



## **Background Checks for Volunteers Working with Minors**

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

#### **1. Which volunteers are required to get background checks?**

All volunteers working in a UNH Youth Program (i.e., a program specifically designed for participants under the age of 18) get a background check. A background check is required *once every three years*.

A check is required *once every calendar year* for all volunteers working in programs that meet the NH Department of Environmental Services definition of a youth skills Camp: “a program with a specific curriculum that has been developed by individuals knowledgeable and experienced in the field to impart a specific skill in a logical progression of increasing difficulty over a period of 3 or more consecutive days.”

*Exception: a background check is not required if a volunteer is serving in a short-term or temporary role where it can be assured that s/he will not be left alone with youth and when s/he is working directly with youth, another staff/volunteer is present who has undergone a background check.*

#### **2. What kind of records are searched as part of the UNH background check?**

- a) *Criminal Misdemeanor/Felony Search*: in each county of residence, going back 7 years. For volunteers working in Youth Skills Camps, the check covers permanent and temporary residences since age 18.
- b) *National Sex Offender Registry*
- c) *Social Security Number Trace*: The social security trace is a search based on the social security number submitted by the applicant. The trace returns all the credit header information associated with that SSN. This does not mean a credit check is being run. This bears repeating: credit header information is not the equivalent of a credit report and does not involve credit scores or credit account information. The information returned on a social security trace is focused on *address* history associated with that SSN.

#### **3. Who will have my social security number and personal information as a result of this check?**

The volunteer’s Social security number is submitted to HireRight, the UNH background check vendor. This is done either by volunteer themselves through the online HireRight system or by UNH Human Resources if the UNH Authorization for release of Information Form is used (this form is kept confidentially by UNH HR for one year) Any copy of the number handled by UNH Cooperative Extension staff is destroyed after it is submitted. HireRight encrypts the number after they submit it into the background check system.

#### **4. What happens if a discrepancy is found?**

If the check results in a discrepancy, it does not necessarily mean a volunteer cannot work for UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE). It does mean:

- UNHCE will share the report with the volunteer and look into the discrepancy further with them
- If the incident(s) are particularly concerning, current volunteers may be placed on suspension.

As per state laws, we cannot have a volunteer with any of the following types of discrepancies:

- Causing or threatening harm of any nature to any child or children
- Causing or threatening direct physical harm to any individual
- Any sex offense

**5. Who has access to the results of the background check?**

The UNH Office of Human Resources retains the background check verification records and shares them with the volunteer's UNHCE supervisor.

**6. I was not alive in 1940, why does the online UNH/HireRight system ask for an address that dates back to then?**

A quirk in the system requires that the oldest address entered (i.e., the one where the volunteer was living when s/he was 18) be entered as if the volunteer started living there in 1940. We are working with HireRight to try to change this.

**7. If I volunteer in a Youth Skills Camp program, will the check need to include all my residences since age 18 every year?**

No.

**8. Who pays for background checks?**

UNH Cooperative Extension pays for all volunteer background checks at no cost to the volunteer.

**9. How often do background checks get done?**

Volunteers working in Youth Skills Camps (see question number 1) are required by law to get annual checks. All other volunteers working in youth programs are required by UNH policy to get a check every three years.

**10. I am concerned about using HireRight (the UNH background check vendor), are there other options?**

If a volunteer would prefer to have their background check done via the NH State Police check and an accompanying FBI fingerprint check, they can do so and should contact their volunteer supervisor for more information.

**11. If I have a background check that has been done by my work employer can that be used for my volunteer background screening?**

Background screening done by an employer may be accepted if it meets the UNH volunteer background check policy and the NH law. The background check would need to be sent directly from the screening source to the UNH hiring volunteer supervisor. If a volunteer would like to pursue this option, they would need to contact their volunteer supervisor to discuss this further.

**12. Why does UNH have a Policy that includes annual background checks for some 4-H volunteers?**

NH ENV-Wq 909 dictate the rules by which NH statutes RSA 485-A:23 and 24 are to be implemented. These rules require that background checks be done annually, for staff who work unsupervised and directly with youth at "Youth Skills Camps." UNH and UNHCE have developed new youth program policies in order to comply. While not all of UNHCE 4-H Youth programs fit the "Youth Skills Camp" definition, many do and in order to comply with UNH policy and NH law, we are implementing annual background checks where necessary.

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