

DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN
Diocesan Policy For a Speaker on any Religious Topic
Or For Someone Who Is Conducting Spiritual Services

The Bishop of the Diocese of Allentown is the chief teacher of all the Christian faithful entrusted to his care. Ordained to the fullness of the Office of Teacher, he has the primary responsibility to present and explain the truths of the faith, which are to be believed and applied to moral issues. Priests and Deacons who are cooperators with the Bishop also exercise this ministry of the Word in union with their Bishop. Qualified laity, by virtue of their Baptism and particular expertise, also participate in the Church's work of teaching and preaching.

In order to assure that the one true Catholic faith is taught genuinely and truly nourishes the spiritual lives of the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Allentown, these guidelines are to be followed when scheduling a speaker on any religious topic.

1. Catholic clergy and laity who have the responsibility of engaging speakers for spiritual and educational programs in parishes, schools, institutions, and with other groups throughout the Diocese are urged to be especially vigilant that these speakers communicate the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church and foster genuine spiritual growth in the Catholic faith.
2. Before anyone, including Catholic clergy and religious, is scheduled to speak publicly within the Diocese, it must be clear that the individual enjoys the endorsement of his or her current proper Bishop or Religious Superior. For laity, if the person is a national speaker, he or she must enjoy the endorsement of his/her current proper Bishop. If the person is not a national speaker, then only the pastor endorsement is required.
3. Non-Catholic Speakers must obtain the approval of the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization.
4. When written proof has been obtained certifying that the proposed speaker has the endorsement of his or her proper Church Authorities, the Pastor or Administrator must submit a written request ("Request for Authorization for a Speaker on any Religious Topic") to host this speaker within the Diocese at least one month in advance to the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization for review and approval. For priests and deacons, this request must also be accompanied by a Testimonial of Suitability for Ministry form/letter. For non-ordained religious and laity, this request must also be accompanied by the letter of endorsement from the current proper Religious Superior, or the Bishop, or the Pastor/Administrator of the Parish.

BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIREMENT

If the non-ordained religious and laity will be in direct contact with children (the speaker provides care, supervision, guidance and/or control of children) as part of their speaking engagement, the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization, at his/her sole discretion,

may require the following three background checks to be provided by the Speaker prior to approval:

- **Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check** (Pennsylvania Access to Criminal History (PATCH))
- **Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Certificate**
- **Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Background Fingerprint Check** (18+ years old)

Also, at the sole discretion of the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization, depending upon the extent and length of contact with children, the Speaker may be required to provide proof of safe environment training, including mandated reporter training by a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania approved course.

If the Speaker is being paid to speak at a school, the “School Vendors and Contractors” policy on page 49 of this manual is applicable. The Speaker is required by Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Public School Code to provide the above listed background checks prior to speaking.

5. Only after the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization has received and reviewed all of the above and has given the necessary approval, may the events be scheduled and publicly advertised.
6. *The A. D. Times* will not accept copy for ads for programs regarding spiritual talks or services unless the advertisement request is accompanied by the letter of approval from the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization.

Steps to follow for speaker approval if the speaker is:

Priest/Deacon:

1. Contact the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization to inquire if the individual has current approval to speak in the Diocese. If they do not, you will be instructed to obtain the proper endorsements for the individual.
2. Submit the completed “Request for Authorization for a Speaker” form along with the proper endorsements.
 - a. Testimonial of Suitability for Ministry form/letter for priests/deacons
 - b. Letter of endorsement from Religious Superior for a religious

Non-Ordained Religious:

1. Contact the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization to inquire if the individual has current approval to speak in the Diocese. If they do not, you will be instructed to obtain the proper endorsements for the individual.
2. Submit the completed “Request for Authorization for a Speaker” form along with the proper endorsements.

- a. Letter of endorsement from current proper Religious Superior
- b. Background checks, if required. Please contact the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization to see if this will be required.
- c. Proof of safe environment training if expected to be in contact with children and youth more than 15-20 hours.

Lay Men and Women:

1. Contact the Secretary for Catholic Life and Evangelization to inquire if the individual has current approval to speak in the Diocese. If they do not, you will be instructed to obtain the proper endorsements for the individual.
2. Submit the completed "Request for Authorization for a Speaker" form along with the proper endorsements.
 - a. Letter of endorsement by his or her current proper Bishop or Pastor
 - b. Background checks, if required. Please contact the Secretary of Catholic Life and Evangelization to see if this will be required.
 - c. Proof of safe environment training if expected to be in contact with children and youth more than 15-20 hours.

Policy approved by Most Reverend Edward P. Cullen at Council of Priests Meeting: March 3, 2007

Episcopal re-approval, Most Reverend John O. Barres: July 28, 2011

Revised: November 2015

Revised and approved by Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert: October 16, 2018