

DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

2500 North Tyler Street • PO Box 7565 • Little Rock, Arkansas 72217 • (501) 664-0340 • www.dolr.org

REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS POLICY **FOR** **DIOCESAN PARISHES AND SCHOOLS**

I. REASONS FOR A POLICY ON REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS (“RSOs”)

The Arkansas Sex Offender Registry Act (Ark. Code Ann. § 12-12-901 *et seq.*), also known as “Megan’s Law,” provides among other things a community notification system whereby certain information about registered sex offenders (“RSOs”) is released to criminal justice agencies and the general public in order to assist in protecting public safety. In Arkansas, RSOs may be assigned one of four levels, based on risk: Level 1 (low risk); Level 2 (moderate risk); Level 3 (high risk); or Level 4 (sexually dangerous person).

The Catholic Church also has laws, policies, and guidelines regarding the sexual abuse of minors. In the United States, the Church’s laws on sexual abuse of minors must also comply with the pertinent civil laws of the given jurisdiction. In our diocese, as in all others, those laws are implemented through various means, including our Safe Environment Program.

To comply with both the civil laws and the Church laws pertaining to the protection of minors, dioceses across the country have enacted formal policies and guidelines on restrictions and limitations to be placed on registered sex offenders. Ever since the creation of our Safe Environment Program, our diocese has advised parishes on what restrictions ought to be in place for RSOs who wish to participate in parish life. Our diocese continues to receive inquiries from parishes, pastors, and parishioners regarding restrictions RSOs, and such restrictions obviously overlap with the concerns of our Catholic schools.

Accordingly, the Diocese of Little Rock has issued the instant *Registered Sex Offenders Policy for Diocesan Parishes and Schools* (the “Policy”), which is in keeping with both prior practice in our own diocese as well as the written policies enacted by dioceses throughout the country. The Policy is not meant to isolate or discriminate against any individual, but rather to put in place protective boundaries within our parishes and schools to create a safe environment for all children, youth, adults, and RSOs.

II. RSOs AND PARISH INVOLVEMENT

When an RSO is made known to parish leadership, the pastor or administrator of the parish must ensure that the following requirements are put in place.

A. Limitations

1. The RSO is not eligible to hold any volunteer or employee position.
2. The RSO must select an adult chaperone who is known to and approved by the pastor or administrator (the “approved chaperone”).
3. The RSO is not permitted on parish property except for purposes of attending scheduled public liturgies, and then only with his/her approved chaperone. The approved chaperone must accompany the RSO at all times while present on parish property.
4. The RSO may be involved in parish groups only after having obtained the express permission of the pastor or administrator. If the pastor or administrator approves such a request, the RSO must be accompanied by his/her approved chaperone, and the head of that ministry will be informed of the status and identity of both the RSO and the approved chaperone. The RSO may not participate in any parish ministries or groups that involve or include minors.
5. The RSO may request an exception to the above limitations. The pastor or administrator may grant exceptions only for compelling reasons and in limited circumstances, and only after having first obtained the approval of the Chancellor for Canonical Affairs, who is generally charged with implementing the diocese’s Safe Environment Program.
6. The RSO shall notify the pastor or administrator within twenty-four (24) hours of being contacted by any law enforcement officer concerning any new sexually-related charges or offenses.
7. If the RSO fails to abide by any of the above limitations or any other part of this Policy, he/she may be precluded from entering onto parish property altogether.

B. Notifications

1. Selected parish staff and volunteers may be informed, on a need-to-know basis, of the identity of the RSO and the approved chaperone, in order to ensure compliance with this Policy.
2. The parish reserves the right to notify all parents of minors in the parish to ensure that they are aware of the RSO’s background, in accordance with Arkansas law.

C. Supervision

1. The approved chaperone must:
 - (a) be known to and approved by the pastor or administrator,
 - (b) agree to submit to a criminal background check, and

- (c) sign a written document agreeing to follow the requirements of this Policy.
2. If the approved chaperone is not available in a given situation, the pastor or administrator may identify and approve a temporary chaperone to accompany the RSO for a single occasion.
3. The RSO may be asked by the pastor or administrator to sit in a specific location in the church for monitoring purposes.
4. Insofar as is reasonably possible, the RSO must avoid sitting next to an unrelated minor.

