

Questions and Answers: Policy on the Safety of Children in University Programs

Background Checks

1. Why is a background check required?

Persons that have direct contact with minors in a youth-serving program are required by the Policy on the Safety of Children in University Programs to undergo a background check.¹ The **sole** purpose of the background check is to identify the existence of past conduct that may increase the risk for children of future abuse. In addition, the ready availability of criminal history and registered sex offender status information has resulted in a significant shift in national practices within higher education to the point where obtaining this information is becoming common practice.

2. Who performs the background check?

General Information Services, Inc. (GIS) conducts the background checks on behalf of the University of Chicago. GIS is the same company that provides pre-employment background checks for UChicago staff applicants. GIS (eServices@geninfo.com) will send an email similar to the email below:

Dear FIRST LAST,

The University of Chicago's Policy on the Safety of Children in University Programs mandates screening of persons who have direct contact with minors. As a result of your direct contact with minors, you are receiving this message.

General Information Services, Inc. (GIS) conducts background checks on behalf of the University of Chicago. GIS has the systems and processes in place to keep your personal information secure. For additional information regarding GIS, please visit www.geninfo.com.

The link in the How to Respond section below will guide you through a few screens where you will be asked to create a User Name and Password, provide additional information and consent for the requested search.

You will need to have the following information available before you click the link to begin:

1. Your social security number.
2. Your date of birth.
3. Your current and previous addresses, including zip codes.

Our objective is to complete the searches quickly, so please make every effort to ensure the information you provide is accurate and error-free.

- Please respond immediately. If you do not respond within 5 days of the date of this message, The University of Chicago will assume you are no longer interested in working with minors.
- If you have any questions about this email, the background check process, or any other concerns, please contact Kenyatta Tatum Futterman, Youth Protection Coordinator at 773-702-8837 or kenyatta@uchicago.edu

Thank you

How to Respond:

Click the link below to enter GIS secure website. (If you are using text-formatted email, please copy and paste the entire link into your web browser to launch the correct page.)

[Login to Applicant Site](#)

Nothing in this message is intended to make or accept an offer or to form a contract, except that an attachment that is an image of a contract bearing the signature of an officer of our company may be or become a contract. This message (including any attachments) is intended only for the use of the individual or entity to whom it is addressed. It may contain information that is non-public, proprietary, privileged, confidential, and exempt from disclosure under applicable law or may constitute as attorney work product. If you are not the intended recipient, we hereby notify you that any use, dissemination, distribution, or copying of this message is strictly prohibited. If you have received this message in error, please notify us immediately by telephone and delete this message immediately.

Thank you

¹ The Safety of Children in University Programs Policy: http://safety-security.uchicago.edu/risk_management/

3. What information will GIS request?

GIS will request your current name, previous names for the last seven years, social security number, birth date, current address, and previous addresses for the last seven years. GIS will also request information about previous criminal convictions, giving you the opportunity to self-report prior criminal convictions.

GIS provides disclosures, acknowledgements, and consent forms and will request that they be executed electronically. The disclosures/acknowledgements will include your rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA); the consent form will grant GIS authorization to check your criminal history.

Quick Tips:

- Please use your full legal name.
- If you do not have a social security number, enter “999-99-9999.”
- If you do not have a middle name, enter “N/A.”
- If you are not a citizen of the United States, the background check vendor, GIS, may request a copy of your passport.

4. Is my personal information secure?

GIS states that information requested or transmitted, such as social security numbers, undergo 128-bit secure socket layer, which is an accepted industry standard encryption method. No UChicago employee will request personally-identifiable information.

5. What about my privacy?

GIS is regulated by federal and state laws designed to protect your privacy. To ensure your privacy, GIS will request that you create a unique login identifier and password to initiate the background check process.

6. What does the background check consist of?

The background check consists of a criminal history and registered sex offender check. GIS will review the county criminal, federal criminal, and national criminal databases, kwikscreen, (includes the sex offender registry), and trace (name and address history). The director or official responsible for a covered program may, in addition to the background check, require supplemental prospective background checks at regular intervals based on the nature of the program, requirements under applicable law, contractual obligations, or other relevant factors. A credit history check will NOT be performed.

7. What is the process for obtaining and reviewing background check information, and who will have access to it?

The process for faculty, academic appointees, postdoctoral researchers, student employees, and volunteers will be modeled on the process currently in place for staff:

- First, individuals subject to a background check must execute an electronic written release authorizing the University to work with GIS to conduct a criminal history and registered sex offender check.
- Second, the check includes only felony convictions and is limited in retrospective reach to seven years. Arrests, convictions older than seven years, juvenile criminal records, and expunged and/or sealed records are not sought, obtained, or reviewed.

- Third, GIS generates a report that shows either the absence of a criminal history and/or registered sex offender status, or provides detailed information regarding any positive results.
- Fourth, depending on the employee category of the individual being checked, the contractor provides the report to the Office of the Provost (faculty and academic appointees), the cognizant Dean's Office (postdoctoral researchers), HR (staff and volunteers), or Youth Program Coordinator (student volunteers, and student employees).
- Fifth, the office that receives the report evaluates the information to determine whether the individual should be excluded from the youth-serving program. NOTE: Having a felony conviction does not preclude working in a youth-serving program. Rather, the office that receives the report, in consultation with the Office of Legal Counsel and the Youth Program Coordinator (if necessary), considers the relevance of the criminal history to the youth-serving role, including a case-by-case assessment of various factors like the nature and circumstances surrounding the offense, the conviction's temporal proximity, any recidivism, and any relationship between the conduct that resulted in the conviction and the role in the youth-serving program.
- Sixth, the office that receives the report uses reasoned judgment to decide whether the individual can work in the program. The office does not share any information with the program's director or manager; rather, the office communicates only whether the investigation yielded satisfactory or unsatisfactory results. It is conceivable that the information obtained will raise legitimate questions about the individual's fitness for University employment and/or enrollment (e.g., registered sex offender status) in which case the information then will be shared only with those persons who have the authority to recommend or make a termination/suspension decision, and thus must know the information to responsibly discharge their responsibilities.
- Finally, the background check report is maintained in a confidential file separate from the employee's personnel file and/or separate from any student file. Any employee who makes an unauthorized disclosure of background check information is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

In addition, the timing, process, and use of criminal history information is subject to significant legal compliance obligations, and thus all screening will be conducted, and all information and results will be used, only in accordance with applicable law.

8. What if I already completed a background check?

If UChicago records indicate that you have completed a background check, no further check will be required. However, if your background check did not include a federal component, a federal background check will be required.

9. How often will I have to have a background check?

The current policy states that once you have undergone a complete background check, no further background checks are required.

10. What if I disagree with the background check results?

The FCRA grants you the right to dispute the results of your background check. GIS will provide you complete information and instructions about how to dispute the background check results. GIS will also provide you information about how to request a copy of your background check results.

11. Whom do I contact with further questions?

Please contact the Youth Program Coordinator Kenyatta Tatum Futterman at kenyatta@uchicago.edu or 773.702.2237.

For additional information regarding GIS, please visit www.geninfo.com.