

## Performing a Thorough Background Check is Key to Hiring the Right Employees

Employment background checks are not just for high-tech companies or executive-level management anymore. A thorough background check should be performed to avoid making any assumptions about an employee's history.

To help you get started, here are some essentials of a complete background check:

**Current Address** – Confirm a current address through a telephone directory, confirmation with a landlord, rental, or mortgage company, or county tax office.

**Former Addresses** – Confirm former addresses through former employers, credit agencies, or by contacting the landlords of former residences. If the applicant resided in another city, state, or county, you may use an investigative agency to perform some standard verification.

Other detailed information you might choose to verify is the amount of rent or mortgage paid, whether it was paid on time, details of complaints made against the applicant whether their former residence was left in good order when vacated, whether they left on their own accord, and any eviction details, if applicable.

**Current and Former Employers** – Employers are reticent about providing too much information on current or former employees since negative references occasionally result in lawsuits. Most employers, however, will verify an employee's job title, length of time employed, starting and final salary, and reason for leaving. You might obtain resume data on old application forms to compare to the resume or application of the person you are considering for the position.

A more detailed background check might include obtaining the names of the applicant's immediate supervisor or manager and trying to establish contact with them. Interviews can be conducted by phone or in person. Since there is a fine line regarding invasion of privacy, obtain the applicant's permission in writing if necessary.

**Education** – Transcripts from most secondary institutions can usually only be obtained either by the applicant themselves or through a signed release that includes enrollment dates, department and subject of study or major, student identification number or social security number, and date of birth. A photocopy of the degree or certificate should be obtained for verification, if possible. Contact the applicable registrar's office and they will be able to specify what is required to release information.

Additionally, verify the college is legitimate. Fake diploma mills offer degrees from fictitious institutions possessing names very similar to known established educational institutes, so do not assume you recognize the name.

**Credit Check** – A credit check is usually required in those situations where the position involves security, fiduciary responsibility, or bonding. Verify that all information provided in the credit check conforms to the information provided on the application. Poor credit references should be cross-referenced and authenticated for accuracy. Depending on the state you are hiring in, there may be limitations on the legality of doing a credit check, and it is best to search online to see what your state's laws are.

**References** – All personal references listed by the applicant should be contacted. If it is a basic employment check, the integrity of the applicant's personal character can be established by phone. Detailed checks may necessitate personal contact to meet with the references face to face, as the references given might provide information prejudicial in favor of the applicant.

**Miscellaneous** – Additional items which may be of relevance include a criminal records check performed in all states listed on the application form, driver's abstracts, and records checks on civil suits.

Be methodical and take time to perform a thorough background check that satisfies the needs of your business.