

**Background Check Policy
PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

RATIONALE

For the safety of all persons of Palo Duro Presbytery, the presbytery will require background checks on each new and existing member of PDP, as well as those who work in any way with children and youth in presbytery-related events.

PERSONS NEW TO THE PRESBYTERY OR THOSE CALLED TO SERVE WITHIN A CONGREGATION OF PDP

- A. For every teaching elder (clergyperson), commissioned pastor, parish associate, interim/transitional pastor, or those in temporary positions, beginning work with a particular congregation in PDP, a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list background check will be required.
- B. Required background checks must be completed and evaluated before a Pastor Nominating Committee can present a name to its congregation for consideration to be called to a pastoral position in the presbytery, or before any session can offer any kind of pastoral relationship to an individual (temporary or stated supply, CP, interim, parish associate).
- C. Evaluation of the required records will be the responsibility of the executive presbyter. In the event that a check discloses anything other than a clear record, the executive presbyter will consult with representatives of the Committee on Ministry team and the individual involved before clearing the report or denying approval.

EXISTING MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERY

- A. For all existing teaching elders (clergypersons), temporary or stated supplies, CPs, interims/transitional, or parish associates relating in any way to a specific congregation in PDP at the time this policy becomes effective, a national, state, and county background check will be required, including the sexual offender registry list.
- B. For teaching elders (ministers) serving in validated ministries of PDP, a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list background check will be required.
- C. For teaching elders (ministers) in at-large positions, a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list background check may be required if they are in leadership positions with congregations, sessions, or congregation members.
- D. If a clergyperson refuses to submit to such checks, PDP may dissolve the pastoral relationship with the congregation, provided that due process is followed in such a decision. Those in other relationships for which the presbytery has oversight and control, such as parish associate, temporary or stated supply, interim, or CP, or any other formal relationship to a congregation, may be removed from those relationships if they refuse to submit to such checks, provided that due process is followed in such a decision.

- E. Evaluation of the required records will be the responsibility of the executive presbyter.

PRESBYTERY STAFF

For all persons working as paid or volunteer staff of PDP, a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry background check is required.

PERSONS WORKING IN PRESBYTERY-RELATED EVENTS

- A. All persons who work with youth or children in presbytery-related events must submit to a national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list background check.
- B. No one will be permitted to be a part of the leadership of presbytery-organized events involving children or youth who have not been cleared by PDP to serve in such capacity.
- C. Events covered under this policy shall include, but not be limited to, the Buffalo Gap camping program, annual youth retreat, Youth Triennium, presbytery youth mission trips, and other occasional youth and children's events.

MAINTENANCE OF FILES

After the initial evaluation, copies of the reports will be maintained in the presbytery office under lock and key and will be made available only to the person for whom the check was made or to someone who has a signed release from the person whose record is requested. No record will be released to anyone without written permission from the individual whose record is requested.

GENERAL

- A. For each clergyperson, temporary or stated supply, CP, interim/transitional, parish associate, and person who work with youth or children in presbytery related events for whom such checks are required, the sponsoring organization/governing body will be asked to pay the costs of the check at the current rate for national, state, and county criminal and sexual offender registry list. Those serving in presbytery-related events shall provide a copy of their background check to PDP. If such a check is needed, individuals should contact their local congregation (if they are representing their congregation at such an event) or contract with PDP for such a check at their own expense.
- B. Records may be transferred from council to council as required, but only with signed permission from the individual whose record is requested.
- C. Individual congregations may request background checks as approved in their policies for laypersons within their congregation. These records will be evaluated and maintained by the local congregation in accordance with its own policies, at the congregation's expense. Teaching elder (minister) records will be maintained by the presbytery.
- D. The presbytery recommends the use of IntelliCorp for the process and will use that company for background checks it authorizes. However, a congregation has the option of using any company it chooses to meet the requirements indicated in this policy.

DISQUALIFIERS

- A. Active indictments alleging the following offenses, or any conviction of the following offenses, will disallow a teaching elder (minister), temporary or stated supply, CP, interim, parish associate, or adult leader from serving in PDP.
 - 1. Murder
 - 2. Aggravated assault
 - 3. Sexual abuse
 - 4. Sexual assault
 - 5. Aggravated sexual assault (rape)
 - 6. Crimes against children (e.g., injury to a child; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child; possession or promotion of child pornography; the sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor)
 - 7. Family violence assault
 - 8. Cruelty to animals
 - 9. Arson
 - 10. Hate crime
 - 11. Lewd behavior
 - 12. Possession with intent to distribute illegal drugs within the past ten years
- B. All other felony and Class A & B misdemeanor convictions, deferred adjudications, charges, criminal investigations, or indictments for crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the executive presbyter. The review should encompass issues such as circumstances, rehabilitation, the time elapsed since the offense, the individual's ministry, and any unresolved personal issues that might lead to misconduct.
- C. Instances of sexual harassment will be reviewed by the executive presbyter. The review should encompass issues such as circumstances, rehabilitation, the time elapsed since the offense, the individual's ministry, and any unresolved personal issues that might lead to misconduct. The provisions of the Palo Duro Presbytery Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy and Procedures will be used in this review.

Appeals of the decision of the executive presbyter may be brought to the stated clerk, the Committee on Ministry, and the presbytery.

Approved: 02/25/06

Updated: 08/2011, 09/2025