What You Need to Know About Background Screening

Contents

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES

COPS

Office of the Director
145 N Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20530

Dear Colleagues,

Protecting children from employees who may mean to do them harm is one of the most important roles youth-serving organizations can serve. Parents and community members trust that the employees and volunteers at their child's school, church, or gymnasium are there to support and guide and, above all, do no harm. Background screening is a vital component to help minimize the risk and protect our nation's most vulnerable assets, our children.

Community members are vital partners to law enforcement regarding this issue, and I am proud to offer this basic guidebook to help educate, inform, and empower youth-serving organizations to help ensure the safety of the children within their care. This guidebook is designed for leaders within a youth-serving organization, community members who volunteer within youth-serving organizations, and parents of children who actively participate in youth-serving organizations. It describes six layers of screening an agency should consider when developing a comprehensive background-screening process. The guidebook offers links to useful tools and resources to help youth-serving agencies understand the best screening practices that are available.

Through the significant work of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is pleased to offer this resource to help youth-serving organizations and community members take an active and informed role in protecting the children in their care.

Joshua Ederheimer, Acting Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

Foreword

As a group, youth-serving organizations have a wide range of missions, such as intervening to prevent children from harm, offering protective settings or homes, teaching important skills, imparting values, offering hope and opportunity, or simply allowing youth to have fun. Despite the diversity of our missions or the methods we employ to fulfill them, we have in common one simple fact: We succeed or fail through the efforts of those who interact directly with youth—our employees and volunteers.

Therefore, of equal importance to our mission is the responsibility to establish reliable screening systems to assist us in selecting persons of high character. But, as explained in this guidebook, screening should not be approached as a one-time, pass-or-fail event. Rather, the organization should establish a process through which appropriate information is gathered and evaluated about each applicant.

Such a process is especially important given the transient nature of today's society, where an organization often has little prior knowledge of an applicant. This reality was underscored by the findings of the 2003 Child Safety Pilot Program[1] in which Boys & Girls Clubs of America and two other organizations collaborated with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to measure the effectiveness of applying background checks to youth-serving volunteers. The review of thousands of volunteer applications and their accompanying records showed that more than one-third of the criminal record "hits" were from out-of-state and more than half of the people with criminal record hits did not disclose them on their application.

Working with youth is, by its very nature, dynamic and complex and demands the regular evaluation of established practices. To stay in the forefront, organizations must embrace continuous safety improvements through new technologies, improved communication, and systematic processes, such as those offered in this guidebook. When it comes to the safety of our children, there can be no compromise.

R. Leslie Nichols

National Vice President
Child & Club Safety
Boys & Girls Clubs of America

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1   The Child Safety Pilot Program was established by the Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction to this Guide

When one sets foot inside a gymnasium, church, or school where children are playing under the watchful eyes of coaches, clergy, parents, or teachers, it is natural to feel a sense of security. These are people and places offering mentorship, guidance, skill-building, and growth for those we hold most precious: our children. It is important to remember the vast majority of people who choose to work with children do so for the right reasons. Unfortunately, some do not. Some individuals seek environments in which they can easily gain access to children for the purpose of victimizing them. They use the friendliness and benevolence of the youth-serving activity, institution, or organization to mask their motivations and crimes.

Youth-serving organizations can take meaningful steps to minimize risk to the children they serve. Background screening should be one component in your child-protection toolbox. While it should not be relied on as the sole basis to keep children safe, it must not be discounted as a risk-management tool. If a child is victimized and it turns out the offender had a history that could have been flagged, no amount of explanation or rationalization will repair the damage done to the child. The credibility of the person or organization responsible for that child's well-being may never be regained.

All of us have the responsibility to minimize risk to children and take steps to hold offenders accountable if inappropriate behavior is observed or a child is harmed. The purpose of this guide is to provide helpful information to community members who play an active role in building protective barriers around children.

