

Background Check Policy

(Revised June 3, 2017.)

Who is included?

- All active members of the Presbytery of Arkansas (Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Ruling Elders, and Certified Christian Educators who are Ruling Elders), Certified Christian Educators who are not Ruling Elders, and other ministers who are serving within the bounds of the Presbytery of Arkansas with the exception of ~~non-active~~ honorably retired clergy **not serving in a pastoral capacity**.
- All persons seeking membership into the Presbytery of Arkansas. (Completion necessary before face-to-face with the Committee on Ministry's Examinations Subcommittee.)
- All paid staff members of the Presbytery of Arkansas.
- It is incumbent on all member churches to follow prudent procedures with their own staff and for persons who work with youth and other vulnerable populations.

What is included?

- National and state criminal records including the sex offender registry.

What is the procedure?

- Those who are included in the background check policy are asked to complete a self-reporting form indicating any prior felony convictions and to give written permission to the presbytery to initiate the criminal background check process.
- All results of background checks will be sent to the General Presbyter or designated presbytery staff. If any irregularities appear, the GP will contact the Consultation Committee to determine if any further action is necessary. This Consultation Committee will ordinarily consist of the GP, the Stated Clerk and the Moderator of the Committee on Ministry. Care will be taken to assure fair representation. The GP and the Consultation Committee will make determination about the most appropriate pastoral response.
- Criminal background check records will be kept in a separate personnel file accessible only by the GP, the GP's designee and the Consultation Committee. Each individual upon whom a background check has been done will have access to his or her own background check results. Under normal circumstances, the presbytery office will only indicate that a background check has been done and a clearance has been given.
- Background checks are to be conducted regularly every five years, ordinarily at the beginning of the year (January 2017, 2022, etc.). Those who have entered their ministry in the Presbytery of Arkansas within the last 18 months will not be required to repeat the background check until the following regular check.

What is the cost?

- Costs associated with the background check for current members of the presbytery will ordinarily be borne by congregations and costs for presbytery staff will be borne by the Presbytery of Arkansas.
- Costs associated with the background checks for incoming presbyters will be borne by the calling congregation.
- For initial and ongoing checks of presbytery members-at-large or those in validated ministry, costs will be borne by the individual or the employing agency.

Refusal to give consent to run a background check will disqualify a person for consideration for membership in the Presbytery of Arkansas, or employment by the Presbytery of Arkansas.