

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Careful screening is one way to help prevent abuse. Screening requires a careful review of information in search of persons who can provide supervision in a safe environment and who can ensure adequate supervision. Screening methods can include interviews, written information, personal contacts, references and criminal background checks.

If you are not currently running background checks on your local church workers, including volunteers and paid staff, you should be. Please note that you must first obtain a signed permission form from the applicant to run a criminal background check.

Once you have permission from the applicant, one option to run a local and state criminal background check is to contact your local law enforcement agency. They will provide you with information for each applicant for a fee that is not to exceed \$20 per applicant. By Georgia law this background check will only include information concerning an applicant's criminal history in the state of Georgia. If the applicant has not been a Georgia resident for the last 5 years you should also obtain a national criminal background check from the FBI.

Another option is to use an online company to run the background checks. The South Georgia Conference Connectional Ministries Office recommends using the following three online companies.

- 1) LexisNexis® Screening Solutions is an industry-leading screening resource and their services are being offered at a substantially reduced price for Church Mutual customers, http://www.churchmutual.com/index.php/choice/risk/page/RM_SN_04/id/39.
- 2) Protect My Ministry serves thousands of ministries across all fifty states and are committed to helping faith-based organizations maintain a safe environment, so they can focus on fulfilling their mission, <http://www.protectmyministry.com/>.
- 3) Secure Search™ primarily works with faith-based organizations across the country and specializes in programs that effectively screen key personnel in church and non-profit organizations, <http://www.securesearchpro.com/>.

Regardless of which option you choose to run the background checks, all forms and reference reports should be kept as a part of an applicant's personnel file. The person responsible for the children or youth activity(ies) and/or their designee is responsible for reviewing and following up on each application prior to service.

GEORGIA SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) is the central repository for Georgia's Violent Sexual Offender Registry. This registry holds information pertaining to sex offenders who have been released from prison, placed on probation, parole, or supervised release after July 1, 1996. To access the GBI Sexual Offender Registry visit the GBI website at <http://www.state.ga.us/gbi/>.