Whether you hold a leadership role in a youth-serving organization, work or volunteer in one, or are a parent or guardian of a child who participates in activities supervised by other adults, this guide is designed to provide you with information that will assist you in protecting the children in your care.

Statistics show 58 percent of children are victimized by an acquaintance.* It is up to parents and community members to be vigilant and informed. The responsibility of preventing abuse belongs to adults, not to children.

* Snyder, H. 2000. *Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics*. U.S. Department of Justice: Bureau of Statistics. Table 6, page 10.

Before the Applicant is Hired

There are many tools available to aid in building safe surroundings and environments for children. Think of these tools in the same way that you use tools to secure your home. When you leave your home, you take steps to reduce the risk of a break-in. At a minimum, you probably lock the doors and make sure windows are also closed and locked. You may choose to invest in an alarm system or get a dog, or some may choose to live in a gated community with paid on-site security. When you travel, you may have your mail picked up or halted during your absence so it does not pile up, set house lights on timers, or use a house-sitter.

Taking all of these steps will not guarantee your home won't be burglarized. In fact, most people only use a few, but each step adds another layer of protection, reducing risk. Each layer of protection reduces the likelihood a criminal will enter and steal your valuables; the more layers, the less risk. Most people would not dream of leaving their homes unsecured while they are away, yet many parents unwittingly leave their children in the care of individuals who may not have taken adequate steps to keep them safe. Not performing any screening at all is like leaving the front door of your home open while you are away.

According to an audit by LexisNexis® of more than 3.7 million screenings from 2002–2007, more than 189,000 people with at least one criminal conviction attempted to gain employment or volunteer with a nonprofit organization. On average, 144 people with criminal records applied for employment or a volunteer opportunity with a nonprofit each day during the audit period and a registered sex offender attempted to obtain a position at a nonprofit organization every 11.5 hours during the same audit period.*

* LexisNexis. 2009. *The Importance of Background Screening for Nonprofits: An Updated Briefing*. Retrieved from www.lexisnexis.com/risk/nonprofit/documents/ Background_Screening_Nonprofits.pdf. Note: the screenings conducted were not limited to youth-serving organizations and the registered sex offenders included those who victimized adults.

The Screening Toolbox: Use a Variety of Resources

Using a variety of resources will help you achieve the goal of a secure and thorough background-screening process. Look at each component as an additional layer, building a solid and comprehensive screening program.

Here are six layers of screening to consider:

I. **Nationwide and state criminal-history checks**
II. **State and national public sex-offender websites**
III. **State child-abuse registries**
IV. **In-person interviews**
V. **Reference checks**
VI. **Observation of the applicant**

I. Nationwide and State Criminal-History Checks

The most vital layer of a comprehensive screening program is a **nationwide criminal-history check**. There are essentially two types of criminal-history checks: fingerprint-based and name-based. Fingerprint-based checks offer one advantage as they can help properly identify someone who is using an alias and attempting to avoid detection. Name-based checks offer their own advantages; most notably—greater accessibility and timeliness of results.

The nationwide fingerprint check is a search of the FBI's master fingerprint file, which can be accessed through state law enforcement agencies. The check involves searching the official state repositories of criminal-history information. These state repositories are maintained in a database called the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System. IAFIS is a national fingerprint and criminal-history system that responds to requests 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. IAFIS searches include arrest records, convictions, juvenile records (if provided by the state), dismissed charges or not-guilty verdicts, warrants, Sex Offender Registry information, physical characteristics (i.e., height, weight, hair, tattoos, and eye color), and aliases. All arrest data included in an Identification Record is obtained from fingerprint submissions, disposition reports, and other information submitted by agencies with criminal justice responsibilities.[2]

Some state search checks allow you to access these records through either a fingerprint or name-based check by submitting the applicant's name, sex, and date of birth; however, the check may only include a search of the state where the information was submitted. State laws and regulations govern access to these records and they vary significantly; therefore it is important to contact your state repository to determine if these records are accessible when creating background-screening policies. If a nationwide search is not an option, then it is important to check every state in which the applicant has resided. A list of the State Identification Bureaus is available on the FBI Criminal Justice Information Service's website at www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/background-checks/state-identification-bureau-listing.

