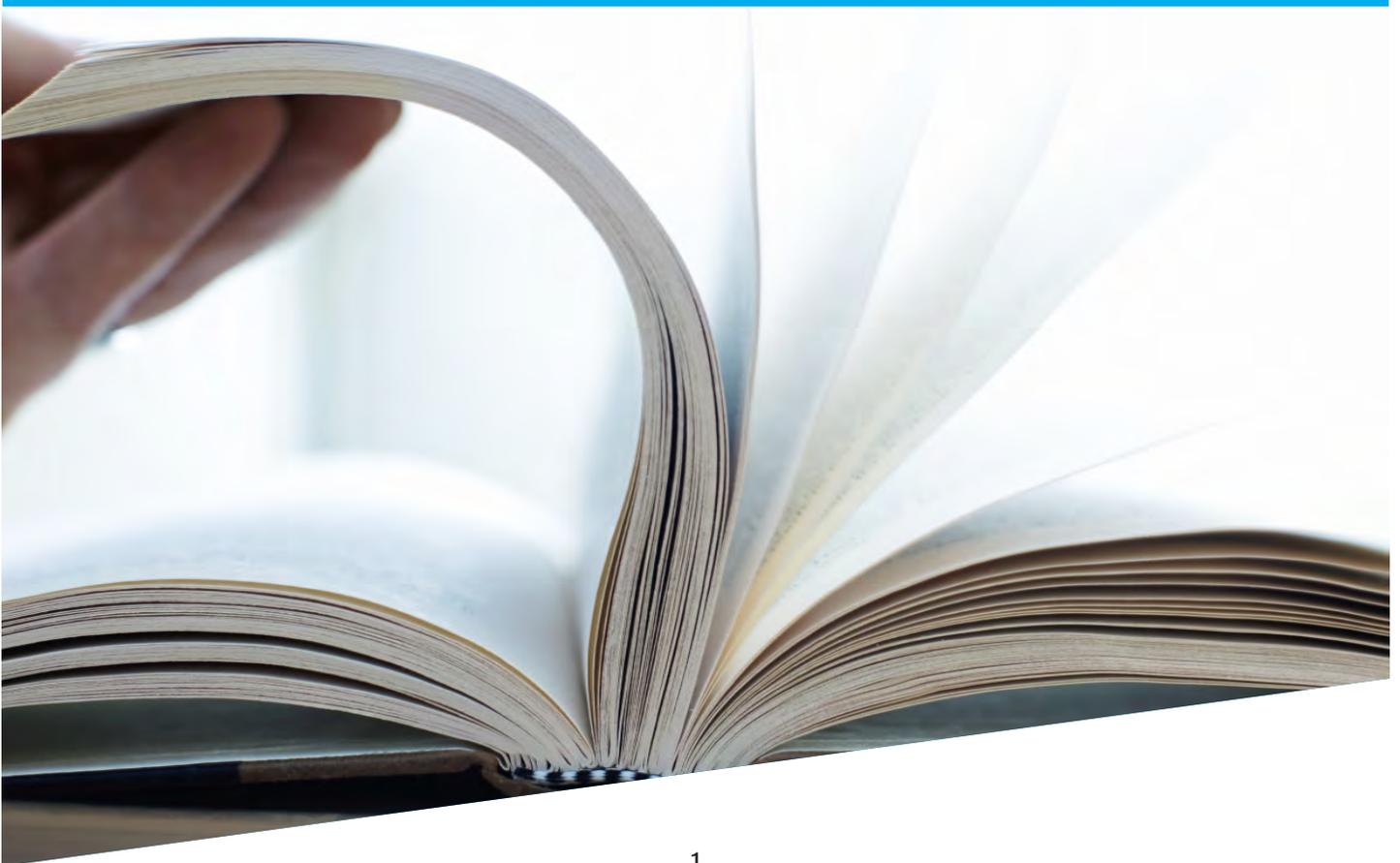




Best Practices:
Background Screening in Education

It's no secret that thorough background screening of potential employees in your schools is crucial. These individuals have consistent exposure to your students and, in the case of teachers and professors, are often responsible for guiding these students' educational paths. What's more, parents trust your institution to not only educate their children, but also to safeguard them from any potential harm or abuse. Taking every possible step to protect your students and manage parental concerns is obviously a top priority for you.

