

The Growing Need for Volunteer Background Checks

By Mark Myers, First Advantage Corporation
www.safevolunteers.com

There is a critical growing need for performing background checks on volunteers. Why? Unfortunately, it is common knowledge among convicted criminals and sex offenders that non-profit entities such as schools, faith-based and volunteer organizations often do not perform background checks on volunteers or only check for records in the state where the organization is located. It is for this reason that non-profit organizations are a target for convicted criminals and sex offenders.

By simply moving out of the state where there records are located and applying to volunteer in the new state, many criminals are able to escape detection. Although there is no foolproof background check available, there are several types of checks that can significantly reduce the risk of a person “slipping through the cracks” who is a convicted sex offender or has a disqualifying criminal record.

The most economical volunteer background check is a search of a criminal record and sex offender data center which contains a broad collection of criminal record and sex offender databases from across the U.S. These types of database checks can search for sex offender and criminal record data from hundreds of databases across the U.S. and can significantly reduce the risk of not finding out-of-state records. However, it should be noted that not all conviction records make it into the databases compiled by state agencies particularly if counties are delinquent or fail to report all convictions to the state agencies.

A further reduction in risk is produced by actually performing a search of the county criminal records in every county identified as a county of current or prior residence. This may identify records at the county level that have not yet reached the state agencies or made it into the databases. Most criminals will not give you accurate previous address information so you will know which counties should be searched for criminal records. A Social Security Number Trace is the tool which can provide this information along with possible aliases used by the person thereby creating a “roadmap” of counties in which to search for criminal records.

When looking for a background check vendor, you should examine factors such as experience, references, website security and ease of use, endorsements, legal and regulatory resources, and client support.

If you have any questions regarding volunteer background checks, feel free to contact Mark Myers at 214-360-9122 x112, mmyers@fadv.com. Mr. Myers is an attorney and COO of the Safe Volunteers background screening program offered by First Advantage Corporation.