese and the data is sent to the parish/Mission the individual is serving.

5.2.2 If the BACKGROUND CHECK finds any criminal record, it sends a report to the diocese with a red flag “records found.” The Diocesan Screening coordinator, after obtaining available details of the offense and the legal disposition, will follow the following procedure:

5.2.3 The diocesan background check coordinator will look over the available details of the background check. There are certain items that the diocesan background check coordinator can approve, automatic or at his/her

discretion (listed below.) In those cases, the Coordinator will ask the executive Director to remove the flags at eApps and the applicant will be treated without prejudice. A record of such action will be kept by the Executive Director.

List of Charges applied to this section:

**Automatic:**

- ▶ Traffic tickets older than 5 years that are not listed else ware.
- ▶ Misdemeanors older than 5 years that are not listed else ware.
- ▶ Disciplinary actions in a civil suite
- ▶ Employment actions not involving sex-offences

**Discretionary:**

- ▶ Three or more moving violations (traffic) in any continuous two-year period
- ▶ Revocation or surrender of any state or federal licenses including driver’s license
- ▶ Resignation or withdrawal of privileges in lieu of disciplinary action for major crime/litigation.
- ▶ Disciplinary action for alcoholism and substance abuse that does not involve a felony conviction
- ▶ Ordinance violations

5.2.3 Any applicant whose background search would

report a conviction for any abuse of a minor (physical, sexual or mental) would automatically receive a “rejected” status and be prohibited from employment or volunteering within the parishes or institutions that are part of or related to SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago. The applicant and the pastor/mission director will be notified of this in the prescribed form (#). In case of priest applicant, this will be immediately referred to the Vicar General in charge of the priests for further action. He would complete t.4e section c, d and e.

5.2.4 If the offence is something that the diocesan director is not authorized to approve, then the director will prepare a letter to notify the Commission Chair of the diocesan Office of Protection for Children and Youth. The chairperson will personally notify the Bishop concerning all applications that require diocesan involvement to finalize. After consulting with bishop, the chairperson will prepare a “BACKGROUND CHECK DISPOSITION STATEMENT” for the parish priest/mission director. This certificate will have the complete list of offenses on it so that the parish priest/mission director would call the individual in and discuss each item with him/her.

5.2.5 The parish priest/mission director will note in detail on the back of the certificate, the specifics of the offense, what the individual has done to modify his/her behavior to insure there will be no further offenses of that nature, check off one of three selections. (1) Approved, (2) Rejected, or (3) Approved with noted restrictions, and note logical explanations to support the decision The chairperson will give the parish priest/mission director up to four weeks to return the Exception Certificate, during which time the individual may not serve in any ministry.



5.2.6 The Exception Certificate is then returned to the Chairperson, and then the chairperson will notify the coordinator through the copy of the certificate to approve the individual in the system. However, if the chairperson is still not comfortable with the parish priest/mission director's decision or explanation, the chairperson will review the certificate with the bishop and, perhaps, the attorney. They will then make the final determination to approve, reject, or approve with noted exceptions.

5.2.7 If Diocese decides to reject the BACKGROUND CHECK, then the parish priest/mission director is notified so that the concerned individual can, in turn, be notified of our decision.

5.2.8 If rejected, the individual can appeal the decision in writing to the bishop, giving justification and providing any additional information as to why we should not reject his/her background check. After reviewing any additional information or extenuating circumstances the individual presents, the Bishop and the Chairperson, perhaps again with the advice of our attorney, make a final determination, which is conveyed to the individual. This decision may be permanent, or the individual could be reconsidered in 2 or 3 years, should the individual wish to do so.

5.2.9 If the background check comes back because the individual has been the subject of a special investigation by the church or civil authorities, in the matter of abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, murder, rape or incest, the procedure is suspended till a final decision is made in that investigation, and then the same basic procedure is followed as in item #2. However, in this circumstance, the individual must also present the parish priest/mission

director with documentation from the civil authorities vindicating him of the allegation/charge. Otherwise, their BACKGROUND CHECK application is “rejected.” That notwithstanding, the presentation of such documentation is still no guarantee that the individual will be approved.

