March 20, 2017

Dear Rev. Frs., esteemed members of the parish councils and faithful,

Christ is in our midst! I pray you are having a blessed Lenten Journey. Three years ago the Holy Synod at its March Meeting *mandated* background checks for all clergy and those who have frequent contact with the youth of the parish. Who was required to have the background check expanded over time and the type of check perfomed has not been very consistent.

As we are now due to begin renewing our background checks, the OCA has provided the attached **GUIDELINES On Background Checks of the *Orthodox Church in America* On Sexual Misconduct**. Please review this document carefully. Although this new approach will increase our workload at the Diocesan Center, the electronic method will be the most efficient method. All background checks are to be done by Protect My Ministry. We can no longer accept background checks done for another entity or from another company. The cost for a check without the driver history is $14.95 and the cost for a background check with a driver history is $27.45.

Our Diocese will implement the Background Checks of this policy in the following manner:

1. B**ackground Checks --- Electronically, i.e., those that have email.** This is the preferred method, as it will reduce the workload.
2. To complete your required Background Check for the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, please go to the following link: <https://ministryopportunities.org/Index.aspx?uid=75693> Then scroll down to **Current Ministry Opportunities**, under that heading, select **Diocese of Eastern PA**. Select your parish and continue. (This link will also be available on our website.)
3. Then fill in your personal information and consent to the background check.
4. Clergy, or the Council Chair where there is no priest, will provide this link to all those of their parish requiring a background check. They will need to fill out their personal information, email address and consent to the background check. (*An email address is required to process online applications.*)
5. Clergy, or the Council Chair where there is no priest, will supply a list to the Diocesan Office of all those requiring background checks in their parish as well as their email addresses. (This will help us monitor full compliance and the ability to follow up.)
6. The Diocesan Office will receive a notice once the consent form has been completed online from *Protect My Ministry,* and we will order the appropriate background check for the clergy and faithful.
7. The OCA will in turn bill the Diocese for the background checks.
8. The Diocese will then bill the parish for reimbursement.
9. Those who have not lived in the state of Pennsylvania for at least ten years and have contact with children are required by the state to have fingerprint checks. Please contact Matushka Sandra Kopestonky, our Administrative Assistant for instructions.
10. **Background Checks (For those who do not have email)**
11. Clergy, or the Council Chair where there is no priest, will provide the attached forms or access them from the Diocesan Website. They may be obtained by going to **DOEPA.ORG**, select the tab that reads “***Resources***,” then click on “***Background Checks***.” There they will find instructions and two forms that will need to be filled out: ***Applicant Data Collection Form*** and ***Background Investigation Form***.
12. The applicant will need to fill out these forms, which requires their personal information, and consent for the background check and mail it to *Screening Coordinator, Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, 144 St. Tikhon’s Rd, Waymart, PA 18472*.
13. Clergy, or the Council Chair where there is no priest, will supply a list to the Diocesan Office of all those requiring background checks in their parish as well as their contact information. (This will help us monitor full compliance and the ability to follow up.)
14. The Diocesan Office will order the appropriate background check for the clergy and faithful.
15. The OCA will in turn bill the Diocese for the background checks.
16. The Diocese will then bill the parish for reimbursement.
17. Those who have not lived in the state of Pennsylvania for at least ten years and have contact with children are required by the state to have fingerprint checks. Please contact Matushka Sandra Kopestonky, our Diocesan Administrator for instructions.
18. **National Sex Offender Registry (** [**http://www.nsopw.gov**](http://www.nsopw.gov) **)** There is no charge for this registry.
19. The Diocese will require the full legal name(s) of all Metropolitan Council Members and Diocesan Council Members from the parish priest. The Diocese will then check the registry.
20. The parish priest or Dean, in cases where there is no priest assigned, will check the registry for Parish Council Members, Church Officers, Choir Director and Altar Servers (Adult and teen)

Attached please find the **GUIDELINES On Background Checks of the *Orthodox Church in America* On Sexual Misconduct**; and a spreadsheet listing dates of Background checks we have on file. Please insure there is no lapse between your previous background check and the one coming due.

Yours unworthy father in Christ,



+ Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

Attachments:

GUIDELINES On Background Checks of the *Orthodox Church in America* On Sexual Misconduct

PSP Background Check Compliance (Shows date of previous background check)

Applicant Data Collection Form

Background Investigation Form