



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



PROTECTION & SAFE TREATMENT OF MINORS BEST PRACTICES

In May of 2019, New Jersey extended the time victims of child sexual abuse could sue their abusers until the child turned 55 or within seven years of their realization that the abuse caused them harm. The MEL has created resources for leaders and employees of public agencies, including the [Protection and Safe Treatment of Minors Model Policy](#).

Model Policy Includes:

- Appendix C – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) (pages 24-29) and Appendix D – List of Qualified Vendors for Background Checks (page 30).
- A provision to reinforce that the form and content of the model policy may be modified so long as your legal counsel approves it. (Page 3).
- The specific background check requirements that are necessary for employees and volunteers working with children. (Pages 9-11).
- The vetting process for employees and volunteers includes background checks by third-party firms in addition to fingerprint checks. (Page 11).
- The background check process for minors. (Page 10).
- A section dealing with training for volunteer coaches. (Page 11).
- The required training programs for officials, department heads, supervisors, employees, and volunteers. (Pages 17-18).
- Information on “dual reporting” of suspected abuse. (Page 18).

Model Policy Updates in October 2026:

- Revised definition of an abused or neglected child to correspond to changes in State law.
- The importance of the strongly recommended “best practice” for municipalities and counties to draft and enter into annual written use agreements with the organizations who are operating the leagues and using publicly owned facilities that set forth the following at a minimum:
 - Insurance requirements
 - Certification by the organization concerning compliance with the MEL policy
 - Permitted dates and hours of use of the facilities by the organization
- Addition of “human trafficking” in the definition section.
- Important change concerning the preferred and strongly recommended method for background checks pursuant to N.J.S.A. 53:1-20.9a for State Police fingerprint-based criminal history record checks (FBCHRI) for staff with unsupervised access to minors.
 - Addition of recommended new best practices to maintain confidentiality throughout the background check process and establishment of an appeal process for prospective employees who do not pass the background check.
- Compliance with “Pass the Trash” law requiring applicants to disclose all prior employers where they had contact with minors.
- Changes to the Code of Conduct concerning staff members and prohibiting electronic communication with minors.
- The importance of local governments providing separate changing and restroom facilities for employees or volunteers who are minors to make certain that there is no chance for interaction in these areas with adults.

- Compliance by law enforcement agencies with:
 - Attorney General's Directive 2020-09
 - 2023 revised Education-Law Enforcement Memorandum of Agreement
 - Safe Haven regulations under N.J.S.A. 30:4C-15.5, et. seq.
- Amendments to the Tort Claims Act in 2025, explicitly removing public entity immunity for sexual abuse cases involving negligent hiring, supervision, or retention. This dramatically increases municipal exposure and should be prominently stated to motivate compliance.
- New "two-tiered" penalties for failure to report child abuse under N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.14

NJ MEL recommends that you adopt the model policy if your legal counsel concurs.

In addition, all employees should be trained in the protection and safe treatment of minors. MSI offers two training options:

- [MSI LIVE: Protecting Children from Abuse in New Jersey Local Government Programs](#)
- [MSI NOW: Protecting Children from Abuse](#)