

## Preparing a Background Checking Policy

"Change is inevitable - except from a vending machine". This quote from American author Robert C. Gallagher may make us smile, but it is ringing true in the HR sphere as never before. With new challenges facing HR professionals in the search and selection of employees, the changes related to implementing a background checking program are on the horizon for many organisations. Undoubtedly one of the most crucial steps in effectively implementing a background checking program is the preparation of a thorough and practical policy on which the program rests.

### Why is a background checking policy so important?

There are three main groups of people that benefit from an effective background checking policy. The policy will:

1. Aid in the understanding of **all employees** as to roles/responsibilities relating to the program and increase the likelihood of full participation;
2. Serve as an opportunity for **key stakeholders** to examine the intricacies of the program and ensure procedures are in place for handling various outcomes, as opposed to reacting to situations once the program has commenced; and
3. Ensure clear communication with **candidates** to avoid confusion or possible legal implications.

### When should the policy be prepared?

The policy should be commenced when the decision is made to implement background checking and should be distributed with adequate time for review and training before the first check needs to be undertaken. This may mean certain aspects need to be discussed and finalised with the department responsible for background checking or your background checking provider as soon as possible.

### What information should the policy cover?

A background checking policy should provide guidance on the following:

- Who/which department is responsible for administering the process;
- When a background check should be undertaken (pre-employment, during the probation period, on role change for current employees etc.);
- The process when background check results are received for both clear and adverse results - who will make the final decision and whether there be an escalation process or assessment panel;
- Whether a candidate will be permitted to access their background checking report;
- The process for communicating the outcome of the background check to the candidate (a written template may be required) and any appeal avenues;
- Any specific privacy information. The policy should outline how long a background checking report will be stored and whether there is a requirement to destroy all information collected after a certain period; and
- A destruction policy for Criminal Record Information, in accordance with CrimTrac requirements.

### How should the relevant sections of our policy be communicated to background checking candidates?

A candidate communication package should be prepared alongside the policy (separate packages may be required for potential and existing employees). It is recommended that this is a written document (but a verbal conversation during the interview may also suffice) and it should:

- Include a statement advising that background checking will be undertaken on the preferred candidate and that employment will be conditional pending the result of the background check;
- Provide information on the checks to be undertaken;
- Advise how the information collected will be used and how it will be stored;
- Detail consequences of failing to consent to a background check;
- Advise that background checks will be undertaken by an external party (if relevant) and obtain the candidate's consent to provide their contact details to PeopleCheck;
- Outline the background checking process and forms required;
- Detail the assessment process should adverse information be identified - who is involved and how decisions will be made; and
- Explain any appeal process available to candidates if their employment offer is rescinded or employment terminated.

### Who does the policy need to be circulated to?

The policy should be distributed to all employees, with specific communication prepared for those who will have an active role in the program. It is recommended that a training session be arranged for these employees, facilitated by your background checking provider.

### Can I get assistance in preparing my policy?

PeopleCheck has assisted many clients in preparing background checking policies and can assist with details such as packages, checks required, privacy considerations and destruction processes. We are happy to arrange a meeting to assist you with your policy and can also provide a sample policy to PeopleCheck clients that can be used as a template.

### More Information

For more information please contact us via phone at +612 4023 0603 or email at [validate@peoplecheck.com.au](mailto:validate@peoplecheck.com.au).

PeopleCheck is a background validation company specialising in local and international background checking and due diligence with a customer service focus. We work closely with our clients to establish validation solutions and packages to best suit an organisation's individual requirements, based on human resource and risk management principles. In order to meet our clients' varying needs, we have established solutions including pre-employment validations, executive team due diligence and legislative and compliance validation.