

CHANGES TO PENNSYLVANIA'S CHILD ABUSE LAW

I. MANDATORY REPORTER TRAINING:

There has been a change in who is identified as a Mandated Reporter. According to the law, “*An individual, paid or unpaid, who, on a regular basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child...*” **This means any individual, who meets the above definition, which includes clergy, staff and volunteers is a Mandatory Reporter.**

As a result, a church must:

- Require all clergy and other employees, who accept responsibility for a child, to take three (3) hours of Department of Human Services approved training no later than **June 30, 2015**
- For new employees, who will bear responsibility for children, this training must be taken within **90 days of hire** or the beginning of volunteer service
- Volunteers are currently not required to undergo Mandated Reporter training, but it is recommended.

The training must be offered by a DHS approved trainer. In most cases, this means the religious judicatory cannot offer the training itself, unless it has been approved by the DHS to do so. The training teaches recognition and reporting of child abuse.

To obtain training, go to one of the sites below:

- www.pa-fsa.org - click on the yellow “Mandated Reporters” box, a drop down box will appear, and under Mandated Reporter Training, there are several options. Select the one which best suits your needs. *There is a fee for this training.*
- www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu - you will be required to register for this site. Simply follow the online instructions from that point on. *This training is FREE.*

II. BACKGROUND CHECKS:

All employees over the age of 14 and adult volunteers (who are responsible for children) must complete background checks.

A. All must complete the PA STATE POLICE CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD

1. To obtain this clearance, go to:

<http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/findaform/childabusehistoryclearanceforms/index.htm>

- a. click on “[Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal record Check Form \(SP4-164\)](#)” and download the form. Please note that you will need a certified check or money order. *Cash and personal checks are NOT accepted.*

B. All must complete the PA STATE POLICE CHILD ABUSE HISTORY CLEARANCE

1. To obtain this clearance:

a. for a paper submission, go to

<http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/findaform/childabusehistoryclearanceforms/index.htm>. Click on

“CY113 form – English Child Abuse Clearance” and download the form. Please note that you will need a certified check or money order payable to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the amount of \$10. *Cash and personal checks are NOT accepted.*

- b. to submit a request electronically, click on: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS> and click on “Create a New Account.” You will need a credit card to complete the request.

C. All employees and any volunteer who has lived in PA for fewer than the last ten continuous years

must complete the FEDERAL CRIMINAL HISTORY BACKGROUND CHECK (with submission of fingerprints)

1. The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services is utilizing Cogent Systems to process fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks. The fingerprint based background check is a multiple step process. For more information and to begin the registration process, go to www.pa.cogentid.com//index_dpw.htm.

III. REPORTING

In cases where mandated reporters suspect child abuse, reports must be made directly by the person who suspects that abuse has occurred. To make a report, go to www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or call 800-932-0313. If a report is made by telephone, the reporter must file an electronic or written report within 48 hours of making the oral report.