

BACKGROUND

SCREENING

CHECKLIST:

Church **Volunteers** Edition





The church is a place in the community where people from all walks of life come together. With open doors, churches work closely with many vulnerable groups within society, including children and the elderly. To protect the people they serve and their mission, churches must conduct background checks on their volunteers.

While it can feel uncomfortable or odd to run background checks on people you have close relationships with, it shows your dedication to their safety and well-being and your community as well. Not to mention, it is a church's legal obligation to protect children from undue harm or misconduct, making vetting volunteers a high priority. To help you prepare for screening volunteers in your church, we've put together a background screening checklist for churches.

Background Screening Checklist:

1 Set standards for which volunteers need to be screened.

Your volunteers play a significant role in your church. They often work closely with vulnerable populations like children, the intellectually and developmentally disabled, and the elderly. Ensuring these populations are in safe hands is essential to establishing and maintaining trust in the church and community.

While the goal is not to make someone feel cast out because of their history, it is important to establish screening standards for each volunteer position. Screening volunteers helps ensure that your leadership team is being proactive in protecting the church body and mission.

As a general guide, consider screening:

- Children's Ministry Volunteers
 - Nursery Workers
 - Sunday School Teachers
 - Special Event Volunteers (VBS, etc.)
- Youth Ministry Volunteers
- Special Needs Ministry Volunteers
- Homebound or Senior Care Ministry Volunteers
- Finance Committee Members
- Greeters and Ushers



2 Build your background screening package.

While there is no “required” background screening package for church volunteers, there are some general checks you should consider conducting to best protect your community.

Consider:

- Social Security Trace (SST) Search
 - National Criminal Search
 - Sex offender registry search
 - Driving records
 - Reference check
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- As these are considerations, choosing your volunteer [background screening package](#) is at the discretion of your church.

Remember, the goal of background screening in the church is to best protect your church members, community, and mission by better ensuring safe volunteers in positions of trust.

3 Define clear rules and exceptions to the rules.

Unfortunately, volunteers might not be the best fit to work with specific populations because of a criminal history. However, that doesn't mean there aren't other volunteer opportunities in your church more suitable for them. Before conducting background checks, outline clear policies and procedures for volunteer screening.

To best define screening rules and policies, consider:

- **Outlining disqualification criteria.** To stay consistent, define rules if a background check report reveals a history that could negatively impact someone's volunteer status. Due to the church's [legal obligations](#) to protect children, any crimes involving children, sex, and violence should disqualify them from any position where they may come in contact with children.
- **Implementing clauses to consider negative information on a background report.** While churches must not disqualify candidates based on [race, religion, disability, genetic information, or sex](#), they have more discretion when evaluating crimes involving theft, finances, or substance convictions. Should a report reveal a criminal history, [consider:](#)
 1. The time passed since the event
 2. The nature and severity of the event
 3. The relevancy of the event to the volunteer duties
 4. The overall character of the volunteer
 5. Any rehabilitation efforts made

All of which should be outlined in your screening policy. **As a best practice**, keep a record of *why* volunteers were turned down as well.

Vetting volunteers goes further than just a pre-volunteer background check, though! A lot can happen in a year. Maintain a safe community by developing a plan for [rescreening](#) as well!

4 Abide by FCRA regulations.

Since the church has a [legal obligation](#) to protect children, they must abide by [Fair Credit Reporting Act regulations](#) when screening volunteers. Before the screening, the church must notify volunteer candidates of required assessments contingent on becoming a volunteer, per the FCRA. Any background checks, drug screenings, or other qualifying tests for volunteering must be disclosed to the volunteer and consented to in writing.

When your volunteer candidate is ready to undergo a background check, you'll want to ensure they've been provided (1) a copy of the [Summary of Consumer Rights](#) under the FCRA and (2) the reporting agency's name, address, and phone number.



5 Integrate with your church management solution.

We know how important volunteers are to your church's mission. That's why finding volunteers and getting them involved in a timely manner is so important.

Finding a background screening partner with integration capabilities that match your church management solution enables a better experience, eliminates manual processes, and improves data quality and consistency. Not to mention, integrating solutions helps maintain record upkeep and compliance.

With insight from the [2021 TA Tech Buyer's Guide](#), an integrated background screening experience results in:

1. Improved volunteer experience and engagement
2. Improved accuracy of volunteers
3. Improved quality of volunteers
4. Improved retention of quality volunteers
5. Improved time-to-fill for volunteer positions

Before conducting background checks, consider an integrated screening process with a [PBSA accredited](#) background screening partner, like Verified First.



6 Determine whether the volunteer is a good fit.

Once the background check is complete, the next step is to review the findings. During this stage, you should refer back to your policies and any screening laws outlined in the FCRA.

While not everyone will be eligible for volunteer positions within your church, it's important to abide by the [FCRA's Adverse Action regulations](#) should your church consider moving in another direction based on findings from the report.

