



Old Dominion Association of Church Schools

December 5, 2017

To: ODACS Churches and Schools

Re: Inappropriate VDSS Requests for Church Ministry Information

Dear Pastors and Administrators,

Earlier today a secretary at one of our ODACS ministries called VDSS to ask how to complete the Office of Background Investigations point of contact form. **The secretary who called VDSS was told to include nursery workers, Sunday school teachers, and bus workers in the number of people who would undergo a fingerprint background check in a year.** I informed the secretary that the VDSS employee gave her incorrect information. In response to this incident, and in light of other recent incidents that may possibly reflect a broader agenda on the part of VDSS, ODACS is issuing the following advice to all of our ministries.

Pursuant to sections 63.2-1720.1 and 63.2-1721.1 of Virginia Code, which became effective on July 1, 2017, Religious Exempt childcare centers will soon be required to conduct fingerprint background checks on all employees and volunteers. The new law gives rise to new reporting and communication requirements from the Virginia Department of Social Services. Since these laws do not apply to other license exempt forms of church-run childcare, such as Sunday school, church nurseries, bus ministries, etc., ODACS advises its members to include only information related to preschool and/or daycare ministries on any report or communication required of Religious exempt childcare centers by the Virginia Department of Social Services. Following are examples of information that ODACS ministries should *not* provide to VDSS.

- **Number of staff and volunteers for other ministries such as kindergarten, Sunday school, or church nursery, when asked to provide such numbers on the VDSS Office of Background Investigations Point of Contact form.**
- **Enrollment and/or employment figures for other ministries such as kindergarten, Sunday school, or church nursery, when asked to provide such numbers for purposes of establishing staff/child ratios on the annual Religious Exemption compliance verification paperwork.**
- **Any other information related to ministries such as kindergarten, Sunday school, church nursery, or any other children's ministry which is license exempt and is not required to operate under Virginia's Religious Exemption from Childcare Licensure.**

Please be sure to contact the ODACS office immediately if your ministry is ever asked to provide to VDSS any information which appears to be beyond the scope of their jurisdiction to collect. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dan Zacharias
Executive Director