



6 THINGS HR PROFESSIONALS NEED TO KNOW

ABOUT BACKGROUND CHECKS

Employment background checks are complex, and that's for a good reason. When you're hiring, you want to know who you're really hiring and ensure they're right for your company and the position. This process requires searching thousands of databases, complying with federal and local regulations, and triple-checking that your results match your candidate.

The complexities of employment screening can be overwhelming. If you're diving into background checks for the first time or just need a refresher, then there are a few things you need to know about.

WorkplaceSafetyScreenings.com

832-572-5577

1717 Turning Basin Dr. #148
Houston, TX 77029



#1

Turnarounds of Reliable Background Checks

A background check typically contains criminal record searches. This means searching potentially dozens of databases and ensuring that any adverse information found is accurate. If your background check provider is turning around completed reports in only a few hours, then that's a major red flag, as they may only be searching online databases. The turnaround of reliable background checks averages 48 hours at WSS to ensure accuracy. Extensive background checks that contain education, employment, and reference verifications can take 5-10 days to process.

#2

There's No One-Size-Fits-All Database for Criminal Searches

Despite what you see on television, there's no one database that compiles all records of criminal convictions in the U.S. Data for criminal convictions are split between different courts, and some courts do not have electronic records, which require an in-person visit to the courthouse. This aspect affects the turnaround time of background checks and provides insight into why turning around a background check in a matter of hours is downright impossible.

#3

Think Twice About Googling Applicants

There are many legal factors to consider if you decide to Google an applicant's name or check their Facebook profile. These searches can provide inaccurate or conflicting information. If you base your hiring decision on what you find, you could end up with a legal headache. Your background check vendor is most likely considered a Credit Reporting Agency and must adhere to the Fair Credit Reporting Act, which protects consumers' rights in the background-screening process. One of those requirements is that applicants must provide authorization for a background check and what it entails, including social media checks.

#4

Allow Time for Credentialing with a New Vendor

Reliable background checks are provided by FCRA-compliant consumer reporting agencies (CRAs). One of the requirements of ordering background checks from a CRA is to document how the employer requesting background checks intends to use the applicant's information. Credentialing is part of this requirement and checks that a business is legitimate and has a permissible purpose under the FCRA to obtain a background check. This ensures that applicants' data is in safe hands. With WSS, this process typically takes less than a day.

#5

A Policy is the Foundation for an Efficient, Compliant Program

Your background check vendor should be able to help you develop a written employment-screening policy. This is your foundation for building a great team and setting the requirements for the company, the employer, and the employees or candidates. The policy should cover all aspects of your background-check procedures and the types of checks you will run, including criminal checks, employment and education verifications, industry-specific checks, and driving records. Your policy should be tailored to your company, so it's best to consult an employment attorney before finalizing it.

#6

When to Ask About Criminal History

Your written policy will need to include guidelines on when to ask an applicant for their criminal background. Should you ask on the application? After the initial interview? Or wait until after an offer has been extended? Some state and local laws prohibit including questions pertaining to criminal history on the application or at other early stages in the hiring process. The best practice is to ask for this information later in the hiring process. This reduces your risk that the EEOC would be successful if a civil rights violation under Title VII was pursued.



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