Adverse action requires two steps:

- 1. Pre-adverse notice.** The pre-adverse action notice, accompanied by the consumer report and the Summary of Your Rights, includes a letter from the church to the volunteer candidate explaining that something in the report might negatively affect their volunteer status. During your state's predetermined time clause, volunteer candidates have the right to respond, correct any inaccuracies, and provide any supporting information, like rehabilitation efforts.
- 2. Notification of adverse action.** Suppose the candidate does not meet the volunteer requirements or doesn't respond within the specified timeframe. You must provide them with the adverse employment decision notice stating your decision to proceed without them. Volunteer candidates have the right to appeal the church's decision if they believe it was unfair.

Again, make sure that you are only considering relevant information to the volunteer position. Denying a position due to irrelevant criminal history can be deemed unlawful discrimination in some cases.

Conclusion

Conducting background checks on church volunteers helps protect what matters most: **people**. By neglecting proper screening practices, you risk exposing your church and community to injury, abuse, or avoidable lawsuits.

To help prepare you for screening volunteers in your church, remember this six-step checklist:

- 1. Set standards for which volunteers need to be screened.**
- 2. Build your background screening package.**
- 3. Define clear rules and exceptions to the rules.**
- 4. Abide by FCRA regulations.**
- 5. Integrate with your church management platform.**
- 6. Determine whether the volunteer is a good fit for the position.**

To assist you in keeping your church community safe, fulfill all your background screening needs with Verified First's seamless integration within your [ACS Technology solution](#).



Verified First

Who is Verified First?

Verified First is the leading comprehensive background screening processor partnered with ACS Technologies. Together, we lead the market in knowing how best to help churches manage, grow, and protect their church with easy-to-use, integrated solutions.

Verified First has received accreditation and is a member of the Professional Background Screening Association (PBSA). This accreditation means Verified First has dedicated itself to providing the highest level of standards in the following areas:

- Information security
- Legal and compliance
- Client education
- Researcher and data standards
- Verification services
- Business practices



Getting started is super simple.

We know your time is valuable, so we make protecting your church and members easy. Follow the few steps listed on the next page beside the ACS Technologies' software you are currently using to start running background checks. Plus, there are no sign-up fees!



1. Sign in using an administrative login.
2. Under the Admin menu, click "Manage Realm Account."
3. Click the "Additional Features" tab.
4. In the Background Checks section, click "Learn more."
5. Click "Sign up for background checks."
6. Complete provided application form.



To take advantage of the integration between ACS and Verified First, you will need to be on version 11.7.1.22 or later.

1. Log in to ACS.
2. Click "Grow Your Ministry" in the toolbar.
3. Select "Background Checks," and you'll be taken to the Verified First signup page.
4. Follow the prompts to start using background checks.



To take advantage of the integration between PDS and Verified First, you will need to be on version 9.0G or later.

1. In the Personnel section, click "Safe Environment."
2. Click "Request Background Check."
3. Click "Sign Up," and you'll be taken to the Verified First signup page.
4. Follow the prompts to start using background checks.



To take advantage of the integration between HeadMaster and Verified First, you will need to be on version 11.5.1.14 or later.

1. On the Home screen, click "Other People, Parents, Staff, or Teachers."
2. Double-click an individual's record.
3. Click the "Safeguard" tab.
4. Click "Request Background Check."
5. When the browser opens, you'll be taken to the Verified First signup page.
6. Follow the instructions on the screen to start using background checks.

Choosing the Right Ministry Partner

The know-how you need from experts you trust.

ACS Technologies is the original pioneer of Church Management Software (ChMS). We are firmly dedicated to serving local churches all over North America by providing the best-in-class ministry software and service solutions that help you fulfill Christ's mission for your Church.

Tools and support to strengthen churches.

We build great software, but we don't stop there. We have a "service-first" approach that truly sets us apart. With hundreds of dedicated support and consulting personnel, your staff can reach our team 24/7. We're in your corner to help you with the ministry challenges you face every day.

Ideas and solutions powered by integrity.

Integrity is real for us, and it means consistently being faithful stewards by doing the right thing for church success. We have earned the trust of pastors, church staff, congregants, our employees, and colleagues for over 40 years.

A plan to meet your needs and move your ministry.


We're not just interested in satisfied customers. We see ourselves as your real ministry partner and will work with you to make disciples that will last for an eternity. We're excited to talk about your goals, create a plan together, and set you up with the software, service, and resources you need.

We believe in YOU!


ACS Technologies believes in the local church. Over 75% of our team has experience serving in their local churches. We know firsthand that serving the Church means serving people, and we take seriously our commitment to helping ministries like yours achieve their God-given mandate - to make disciples in their communities, states, and across the world.

Let's Talk

We know the challenges of switching or implementing new technology and how that can be intimidating. But we also know the unbelievable changes that have happened within churches that have partnered with us for their ministry needs. Let's connect and see how we can assist you in the greatest thing you do - grow God's Kingdom.

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