## **6. Ineligibility**

Any individual convicted of a crime listed below is ineligible to participate in any service or ministry position of the Diocese or related entity, which involves ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors:

- ▶ Conviction of any crime that results in the death of the victim
- ▶ Conviction for attempted murder
- ▶ Conviction of any crime involving sexual assault/molestation
- ▶ Conviction of any felony assault/battery
- ▶ Conviction of any misdemeanor assault/battery charge in the last five years
- ▶ Conviction of three or more misdemeanor assault/battery charges in a continuous three-year period
- ▶ Conviction of any felony distribution or possession of marijuana or other drugs of abuse.
- ▶ Conviction of any crime involving the promotion, advertisement, distribution, possession, or possession with intent to distribute pornography involving minors.

Any one known to be charged with the above should

be removed from office/volunteer work or should be relieved from such capacity pending completion of the proceedings in Section 2.

## **7. Rechecks**

All employees/volunteers who continue to have ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors as part of their entire ministry of service must undergo a background screening every three years.

## **8. The Appeal Process**

Any person who applies and is not accepted for employment or volunteer service or whose service as a member of the clergy, an employee or a significant volunteer is terminated for any reason under these guidelines, will have the right of appeal to the Commission for review.

Note: Notwithstanding what a criminal background check may indicate, the Diocese and its related entities, reserve the right to refuse employment and/or volunteer services depending on the circumstances shown by the background check.

***Appendix C***  
(Sample letters)

**St. Thomas SyroMalabar  
Catholic Diocese of Chicago**

**Office for the protection of Children and Youth**

Background Check Disposition Statement

The following individual's background check record has been pulled for further discussion prior to approval for volunteering/employment with parish/mission of St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago:

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Position:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Review:

- 1) BACKGROUND CHECK RECORDS FOUND
- 2) APPLICATIONFLAGGED \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact Dr. Paul Cherian at 630-769-9603 to discuss this applicant's background check history. Once you have reviewed this applicant's history with Dr. Paul Cherian, please complete this form and return it to the following address:

**St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago  
Office for the Protection of Children and Youth  
372 S Prairie Ave  
Elmhurst, IL 60126  
Attention: Dr. Paul Cherian**

\_\_\_\_ I have reviewed this applicant's history with the Chairperson of the Office for Protection of Children

and Youth of St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago. After careful review, I wish to approve this application.

\_\_\_ I have reviewed this applicant's history with the Chairperson of the Office for Protection of Children and Youth of Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago. After careful review, I do not wish to approve this application.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Priest/Mission Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish/Mission: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## *Sample Letter*

Date:

Regarding: Volunteer Application

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

The application you submitted for volunteer service in St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago cannot be approved at this time based on the following (reasons checked below):

1) Results of the background check done via Integrated Screening Partners.

2) You have not satisfied the necessary requirements for the ministry below:

- Complete the eAppsDb application
- Complete the Acknowledgement of the Code of Ethics and Behavior for Adults who Minister with Children in the diocese.
- Complete a background check
- Complete Protecting God's Children for Adults training

Please find A Summary of Your Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act attached to this letter (For background checks completed through Integrated Screening only).

Sincerely,

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(Parish Priest/Mission Director)

**St. Thomas SyroMalabar  
Catholic Diocese of Chicago**  
Office for the Protection of Children and Youth

**Code of Conduct for Church Personnel**  
(Employees, volunteers and visiting /temporary staff)

As someone who ministers to young people, I will maintain a professional role and be mindful of the trust and power I possess as a minister to young people. To achieve this,

**I will:**

- ▶ Never touch a minor in a sexual way or other inappropriate manner.
- ▶ Never be alone with a minor in a residence, rectory, sleeping facility, or any other closed room.
- ▶ Never share a bed with a minor.
- ▶ Never take an overnight trip alone with a minor.
- ▶ Never introduce sexually explicit or pornographic topics, vocabulary, music, recordings, films, games, web sites, computer software, or entertainment.
- ▶ Never provide drugs, alcohol, or tobacco to a minor.



- ▶ Never use, possesses, or be under the influence of illegal drugs.
- ▶ Never use alcohol when engaged in ministering to a minor.
- ▶ Never engage in physical discipline for behavior management of minors. No form of physical discipline is acceptable.

### **Measures to Aid Observance of the Code of Conduct**

#### **To help me keep the promises in the Code, I will:**

- ▶ Report any suspected child abuse to the proper authorities.
- ▶ Avoid physical contact when alone with a minor. Physical contact with minors can be misconstrued, especially in private settings.
- ▶ Avoid overnight stays with a minor unless there is another adult present in a supervisory role.
- ▶ Avoid providing overnight accommodations for minors in private residences or rectories.
- ▶ Avoid driving alone in a vehicle with a minor.
- ▶ Refrain from giving expensive or inappropriate gifts to a minor.
- ▶ Avoid meeting privately with minors in rooms, offices, or similar areas where there is no window or where the door cannot remain open. If one-on-one

pastoral care of a minor is needed (e.g., Sacrament of Reconciliation) avoid meeting in isolated locations.

