

Background Check and Workshop FAQs

Q: SJMS is a small school community. Is this really necessary?

A: While the risk may be small, this workshop participation and background checks are a small price to pay where the children of our school are involved.

Q: Did something happen that caused SJMS to take this action?

A: No specific event occurred to bring about this decision, but the environment around the country was such that the board deemed it was prudent to require this of our volunteers.

Q: Do the teachers and administration adhere to these requirements? What about after-care staff?

A: All school staff, extended day staff, and summer program staff, whether they are working directly with children or not, already participate in the sexual abuse workshop and are screened via background checks.

Q: Do other schools do this?

A: Yes. A growing number of both private and public schools as well as other volunteer organizations require this of their volunteers.

Q: I would prefer to take a workshop that is not Catholic-based. What options do I have?

A: There may be other community based programs available. At present we do not have a list of area offerings. If you choose to participate in another program, you must provide evidence of participation to the School Administrator. The "Protecting God's Children" workshop was chosen on merit and because it is offered for very little cost to the school. There is no charge to parents to participate in this course. Workbook materials are provided by the school.

Q: What kind of events would preclude my volunteering?

A: Each case is handled individually based on guideline in place by the Diocese. Generally, only offenses of a violent or sexual nature would prevent you from being approved to volunteer with children. Some examples would include assault, domestic violence, or corruption of a minor.

Q: What if my background check reflects an offense from my college days?

A: While there are serious offenses that would absolutely prevent someone from volunteering with children, not everyone with an offense is precluded from volunteering. These are handled confidentially on a case-by-case basis. Also, there are also many opportunities to volunteer where supervision of children is not involved, such as Winter Festival, Adult Fundraisers, etc.

Q: Will teachers know about my past?

A: Absolutely not. Teachers will only be given a list of approved volunteers. They won't know who applied for a background check or receive any information about the background checks.

Q: Do I have to do this every year?

A: Present policy requires that each person complete the course and background check upon joining staff or before becoming a volunteer for the first time. It is the expectation that the school administrator would be notified of any incidents arising after a background check.