**Release of Information – Background Clearances FAQs**

**Why are background checks required?**

Agencies licensed by the state of Pennsylvania are required to do background checks on anyone working with or observing children and other vulnerable populations. These checks are done to protect you and the agency.

**Which checks are required?**

Most agencies will ask that you provide the following clearances:

* [Federal Criminal History Record](http://www.education.pitt.edu/clearance/#federal)  
  Fee: $38 - Applicant must register online or by phone, and then visit a fingerprinting facility
* [Pennsylvania State Criminal Record Check](http://www.education.pitt.edu/clearance/#pacriminal)  
  Fee: $10 - Applicant can apply online, or via postal mail (form available below)
* [Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance](http://www.education.pitt.edu/clearance/#paabuse)  
  Fee: $10 - Applicant must apply via postal mail (form available below)

**If something comes up on one of my background checks, what will happen?**

This will depend on the agency. These clearances are searching for criminal records, not parking tickets or traffic violations. If you were found guilty (including entering a plea of no contest), and if you anticipate that a criminal charge will come up on your checks you should speak with the BASW Program Director and Director of Field Education immediately to evaluate how this will impact obtaining a field placement.

**From: http://www.education.pitt.edu/clearance/**

**Information for OBTAINING the Federal and State Background Checks and Clearances**

**\*we recommend that you do this as soon as possible; you may need these clearances for other volunteer requirements in other courses too- These clearances are good for 1 year**

**Obtain 3 copies of your clearance verification forms (sometimes certificates, sometimes letters). You should keep one for yourself, and one or two to give to the School of Social Work.**

**Obtaining the Federal Criminal History Record**

**Fee:** $38.00

* The applicant should register online with Cogent Systems ([www.pa.cogentid.com](http://www.pa.cogentid.com)) or by calling 1-800-439-2486 **prior to** going to the fingerprinting center. Payment is made online at the time of registration by credit or debit card, or at the fingerprinting site by money order or cashiers check made payable to Cogent Systems. **No cash or personal checks are accepted.** **Please record your registration number - it is a series of letters and numbers - you will need to provide this number to any school district, institution, or agency needing the results of your federal background check.**
* The applicant then reports to one of the approved fingerprint centers. Click on either of the links below for hours and directions to the centers nearest to you.
  + [Allegheny County locations](https://www.pa.cogentid.com/PA_regions_html/reg_3.htm)
  + [All locations in Pennsylvania](https://www.pa.cogentid.com/PA_terr_map/PA_terr_map.html)
* The fingerprints are scanned; the entire fingerprint capture process takes approximately 10 minutes. If you would like an unofficial copy of the results of your federal background check, you must order it at this time for a $2.00 fee - you will not be able to obtain it at a later date.
* The prints are then electronically transmitted to the PA State Police, who then submits the fingerprints and demographic information to the FBI as required by federal statute.
* Pennsylvania Department of Education will receive the Federal Criminal History Report from the FBI
* After you have been fingerprinted, you should provide any school district, institution, or agency which needs access to the results of your federal clearance with your registration number. They will access a secure database at PDE to view your results using their institution's username and password. They may not provide you with copies of this information. They should be able to access your clearance information within a week of fingerprint processing.
* If you have a question or an issue with your federal clearance, call 717.783.3750 or email the Pennsylvania Department of Education at [dwolfgang@state.pa.us](mailto:dwolfgang@state.pa.us). **Neither Cogent Systems, nor the School of Education can provide the status or results of your report to you.**

Further details regarding fingerprinting can be found on the [Cogent Systems](http://www.pa.cogentid.com) web site or the [Pennsylvania Department of Education](http://www.pde.state.pa.us) web site

**NOTE:** The Regulation allows an applicant to enter into a school for a single period not to exceed 90 days, except during a lawful strike, provided that all the following conditions are met:

* The applicant has applied for the background checks and can provide appropriate documentation
* The administrator has no knowledge about the applicant that would disqualify the applicant from employment
* The applicant affirms in writing that they are not disqualified from employment
* If the information revealed in the background check reveals the applicant is disqualified, the applicant will be subjected to termination
* The administrator requires that the applicant not be permitted to work alone with children and does work in the vicinity of a permanent employee.

**Obtaining the Pennsylvania State Criminal Record Check**

**Fee:** $10.00

**For Pennsylvania Residents:**

* This clearance may be obtained on-line if the applicant has a credit or debit card at <https://epatch.state.pa.us>
* If the applicant must use a money order, send it with the paper form ([available online](http://www.education.pitt.edu/clearance/PaStatePoliceRequestForCriminalRecordCheck.pdf) or in hard-copy from the Department of Instruction and Learning in 5300 Posvar Hall) to the PA State Police. **When filling out this form, the check the "School District" option under the "Reason for Request"**
* The on-line response is virtually instantaneous ­ the applicant prints the report from their computer. The mailed request can take up to 4 to 5 weeks for processing and will be mailed directly to the applicant.

**For Out of State Residents:**

Out of State Residents must first obtain the Federal/FBI clearance (see above) and then submit the mailed request for the PA State Criminal Record Check with a **copy** of the FBI clearance results.

**Obtaining the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance**

**Fee:** $10.00

* The application is [available online](http://www.education.pitt.edu/clearance/PaChildAbuseHistoryClearance.pdf) or from the Department of Instruction and Learning in 5300 Posvar Hall. The applicant should complete Section 1 of the form only. The supplied address must be the applicant's current home address and **all** information must be completed in full and to the best of the applicant's knowledge.
* The application must be signed.
* A $10.00 **money order** must accompany the request (**no personal checks**)
* When filling out the form, the check the "School" option under "Purpose of Clearance".
* The request can take up to 4 to 5 weeks for processing and will be mailed directly to the applicant. You may call the Office of Children Youth and Families at 717.783.6211 or 717.783.6211 if problems arise.

Further information is available on the School’s website at <http://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/academic-programs/field-education/resources.php>

**Licensure as a Social Worker** (as of 9/12/11)

*The purpose of licensure is to protect the public by setting for qualification standards for the education and training as well as expectations for the professional and ethical performance of people who will engage in the profession of social work.*

* Licensure regulations vary from state to state
* In PA: there is no BASW licensure; there is ONLY MSW level licensure
* In OH: certain types of licensure are available to persons with a BASW
* In WV: certain types of licensure are available to persons with a BASW