



Memo

Date: November 14, 2022

To: Pastors, Priests, Parish Administrators, Business Managers, Parish Secretaries, Principals, School Business Managers, School Secretaries, Safe Environment Coordinators, Catechetical Leaders, Directors of Religious Education, Youth Ministers, Chancery Staff, Seminarians, Deacons, Deacon Formation, Parochial Vicars, Bookkeepers, Parish Ministry Coordinators, Campus Ministers

From: Jenni Weldin, director, Safe Environment

Re: Sterling retention changes

Sterling, our background check company, is changing its retention policy. This means that all Archdiocese of Atlanta locations need to begin to save in paper or electronic format the documents that we have currently been keeping in Sterling outside of their system.

As of January 1, 2023, the following documents need to be printed and filed at your location or saved as PDF to your networked server after a person's background check has come back:

- Background Check/Credit Check/Driver's Record
- Standards of Conduct Acknowledgement Form
- Volunteer Application (if a volunteer background check is what was run)
- Employment Application/I9/Post Offer Medical Questionnaire (if these documents have been sent via Sterling)

All Safe Environment records – paper or electronic – must be kept on file for 50 years. If paper copies are retained, they should be stored in a secured file cabinet alphabetically by last name or boxed up alphabetically by last name and by year and stored on a shelf in a secure file room.

If electronic copies are kept, they must be retained in PDF format on a server that is backed up. These documents cannot be kept on a hard drive or any kind of external storage device. The server can be on premises or in the cloud, but it should be secure (not a personal Google Drive or Dropbox).

If you choose to retain the records as PDFs, the Office of Archives and Records has recommended that all of the file names include the last name, the first name, the type of document and the date. For example:

- Last Name First Name Background Check YYYYMMDD
(i.e. Smith John Background Check 20220515)
- Last Name First Name Standards of Conduct YYYYMMDD
(i.e. Jones Mary Standards of Conduct 20180630)
- Last Name First Name Volunteer Application YYYYMMDD
(i.e. Smith John M Volunteer Application 20221025)
- Last Name First Name Employment Application YYYYMMDD
(i.e. Smith-Jones Nathan Employment Application 20171231)

Please note that the date format could be placed at the beginning of the file name instead of the end for any of the records, just be consistent in which option you choose. Also, if you have people with identical last and first names, please add a middle initial (without punctuation) or middle name to differentiate the individuals.

The Office of Archives and Records also recommends keeping the folder structure simple for all electronic records and instead relying on a strong file name as suggested above. Keeping all of the Safe Environment documents in one folder is ideal, maybe with subfolders by year. However, they do not recommend splitting up the PDF documents by type of record as that would require looking in multiple places to verify an individual has all the appropriate records.

If you have questions regarding the retention or storage of the records outside of Sterling, please contact the Office of Archives and Records at records@archatl.com.

We have requested all of our records from Sterling. You do not need to go back and print or save as a PDF documents that were returned by Sterling prior to January 1, 2023.

If you have questions regarding Sterling, please contact me at jweldin@archatl.com.