Background Check Requirements for School Contractors

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**Act 114 Requirements**

(Act of 114 of 2006, Sec 1-111 of the PA Public School Code)

- Requires prospective employees or their contractors’ employees to submit reports of criminal history, including:
  - PA State Police Criminal Check
  - DPW Child Abuse Check
  - Federal Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) (April 1, 2007)
- Background check reports must be no more than one year old at time of hire
- Reports must be submitted PRIOR to employment
- Prohibits hiring individuals who have been convicted of specified offenses within 5 years of conviction

**ALL Public & Private Schools**

- Must review the reports and make the “fitness determination”
  - Determine whether an applicant is fit to work in a position in which they will have direct contact with children
  - Must be completed PRIOR to hire
- The school administrator is required to maintain a copy of the reports

**Contractors**

- Applies to independent contractors and their employees who have direct contact with children
- Includes bus drivers
- Employee remains an employee of the contractor, although the school entity determines who may work in direct contact with children
Registration – Applicant must register and pay prior to being fingerprinted

Identification – Applicant’s fingerprints will be collected and forwarded to the FBI

Records Check – Applicant images will be compared to those images contained in FBI and State criminal databases

Results – Federal results of the background check will be available for on-line review by PDE-approved hiring entities. CHRI are stored for 12 months on Cogent System’s secure server.
Access to Online System

Approved School Entities

• Are provided online access
• PDE-approved school entities:
  – Public schools
  – Private schools
  – Higher Education institutions with a teacher training program
• School entities are responsible for making the “fitness determination” - whether an applicant is fit to work in a position in which they will have direct contact with children, based on:
  – Act 114 of 2006, section 1-111 of the PA Public Code, and
  – Any additional restrictions as defined by the individual school entity

Contractors

• Independent contractors do not have access to the on-line system for review of CHRI reports
• School contractors must provide background check information to the school entity in order for the school entity to make the “fitness determination” regarding the application
• Although the school entity makes the “fitness determination” as to who will work in direct contact with children, the employee remains an employee of the contractor

Online system in place December 1, 2008. It expedites report processing.
Applicant Registration Process

1. Visit secure site: https://www.pa.cogentid.com
2. Select: Department of Education icon.
3. Select: Registration → Register Online.
4. Review the disclaimer (box must be checked to continue with registration) and click <Continue>.
5. Fill out the required applicant information. Registration fee: $36

6. Requirements regarding an unofficial paper copy of your criminal history are addressed on the next slide. Additional fee for paper copy: $2
Requesting a Paper Copy

• For contractors that wish to see a copy before sending information to a school, the applicant may request an unofficial paper copy during registration. Registration fee is $36.
• The paper copy costs an additional $2 and is mailed from Cogent to the applicant’s home address.
• Mailing takes up to two weeks, so please ensure that employees are fingerprinted at least two weeks in advance of needing the report (if you choose this option).
• Registration is the ONLY opportunity for a paper copy to be requested. A copy cannot be provided by the PDE or Cogent at a later date.

DO YOU REQUEST AN UNOFFICIAL COPY OF YOUR CRIMINAL HISTORY BACKGROUND CHECK?
(This will be your only chance to request this document)

☐ I request a copy of the report be mailed to the address on my application; there is $2.00 processing fee.
☐ I do not request a copy of the report, and I am aware that this is my only opportunity to request a copy.

Next  Reset
Registration & Printing Errors

- Any error with the applicant’s registration must be corrected before being fingerprinted
  - This includes a failure to request a paper copy

- Registration errors must be corrected through Cogent System’s applicant registration by phone or online:
  - Phone: 888-439-2486
  - www.pa.cogentid.com

- Applicants cannot change registration information at the fingerprint site.

- Applicants should review the form for accuracy before submitting registration
The “Name Check” Process
(what to do if the applicant has not received the requested paper copy)

• Access the proof of transaction online to confirm that the applicant’s prints were taken and submitted
  – If the proof of print indicates that the individual has been successfully printed, contact the school and request that the school look up the report

• The school will either be able to review the report, or in a small number of cases, will see an error message that indicates the fingerprints could not be processed
  – This error is called a “rejection” and results in a rejection notification from Cogent. The applicant would receive the rejection notice in the mail at their home address
  – An applicant who receives a rejection notification will take their rejection letter and be printed a second time at no charge
  – If the prints are rejected a second time, PDE is notified
    • A “name check” is performed directly through the FBI at the request of PDE
    • This manual process could take 3-4 weeks
    • When results are returned to the PDE, a results letter is mailed from PDE to the applicant at their home address. This letter will be presented in lieu of the original FBI report
1. Prints are captured electronically at a local Cogent printing location.

2. Unreadable cannot be processed properly using the electronic system.

3. Cogent mails a rejection letter to the applicant, which is taken to a print site for a second printing at no charge.

4. A second print rejection requires a **name check**. If this is necessary, PDE will call to notify the applicant.

5. The PDE requests a name check from the FBI. When FBI results are returned, the PDE issues a results letter to the applicant via mail.

**STEP 5 OF THE NAME CHECK PROCESS CAN TAKE 3-4 WEEKS.**

*Please allow ample time for printing in case this occurs.*
Preparing to Place an Employee

Provide the school with the following items:
1. Employee name
2. Employee’s Registration ID*
3. Copies of employee’s state clearance and Child Abuse History clearance

*The Registration ID is vital for the school to review a report. It is the number associated with that employee’s personal report. (See illustration.)
Preparing to Place an Employee (cont)

Retrieving a forgotten Registration ID

- Access Cogent secure registration site: https://www.pa.cogentid.com
- Select icon: Department of Education
- Select on the homepage: Proof of Transaction (Receipts)
- Enter applicant name, last 4 digits of SSN, and date of birth to obtain their personalized Registration ID
Reviewing the CHRI

- Contractors provide information to the school
  - Applicant’s name
  - Registration ID
  - File with the applicant’s State Police criminal check and DPW Child Abuse check

- School retrieves the CHRI in the online system and reviews the applicant’s report
  - Independent contractors do not have access to view the official on-line report

- School administrator makes the *fitness determination*
  - Whether the applicant should work in a position where they will have direct contact with children

- School administrator advises the contractor of the determination

- School maintains copy of CHRI report for applicants that are hired
  - A copy of the CHRI will NOT be provided to the contractor
Who to Contact

• Policy questions: PDE
  – Phone: 717-772-3618
  – Email: RA-PDE-SchoolService@state.pa.us

• Technical questions: Cogent
  – Includes ABID account inquiries
  – Phone: 614-718-9691

• “Name Check” and report questions: Denise Wolfgang
  – Phone: 717-783-3750
  – Email: RA-PDE-SchoolService@state.pa.us

• Missing paper report: Cogent
  – Phone: 614-718-9691, extension 3304

• Missing Registration ID:
  – Contact the applicant, or
  – Visit the Cogent registration website to obtain a forgotten Registration ID number
Questions?

Thank You for Attending!
Background Check Requirements for School Contractors

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