

Performing a Background Check

The Discipleship Ministry Team is committed to assisting churches and presbyteries as they seek to provide a safe environment for children, youth, and adults. We encourage churches and presbyteries to pursue every available avenue to secure this safety, especially in matters of hiring employees and securing volunteers who work with children and youth.

1. Have the volunteer or applicant complete an application. This is an application created by your congregation for volunteer or staff positions. Include space to obtain work history, service history, and references.
2. Have the volunteer or applicant complete the ***release form and disclosure agreement***, which will give permission to obtain a record check via the CP denomination or a public records search from a reputable company.

Checking Public and Criminal Records

The Discipleship Ministry Team offers a free Public & Criminal Record Check service to churches and presbyteries that are hiring employees or securing volunteers.

- You may obtain a form at ministrycouncil.cumberland.org/safesanctuary. If you have questions, email dmt@cumberland.org.
- You may submit a form by emailing dmt@cumberland.org or faxing it to 901-276-4572 or mailing it to DMT, Records Check, 8207 Traditional Place, Cordova, TN 38016
- The church/presbytery must request this information in a timely manner and provide all the needed information. *Please allow two weeks for less than five record checks to be completed once they are received. Please allow one month for more than five record checks.* (You have more steps in the process, and this will allow you plenty of time to complete your next steps.)
- This check will include public records, criminal records, and sexual offenses.

Next Steps the Church needs to take beyond the Public and Criminal Records Checks.

Once the results from the Public and Criminal Record Check have been received, churches and presbyteries are responsible for continuing the process before hiring an applicant or securing the volunteer. The process includes the following steps:

- a. Contact past employers to ask questions regarding job performance and interactions with people. Is the person eligible for rehire? Why or why not?
 - b. What was his/her reason for leaving?
 - c. If I could talk to parents of the students with whom this person has worked, what would they likely tell me?
 - d. Would you have any reservations about this person working with people of all ages?
 - e. Do you have any knowledge of this person being charged with a crime?
 - f. Are there any other people with whom you think we should talk before deciding whether this person should work with our children, youth, and adults?
 - g. Have there been reports of sexual harassment?
3. Contact references listed on the application as well as references who may not be listed. (For example: if the person worked at a church camp in another presbytery, contact the director or other staff from that camp.) (see above questions)
 4. The above are suggested questions, but are not totally inclusive. Additional questions should be developed by the inquiring body.
 5. Keep all your records and findings confidential and in a secure location.
 6. It is the responsibility of the churches/presbyteries to listen to and evaluate reports of suspicious behavior and sexual harassment, even when no public charges have been filed. In cases such as these, it is not the role of the church/presbytery to be concerned with hurt feelings, but to pursue getting accurate information for the protection of children, youth, and adults in their care.

7. Reports should be made to appropriate CPC and MC staff members know at the denominational level so these people are not asked to participate in denominational events. Or this could be a separate number. You may contact the Director of Ministries office at 901-276-4572.
8. Steps to take if something is found/discovered

In a congregational setting:

- a. Notify the pastor and an appointed session member.
- b. Will this offense keep them from doing the job to which they feel called? (Example: They got a speeding ticket. Are they suitable to teach VBS? Why, yes! We all make mistakes. They were arrested for child molestation. Are they suitable to teach K-1 Sunday School? No. They had a drug possession charge 5 years ago. They sought treatment and served their sentence. They continue to be clean. Are they suitable to volunteer with Children's Church? Yes! We are a place of grace and redemption.)
- c. With the pastor, notify the individual of what was found.
- d. Keep all records on file. The congregation or judicatory is responsible for keeping all records of records and reference checks.

In a presbyterial setting:

- e. Notify the person requesting the check and the subject's pastor.
- f. Will this offense keep them from doing the job to which they feel called? (Example: They got a speeding ticket. Are they suitable to attend the mission trip? Why, yes! We all make mistakes. They were arrested for child molestation. Are they suitable to staff junior high camp? No. They had a drug possession charge 5 years ago. They sought treatment and served their sentence. They continue to be clean. Are they suitable to volunteer with the youth rally? Yes! We are a place of grace and redemption.)
- g. With the pastor, notify the individual of what was found.
- h. Keep all records on file. The congregation or judicatory is responsible for keeping all records of records and reference checks.

Though we are a people of grace, we must also protect those who participate in our congregations and other gatherings. Do not use this information to humiliate the individual publically, but do make share it with the subject's church, presbytery, and other entities that might employ this person as staff or a volunteer. (For example: Presbyterial board of CE chairperson to be shared with camp directors, denominational staff working with children and youth, congregation's CE chairperson, etc.)

If you have any questions, you may contact the Discipleship Ministry Team staff at dmt@cumberland.org.