Further driving the need for an accurate and effective background screening program are reputational issues—all the more important in higher education and private schools, where your school's good name can make or break the success of your institution. Just one employee with an unsavory background can ruin years of meticulous stewardship and careful planning.



Taking the First Steps

How to go about creating and implementing a successful employment screening program can often seem like an insurmountable hurdle. A basic Internet search for “background checks” can turn up hundreds of results. So how do you separate good information from bad? How do you distinguish trustworthy providers from disreputable vendors, or valuable checks from unnecessary services?

The first step is to determine if your institution already has screening policies and procedures in place. It’s good practice for these policies and procedures to be developed by, or in concert with, your school’s legal counsel, since there are numerous state-specific laws and regulations that may govern how your institution should screen its employees.

If your school doesn’t have these types of policies in place, it’s important to develop them before performing background checks on potential employees. Such policies not only create fair, standardized procedures for employees at all levels, but also provide a layer of protection in the case of a lawsuit or complaint. You should involve your legal counsel in all steps of this process.

Who Should Be Screened?

Working with a background screening company with extensive experience in education will help you better understand industry norms for what types of checks to perform—and on which types of employees. Employment screening should not begin and end with faculty and high-level administrators. Everyone who works on your campus or with your students should be properly screened in accordance with their position.

Many times, experienced background screening companies see the most grievous and worrisome issues arise as a result of schools simply overlooking the potential risk of not performing background checks on all employees. Therefore, screening all employees, as well as all “others” who could pose a potential risk to a school’s most valuable assets (its people and sensitive data), is absolutely necessary. This includes a wide range of individuals: volunteers, third-party contract workers, athletic coaches, substitute/adjunct teachers, chaperones, security guards, host families, cafeteria workers, janitorial staff, daycare facility workers, bus drivers and summer camp workers.

Selecting a Vendor

Many schools often seek the cheapest background screening provider without fully understanding the disadvantages of doing so. All too often these providers create a false sense of security for their clients by relying on outdated, unproven resources to obtain information and by utilizing faulty—and sometimes unethical or illegal—methods in preparing reports. Searching for a background screening vendor should be a careful, thorough and rational process. There are a number of important characteristics you should look for in a vendor:

Information Sources

Reputable screening vendors go straight to the source, procuring records from county courthouses (or combing the same databases that court clerks use), contacting employers and educational institutions

directly and probing licensing bodies for information on certifications or credentials. Any databases used by the vendor should be compiled at the original source, updated on a continued basis and regularly tested for inaccuracies or outdated information.

Accuracy

Another key factor to verifying that the information you receive on your applicants and employees is highly accurate, is to ensure your selected vendor has an established quality assurance process in place. Investigators, data and final reports should all be properly monitored with proven methodologies to reduce the likelihood that incomplete, outdated or inaccurate information is being provided to you.

Compliance

Methodologies and information should be completely compliant with all necessary federal, state, local and industry-specific laws and regulations, including the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). The best screening providers have in-house legal counsel who monitor state and federal legislation to ensure their organization adheres to these regulations, as well as keeping you updated of changes to better strengthen your school's compliance.

Experience

The best screening vendors have lengthy histories of providing background information to their clients. You should look for a provider with at least five years of service. Don't forget to ask for references, as track histories are important indicators of a vendor's reliability and record of customer service. You should also work with a screening provider with numerous clients in the educational sector. This expertise will prove valuable when you are deciding who, what and how to screen.



What Elements Should Be Screened?

We often think of employment screening as simply verifying that an applicant doesn't have a criminal record. However, there are myriad elements in an individual's background that a screening provider can search for. Following are four levels of standard screening for educational institutions. Note that additional services may be legally required depending on your state's individual laws or regulations:

» One Base Package

This is considered the baseline approach for conducting a criminal background check on an applicant or employee. A minimum of seven years of history should be searched.

Social Security Number Trace and Address Locator

This service is a foundation for the most effective background screening methodology since it not only reveals identifying information (such as name and name variations and date of birth), but also provides an accounting of resident history by uncovering current and former addresses associated with that Social Security number (SSN). The screening provider should cross-reference addresses uncovered by the service with addresses provided by the applicant and then order the appropriate criminal searches based on a minimum of the last seven years of address history.

This methodology restricts the candidate from omitting a place of residence where he or she may have a pending charge, arrest or criminal record. By using this service to better define search parameters, screening vendors can discover criminal histories that were missed under the traditional process and become much less reliant on information candidates provide on applications.