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2   Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2012. *About Us: Criminal Justice Information Services.* Retrieved from www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis.
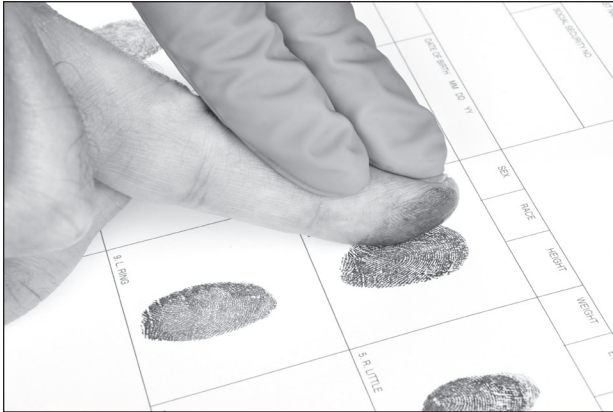
Of a subset of Child Safety Pilot applicants with criminal records:*

- **42% had a record in a different state**

- **23% applied with a different name**

- **6% applied with a different date of birth**

- **53.4%[†] indicated they did not have a record, but one was uncovered**

* Child Safety Pilot Program Description and Findings, Appendix A.
([†]Percentage based on statistical information taken from 1,638 applicants from a youth-serving organization who provided personal information during a study period and have records containing criterion offenses [Information based on CJIS and public record databases].)

Another way to obtain a criminal-history check is through a private company. These are name-based searches of public court records, state correctional facilities, and state criminal history record repositories. These companies buy the information from the states and create their own proprietary databases. You supply the applicant's name, date of birth, and social security number, and they will provide your results in a report. It is important that the search includes a social security number, if possible, which will provide a history of past and present addresses and names associated with the individual's SSN, including aliases. Private vendors return the results rather quickly; however, it is important to remember not all states sell their criminal-history information to commercial databases, even if the report says it is a nationwide check. When choosing a private company, it is recommended to inquire about the sources of their information and how often the data is updated. The commercial databases may also be missing important disposition information that is relevant to determine whether an individual was only *arrested for* versus *convicted of* a particular offense. It is also important to speak to legal counsel as there are certain legal requirements that organizations must meet in order to protect an individual's privacy rights and ensure fair use of the information, including compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act and state consumer reporting laws. (For further information, visit the Federal Trade Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection website at www.business.ftc.gov/documents/bus08-using-consumer-reports-what-employers-need-know.)

There are pros and cons to both fingerprint-based and name-based checks. It is therefore recommended that you use a combination of these resources (when available) to minimize the challenges inherent to both types of searches.

II. State and National Public Sex-Offender Websites

The second layer of a thorough screening process is free and may help identify registered sex offenders trying to gain access to children. Each state has a public sex-offender website, which contains sex offender data and is easily searchable by anyone with access to the Internet. Another resource is the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website. *It is important to search both the national website and the websites in every state in which the applicant has worked or resided.*

Although sex offenders are required to provide a large amount of personal data, the NSOPW and most state registries provide limited information, including:

- Personal information, such as name and any aliases, age, physical description, and current photos
- Home address, work address, and employment status
- Convictions, jurisdiction of convictions, dates of convictions, relevant state statute, and age of victim(s) if known

Additional details may be obtained from the court. Adult court records are public information unless sealed by court order. Links to all state, territorial, and tribal sex-offender websites can be found by visiting the "Registry Sites" web page, accessible from www.NSOPW.gov.

NOTE: Not all registered sex offenders are on the NSOPW. The www.NSOPW.gov is the state portal site that allows the public to conduct nationwide searches. State laws dictate which offenders are made public. For example, it is possible someone who committed a lower-level sex offense will come up on a fingerprint check, but will *not* be listed on the public website due to the requirements of the state. If you have questions about the NSOPW, contact the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/smart/.

