

## **Diocese of St. Augustine Dangerous Weapons Policy**

In the interest of maintaining a safe work environment, the Diocese of St. Augustine has developed the following policy relating to dangerous weapons.

**Applicability.** This policy applies to all individuals who work for the diocese, to all individuals who provide volunteer service to the diocese and to all individuals who are visitors to diocesan locations. It also applies to all diocesan entities, including parishes, schools and agencies.

**Definitions.** A dangerous weapon is defined to include all firearms, explosives, munitions, electronic weapons, chemical weapons and knives, other than small pocket knives.

**Background.** Florida law allows individuals who are properly permitted to bear and carry arms in public places. Further, Florida Statute 790.251 recognizes that individuals have a basic right to possess and keep legally owned firearms within their motor vehicles for self-defense and other lawful purposes. Both of these laws, however, provide for exceptions to protect certain entities and buildings in the interest of public safety (Florida Statute 790.06).

**Policy.** The following policy provisions fully comply with state law, and therefore, should not be further revised, restated or modified. These provisions are designed to balance the rights of individuals to bear arms, while at the same time, protect the interests of the diocese and its entities, our employees and those we serve.

Except as provided below:

- Firearms and other dangerous weapons may not be brought into any diocesan-owned workplace, building or facility. Nor may firearms or other dangerous weapons be brought into any facility leased or exclusively used by the diocese or one of its parishes or entities. Any such weapons in the individual's possession must remain secured within the individual's motor vehicle, in accordance with state law.

- Firearms and other dangerous weapons may not be brought on to school property, which includes the buildings, facilities and grounds of a grade school, high school or any school operated by, or under the auspices of the diocese or a parish or entity of the diocese. This prohibition also applies to school buses and school bus stops.

The only exception to the above prohibitions are for federal, state, county and municipal law enforcement officers while on duty, or off duty, or while acting in an official capacity. Duly authorized security personnel are also exempt from the above prohibitions, provided that advance approval has been obtained from the Office of the Chancellor.

**Searches.** The diocese retains the right to search all personnel, their belongings, their vehicles and their work areas to determine compliance with this policy. Employees who are found to have knowingly violated this policy will be subject to corrective action, up to and including discharge. Volunteers who are found to have knowingly violated this policy may be prohibited from future service within the diocese. Refusal to submit to an authorized search will also be grounds for corrective action.