III. RSOs AS SCHOOL PARENTS

When it is made known to school leadership that the child of an RSO attends a Catholic school within the Diocese of Little Rock, as a matter of state law and diocesan policy, the school principal shall ensure that the following requirements are put in place.

A. Limitations

1. If the RSO wishes to communicate with his/her child's teachers or administrators, he/she may only do so by telephone, regular mail, or e-mail, or by making an appointment to meet when school is not in session and school children are not present. The RSO must receive written approval from the principal in advance for any such appointment, including parent-teacher conferences.
2. As a general rule, the RSO is not permitted to be on school grounds while children are present, nor is the RSO permitted to be present at school-related events, whether on school property or elsewhere.
3. The RSO is permitted to be on school property to drop off and pick up his/her own child, with the following conditions:
 - a. The RSO may not be present on campus for any period of time longer than that which is reasonably required to perform this task.
 - b. The RSO must remain in his/her vehicle at all times.
 - c. The RSO is not permitted to drop off or pick up any children other than his/her own child.
4. With the express prior written permission of the principal, an RSO parent may be permitted to attend specified school events that directly involve his/her own child, with the following conditions:
 - a. Such permission may be granted by the principal only after having first obtained the approval of the Chancellor for Canonical Affairs, who is generally charged with implementing the diocese's Safe Environment Program.

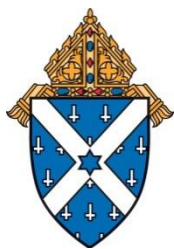
- b. The RSO must select an adult chaperone who is known to and approved by the principal (the “approved chaperone”). The approved chaperone must accompany the RSO at all times while present on school property.
 - c. The RSO may only be present on school property for the specific event for which he/she was granted permission.
5. The RSO is not permitted to volunteer or work at any school events.
 6. The RSO has the right to review his/her child’s educational records. The RSO may do so by receiving the prior written approval from the principal to be on school grounds for that purpose, and making an appointment to review those records after normal school hours when school children are not present.
 7. The RSO shall notify the principal within twenty-four (24) hours of being contacted by any law enforcement officer concerning any new sexually-related charges or offenses.
 8. If the RSO fails to abide by any of the above limitations or any part of this Policy, he/she may be precluded from entering onto school property altogether.

B. Notifications

1. Selected school staff and volunteers may be informed, on a need-to-know basis, of the identity of the RSO and the approved chaperone, in order to ensure compliance with this Policy.
2. The school reserves the right to notify all parents of minors in the school to ensure that they are aware of the RSO’s background, in accordance with Arkansas law.

C. Supervision

1. The RSO’s approved chaperone must:
 - (a) be known to and approved by the principal,
 - (b) agree to submit to a criminal background check, and
 - (c) sign a written document agreeing to follow the requirements of this Policy.
2. If the approved chaperone is not available in a given situation, the principal may identify and approve a temporary chaperone to accompany the RSO for a single occasion.
3. If and when the RSO is given permission to attend a specific school event accompanied by his/her approved chaperone, the RSO may be asked by the principal to be in a specific location on school property (or wherever the school event is taking place) for monitoring purposes. Moreover, the RSO must avoid contact with unrelated minors insofar as is reasonably possible given the circumstances.



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ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT

REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS POLICY FOR DIOCESAN PARISHES AND SCHOOLS

By my signature below, I attest that I have read, understand, and hereby agree to abide by the provisions of the Diocese of Little Rock's *Registered Sex Offenders Policy for Diocesan Parishes and Schools*.

Full Legal Name of Registered Sex Offender (Printed)

Signature of Registered Sex Offender

Date

Full Legal Name of "Approved Chaperone"
(if applicable)

Signature of "Approved Chaperone"

Date

Signature of Pastor/Administrator/Principal

Date