



Archdiocese of Seattle

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Protecting the Young and Vulnerable

SEP Newsletter ~ April 2024

Spring is God's way of saying "One more time!" So spring into action with these SEP tips that are sure to help your work blossom!!



Spring Tips Inside this Issue:

1. **Virtus Upgrade: Standard Background Check Package**
2. **Background Check Errors: "What do I tell my volunteers?"**
3. **Welcoming Volunteers to Virtus**
4. **ParishStaq and Virtus Database IDs**
5. **Outside Organizations: New Decision-Making Matrix**
6. **April is Child Abuse Prevention Month**
7. **Minors Working with Younger Children Protocol**
8. **Featured Virtus Instruction: Background Check Error Report**
9. **Gentle Reminders**
10. **Annual Compliance Verification Forms**



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



Spring Tip #1 ~ Virtus Background Check Upgrade: Standard Package

Virtus recently upgraded our background check package to **Standard Package**.

- All background checks now go through as STANDARD package.
- Please **do not re-submit manually** for employee or volunteer packages - this is not necessary and wastes money if locations are re-ordering just for a different label on the report.
- The packages are all the same so please use Standard Pkg from this point forward.
- **Reminder:** For your Master Reports: be sure to add the Standard Package filter - don't remove any of the other filters, simply check the box for Standard Package.

Spring Tip #2 ~ Background Check Errors - *What do I tell my volunteers?*

Background check errors have been happening a lot, although we are getting a better handle on it. There are some **Best Practices** surrounding all of this to ensure that volunteers and staff are able to renew their background checks seamlessly!



- Remind folks not to interrupt the background check application once they hit the prompt in Virtus. They should plan a time when they can complete the full application in one sitting without distractions.
- If a user closes the application in the middle, or their internet has a blip, or they leave their computer and the page 'times-out', the application is aborted and they will not be able to get back in. This is what causes an error in Virtus. *Errors must be deleted for the user to start the process again so please email sep@seattlearch.org and request assistance.*
- Remind the user to preview the application information for accuracy, then click the 'submit' button and wait for Trak-1 to confirm receipt. This is the sure guarantee that the background check search has started.
- Once complete they can exit Trak-1 and return to Virtus. Remind them that their Virtus profile Homepage background check box will be red and show as "incomplete" until the results upload into Virtus; that could take 2-7 days. Once the results are uploaded the background check box will turn green and show as "current".

Create a **Background Check Report** every 2-4 weeks to catch BGCs that have an error or are incomplete - this keeps up on the problem instead of letting BGCs build up and potentially cause issues for users. Email sep@seattlearch.org for errors that need to be deleted.



Spring Tip #3 ~ Welcoming Volunteers and Staff to Safe Environment/Virtus

We all want people to engage with our parishes and schools; service is what our Catholic faith is all about. But sometimes we don't think about our first-time folks. They often get lost in the shuffle, or worse yet they never hear about Safe Environment: the requirements, what is expected of them and how they accomplish what we are asking of them. What are some **Best Practices** for welcoming new volunteers or staff to Safe Environment and Virtus?

- ALL adults who are employed; those volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults as part of their duties; and those volunteers working with money must create a Virtus profile. Virtus is our record-keeping database and it is where we track all safe environment records.
- We want to avoid duplicate profiles; we have thousands of people in the system. So please work with new users and search Virtus for an active or inactive profile before asking someone to create a new profile.
- **Important Reminder:** Our Organization is "Seattle, WA (Archdiocese)". Please instruct users so they create their profile in the correct organization.
- Use this great [Welcome to Virtus Letter](#) and provide instructions on [Setting Up a Virtus Profile](#) for your new users. People appreciate getting information that will help them streamline the process.
- If your location is considering a new hire who does not have a Virtus profile, please ask them to create a profile and submit their background check through the system. This is important because even if you do not hire them we must have record of their background check and other requirements. We can always inactivate the profile if the person is not hired for any reason. If there is no profile, and we have a flagged background check, there is no way to put in the CAUTION to alert all locations to the criminal history. *Please avoid manual background checks for potential new hires; instead, ask them to create a profile to maintain their Safe Environment records.*

Spring Tip #4 ~ ParishStaq and Virtus Database IDs - the Sync!

Imagine this: Virtus and ParishStaq actually talk to each other! How cool is that! But they can only exchange information if they are synced and that takes some human effort. Remember, it's always the first time around that is the bear! Once we get things set up it's smooth sailing after that. Please take the time to get your location(s) ParishStaq and Virtus Databases synced.

- [Click here](#) for instructions on how to enter a Virtus database ID into ParishStaq. The information in Virtus cannot be shared with ParishStaq until the sync takes place.
- ParishStaq will import the status of each synced individual from Virtus and show as "**certified**" or "**not certified**".
- Please reach out to Bryan Gummarsall if you have questions about the syncing process.





Spring Tip #5 ~ Outside Organizations - New Decision-Making Matrix



There has been a lot of confusion regarding outside organizations and small contractors in regards to Safe Environment: *Do they need a Virtus profile or not? How do we track them?* The Archdiocese responded with a goal to revise the SEP/Insurance matrix, making it more clear and concise.

The [new SEP/Insurance matrix](#) is ready to go! It has a fresh look and it simplifies the SEP and Insurance requirements all on one page.

