



Background Verification FAQs

Q: Why would I need to perform a pre-employment background check?

A: A background check ensures a sound hiring decision and can protect an employer from a number of potential risks.

- Financial – You're investing a lot of time and money to find the right person so it's important to make sure they are qualified for the position and don't have any potential red flags.
- Compliance - Depending on what industry you're in, employees may legally need to have certain certifications. It's best to check that these credentials are possessed and up to date.
- Workplace safety – As an employer, you are responsible for the safety and security of your employees so it's important to know if the person you are hiring has a violent record.
- Legal liability – Federal, state, or local laws may require you to run pre-employment background checks for certain positions.

Q: When should we perform a background check?

A: The background screening should be conducted after an offer of employment has been made to an individual.

Q: What type of searches do you recommend for a standard background screening?

A: We recommend that your standard background check screen for basic criminal background information. This includes a Social Security Trace, County Record Search, State Record Search, National Criminal Supplemental Database Search, and Federal Record Search.

We also advise that additional services be ordered based on the candidate's role in the organization. For example, a motor vehicle report should be run for anyone driving a company vehicle, credit reports should be done for any employees with fiduciary responsibility, and an education verification should be done for any role which requires a degree.



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Q: What is included in a Social Security Trace (SST)? Why would I order one?

A: A Social Security Trace is a good starting point to determine what additional searches should be conducted for an applicant's background. This search will assist you in conducting a more comprehensive background check.

- A Social Security Trace will identify the following information:
- Validation of Social Security number
- Address history from when the applicant's credit was established
- A date frame of when the first time an address was used and the last time an address was used
- Name variations (i.e., maiden name)
- The state the Social Security number was issued
- The year the Social Security number was issued
- Provide any type of death record information

Q: What is contained in a National Criminal Supplemental Database search?

A: The National Criminal Supplemental Database is compiled from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, county and statewide criminal record repositories, State Department of Corrections, and the National Sex Offender Database. This search is for supplemental purposes only and should not be used as a standalone search to determine an individual's past criminal history. If a criminal record is identified within this search, further verification should be conducted in order to confirm the most recent information is provided. It is crucial, if you are using this method of criminal search, to supplement the database search with a physical county or state criminal searches as they will provide the most up to date and full coverage information.



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Q: Are federal charges included in the National Criminal Supplemental database? Are they included in physical state criminal searches?

A: Federal charges and state charges are tried independently of each other. Any federal charges are not reported to the states and state or county charges are not reported to the federal courts. To ensure a complete criminal background check it is advised to run a federal criminal search in conjunction with a county/state/or National Criminal Supplemental Database Search.

Q: When should a credit report be ordered on an applicant?

A: A credit report can only be ordered if the individual is applying for a position with fiduciary responsibility. Examples include accounts payable, accounts receivable, account supervisor or manager, CFO, CEO, an employee with a company credit card, etc. If there is doubt, you should not order a credit report. There are also several states with specific laws regarding the use of credit reports as part of a background check so check with your provider before ordering.

Q: Is a signed authorization required to run a background check?

A: Yes, the signed authorization is required under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). This will help minimize unfair hiring practice or discrimination lawsuits.

Q: Can we combine the disclosure and authorization forms? Can we make this a part of our application?

A: Authorization and disclosure forms should always remain separate documents. This is to ensure that the information is clear and conspicuous to the applicant. These documents should not be included as part of the application statement.



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Q: What are the Adverse Action steps?

A: If any part of the background check may lead you to disqualifying an applicant for employment, a pre-adverse action letter should be sent to the applicant first. This letter should include the contact information of the Consumer Reporting Agency of the employer, a Summary of Rights Under FCRA, and a copy of the background report. After a 5-day period (to allow the applicant time to dispute the charges), if the decision has been made to remove the applicant from consideration due to any part of the background check, a final adverse action letter should be sent to the applicant. Again, this should include the information contained in the pre-adverse action letter and state the fact that employment was denied due to a component of the background check. There are some states such as New York that require additional documentation to be provided to that applicant at the time the Pre-Adverse Action letter is sent so contact your provider to discuss.