III. State Child-Abuse Registries

Most states also have **child-abuse registries**, which contain information related to child abuse and neglect investigations conducted by state social services agencies. Unlike sex-offender registries, access is more restricted, but many organizations in the business of caring for children can request a search of this information. Criteria for obtaining this information vary by state.

Searches of these registries may be conducted when screening for specific types of employment or volunteer activities in which the individual will come into contact with children, such as child care institutions, schools, and court appointed special advocate programs, as well as foster parent approval, adoption approval, and assessment of custody petitions.

The type of information in each registry varies as well. Some states limit the information to only substantiated reports of abuse, while others include all reports made and investigated, even if they were determined to be unsubstantiated. There is currently no national registry, so individuals must be checked on a state-by-state basis.

IV. In-Person Interviews

In-person interviews are critical. The Nonprofit Risk Management Center provides examples of questions when interviewing applicants for positions involving access to children.[3] It is important to ask open-ended questions encouraging discussion to identify potential areas of concern that may require additional follow-up.

V. Reference Checks

Reference checks provide additional information about individuals and help verify previous volunteer and work experience. It also allows for a comparison of the information from the in-person interview and may identify discrepancies. In addition to listed references, consider asking references if they can recommend others who know the applicant, but are NOT listed on the application.

VI. Observation of the Applicant

It is also extremely important to **observe** the applicant in the environment with the child to look for potential red flags. If there are behaviors, actions, or statements that give you pause, do not ignore them. This does not necessarily mean there is a problem, but it may be a potential issue warranting further observation or inquiry.

It is imperative to remember that people who are trying to gain access to children to victimize them may not have a criminal history. Therefore steps such as conducting interviews, checking references, and observing the applicant play an extremely important role in the background-screening process. Examples of red flags could be an excessive or unnatural interest in children's activities, interest in particular age groups or gender of children, and possibly an unwillingness or reluctance to submit to a background check. Keep in mind that there are some characteristics that are similar in individuals who pose a possible *threat* to a child, and in individuals who have healthy relationships with children.

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3   Patterson, John C. 2004. *Staff Screening Tool Kit*, Third Edition. Washington, D.C.: Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 61.

Acting on the Information

The background-screening process may uncover information of concern, so it is important for organizations to have a written policy regarding how the information will be collected, processed, retained, and used to determine an applicant's fitness for the position. The information gathered should be used and applied in a secure, consistent, and professional manner.

Who Will Perform the Screening?

Designate a person or a team in your organization to be responsible for receiving, reviewing, and acting on background-screening information. This person or team must be trusted to maintain a high level of confidentiality.

What Criteria Will be Used?

Establish assessment criteria defining what will constitute automatic disqualifiers, and make these criteria known to the applicant. Organizations may wish to consider including the criteria below in their screening policy as factors that may disqualify an applicant. (This list is not exhaustive; an organization may wish to consider additional factors in their screening policy.)

- Failure to complete the screening process
- Past history of sexual victimization of children (regardless of whether the individual completed therapy)
- Conviction for any crime in which children were involved (regardless of successful completion of probation or incarceration)
- History of violence or any sexually exploitative behavior including acts against adults
- Termination from a paid or volunteer position for misconduct with a child
- Lying about criminal history

Assessment criteria should be relevant to the needs of the organization and type of work the applicant may be performing. All hiring decisions should be based upon a complete review of the candidate's qualifications and characteristics.

You may wish to make the applicant aware that your organization is especially mindful of concerns regarding child-sexual abuse within youth-serving organizations and that it is proactive in taking appropriate measures to protect children. Sometimes making the applicant aware of your process will serve as a deterrent to individuals with questionable motives.