Multi-Jurisdictional Criminal Database

Crimes are not isolated to where we live and work. Individuals can commit offenses in jurisdictions in which they visit or travel. To provide another layer of security in the screening process, screening vendors should perform a search of a proven multi-jurisdictional criminal database that may reveal these hidden records. Such a database should pool information from multiple trusted sources (like electronic repositories and sex offender registries) and meet the most stringent industry regulations.

Possible hits uncovered by the database should, as a best practice, be automatically verified by ordering the necessary county and/or statewide criminal search.

County (or Statewide) Criminal Record Searches

The screening vendor then takes the address history provided by the SSN Trace and Address Locator—as well as any hit information uncovered by the multi-jurisdictional criminal database—and orders the appropriate county and/or statewide criminal record searches for a minimum seven-year period. Ordering a statewide search, as opposed to the individual county, is dependent upon whether the state(s) of residence offer reliable record repositories. You need to ensure that any state repositories used meet the highest standards for data accuracy.

» Two Five Points Package

The Five Points method offers an excellent overview of a candidate's background and avoids many of the common pitfalls associated with the "bargain basement" criminal background check that might be performed through a quick online search. Perform all three elements of the Base Package outlined above and the following:

Federal Criminal Record Searches

A number of heinous crimes may only be reported in federal district courts and would therefore not be found during standard county or statewide criminal record searches. These include such offenses as tax evasion, mail and wire fraud, drug trafficking, immigration law violations, bank robbery and child pornography. Screening vendors should use the address history uncovered by the SSN Trace and Address Locator to determine jurisdictions in which federal criminal record searches will be ordered.

Driving Record Search

While some organizations think driving records should be pulled only if an applicant will operate a company vehicle, motor vehicle information exposes important character issues. Searching an applicant's motor vehicle record (MVR) can reveal suspended licenses, failures to appear in court and arrest warrants. In addition, drug- and alcohol-related driving offenses, such as DUIs, may serve as a warning of potential substance abuse problems that might affect job performance. In some states, these offenses are not always recorded with criminal records, but instead only appear on the MVR.

Pulling an MVR can also serve as another means of confirming the candidate's date of birth, allowing screening vendors to prevent savvy criminals, who know that the primary identifier in court records is date of birth, from concealing their past by providing a false birth date.

» Three Professional Package

Certain positions require additional elements to be added to the background investigation. Perform the Five Points Package outlined above and the following:

Employment Verification

An applicant's work record can reveal his or her qualifications for the position being applied for, may provide insight into job performance, and serves as an important indicator of integrity by verifying stated facts such as salary history and tenure. Screening vendors should research a minimum of seven years of an applicant's work history.

You should be wary of providers that "close out" a verification service in just a day or two. This may indicate they didn't attempt to contact the employer more than once. Screening vendors who practice reliable verification methodologies make numerous attempts to obtain a verification of an applicant's history with an employer. Though it may take a day or two longer, this approach always returns more useful information to you.

Education Verification

The most cost-effective approach is to verify the highest degree claimed (e.g., B.S., Ph.D.) by the applicant. Reputable screening vendors will make various valid attempts to confirm a degree with the institution, so be cautious if a provider claims to be able to typically provide this information in just one day.

» **Four** **Executive Package**

The Executive Package is typically used for individuals with access to a school's financial resources or with a high level of exposure to the general public. Perform the Professional Package outlined above and the following:

Civil Records Search

This search may uncover vital character-related information, such as a history of litigious behavior or complaints only filed in civil court. Once again, be sure that your screening provider is procuring records directly from the source and not relying on outdated or unproven databases.

Consumer Credit Check

A credit check performed for employment purposes is another method of establishing character and a track record of responsibility. This search is very important, especially if the employee will have access to your financial resources.

A Note on Fingerprinting

Many schools are also required to perform a fingerprint check on potential employees. The unfortunate reality is that these results often take weeks and sometimes months to be returned. In many cases, the employee has already begun working when results are ready, putting your institution at great risk. What may be even more troubling is that various loopholes exist in standard fingerprinting analyses in which a criminal record could potentially be missed. Working with an established screening provider who relies on primary sources and employs best-of-breed search methodologies will help you uncover criminal histories in a much more expedient and thorough manner.

