

# Background Checks in Safeguarding

## **When is a Background Check required?**

Criminal Background Checks are required for all Safeguarding certifications and recertifications in the diocese. In effect, this means that Background Checks are run every five years for employees and volunteers who require Safeguarding certification.

## **Why does EDOT require a Background Check for Safeguarding Certification?**

Non-profit organizations that work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults routinely require Background Checks for their volunteers and employees. Although in the past, congregations and other religious organizations may have been trusting environments where people have not been screened and monitored, we cannot allow the church to be the only place where people with criminal backgrounds can gain access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults. As the church, we believe in grace and forgiveness, but we also have a responsibility to protect the people who seek ministry from us. Background Checks are one tool that we use to screen adults who may not be well-intentioned or who should not be tempted to offend by being given access to potential victims of abuse.

## **Who runs the Background Checks and what do they include?**

In most cases, the Safeguarding Records Administrator (SRA) of the organization initiates the Background Check through the diocesan Safeguarding Records System (SRS), and the company that performs the Background Check is First Advantage. This type of process is called “full process certification.”

Sometimes an organization (often a school) does not use “full process certification,” because it has a written agreement with the Safeguarding Office (a “Training Only Agreement”) to screen their employees outside of SRS. In these cases, Background Checks are still required but are not initiated or recorded in SRS, and a different (but approved) company may be used.

All Safeguarding Background Checks include a Social Security Number verification and a national criminal and sex offender check for the past ten years

## **What kind of information does the applicant have to provide?**

Applicants for Safeguarding certification will be required to provide:

- basic contact information, including official name, birthdate, driver’s license number (if they have one), and current addresses
- addresses for the past ten years
- Social Security Number, if they have one, and
- consent to a Background Check

## **How confidential is an applicant’s information and how is the information kept secure in a full-process certification?**

The SRS system is data encrypted and is continually updated to remain secure.

The persons with access to information provided by an applicant or revealed by a Background Check may include the following:

- the SRA for the organization who reviews and approves the Background Check
- First Advantage employees who run the Background Check
- the head of organization, but only if an issue arises that calls into question the approval of certification
- one or more members of the EDOT Wellness and Care Team, if consulted on whether certification or if a Background Check has been delayed
- a Covenant representative, if a technical issue arises (Covenant is the company that provides technical support for SRS)

### **What about the Social Security Number specifically?**

When a Social Security Number is entered into SRS, it shows up as asterisks only (no numbers appear as they are being typed). The number is asked for twice to ensure that the applicant is entering the number correctly. The numbers are stored in SRS (but visible only as asterisks) only until the SRA approves the application for certification. Once approved, the numbers themselves are no longer stored in SRS; only the asterisks remain. The Social Security Number does not appear on the Background Check report that is provided by First Advantage. Therefore, nowhere in SRS is the number retained. On rare occasions, however, the Manager of Safeguarding Certifications or a Covenant representative must access the records of First Advantage (including the Social Security Number) to resolve an issue with the Background Check.

### **Who pays for the Background Check?**

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas pays for all Background Checks run by First Advantage through SRS. The organization, not the diocese, pays for Background Checks run under a "Training Only Agreement."

### **Additional Information for SRAs**

[Background Checks SRA Help Sheet](#)