After the Applicant has been Hired

It is every parent's right and responsibility to ask what policies and procedures are followed by the organizations in which their children participate. As a youth-serving organization, being open about your policies and procedures, as well as being prepared to answer such questions, is highly recommended. It will not only bolster your credibility, it will help foster a healthy environment of transparency and accountability with your staff, which will provide greater safety for the children you serve.

When developing your organization's policies and procedures, you may wish to consider the following:

Screening

- Are criminal-history checks performed on all employees and volunteers with access to children?
- Are the checks fingerprint-based or name-based?
- Are the checks nationwide, statewide, or both?
- Are reference checks performed on each applicant?
- What would disqualify a person from being hired?
- Are employees/volunteers re-screened after they are hired, and if so how often?
- Who is responsible for conducting screening/checks, and what training have they received?

Safeguarding

- Is there a policy prohibiting adults from working alone with a child?
- Are employees and volunteers prohibited from giving gifts to children?
- Are adult/child sleepovers of any kind prohibited?

Training

- Is training provided to employees and volunteers regarding child-abuse prevention and identification, and reporting concerns internally through the appropriate organizational process?
- Is training provided to employees and volunteers regarding appropriate contact with children, in accordance with best practices and organizational policy?
- Is training provided to employees and volunteers regarding mandatory-reporting laws?

Reporting

- If inappropriate contact or behavior with a child is suspected, reported by others, or witnessed, does the organization have a policy about how and to whom the incident or behavior is reported within and outside the organization?
- Does that policy mandate all employees and volunteers with knowledge of such suspected inappropriate contact or behavior report the incident or behavior?
- Who investigates reports of suspected inappropriate contact or behavior within the organization?
- Who is ultimately responsible for reporting criminal behavior to law enforcement?

A Note about Reporting

It is everyone's responsibility to make sure any harm against a child is reported. If you observe inappropriate behavior or if you have reason to believe something inappropriate has occurred, do not assume someone else will report it. It is up to you to act.

- If you have observed or have reason to believe there has been an incident of sexual contact, sexual abuse, or physical abuse, **report this information directly to law enforcement**.
- If you have observed or become aware of behavior you feel is suspicious or concerning, **report this information directly to the organization's leadership**. This should not be a substitute for contacting law enforcement.

You can also report incidents of child sexual exploitation to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's CyberTipline. See www.cybertipline.com.

A 2008 survey conducted by the National Center for Victims of Crime found that of 517 nonprofit human service organizations surveyed, 12 percent do not screen volunteers. Nearly one in four said the primary reason for not screening is they do not believe it is useful. Another 17 percent cited insufficient funds as the primary reason, and 13 percent said they were concerned with offending potential volunteers. In addition, one in four said the process takes too long and they do not have the time to wait to put volunteers to work.*

*Webster, M., and Whitman, J.. 2008. *Who's Lending a Hand? A National Survey of Nonprofit Volunteer Screening Practices: Summary of Findings*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Victims of Crime.

Conclusion

Ideally, background screening should be nationwide, timely, and at minimal cost; yet there is no comprehensive national screening resource currently available meeting these criteria. It can be difficult for non-law enforcement entities to conduct and analyze criminal history checks, and access to child-abuse registries is limited. Despite these limitations, the responsibility still rests with youth-serving organizations to understand what best screening practices are available, identify sources of information, and be as diligent and thorough as possible to protect the children in their care.

A comprehensive screening program includes training, reporting procedures, criminal history checks, in-person interviews, and reference checks. Whatever combination of sources used, it is important to know what each search actually provides and that time is taken to understand the content and quality of the searches being run.

