



Archdiocese of Seattle

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Protecting the Young and Vulnerable

SEP Newsletter ~ July 2023

Summer is already here!! Don't let the dog days of summer get you down! Read on to share in the Top Ten Sweet Summer Tips from SEP!!



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For more information or questions please email sep@seattlearch.org or call 206-274-3188



Summer Tip #1 ~ Monitor Compliance Regularly

Thank you for all your great efforts at ensuring that your locations are in order and compliant with our Safe Environment requirements!

Remember, monitoring compliance is not a once-a-year activity! Please run reports regularly:

- **Master Report** *At-a-glance report for overall compliance of your users*
- **Background Check Report** *At-a-glance for any outstanding background checks*

Keep up on compliance management! Be prepared prior to next May! Stay ahead of the game so next year’s compliance verification is not a big drain on your time!

Summer Tip #2 ~ ParishStaq Pointers

Many locations have already transitioned to ParishStaq, and many more will do so over the coming months. Remember that ParishStaq interfaces with Virtus, which allows ministry leaders to determine if their group members are compliant or non-compliant with SEP requirements. Red/Green coding will let them know [**Green** for go ~ compliant; **Red** for stop ~ non-compliant].

SEP local coordinators: please assist ministry leaders as needed to give guidance about how to proceed if one of their members is non-compliant. Reach out to your ministry leaders and come up with a plan!!

- **Notification of new users** Staff with admin access in Virtus will get a notification when a new user signs up in Virtus. Take advantage and review the status of their profile BEFORE syncing with ParishStaq!
- **Profile Clean-up** Please clean-up new user profiles as needed: Review role, primary location, job title, continuing training status, contact with minors/vuln adults, etc. Revise as needed prior to syncing.
- **Syncing with ParishStaq** Syncing profiles with ParishStaq can only happen once a location goes live! We have an instruction for this process so please contact sep@seattlearch.org if you need a copy.

Virtus ID for syncing is found in the URL when you are in a user’s profile.





Summer Tip #3 ~ Know the difference between our Initial Training Options

There seems to be confusion about the Online Awareness 4.0 module and when it is used.

We now have **two options for initial training** for *Protecting God's Children for Adults* sessions:

- **In-person group session** in a parish or school facility ~ 3 hour class led by the facilitator
- **Internet-based at-home personal session** ~ *Protecting God's Children for Adults Online Awareness 4.0* for individuals who are unable to attend an in-person session due to scheduling or other conflicts. This format is accessed when the user logs into their new profile. On the Home page they need to click on the link "you have 1 online module assigned" to begin the video. Once complete their profile is automatically approved.

Both options fulfill the requirement for initial training; a user need only choose one or the other, not both (which some locations have been confused about); a new user can register for either format when they create their Virtus profile.

Zoom classes are no longer permitted. In-person at a facility or the Online Awareness module viewed from home are the two formats we now have available.

REMINDER: Refresher modules are determined by Virtus and assigned automatically every three years. The user will be sent an email from Virtus a week prior to due date, as long as the email address in their profile is current!!

Summer Tip #4 ~ Promote/Publicize the need for new Facilitators

Protecting God's Children for Adults in-person classes require a Facilitator to conduct the training sessions. Please advertise in your bulletin quarterly and as needed. Each parish should have at least one trained Facilitator who is available to conduct classes on a regular cycle - every two to three months depending on the demand at your location.

- **Applications** Applications are required for anyone wishing to become a new Facilitator. The individual must be endorsed by the pastor.
- **Training** New Facilitator training is offered as a webinar by our Virtus trainer 3-4 times per year. Training sessions are available in English and Spanish. Full attendance is required and typically involves approximately 3 hours a day for five days. The Archdiocese covers all costs associated with the training. A manual and DVD/USB drive are included with the training.

Interested individuals may email sep@seattlearch.org for more information and an application.



Summer Tip #5 ~ Understand our relationship with *PREPARES* volunteers

PREPARES Pregnancy & Parenting Support program is a parish-based ministry managed by Catholic Community Services of Western Washington. It was launched in 2014 by the Catholic Bishops of the State of Washington to provide pregnant mothers, fathers and their families the Church's promise of support and care from pregnancy through a child's fifth birthday.

Parish volunteers run their local *PREPARES* ministry under the auspices of CCS. Due to the nature of our close relationship with CCS, *PREPARES* volunteers may fulfill their SEP training through our Archdiocesan Virtus database. *PREPARES* will conduct their own background checks, but volunteers are authorized to take initial and renewal training through Virtus. They are responsible for printing their certificate and providing it to CCS for documentation of their training compliance.

To learn more about *PREPARES* please visit their website www.preparesforlife.org.

