Virginia Cooperative Extension
Volunteer Screening Guidelines

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why is background screening important?

    A. Background screenings are important to meet industry standards. Also, it protects the integrity of our agency, our volunteers, and our clients.

Q. Why is a background screening required?

    A. Volunteer positions requiring screening include Master Volunteers, those volunteers working with vulnerable populations (youth, seniors, participants with disabilities), handling funds, and those that have unsupervised access to VCE equipment/facilities. Background screenings protect our agency, volunteers, and community members.

Q. How did Virginia Cooperative Extension select PreSearch Background Services as a vendor?

    A. PreSearch Background Services was selected as a provider to conduct the criminal history screening based on the following:

        1.) Experience and service within the field of criminal background screening;

        2.) Level of security of the platform used to complete the criminal background screenings;

        3.) Endorsements and recommendations from professional associations including the American Camp Association and the National Association of Professional Background Screeners;

        4.) Flexibility to work with each VCE unit and 4-H Center to maintain a secure and user friendly system for conducting criminal background screening;

        5.) Price of the package screening.

Q. Who is PreSearch Background Services and how will they protect my information?

    A. Since 1995, PreSearch Background Services has performed more than 2 million employment screening background checks. PreSearch Background Services uses a secure, online system to collect information from volunteer applicants to complete the criminal background screening. PreSearch is a member of the National Association of Professional Background Screeners, American Camp Association, and an affiliate of Affirm Background Screening.

Q. Why should volunteers not take the policy personally or feel disrespected?

    A. These guidelines are not designed to disrespect or to imply mistrust in our volunteers. The screening process helps to protect the well-being of Virginia Cooperative Extension programs, its participants, and volunteers. The screening guidelines were recommended by a committee of VCE faculty and administrators, and reviewed by the University's legal counsel and Risk Management offices after more than 18 months of review and research.

Q. Who will see my information?

    A. No VCE representative will have access to the full social security information used to conduct the Criminal Background Screening. Only PreSearch Background Services has access to the full social security number, and the security access to that information is described in the question above. Any specific criminal results that are returned are only visible by two specialists in the VCE State Office. Locally, results on each participant are marked as 'accepted' or 'further review'.

Q. I just recently completed a volunteer screening with another organization or my employer, will you accept a copy of these results?

    A. Yes. Applicants may submit outside screening results that meet the scope of the Presearch screening and have been completed within three years. The scope of the criminal background screening must include the following: National Criminal Index Search, National Sex Offender Registry Search, Name, SSN, and DOB validation with address history verification, County or Statewide Level Criminal Search.

    The verifiable results can be mailed directly to the State Office using the address provided below. Please mark on the top of the results the city/county in which you volunteer. Also mark the outside of the envelope "Confidential". The State Office will review to ensure the results meet the scope and timeframe of the VCE volunteer screening guidelines and will contact the local VCE unit after review.

    Virginia Cooperative Extension
    Attn: Jeremy Johnson – Volunteer Screening
    107 Hutcheson Hall (0419)
    Blacksburg, VA 24061

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Q. Will my concealed carry permit, TSA Pre-Check, or Global Entry screening be accepted?

    A. Concealed carry permits and TSA Pre-Check criminal background checks do not complete the full scope of the VCE screening. However, Global Entry from U.S. Customs and Border Protection does and you can submit your current letter to fulfill the screening requirement.

Q. What if I need to save and finish my PreSearch application and release form later?

    A. If an applicant/volunteer begins the release form and wishes to save without completing all of the information, a Candidate ID is created and appears after saving. In order for the applicant/volunteer to access their release form after it is saved, they will need this Candidate ID. NOTE: the Candidate ID can only be accessed at the time it is saved and not resent at a later time.

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Q. I'm being prompted for an ID and don't have one.

    A. If an applicant/volunteer is prompted for a Candidate ID or Log ID for a new application, it is most likely an issue with following the link from the email. Be sure that you click directly on the link from the email to open the portal. In some cases, the Access Code may have been entered incorrectly. The "Access Code" can be copied from the email and then pasted into the link by using holding the "Control and V" keys. For security, click "Submit" after entering the code instead of pressing "Enter." If you experience this problem, contact the VCE office.

Q. The disclosure statement refers to the Fair Credit Reporting Act. Is VCE running a credit report?

    A. The Fair Credit Reporting Act is the federal statute that provides governance over consumer background reporting agencies. A credit report is not a part of the volunteer screening process; the Fair Credit Reporting Act protects consumers receiving criminal background checks as well as credit reports.

Q. The release form requires a signature and I don't have an electronic signature. What do I do?

    A. No electronic image of a signature is required. Applicants/volunteers must simply type his/her name and provide the last 4 digits of the social for verification.

Q. I regularly use a nickname, what name should I enter?

    B. The background screenings will be initiated using the name listed in VMS. The release form will populate with this name for you. Your actual legal name will be matched by the social security number.

Q. If another individual has a similar name to mine, can their criminal history be added to/combined with my record?

    A. PreSearch utilizes SSN and Name Verification along with Address History Verification to avoid such inaccuracies. If any results are found that would be used to screen out a candidate/volunteer, the volunteer will be contacted by the VCE State Office and will receive a written copy of the results to verify any returned information before any decisions are made.

Q. Can I receive a copy of my criminal background screening results?

    A. Yes. Please submit your request in writing, including a return mailing address, to the Associate Specialists, Volunteer Development at address below or by sending an email to jejohns1@vt.edu. Results will mailed or faxed only and no results will be emailed to protect confidentiality.

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        For more information or assistance, contact Jeremy Johnson, Associate

        Specialist, Volunteer Development at jejohns1@vt.edu or 540-231-2330.