

Background Checks – Explanation and Process updated 3/19/09

The SCA has long had a policy of parents being ultimately responsible for their children at SCA activities. We have policies in place prohibiting a single adult from being alone in supervising youth that are not their children by birth or legal document. These have not sufficed to prevent harm to some of our minor participants at the hands of adult participants.

Since 2002, there have been 88 revocation and denial of membership decisions rendered by the Board of Directors. 29 of these have been for conviction of predatory crimes. 24 of these have been with regard to abuse of minors. It would seem clear that the old policies are not sufficient to protect our minor participants. Any number greater than zero of these incidents is profoundly unacceptable.

There are many organizations similar to the SCA in that they have well-defined programs for minor participants. These organizations conduct a due-diligence check of volunteers who would like to be in positions of control, teaching, or supervision of minor participants. The vast majority of these organizations vet possible volunteers via background check. There are a variety of methods used.

The SCA feels a responsibility to the wellbeing of our minor participants and have implemented a program of background checks to enhance their safety.

This program consists of conducting background checks --via a properly licensed vendor--on all persons wishing to serve in a leadership or supervisory position where minors are expected to be taking direction from--or be in the direct control of adults who are not their parent or legal guardian.

Officials who must receive the background check include (but are not limited to): Youth activities officers at all levels, adults acting as youth marshals for any martial activity, persons organizing/in charge of youth activities for an event.

The Process

1. Determine if a background check is needed. A background check is required for people in a leadership or supervisory position where minors are expected to be taking direction, or be in the direct control of adults who are not their parent or legal guardian.. The following offices meet this requirement:
 - a. All Ministers of Children, Pied Pipers, and Preceptors of Pages
 - b. All Youth Armored Combat MarshalsAdditionally, Society has determined that all Kingdom Seneschals will be required to pass this check as well.
2. After determining that a background check is required, the individual will contact the Kingdom Seneschal and request that a background check be performed. The Kingdom Seneschal will need the following information:
 - a. Modern name and email address
 - b. SCA name and branch
 - c. Office or function necessitating background check
 - d. Whether or not the individual can print out .PDF files, or if they will need them physically mailed.
3. The individual will receive two forms that must be completed and sent to **SCA Corporate in Milpitas**.
4. The Kingdom Seneschal will send a list to Corporate of individuals authorized to receive a background check. If the individual's name is not on this list, the background check will not be performed.
5. After Corporate has received both the paperwork from the individual and the authorization from the Kingdom Seneschal, they will send the information to the vendor performing the checks.
6. The individual will receive a letter directly from the vendor stating whether they have passed the check or not.
7. The Kingdom Seneschal will receive a monthly list of everyone who has passed the background check.
8. The individual will present their letter as proof that they have passed the check as part of their application for their office. Additionally, they will receive a new blue card from Corporate.

Some Questions and answers about this endeavor follow:

Q: Are Kingdoms required to implement the Society policy?

A: Once upheld by the Board of Directors, the Kingdoms will have a timeline to implement the policy or cease offering youth-activity programs.

Q: I had a background check for work. Can you just use that?

A: No. All checks for this program will be performed according to the same criteria and by the same vendor for all participants. The vendor is a licensed, bonded provider of background examinations.

Q: Will the SCA be privy to specific details of my background, whether I pass the exam or not?

A: No. The SCA will only receive a pass or a fail notice from the background-examination provider.

Q: Will my personal information be exposed to other SCA participants?

A: No. Information is provided directly to the vendor in order to perform the background examination, and does not go through the SCA.

Q: Regarding the Fair Credit Reporting Act form? While this is standard procedure for criminal background checks for volunteer groups, I can foresee people screaming bloody murder about credit checks to hold volunteer offices.

A: The FCRA covers all consumer background reporting--of which a criminal check is one type. No one's credit is being checked by us. Ever.

Q: What are the requirements around background checks where minors participate in adult activities, such as 16 year old armored combatants, 14 year old rapier combatants, archery, and thrown weapons? This is different than the youth combat and rapier programs, and I assume that our regular marshals will not need to be authorized but it is bad to assume.

A: There are none. This is for Youth activities, not adult activities where a minor participates.

Q: How are we protecting the data that is collected for the checks? How are we storing it?

A: The data goes to the vendor. We do not store it.

Q: Does someone with a background check have to be on-duty at all times? If not, what liability does the individual in-charge take on for those who are on duty when they are not?

A: A formal activity requires the two deep rule be complied with, and that a person with clearance be responsible for the activity. They may or may not be present at the activity.

Q: How long is this check good for?

A: Background checks are good for a minimum of two years.

Q: Does one have to be a member to submit?

A: You have to be a member to be a warranted officer, so, yes.

Q: How has the vendor been vetted?

A: This vendor is checking against state dept. of justice records--not Megan's law web sites etc. The State DOJ ties name, DOB, and SSN to criminal conviction records. The vendor was reviewed by SCA retained counsel and was clear of fraud, abuse, malfeasance, and/or malpractice claims/litigation as recorded by any of the 50 states or the better business bureau. If a vendor of this nature falsely [by accident or error] reports against those databases, they run the risk of losing access to those databases as a minimum--putting their business at immediate risk. They have an investment in doing it right. If a state DOJ is carrying in it's records incorrect criminal abuse convictions against one of our members that is incorrect, then that member needs to get that resolved for reasons far more important than whether they get to be an officer in a hobby.