



4-H Youth Development Background Checks Frequently Asked Questions

QUESTION 1: Why is OSU implementing background checks?

ANSWER: OSU is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for the University community in support of its overall mission. This procedure is intended to help OSU achieve its goal of providing a safe and secure environment, especially for children, vulnerable members of the population, by requiring the use of background checks of 4-H volunteers.

QUESTION 2: Who must complete a background check?

ANSWER: All adult volunteers who will be in contact with youth one-on-one without the immediate supervision of a certified 4-H volunteer(s) or Extension Employee. This includes but is not limited to: Club/Cloverbud/Project/Activity Leaders and/or General Club Volunteer, chaperones, and adults transporting youth.

A New Volunteer, a Volunteer with break in service (inactive enrollment in ZSuite), and a Veteran Volunteer up for re-certification must have a background check.

Episodic volunteers do not require a background check. *Excerpt 2017 VMS manual.*

Defined: Episodic service that is short in duration

Volunteers who provide service that is short in duration can include the:

- One-day volunteer/judge who assists with Share the Fun
- Person who transports fair exhibits to the state fair
- Guest speaker or instructor for a special program

These volunteers assist the 4-H program for a pre-established time and are truly finished when the job is done in the prearranged time frame. These individuals are under the supervision of certified volunteers and/or Extension educators.

Refer to 4-H Volunteer Management System Manual (VMS) for additional details.

QUESTION3: Do current volunteers require a background check?

ANSWER: All volunteers regardless of tenure with 4-H, or association with a school, faith-based group, another youth serving organization, employment or military service will receive an initial screening and be rescreened every four years with no exceptions.

If there is a one-year break in service (inactive enrollment) a new background check will be required for the volunteer.

Sterling Volunteer has a column on the county page that notes when a volunteer’s background check expires. A new background check will occur when the volunteer re-enrolls for that program year.

QUESTION 4: Who pays the screening fee?

ANSWER: The fee will be paid from state 4-H Program Fees.

The volunteer will have the opportunity to offset the cost of their screening by paying through Sterling Volunteers should they want to contribute in that way.

QUESTION 5: How long does it take to get the results of a background check?

ANSWER: Most background check results are made available within 24 hours or less from submission.

QUESTION 6: Do candidates have the right to receive a copy of their background check?

ANSWER: Yes. Candidates are given this right under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). SV provides one free copy to each individual. The individuals can request additional copies at a personal expense through SV.

QUESTION 7: When does the background check take place?

ANSWER: The background check will be initiated by the Extension Educator once the volunteer completes the enrollment and application process through ZSuite. The enrollment status must be in “Pending Approval” status in ZSuite.

QUESTION 8: Are additional background checks required after the initial background check is completed?

ANSWER: In most cases, volunteers who have a break in employment (an inactive enrollment) of one year will need an additional background check when they are rehired/reenrolled.

Contact the State 4-H Office if there are questions relating to a volunteer/volunteer position which may require an additional background check.

QUESTION 9: Who conducts the background check?

ANSWER: OCES 4-H Youth Development has contracted with a third-party agency, Sterling Volunteers (later referred to as SV), to conduct all background checks on our volunteers.

QUESTION 10: What steps must the candidate take to complete the background check, and what information will the candidate need to provide for the background check?

ANSWER: Per OCES Administration and Legal Counsel, 4-H will continue the “best practices” described in the 4-H Volunteer Management Manual with one deviation. The Extension office will enter the volunteers name and other required information into the SV system to initiate the background check. The county will no longer do any background checks online or at the county level.

SV will initiate an email contact with the individual. The Volunteer will be responsible for completing the process online through SV. The county Educator will be responsible for following up with the volunteer, in a timely manner, to ensure the SV online process has been completed.

The volunteer will provide his/her first and last names; current address; date of birth; and social security

number. All information volunteers share via the Sterling Volunteers platform meets the university’s online security measures.

QUESTION 11: What does the background check include?