The most thorough and comprehensive of background checks will not eliminate the risk of harm to children and should not be viewed as the universal remedy to child protection. Organizational policies must prohibit inappropriate practices such as allowing an adult to work alone with a child or give personal gifts to a child. The policies should also mandate reporting of any form of abuse. Background checks are, however, a critical element that responsible youth-serving organizations cannot overlook. There can never be enough layers to protect a child from harm; it is up to parents and the child-serving organizations to get involved, be aware, and implement sound background-screening policies that will help keep children safe.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Child Safety Pilot Program Description and Findings

The Child Safety Pilot Program was established by the Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003. The Child Safety Pilot Program addressed the question of what kind of criminal history checks will help youth-serving organizations better protect the children in their care. During its operation from 2003 to 2011, the Child Safety Pilot Program conducted more than 100,000 criminal-history checks. Under the pilot program, NCMEC was tasked with providing fitness determinations for applicants wishing to volunteer to work with children at nonprofit youth-serving organizations. These fitness determinations were based on the results of nationwide fingerprint-based, criminal-history checks from the FBI. NCMEC made fitness determinations based on criteria established by NCMEC and the original three organizations participating in the program.

Each determination fit into one of three categories: (1) meets criteria, (2) does not meet criteria, or (3) may not meet criteria/unable to determine. Once the determination was made by NCMEC, it was sent to the organization for consideration when examining the candidate's application to volunteer. Every applicant had a right to appeal to the FBI and obtain a copy of their criminal history.

Child Safety Pilot Program Criterion Offenses:

- Any felony conviction (and/or crime punishable by confinement greater than 1 year)
- Any lesser crime using force or threat of force against a person
- Any lesser crime in which sexual relations is an element, including "victimless" crimes of sexual abuse
- Any lesser crime involving controlled substances (not paraphernalia or alcohol)
- Any lesser crime involving cruelty to animals

Information from the pilot program demonstrated that people who intend to victimize children will try to obtain legitimate access to them, despite a national, fingerprint-based, criminal-history check. Some applicants had criminal histories that included homicides, sexual assaults, prostitution, child endangerment, abuse and neglect of a child, rape, as well as registration as a sex offender. Of a subset of applicants who had criminal records and applied to volunteer at the nonprofit organizations: 42 percent of applicants had a criminal record in a different state other than where they applied to volunteer, 23 percent of applicants had a different name on their criminal record other than the one used to apply to volunteer, and 6 percent of applicants applied with a different date of birth other than the one in their criminal history.

Equally concerning, more than half of applicants who indicated they did not have a criminal record did, in fact, have one.

The pilot program demonstrated the need for a permanent background-check program to provide criminal-history checks to youth-serving organizations. Such a program should provide nationwide checks at little or no cost, returning the results to these organizations in a timely manner.

Appendix B: Pertinent Federal Laws

Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) - 15 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq.

- **Summary:** The Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) promotes the accuracy, fairness, and privacy of information in the files of consumer reporting agencies. There are many types of consumer reporting agencies, including credit bureaus that gather and sell information about an individual's creditworthiness and/or criminal history to creditors, employers, landlords, and other businesses.
- **Full Text of Law:** www.ftc.gov/os/statutes/031224fcra.pdf.

Appendix C: Mandatory Reporting Laws

Every state requires certain people to report child maltreatment to the authorities. Mandated reporters often include law enforcement, child care providers, social workers, teachers, and medical and mental health professionals. Each state sets out a reporting process that applies to all mandated reporters. Additionally, some states have expanded their list of mandated reporters to include all people who suspect child abuse or neglect, not just those in a specific profession.

In order to determine if you or your volunteer organization is required to report suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect, please visit the following website provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/state/

- Identify your state in Step 1
- Under Step 2 "Select a Topic(s)" — place a check mark next to Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect within the "Child Abuse and Neglect" category
- Click "Go!" under Step 3 "Begin Your Search"

Appendix D: Additional Reading and Resources

Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Standard Practices for Hiring Staff and Selecting Volunteers of High Character: The Boys & Girls Club Way

> www.bgca.net/Departments/HumanResources/Documents/Hiring%20Staff%20and%20 Volunteers.pdf

Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website

> www.nsopw.gov

Federal Bureau of Investigation's Listing of State Identification Bureaus

> www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/background-checks/state-identification-bureau-listing

