



INFO SHEET: CONDUCTING BACKGROUND CHECKS

Organisations that facilitate overseas short-term missions (STM) trips, should ensure all participants undertake a criminal background or police record check as part of their screening process. Background checking is one part of a thorough screening process that should be undertaken, and should never be the sole means for vetting applicants.

WHAT IS A CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK?

A Background Check ('National Police Check' or 'Criminal History Check') involves searching and compiling the criminal history of an individual into a report. This is most often done to determine suitability for employment, working overseas or care of children, as well as screening potential volunteers for volunteer roles.

WHAT IS A WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK (WWCC)?

A Working with Children Check or 'Vulnerable Sector Check' is undertaken in some countries where volunteers will connect with 'vulnerable' groups such as children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, or in roles that have financial or leadership responsibilities. These checks involve searching a national database and sex offender registries for relevant offences that indicate unsuitability to work with vulnerable people.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR A BACKGROUND CHECK?

In many countries, you can now apply for a Criminal History Check online. Where an online service is not available, you can apply at a local police station. See below for list of country specific information and links.

You'll typically be asked to provide identification, such as a current driver licence, passport or other photo ID, and pay an application fee.

Some countries, such as the UK, offer a free-of-charge criminal record check for eligible volunteers.

WHAT DO I GET WHEN I COMPLETE A BACKGROUND CHECK?

Many countries issue a Certificate or ID Card as proof that the candidate is suitable for employment/volunteering.

Most checks are point-in-time checks, current at the date of issue. It is up to the organisation to determine the period of time for which they will consider a Background Check valid. Some checks, such as a 'Working With Children Check' are considered valid for 5 years from receipt, with an expiry date indicated on the certificate/card.

HOW CAN I KNOW THE PROGRESS OF MY APPLICATION?

Countries that provide online Criminal Records services often have online application tracking services that allow you to follow the progress of your application.

Each application, and each country's processing systems, are different. For this reason, completion time can vary from a week to a month or two.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Below is some information on background criminal checks from several different countries. Policies and practices can change. So, it is recommended that you complete your own research to determine what check is required for your own ministry.

STM MANUAL	
Country	Checks
Australia	<p>In Australia, each state and territory has their own procedure for obtaining Police Checks and Working with Children Checks. It is necessary to research requirements in the jurisdiction in which you live.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Police Checks: Police Checks identify and release relevant criminal history information relating to convictions, findings of guilt or pending court proceedings. Police Checks can be gained through your relevant state government or the Australian Federal Police. See: afp.gov.au/what-we-do/police-checks/national-police-checks• Working with Children Checks (WWCCs): Working with Children Checks are checks of the databases of law enforcement agencies and are more extensive than Police Checks, gathering information from additional sources including sex offender registers and adverse findings on professional disciplinary registers. See: aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/pre-employmentscreening-working-children-checks-and-police-checks#table-4.

USA	<p>There is no national or state specific database in the USA where a check on a person's criminal records can be obtained. Instead, background check companies can provide a range services and packages. When considering which investigation company to use, look for a company that has access to multiple databases, including national, state, and county records.</p> <p>Checks should include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SSN Verification and Address History 2. National/Multi State Criminal Database Search, and 3. National Sex Offender Search/Registry. <p>Examples of online companies that offer background check services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect My Ministry: protectmyministry.com/background-checks/volunteer-screening/ • Background Checks: backgroundchecks.com/solutions/churchesandreligiousorganizations
Singapore	<p>A Certificate of Clearance (COC) is issued by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Singapore Police Force (SPF) to certify that a person has no Criminal Conviction within a stipulated period of time in Singapore. See: http://www.spf.gov.sg/epc/cert_issued.htm.</p>
Canada	<p>Information of how you can obtain a Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector checks can be found the Royal Canadian Mounted Police website. See: rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/criminal-record-and-vulnerable-sector-checks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal Record Check: This process verifies whether an individual has a criminal record, and provides the applicant with the detailed information that can be legally disclosed. • Vulnerable Sector (VS) heck: This process verifies whether an individual has a criminal record, as well as any record suspensions (formerly pardons) for sexual offences and local police records for information relevant to the VS check.
England	<p>DBS Check (Disclosure and Barring Service): A criminal records check can be processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). For certain roles, the check will also include information held on the DBS children and adults' barred lists, together with any information held locally by police forces that is reasonably considered to be relevant to the applied for post.</p> <p>See: gov.uk/guidance/dbs-check-requests-guidance-foremployers#volunteer-applications.</p>
Scotland	<p>Disclosure Scotland is an executive Agency of the Scottish Government, and provides criminal records checks and Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme checks. See: disclosurescotland.co.uk/index.htm.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal Check Disclosure: A Disclosure contains impartial and confidential criminal history information held by the Police and government departments. • PVG Scheme Check: The scheme helps to ensure that those who have regular contact with children and protected adults, through paid and unpaid work, do not have a known history of harmful behaviour.
Northern Ireland	<p>AccessNI is a Criminal History Disclosure Service within the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland. See: dojni.gov.uk/articles/about-accessni. They provide various levels of checks including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic check containing details of all unspent convictions • Standard check containing spent and unspent convictions, informed warnings and other non-court disposals from the Police National Computer, and • Enhanced check containing above checks plus information held by the Disclosure and Barring Service. The Disclosure and Barring Service keeps two barred lists of people who are unsuitable for working with children or vulnerable adults. Enhanced checks are normally required where the applicant will work or volunteer in a role providing services to, or having close and regular supervision of, children and/ or vulnerable adults.
New Zealand	<p>Criminal Conviction History Checks: In New Zealand, a criminal record history check is available through the Ministry of Justice. See: http://www.justice.govt.nz/services/criminal-records.</p>