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SCREENING 101

Background Screening Basics

The common types of checks, when they are used, and how the process works from screening request to reviewing results.

A professional background check is prepared by a consumer reporting agency that gathers information from multiple sources.[1] Organizations use background checks to make informed decisions, meet legal and contractual requirements, and help keep people safe.

When are background checks used?

- Employment
- Rental housing
- Volunteers
- Contractors & vendors
- Healthcare
- Education
- Staffing
- Licensed roles

What can a background check include?

COMMON CHECKS

- **Criminal records** — County, state & federal
- **Identity & address** — History & aliases
- **Sex offender registry** — Public registries
- **Watchlists** — Sanctions sources
- **Driving records** — Motor vehicle history
- **Employment** — Dates & titles
- **Education** — Degrees & dates
- **Licenses** — Status & issuer
- **References** — Professional contacts
- **Social media** — Public content

SOURCES

1 FCRA §603, definitions incl. "consumer reporting agency," 15 U.S.C. §1681a. www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/15/1681a

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From request to results

01 Define the package
The organization chooses searches that fit the role or property and its legal requirements.

02 Disclosure & authorization
For employment, the candidate receives a stand-alone written disclosure and gives written permission.[1]

03 Order placed
The screening request is submitted with the candidate's identifying information.

04 Search & verify
Records are searched, matched using identifiers, and verified with original sources.[2]

05 Quality review
Results are reviewed before release, following reporting limits and accuracy procedures.[3]

06 Results & review
The organization reviews the report. Before adverse action, the candidate gets a copy and a summary of rights.[1,4]

Who does what

The organization
Chooses searches, obtains consent, reviews results, follows adverse action steps, and makes the decision.

The candidate
Provides information and consent, may request a copy, and can dispute inaccurate information.[5]

The screening company
Searches and verifies records, follows accuracy and reporting rules, and handles disputes.[2,5]

Before taking adverse action based on a report, an employer must give the candidate a copy of the report and a summary of their rights, then allow time to respond.[1,4]

SOURCES

1 FCRA §604, permissible purposes, disclosure, authorization, and pre-adverse action, 15 U.S.C. §1681b. www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/15/1681b

2 FCRA §607(b), reasonable procedures to assure maximum possible accuracy, 15 U.S.C. §1681e. www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/15/1681e

3 FCRA §605, requirements relating to information in reports, 15 U.S.C. §1681c. www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/15/1681c

4 FCRA §615, requirements on users of consumer reports (adverse action), 15 U.S.C. §1681m. www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/15/1681m

5 FCRA §611, procedure in case of disputed accuracy, 15 U.S.C. §1681i. www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/15/1681i

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