And for those organizations or companies that have their own SEP-equivalent program we've developed a [Safe Environment Compliance Form](#) to document their safe environment/insurance compliance. Be sure to keep these forms in permanent file.

Spring Tip #6 ~ National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Throughout the month of April, we join in the nationwide effort to increase awareness about child abuse and abuse prevention. *National Child Abuse Prevention Month* is a great opportunity for your parish or school to pray for the eradication of child abuse and for the protection of all children.

PARISH & SCHOOL RESOURCES:

- Liturgical Aids – homily helps; Prayer of the Faithful; devotions for protection & healing
- Bulletin Inserts
- Social Posts
- Website & Email – digital web banners

[\(Click here for your 2024 Resources\)](#)

If every Catholic parish or school did ONE NEW THING to increase awareness about child abuse, imagine the amazing difference it would make. By educating people and working together, we can make a difference in the lives of all children!

Thank you for your dedication to protecting children and providing resources to families!





Spring Tip #7 ~ Minors Working With Younger Children Protocol

A reminder that last year 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 are posted on the [SEP Website](#) and in the [Coordinator's Handbook](#).

- **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.
- **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.

Cool Reminder: *ParishStaq* has a place in the Minor's profile to record that the forms have been completed and are in permanent file. Call or email the Safe Environment office for this slick how-to if you aren't familiar with it.



He is not here;
he has
Risen!

Luke 24:6



Spring 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! Throughout the year we'll provide some helpful and important instructions that should become an integral part of your ongoing compliance management. THANK YOU for your efforts at helping make our SEP Virtus database the best and most accurate database ever!!



Featured Instruction: Background Check Reports

The "Background Check Report" is another important report to run on a regular basis, monthly at a minimum. We all know that errors happen; but we *no longer want to allow months or years to go by before we discover that a background check did not go through*. This is not best practice!

IMPORTANT: background check errors actually BLOCK the user from being able to access their profile so it's important to get them out when we discover them!!

Background Check Report Filter

You may filter the background check report by any of the criteria below, but none are required. Please note that an unfiltered report may take a long time to generate.

If the date filters are used, the report will include all background check records created between the start date and end date.

All checked statuses will be reported. If no status is checked, all statuses will be included in the report.

User Location:

Chancery (Seattle) ▼

Background Check Start Date:

1/1/2021

Background Check End Date:

3/20/2024

Background Check Status:

- Error
- Incomplete
- Initiated
- Pending
- Complete

1. Click on your Administration Tab in Virtus and in the quick links click "Background Check Report."
2. Choose your location.
3. If this is your first-ever report be sure to go back three years so you capture any issues within the current renewal period. With subsequent reports check a month at a time.
4. Click "error", "incomplete" and "pending" so you capture anything that might be a problem.
5. Click "get report".
6. Review each person on the list. Check their Background Check tab. Some may be recently pending so check their profile in a few days to ensure that it actually changes to a result.
7. Check Trak-1 if the error message is ambiguous. Sometimes BGCs have gone through and never got uploaded back into Virtus.
8. For BGC errors that need to be deleted: contact sep@seattlearch.org with user name(s) and user ID(s);

IMPORTANT REMINDER: "complete" simply means that the search is over and completed. It does not indicate the actual results. Results will either be 'all clear' or 'received' (this means it is a flagged background check)

Anyone who is non-compliant must be followed up on promptly.
Again, *please be sure to keep up on this regularly, monthly at a minimum.*



Spring Tip #9 ~ Gentle Reminders!

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

- **Our Virtus Organization** We have had an inordinate number of people creating Virtus profiles in the wrong organization. Please remind your new staff and volunteers to choose "Seattle, WA (Archdiocese)" for the organization. ALL of our locations fall under this in Virtus - we do not choose individual parishes or schools until we create the profile and choose our location. **Best Practice:** send your new users the [Instructions for Creating a Virtus profile!](#)
- **Forced BGC Prompts** Local Coordinators can no longer force BGC prompts. Tons of calls were coming into the SEP office - users were not able to access their profiles. **Reminder:** Virtus has a default prompt for anyone who is overdue for the background check. Forcing a prompt blocks their access to the default prompt.
- **Training** Would you like to understand the local coordinator role better? Do you put off compliance because you aren't real familiar with Virtus? **Best Practice:** set up refresher training through the SEP office. *It's WORTH IT!!*



Spring Tip #10 ~ Annual Compliance Verification Forms

The spring is a busy time around the Archdiocese, no doubt. But there is one annual event that is super-important in the Safe Environment realm: the Annual Compliance Verification Form. This form is signed by the pastoral leader (parishes) or principal (schools) attesting to full compliance with all SEP requirements for all active staff and volunteers. **It's a big deal!**

- These forms are required for all locations and will be emailed in early to mid-April.
- **DEADLINE** for completing the form and having it back at SEP office: **May 31, 2024.**
- Instructions for completing the forms will be provided this year.
- If you've been doing a regular Master Report and Background Check Report you'll be way ahead of the game! If you have never done a Master Report or Background Check Report I suggest that you get going on that as soon as possible.
- Present the form to your pastoral leader or principal only after you've followed up with all non-compliant users and you know their status: they have completed what was missing or they are in process of doing so.

Please watch your email for this form after Easter. The deadline is firm so please respect it. Thank you!!



*Spring Fever: it's
contagious!!*



*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!*

