

## Diocese of St. Augustine Dangerous Weapons Policy



The policy of the Diocese of St. Augustine (hereafter, “the diocese”) regarding “dangerous weapons” (see definition below) is as set forth herein. The following policy provisions fully comply with state law, and therefore, should not be further revised, restated or tailored. 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 whom we serve.

### **Definitions:**

Dangerous Weapon A dangerous weapon is defined to include, but is not limited to, all firearms, explosives, munitions, electronic weapons (e.g. Tasers), chemical weapons, and knives, other than small pocket knives; a pocket knife is not “small” if, when opened, its blade is greater than 2½ inches in length. Razor blades or box cutters are also to be considered as dangerous weapons for purposes of this policy, unless they are possessed or used in support of a parish, entity, or school-sanctioned activity.

For schools (see definition below), other items may be designated as dangerous weapons if so specified in the school handbook.

For persons 18 years of age or older, a chemical **self-defense** weapon such as mace or pepper spray is excluded from the above definition of “dangerous weapon.”

Motor Vehicle A motor vehicle includes any automobile, truck, minivan, SUV, motor home, recreational vehicle, motorcycle, motor scooter, or any other vehicle operated on the roads of the state of Florida and required to be registered under state law.

School A school includes for purposes of this policy a parochial school, high school, early learning center, day care center, or a school for those educationally challenged or disabled in any way, and which is owned or operated by the diocese or any parish or entity of the diocese.

School Property School property includes the buildings, facilities and grounds (including parking areas for motor vehicles) of any school.

At locations in the diocese where a school is co-located with parish facilities, the Pastor should designate the portions of the parish campus which are to be considered as school property. School property may be defined for purposes of this policy not only by physical boundaries, but also by time, or functional use, or a combination of time, functional use, and place. That portion of the parish campus designated as school property by physical boundaries and / or duration of time and / or functional use should be clearly noticed to employees, volunteers and parishioners by way of signs, charts, or maps of the parish campus as appropriate. Any such designation of school property shall be only for the purpose of this policy and will have no other civil or canonical legal effect. A sample sign, provided merely as an example, is at the appendix to this policy.

**Applicability** This policy applies to:

- All parish, school, or diocesan entity employees or volunteers,
- All students enrolled in a school (see definition above), and to
- All visitors or invitees onto the property of a diocesan entity, parish, or school.

**Prohibitions** 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 (see Florida Statute 790.06). Accordingly, 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 firearms 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, even secured in a motor vehicle. This prohibition also applies to school buses and school bus stops.

**Exceptions** Exceptions to the above prohibitions are as follows:

Persons Federal, state, county, and municipal law enforcement officers while on or off duty, or while acting in an official capacity, are not bound by the prohibitions of this policy. Duly authorized security personnel are also exempt from the above prohibitions, provided that advance approval has been obtained from the pastor, principal, or agency head.

Places A dangerous weapon as defined above may be maintained in a rectory for the personal safety of the priest or priests who reside there, or as a *bona fide* and properly registered hunting or sport weapon, if the pastor so permits.

**Searches** The diocese retains the right to search all personnel, their belongings, their motor 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 or adverse personnel actions, up to and including termination of employment. 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 exclusion from the location to which entry is sought, or removal therefrom. Any consequences arising from the inability to obtain entrance, or to remain on the premises, as a result of refusal to submit to a reasonable search, will be borne by the individual concerned.

**Notifications** This policy should be widely publicized among current employees and volunteers. New hires and new volunteers should also be told of this policy during the hiring / training process.

I acknowledge that I have read the Diocese of St. Augustine Dangerous Weapons Policy and have been given an opportunity to ask any questions of my supervisor. I understand and agree to abide by this policy as part of my employment. I understand that my employer may periodically amend or revise this policy.

**Annunciation Catholic School/Location 5002**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix** The following sign, designating school property / grounds is provided as an example only and does not refer to any actual parish:

**Designation of School Grounds**

The parish grounds and parking places located to the east of the parish church, and extending eastward to the end of parish property, is designated property of the parish school (school grounds) during the academic year Monday thru Friday from 8:00 a.m. thru 3:00 p.m., and at other times when there is a school function taking place on the parish campus. This notice is for purposes of the Dangerous Weapons Policy.