

## **Policies for the safety of children and youth are being implemented throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America**



The implementation and enforcement of the Policies for the Safety of Children and Youth take another step forward towards the goal of ensuring that every ministry and event is physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe and healthy for the children of all Greek Orthodox Churches in America.

In 2009, the 'Youth Protection Manual', was unanimously supported and approved by the Holy Eparchial Synod for the physical and spiritual protection of the children of the Archdiocese. In the 2009 letter of endorsement it states, "We believe that a safe environment is essential for the spiritual formation and learning we strive to achieve through our camping and retreat programs."

In 2018, the Holy Eparchial Synod, the Archdiocesan Council and the national Clergy-Laity Congress approved a more comprehensive manual or guide known as the 'Policies for the Safety of Children and Youth'.

Archbishop Elpidophoros of America states, "As we begin this new Ecclesiastical New Year, it is a time of hope and diaconia. A time when we ask ourselves and ask the Lord, 'How can I best serve my family, my Lord and His Great Church?'"

Archbishop Elpidophoros calls the Greek Orthodox faithful of America to action, and encourages all the faithful to mobilize in the service of the children and youth of our Holy Church.

It is now time to implement a new set of procedures and requirements approved by our Clergy and Laity to improve the environment of safety for the children in all our Church programs. Archbishop Elpidophoros states, "The new policies require that every single person who works in your Church, your Metropolis and your Archdiocese with youth in any way must move rapidly into compliance."

This month of September begins the process of all clergy and all youth workers

registering with the Parish Administrator at your Church community and being trained by on-line courses, as well as passing a criminal background check. Under this new mandate of our Church, unless a worker completes this process by the end of this year, he or she cannot be allowed to work with parish youth. Many religious and charitable institutions have been doing training and background checks for years. Now in this new Ecclesiastical New Year, we join them in better training and screening for youth workers and educators in order to identify abuse before it happens and protect our children and our future.

Every Metropolis and parish will shortly be in touch with all her ministries in assisting them to be in full compliance by the end of this year.

### **Read the letter from Archbishop Elpidophoros:**

September 5, 2019

Dear Faithful of the Archdiocese of America,

The beginning of the new Ecclesiastical New Year is a time of hope and diaconia. A time when we ask ourselves and ask the Lord, "how can I best serve my family, my Lord and His Great Church".

I am writing as Archbishop to bring to your attention an important matter that is and must be an urgent concern for all of us who work with children in every aspect of the Archdiocese, in every Metropolis and in every parish and youth ministry.

This letter is to call each of us to action, and to encourage us as our clergy, our lay leaders and our fellow parishioners to mobilize to serve our children and youth. The Archdiocese has distributed a new set of procedures and requirements intended to improve safety for the children in all our Church programs. [Youth Safety](#) is our top priority and greatest duty in our family of Orthodox Christians. As we all inherently know, protecting our children and our future requires hard work and diligence.

The new requirements demand that every single person who works with youth in any way in your Parish, your Metropolis and your Archdiocese move rapidly into compliance.

This month of September begins the process of all clergy and all youth workers registering with the designated Youth Protection Parish Administrator at your Church community and being trained by on-line courses, as well as passing a criminal background check. Under this new mandate of our Church, unless a worker

completes this process by the end of this year, he or she cannot be allowed to work with parish youth. Many religious and charitable institutions, including some of our own parishes, have been doing training and background checks for years. Now in this new Ecclesiastical New Year, we join them in better training and screening our youth workers and educators to identify and protect our children against all forms of abuse.

There are two obvious first steps for this month of September, naming a Parish Administrator and gathering a completely inclusive list of both paid and volunteer workers whose efforts include contact with children. Anyone who does anything that involves contact with children will have to be registered, trained, and screened by the end of the year, with no exceptions.

Many of you who receive this letter are leaders of various ministries and programs. You are in the best positions to begin compiling lists of people in your ministry who have contact with children and youth. We are relying on your commitment to get this done. Please be aware that the Holy Metropolitans and the Direct Archdiocesan District will be sending your Church leadership all that is needed to comply under these [Policies for the Safety of Children and Youth](#).

Thank you for being part of this effort and for working with your Hierarchs, your priest and your parish leadership. May our Lord bless and protect you, your family and your Church family as we begin this Ecclesiastical New Year.

Yours in the service of this Great Archdiocese,

† ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America

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For more information on Youth Safety please visit [www.goarch.org/safety](http://www.goarch.org/safety)

- Source: [goarch.org](http://goarch.org)