

Background Screening For Nonprofits



THE
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The Importance of Background Screening for Nonprofits

Are our most vulnerable populations at risk?

Vulnerable populations can include the poor, the elderly, the disabled, as well as those isolated by culture, language or geography. They are also at-risk children, family members separated from one another during disasters; they are the homebound, tourists and even animals.



These vulnerable populations increasingly rely on over 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States to deliver the programs and services that increase their quality of life and, in some cases, are essential to their survival.



Fundamental to our nation's nonprofits' ability to deliver these services to vulnerable individuals are volunteers. According to "Volunteering in the United States, 2013", though the number of volunteers declined, the volunteering population continues to remain high. This survey reports that 62.6 million people, or 25.4% of the U.S. population, volunteered at least once between September 2012 and September 2013.

With the large number of volunteers providing services directly to our most vulnerable populations, the risks to those persons and the nonprofits for whom they deliver services remains high.

How real is the risk?

A recently updated audit of screenings completed between 2007 and 2013 found that from the more than 3.7 million background screenings completed during this five year period, **over 189,000 individuals with at least one criminal conviction attempted to gain employment or volunteer with a non-profit organization.**

Offenses revealed in 2007 audit include:

- **Over 2,700 Registered Sex Offenders**
- **3,900 Sex-related crimes**
- **37,400 Drug related offenses**
- **651 Murder convictions**



Where do people in the U.S. volunteer?

Top Organizations For U.S. Volunteers:

Religious Organizations.....	34.8%
Educational & Youth-serving Organizations.....	26.2%
Social &Community Service.....	13.4%

The audit revealed that the hit rate for the nonprofit sector is 5.06%. This means that for every 100 individuals who were screened, more than 5 of them were found to have prior criminal convictions.

Top Ten Offenses found during this audit:

- DWI/DUI
- Theft/Larceny
- Simple Worthless Check/Bad Checks
- Drug Possession
- Assault
- Burglary
- Sex Related Crimes (including rape)
- Disorderly Conduct
- Criminal Trespass
- Forgery



What steps can a nonprofit take to protect the people they serve?

A study released in February 2008 by the Pew Charitable Trusts Center on the States revealed that the incarceration rate for adults in the United States has reached 1 in every 99 adults. With over 2.3 million American adults incarcerated, the national prison population has nearly tripled in the past 20 years.

This sobering trend further underscores the necessity of thoroughly screening and vetting all applicants for employment and volunteer positions with our nation's nonprofits.



Nonprofits must be diligent when hiring and recruiting their paid and volunteer staff meaning they must conduct comprehensive background screenings. A key component of these screenings is a nationwide background check. Nationwide, multi-jurisdictional background checks are critical because many individuals were convicted of crimes in states or countries that are different from their current place of residence.

Key Audit Findings

- Each day, 144 individuals with criminal records applied for employment or a volunteer opportunity with a nonprofit.
- Every 11.5 hours, a registered sex offender attempted to obtain a position at a nonprofit.
- Sexual offenders are four times more likely to be arrested for another related crime after their release from prison as are other types of offenders.
- Individuals with poor driving records or a history of D.U.I. convictions may be strong volunteers, but roles where driving is required may create unnecessary risks for a nonprofit.

California	64.8%
Florida	55.2%
Georgia	63.8%
New York	92.1%

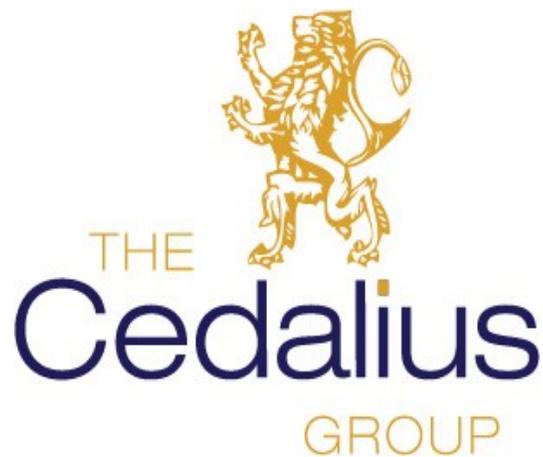
This table represents criminal convictions that were found from 2005 - 2007 occurred outside the applicants' current state of residence. *If the nonprofits had simply performed local searches, these hits may not have*

Conclusions

While the majority of individuals who seek volunteer or employment positions with our nation's nonprofits do so out of a desire to serve, the audit results and current events presented in this briefing are intended to draw attention to a growing problem facing nonprofits: how to balance the needs of their organizations while remaining vigilant about the risks some individuals pose to the safety of the clients they serve.

While employing a convicted criminal as a staff member or allowing them to volunteer does not mean the organization is necessarily at risk, nonprofits should develop sound policies for interpretation of criminal history results and remain aware of the recidivism rates for crimes, particularly for violent or sex-related crimes.

By remaining aware of the risks that individuals can bring to their organizations and developing simple but thorough background screening programs, nonprofits can protect themselves and continue to provide the critical services to society's most vulnerable members.



The Cedalius Group—the background screening provider you can trust.