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What background checks is your vendor doing on potential volunteers?

Many mentoring programs across the state of Kansas are utilizing screening vendors to conduct their background checks. Vendors can be incredibly valuable to programs as it takes a large amount of time to perform all background checks “in house”. However, when asked the question, “Do you know what background checks your vendor is doing on your potential volunteers”, most programs do not know the answer. And that is quite alarming.

Do not just assume that your vendors are conducting quality background checks. A background check could be defined as a simple reference check, cheap local search, or a comprehensive national search. If your program plans to use a vendor, make sure you compare vendors before choosing one, and you take control of your vendor background checks.

Questions to Ask Vendors

- Is their company bonded and insured? Being bonded is like an insurance policy for the customer. The idea behind bonds is protection for the consumer.
- Are they FCRA compliant? The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) is the federal law that governs background checks and the companies who conduct them. When comparing vendors, programs need to make sure that the vendor is FCRA compliant. [Click here](#) to read more about the FCRA.
 - If they are FCRA compliant, do they continue to monitor the FCRA for any changes and update program to those changes as needed?
 - Do they have proof that they are FCRA compliant such as a certificate?
- Are they a member of the NAPBS? The National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NAPBS) was founded in 2003. It is a non-profit organization formed to represent companies offering background and employment screening. [Click here](#) to read more about the NAPBS.
- What is their knowledge of the industry? How long have they been in business? This question is important because there are many new companies starting in the background check business as it has become more popular for employers to screen their potential employees.
- How do they maintain their background check accuracy? Do they have data to back up their response to this question?



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- Is customer service free? Believe it or not, some vendors are charging for customer service inquiries.
- Are there annual fees or contracts? Hidden fees associated with the background checks can prove costly for programs.

Take Control of Vendor Background Checks

- How far back do they search?
- Do they use only a criminal database? If so, which one?
- Do they use a Federal Criminal Search?
- Does the report include felonies and misdemeanors? Many of these reports do not include misdemeanors. It is very important that mentoring programs get background checks including misdemeanors.
- Do they search alias and other names? It is important that organizations make sure their vendors are searching all alias and other names of potential mentors including maiden names and nicknames.
- Do they only search national registries? Make sure they are searching local registries too, including state sex offender registries. Please note: It does not cost money to do state and national sex offender registry searches. They are free for anyone to utilize. This is something you should consider when thinking about hiring a vendor. [Click here](#) for the Kansas sex offender registry. [Click here](#) for the National sex offender registry.
- Are they doing the Kansas Child Abuse & Neglect Registry check? If so, how much are they charging you? This check is free for mentoring programs in the state of Kansas, and not all programs are utilizing this service. This check provides any records of arrests, convictions, and reports of child abuse/neglect. Kansas Mentors strongly advises ALL mentoring programs to do this check on ALL potential mentors. [Click here](#) to learn more about Child Abuse & Neglect Registry checks.

Vendors are convenient for programs and can prove to be reliable as long as screenings are conducted based on your program's policies and procedures. Do not place the safety and security of your organization in unknown hands, if they have not met all of your qualifications and expectations.



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Avoid using vendors that promise the following:

- Instant results!
- Anonymous, free searches!
- As seen on TV!

This is a cliché, but if it sounds too good to be true, it most likely is. Take charge of your screening process. The most important part of your job as a mentoring program should be making sure the youth you serve are safe.

Do you have questions about anything found in this article? If so, contact Kansas Mentors at the number below.