The information contained in this publication is based on sources we believe reliable, but we do not guarantee its accuracy or completeness. This information provides only a general overview of subjects covered, is not intended to be taken as advice regarding any individual situation or as legal or business advice and should not be relied upon as such. Recipients of this publication should consult their own legal and other advisors regarding specific issues.

HireRight Background Check Services

HireRight offers a broad array of local and global services for employment screening and is continually expanding the menu of available services. The following HireRight services support the background checks for education mentioned in this paper.

Social Security Number Trace

Reveals the names and addresses associated with a Social Security number (SSN) using credit bureau records. The HireRight Social Security Number Trace provides the essential information necessary for other services and can help detect an incorrect or compromised SSN.

National Criminal Records Search

The HireRight National Criminal Records Search expands coverage by searching national criminal databases (NCDBs). The results include locations beyond a person's address history, and any potential records found are confirmed using a HireRight County Criminal Records Search or HireRight State Sex Offender Registry Search.

Statewide Criminal Records Search

Expand coverage by searching state criminal databases and state police department records where available. The HireRight Statewide Criminal Records Search results include locations beyond a person's address history, and any potential database records found are confirmed using a HireRight County Criminal Records Search.

County Criminal Records Search

Perform fundamental criminal searches that reveal felonies and misdemeanors by searching county courthouse records corresponding to an applicant's address history. The HireRight County Criminal Records Search finds, confirms and reports a candidate's criminal records history.

National Sex Offender Registry Search

Reveal records for known sex offenders by checking U.S. Department of Justice databases. The HireRight National Sex Offender Registry Search results include registered sex offender information for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam.

Federal Criminal Records Search

Reveal criminal records for incidents that are prosecuted in the United States District Courts. The HireRight Federal Criminal Records Search uncovers crimes prosecuted in federal courts that generally include incidents that violate federal law or occur on federal property, such as identity theft, Internet use violations, embezzlement or kidnapping.

Motor Vehicle Records Check

Identify the status of an individual's driver's license, license type, endorsements, restrictions, driving violations, suspensions and revocations. The HireRight Motor Vehicle Records (MVR) Check provides this information and shows driving under the influence (DUI) convictions for states that report this information in driving records.

Employment Verification

Verify company names and locations, dates of employment, positions or titles held and compensation (when available). The HireRight Employment Verification confirms previous employment claims and reveals discrepancies in provided information.

Education Verification

Confirm degree, certificate or diploma claims directly with institutions or their authorized agents. The HireRight Education Verification results are checked against a database of fictitious schools and diploma mills and include institution name, dates of attendance, current status, and degree, certificate or diploma issued with award dates.

County Court Civil Records Search

Locate records related to small claims, breach of contract, lawsuits and more. The HireRight County Court Civil Records Search performs upper court searches for records that typically include cases involving more than \$5,000, and lower court searches for records that typically involve less than \$5,000.

Credit History Check

Review the comprehensive credit history of a candidate. The HireRight Credit History Check provides information about negative account status, accounts in collections, inquiries by third parties and more. Understanding credit history may be relevant for individuals with access to cash, budgets or discretionary spending.

Discover why many of the world's most respected organizations trust HireRight as their employment screening provider of choice. Call us at **800.400.2761** in the U.S. and Canada or +1 949.428.5800 worldwide, or visit us online at www.hireright.com.



About HireRight

Employers need more than just data to successfully administer an employment screening program. As one of the world's largest screening providers focused 100 percent on employment screening, we are specialists at helping organizations of all sizes efficiently implement, manage, and control employment screening programs. We pride ourselves on understanding the complex screening needs of today's global employers and strive to provide easy-to-use, streamlined solutions that help organizations work smarter.

In fact, many of the world's most forward-thinking and successful companies trust HireRight to deliver effective, customer-focused solutions that provide increased efficiency and faster turnaround. HireRight also partners with the industry's top e-recruiting solution providers, such as Oracle, Taleo, Kenexa, Peopleclick Authoria, Kronos, ADP/VirtualEdge and PeopleAdmin, to co-develop unique, pre-integrated employment screening solutions that allow organizations to leverage their recruiting solution investment for background screening.

With worldwide headquarters located in Irvine, California, and offices and affiliates around the globe, HireRight reaches more than 200 countries and territories with more than 100 unique service offerings. HireRight is an Altegrity company.

Intelligence to move forward.™



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