ANSWER: The background check includes: Social Security Number Trace; Office of Foreign Assets Control (**OFAC**) Sanctions List; nationwide Criminal History Search with validation; National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) Real-time Sex Offender Registry; County/state criminal history based on the jurisdiction revealed in the SSN Trace (past 7 years); Alias/maiden names run at jurisdiction revealed in the SSN Trace (past 7 years); Locator Select; and Monthly updates using the National Criminal Database Search for the first year.

QUESTION 12: Does the background check include a Motor Vehicle Report (MVR)?

ANSWER: No, not at this time.

QUESTION 13: Does the background check include a credit history check?

ANSWER: No

QUESTION 14: How does the University and OCES protect an individual’s right to privacy?

ANSWER: OSU follows state and federal laws that ensure a candidate’s right to privacy, which prohibits employees and others from using or disclosing personal information except within the scope of their assigned duties.

An Adverse Action Policy will be in place as required by the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). Adverse Action is a two-step process that organizations are required to follow when a volunteer position is denied as a result of a background check. It starts prior to making a final decision and is a way to protect the volunteer. The two steps consist of a pre-adverse notice, sent prior to making a final decision, followed by a notification of adverse action, sent after a decision is made not to accept application. The volunteer candidate receives a copy of their background check report so that they are able to

address inaccuracies. (Source: 2018 Sterling Volunteers)

QUESTION 15: Does a candidate have to give permission or consent for a check to be conducted?

ANSWER: Yes. If a candidate does not give permission or neglects to give all of the information required to process a background investigation, the background check will not be conducted. However, a person who does not give permission or does not provide all of the information needed cannot become a certified volunteer.

QUESTION 16: If a candidate has adverse information reported in the background check, is that individual automatically disqualified from volunteer employment at OSU?

ANSWER: No. Adverse information is not an automatic bar to becoming a certified volunteer. OSU-OCES will consider the passage of time and the severity, frequency, and nature of a conviction, as well as its relationship to the position in question. If the background check reveals information that affects the University's decision to not offer certification as a volunteer, through the State 4-H Office Adverse Action process the candidate will be provided an opportunity to provide an explanation of what was revealed on their copy of the background check. The state 4-H Program Leader and OCES Human Resources has the final decision in the adverse action process.

QUESTION 17: Who makes the decision on what constitutes adverse information?

ANSWER: 4-H Youth Development receives the initial report and makes a decision based on factors listed in Question 16. The State 4-H Program Leader and OCES Human Resource staff have final decision in the certification process.

QUESTION 18: How will 4-H Youth Development Educators be notified of the background check results?

ANSWER: If the background check comes back with no adverse information, the Extension educator will see "Eligible" on the individual's status within SV. The volunteer and county must complete the remaining certification steps, per the 4-H Volunteer

Management Manual, within 90 days of the date the volunteer applied/enrolled in the ZSuite Data Management System.

If SV status is visibly "Ineligible" or "Pending Review" the Extension educator will take no action and will have restricted communication with the volunteer candidate until after the Adverse Action Process has run its course.

If the check reveals adverse information that would affect the candidate's volunteer certification status with the University/OCES/4-H, the State 4-H Program Leader will begin the Adverse Action review process and notify the county when the process is complete.

Following Adverse Action process, volunteers may be found:

- "Ineligible" cannot volunteer in ANY capacity with 4-H Youth Development.
- "Eligible" with defined restriction(s).

QUESTION 19: Will the State 4-H Office share the results of the background check with the county?

ANSWER: No. In order to protect the confidentiality of the information obtained, State 4-H Office will only share with the county whether or not the candidate is eligible to be certified as a volunteer.

QUESTION 20: If a county disagrees with the decision that the candidate is not eligible, is there an appeal process for the county?

ANSWER: The county may offer any additional information it feels would be supportive of the candidate, but no information from SV reports will be shared.

QUESTION 21: Who may candidates contact if they have additional questions about the background check process?

ANSWER: Candidates should contact the State 4-H Program Leader, Steve Beck at steve.beck@okstate.edu or 405-744-8890.