- ▶ Exercise caution in communicating with minors through e-mails or the internet.

- ▶ Only share work/ministry related e-mail addresses with minors. Do not participate in chat rooms with minors.

- ▶ Ensure that all activities (extra-curricular, catechetical, youth ministry, scouting, athletics, etc.) for which you are responsible have been approved in advance by the appropriate administrator.

- ▶ Have an adequate number of adults present at events. A minimum of two adults in supervisory roles must always be present during activities for minors.

- ▶ Release young people only to parents or guardians, unless the parent or guardian has provided permission allowing release to another adult.

- ▶ Avoid taking minors away from the parish, school, or agency for field trips, etc. without another adult present in a supervisory role. Obtain written parental permission before such activities. Permission slips should include the type, locations, dates, and times of the activity and emergency contact numbers.

## **Practical Suggestions**

These are some practical suggestions for identifying permissible and impermissible conduct.

## **Conduct that May Be Permissible**

Appropriate affection between Church personnel and minors constitutes a positive part of Church life and ministry. Nonetheless, any touching can be misunderstood and must be considered with great discretion. Depending on the circumstances, the following forms of affection are customarily (but not always) regarded as appropriate.

- ▶ Verbal praise.
- ▶ Handshakes.
- ▶ “High-fives” and hand slapping.
- ▶ Pats on the shoulder or back.
- ▶ Hugs.
- ▶ Holding hands while walking with small children.
- ▶ Sitting beside small children.
- ▶ Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- ▶ Holding hands during prayer.
- ▶ Pats on the head when culturally appropriate.

## **Conduct that is Not Permissible**

Some forms of physical affection have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following are examples of affection that are not to be used:

- ▶ Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- ▶ Kisses on the mouth.
- ▶ Holding minors over four years old on the lap.
- ▶ Touching buttocks, chests or genital areas.
- ▶ Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms.
- ▶ Touching knees or legs of minors.
- ▶ Wrestling with minors.
- ▶ Tickling minors.
- ▶ Piggyback rides.
- ▶ Any type of massage given by minor to adult.
- ▶ Any type of massage given by adult to minor.
- ▶ Any form of unwanted affection.
- ▶ Compliments that relate to physique or body development.

# Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form

## Employees and Volunteers

Parish/School/Agency \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have received a copy of the Code of Conduct for Church Personnel. I have read and understand this Code of Conduct, and I agree to abide by it. I have also read and understand the “Measures to Aid Observance of the Code of

Conduct” and the “Practical Suggestions” and will employ them to help me observe the code of conduct. A violation of this code can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination and/or removal from ministry.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Position

The signed Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form shall be kept in employee personnel files at the agency/parish/school or in a general volunteer file at the agency/parish/school.

Please return this completed form to the site where you are an employee or volunteer.

# Chicago St. Thomas SyroMalabar Diocese

## Background Check Instructions

Chicago St. Thomas SyroMalabar Diocese has contracted eAppsDB to provide background check service for all of its parishes and missions. Please follow the instructions below to complete the registration at eAppsDB and submit the application for background check.

Note: When you access the eAppsDB service for the first time, you will need to register for a user account and the registration page requires an Access Code. Please obtain the Access Code for background check from your parish/mission. Please do not share your access code with anybody else.

- Open your browser and go to <https://www.eappsdb.com>
- At the ‘Login Page’ of eAppsDB, you will first need to register for an account. To do so, select ‘Syro-Malabar’ from the drop-down list for organization and click on Register button.

You should now be at the ‘New User Registration’ screen. All fields on this screen except email address are required fields.

- In the ‘Primary Site’ field, select the church at which you are employed or at which you do the majority of your volunteer work.

- The ‘Access Code’ field requires entry of a code that will be provided by the St Thomas SyroMalabar Diocese. Please contact your parish/mission for the access code.
- The ‘Type of Application’ is required, click on the radio button beside ‘Employee’ or ‘Volunteer’ that applies to your application.
- In the ‘User ID’ field, you should enter a user ID that you would like to use for access to your application. Please read the requirements for user ID at the bottom of the registration screen.
- In the ‘Password’ field, you should enter a password that you would like to use for access to your application. Please read the requirements for password at the bottom of the registration screen. You are prompted to enter your password twice for verification purposes.
- In the ‘First Name’ and ‘Last Name’ fields, please enter your name as it appears on your driver’s license.
- In the ‘Date of Birth’ field, please enter your DOB in mm/dd/yyyy format. You are prompted to enter your DOB twice for verification purposes.