National Association of Professional Background Screeners

> www.napbs.com/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®, CyberTipline

> www.cybertipline.com

National Center for Victims of Crime, Who's Lending a Hand? – A National Survey of Nonprofit Volunteer Screening Practices

> http://lexisnexis.com/risk/nonprofit/documents/Volunteer_Screening_Press.pdf

National Commission on Children and Disasters, Recommended Guidelines for Conducting Background Checks on Volunteers

> www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Resources/Other_Resources/Recommended-Guidelines-Background-Check-Volunteers.pdf

National Institute of Justice, Youth Victimization: Prevalence and Implications

> https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/194972.pdf

National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, Report of the National Task Force on the Commercial Sale of Criminal Justice Record Information

> www.search.org/files/pdf/RNTFCSCJRI.pdf

National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, The Report of the National Task Force on the Criminal Backgrounding of America (SEARCH Report)

> www.search.org/files/pdf/ReportofNTFCBA.pdf

Nonprofit Risk Management Center, Online Tutorials and Frequently Asked Questions

> http://nonprofitrisk.org/tools/volunteer/volunteer.shtml

> www.nonprofitrisk.org/advice/faqs/screening2.shtml#required

State-by-state search for laws and policies on background screening

> www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/state/

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures

> www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/PreventingChildSexualAbuse-a.pdf#page=1

U.S. Department of Justice, Attorney General's Report on Criminal History Background Checks

> www.usdoj.gov/olp/ag_bgchecks_report.pdf

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART)

> www.ojp.usdoj.gov/smart/

U.S. Department of Justice, Privacy and Civil Liberties Policy Development Guide and Implementation Templates

> https://it.ojp.gov/documents/Privacy_Guide_Final.pdf

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Volunteering in the United States

> www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm

About the COPS Office

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.

Rather than simply responding to crimes once they have been committed, community policing concentrates on preventing crime and eliminating the atmosphere of fear it creates. Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office has produced and compiled a broad range of information resources that can help law enforcement better address specific crime and operational issues, and help community leaders better understand how to work cooperatively with their law enforcement agency to reduce crime.

- Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested nearly $14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.
- By the end of FY2012, the COPS Office has funded approximately 124,000 additional officers to more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country in small and large jurisdictions alike.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- As of 2012, the COPS Office has distributed more than 8.5 million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.

COPS Office resources, covering a wide breadth of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—are available, at no cost, through its online Resource Center at www.cops.usdoj.gov. This easy-to-navigate website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.

About the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

Established in 1984, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® is the leading nonprofit organization in the United States working with law enforcement, families, and the professionals who serve them on issues related to missing and sexually exploited children. As part of its Congressional authorization, NCMEC has created and maintains a unique public and private partnership to build a coordinated, national response to the problem of missing and sexually exploited children. We established and maintain a missing children hotline and serve as the national clearinghouse for information related to these issues.

Through March 2013, our national toll-free hotline, 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678), has received and expertly responded to more than 3.7 million calls. With help from corporate partners, we have circulated billions of photos of missing children and our employees have assisted law enforcement in the recovery of more than 185,000 missing children. We have trained more than 300,000 law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and health care professionals at our Alexandria, Virginia, headquarters, our branch offices, and online.

Based in the Washington, D.C., suburbs we have grown from a staff of five to a team of more than 350 employees and 200 volunteers. Today we perform 19 specific functions as authorized by the U.S. Congress and work with law enforcement, the private sector, and families to find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization.

Youth-serving organizations have the fundamental duty to protect the children within their care. *What You Need To Know About Background Screening* is a simple, yet powerful resource from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children dedicated to helping youth-serving organizations by providing information on how to better screen employees and minimize the risk to the children they serve. This guidebook describes six layers of screening an agency should consider when developing a comprehensive background-screening process and offers links to useful tools and resources to help youth-serving agencies understand the best screening practices that are available.