Summer Tip #6 ~ Introduce new staff & volunteers to Safe Environment

Have you considered that new staff and volunteers may have little or no knowledge about our Safe Environment Program policies and requirements? Or, maybe they created a profile years ago and don't even remember? Part of our long-term goal is to re-educate, and re-educate some more so that SEP becomes a household word!! Ideas include:

- **Onboarding new staff** Create a new employee packet that includes a check list for Safe Environment requirements: verify user Virtus profile status, reactivate and update as needed; provide instructions on setting up Virtus profile if they don't already have one; review all requirements and follow up timely to ensure compliance; etc. Every new staff member should be informed about SEP!
- **Welcome letter** Send a letter to all new volunteers. A letter template is being created and will be available on the SEP website this summer! Stay tuned!! Or feel free to create your own letter and if you'd like me to review it for content send it my way. Happy to give you feedback!



Summer Tip #7 ~ Review the *Minors Working with Younger Children Protocol*

This past Spring we introduced a revised protocol for minors working with younger children. **The protocol is in effect for all minors working in any capacity with younger children**, whether volunteer or employed, even temporarily. This surpasses all previous protocols so please familiarize yourself with the protocol and the new forms. The new protocol and revised forms will be posted on the SEP website this summer! Stay tuned!!

- **Background Checks** All minors age 16-17 (up until 18th b-day) must have a clear background check on file prior to starting work with younger children. A background check authorization form is required, and must be signed by the parent/guardian prior to submitting in Trak-1 as a manual background check application.
- **Code of Conduct Form** *All* minors working with younger children must have a Code of Professional Conduct form on file in the parish or school office prior to starting work. The form is provided to the parent/guardian who reviews the Code of Conduct with the youth. Parents then return the completed form to the SEC.

ALL background check authorization forms have been revised for 2023 and replace all old forms.
If you are in need of these documents prior to September please email sep@seattlearch.org and request the protocol for Minors Working with Younger Children.





Summer Tip #8 ~ Help with ongoing Virtus clean-up

As you know, we're on a mission to clean up our Virtus database and get it in better order! Right now we still have a lot of inaccurate information in individual profiles, so I'm asking all local coordinators to assist with clean-up as part of an ongoing project ~ something we'll all be doing 'forever'!! We're implementing *Best Practices* that to date have not been happening because we weren't aware they needed to be in place! THANK YOU for your efforts at helping make our SEP Virtus database the best and most accurate database ever!!

Instruction #1: ROLES

'Employee' OR 'Educator' is chosen as the **primary role** if the user is employed at any location.


EDUCATOR is only used for covenanted Catholic School teachers and principals whether full time or part time. Please make changes for a user who is not a Catholic School teacher. "Educator" implies that the user is employed *by the Catholic school*. Do NOT assign as Employee.

Substitute teachers hired and managed through the Office of Catholic Schools sub-pool should not be listed at the school location. (SEP compliance mgmt. is the responsibility of OCS.) If a teacher is *hired locally by the school* as a substitute teacher (not part of OCS sub pool) then the employee is considered an Employee for that location. Please list their title as "Sub teacher hourly". (The school is then responsible for compliance management of that employee.)

EMPLOYEE(Parish/Parochial) is used for all parish or school hired staff other than Educators. EXAMPLE: school teaching aide, school custodian, school librarian (unless a covenanted teacher), office assistant, parish faith formation director, maintenance staff, parish musician, administrative staff, etc.

VOLUNTEER is used for all non-employee users at a **parish** location and encompasses any ministry (or multiple parish ministries), except for **FAITH FORMATION VOLUNTEER** which is any volunteer serving in a faith formation program, even a parent. *Choose one or the other, not both, unless the person is serving in a ministry in addition to their role in faith formation.*

PARENT VOLUNTEER indicates that the user is volunteering at a **Catholic school** location and includes parents; grandparents; and parishioners volunteering at the school whether or not they are volunteering in another ministry in the parish.

It may be that a person volunteers in more than one ministry, in which case there would be a role selected for each ministry in which they serve. In this case the primary role is denoted with the . Be sure to list the job title(s) in the "Title or Function" field.

These roles are determined by the USCCB for the purpose of our annual audit. Individuals should have ONE role for a particular ministry, and only list multiple roles if indeed the individual serves in multiple ministries.



Summer Tip # ~ Gentle Reminders!

We're all super-busy but please keep in mind a few important things:



- **Staff Changes** Please always email sep@seattlearch.org if there are any changes in SEP local coordinator or PAA. The SEP communication contact list will be updated accordingly.
- **SEC Training** Do you have a new local coordinator who needs training, or an SEC who would like some refresher training? Please email sep@seattlearch.org and get some training on the calendar!! Those who have had SEC training are much more confident in their role!
- **BGC reports** Trak-1 background check reports are confidential and contain sensitive information. Please do not email them unless you have encrypted email.

Summer Tip #10 ~ Watch for the SEP Website updates coming this summer!

The Safe Environment Program website is chalk-full of great information, but the majority of it is very outdated. I'm gearing up to do a re-vamp of site documents and replace outdated information with current information. I'll send an email to all SECs when the project is complete - hopefully by the end of August!!





*HAVE A GREAT
SUMMER!!*

*THANK
YOU!*

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*You guys are the best! Thank you
for all you do to help make our
Safe Environment Program one of
the best in the US!*