Please write down your user ID and password in order to access your application at a later time. Store this information in a safe place.

Once you have completed requested information, click 'Submit Registration'.

You will receive a message that you have been successfully registered in the system. To continue with the application process, click the link that says: 'Please click here to login and continue your application. This will take you to the 'Login Page' screen.

- At the 'Login Page' enter your user ID and password in the areas provided and click 'Login' to continue.
- After you successfully login to eAppsDB, you will be taken to the 'Application Overview' screen for your application. This screen indicates the status of your application, a list of the application forms to be completed, and the option to view or submit your application.
- St. Thomas SyroMalabar Diocese requires each of the listed application forms be completed. The red 'X' located by each application form indicates the form has not been completed. To fill out the forms, click on the form name in the list on the right hand side of the screen. After completing requested information in section, click 'Save'. A green check mark will appear by the forms that have successfully been completed.

- After all forms have been successfully completed, the ‘Submit Application’ button will be activated and you will be able to submit your application. To get started, click on the ‘Main Application’ form.

If questions should arise during your application process, please click on ‘HELP’ in the top left hand corner of the screen in which you are currently working. You will be taken to our HELP screen information for that section. If you still need help, click on the link at the bottom of the page that says ‘To report problems with this web page, click here.’

**(Sample letter for Internal Audit)**

Dear Local Site Administrators,

As part of Annual National Audit for the Chapter for Protection of Children and Youth, United Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) dioceses are required to perform a local audit of parishes to ensure compliance status.

The diocese has the responsibility to conduct an audit of local parishes and the report has to be included in the review documents. Also, the audit team may want to visit a local church to assess the level of program implementation.

Considering the above requirement, the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth of our diocese has selected the following three parishes in the -----area for local audit:

**1. Parish Name -----**

**Site admins are requested to pick any three dates and time from the list below and notify us your options. The audit will take place only one day. Upon receipt of your picks, we will notify you which option has been finalized for your parish.**

## 1. Date and time of possible dates

Please note that this audit is meant to be an evaluation of Safe Environment activities taking place in your parish. This will help us to identify the areas we need to focus on improvement. Your cooperation of and support for the Safe Environment Programs are highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

**Thomas Moolayil**

Executive Director

Office for the Protection of Children and Youth

SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago

**cc to:**

Bishop Mar Jacob Angadiath

Auxiliary Bishop Mar Joy Alappatt

Rev. Dr. Augustine Palackaparampil

Dr. Paul Cherian

**(Parish Letter Head)**  
St. Thomas SyroMalabar  
Catholic Diocese of Chicago

Dear Parent,

The Touching Safety Safe Environment Instruction of St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago is an age-appropriate personal safety curriculum to provide your child with basic skills to help keep them safe from dangerous or abusive situations. Our parish will be providing instruction to children and youth to help them recognize improper touch, understand that they can say “no” and tell a trusted adult. The instruction is gentle and will help your child learn about these unpleasant realities in a positive way. Your child will not be exposed to specific sexual language or depictions of graphic situations or to anatomically correct language regarding private body parts.

This is an optional program. Parents have every right to choose to cover this material at home. However, it is important to realize that adults can make every effort to provide a safe environment for children, but they cannot always be there to protect children from exposure to dangerous situations. Working together and using the materials in this program, parents and catechists can help provide the rules, information, encouragement, and practice that children need to protect themselves

Dates for the instruction will be included in your calendar

Parents are invited to attend the Virtus Training for Protecting God’s Children for Adults to get a deeper understanding about the program.

If you do NOT wish for your child to participate in Safe Environment Instruction, please sign the release below, detach and return to the Director of Religious Education of your parish before the date of your child's instruction.

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I have read the information regarding Touching Safety Safe Environment Program of St. Thomas SyroMalabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago.

I have received the *Parent Guide to Internet Safety for Children & Teens Understanding, and Preventing Child Sexual Abuse*.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have decided to take on the responsibility of instructing my child/children to prevent sexual abuse at home. I do not wish to participate in the instruction offered at the parish.

Children's names: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of parent/guardian

Date