County Extension and Outreach Staff and Volunteer Background Screening

The purpose of a county employee and volunteer background screening process is to create and maintain the safest possible environment for clients and program participants of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. This is one step in selecting and placing qualified employees and volunteers in appropriate positions. The background check provider is First Advantage Background Screening Series (FABSS).

**County Extension Staff**

- The hiring process is complete after the approved candidate receives a favorable FABSS report. This report includes: social security number verification, motor vehicle, national criminal records, sex offender, and state and federal abuse registry checks.
- Existing staff complete FABSS a minimum of every three years unless working directly with vulnerable populations (such as but not limited to: youth, disabled, elderly) in which case it must be completed annually.

**County Extension Volunteers**

Services required by the county volunteers fall into two categories dependent upon interaction with vulnerable audiences.

**Low Risk Services**

Examples of low risk volunteers include but are not limited to:

- Volunteering in public setting at an ISU Extension and Outreach sponsored event. Examples may include but are not limited to: a Master Gardener community garden, a fair livestock/weigh-in committee member or a Mid-Life and Beyond committee member.
- All Master Gardeners with the exception of those working with youth or vulnerable populations.
- Please contact your Regional Director/County Services Unit if unsure if volunteer position is low or higher risk.

**Higher Risk Services**

Examples of higher risk services include but are not limited to:

- Serving as a 4-H Club organization leader or co-leader
- Providing overnight chaperone services for youth activities
- Interacting with vulnerable populations such as but not limited to youth, people with disabilities, and elderly on a one-on-one, unsupervised basis
- Providing services that involve financial or confidential matters
- Managing food stand activities
Frequency of County Extension FABSS Screening for Volunteers

- All new volunteers including Master Gardener Program applicants, regardless of program area or level of risk, are initially background screened.
- Volunteers moving from low risk services to higher risk services are re-screened at that time.
- All volunteers providing higher risk services and working with vulnerable populations (such as but not limited to youth, elderly, people with disabilities) per schedule.

Background Results – Decision making both for staff and volunteers

The process for decision making adopts the standards, procedures and business protocol of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). The FCRA basically requires:

- Disclosure to individuals that a consumer report may be obtained from a consumer reporting agency
- Obtaining written authorization from all individuals who will have their background checked
- Certify to the consumer reporting agency that you took the steps and obtained a report for a permissible purpose (employment and volunteer screening is a permissible purpose)
- Send a “pre-adverse action” notice to consumers before any adverse action is taken based at least in part on the information obtained. That notice should contain a copy of the report you received from the consumer reporting agency or information about how to obtain that information. At the same time you should provide a summary of rights under the FCRA to the individual.
- Provide the individual an opportunity to challenge the information contained in the background screening report
- Once an adverse decision is made, an "adverse action notice” is sent to the individual to inform them that information from the background screening process impacted your decision to either not hire an staff or not accept a volunteer

To comply with these standards the following will be procedures for data input and report actions.

- Complete the correct Authorization and Disclosure forms (employee or volunteer)
- Data inputted into FABSS online
- Report is received by county designee and County Services unit designee
  - A list of questions may be developed by County Services Unit in concert with appropriate program director and sent to the county contact for further investigation with the applicant, initiating the pre-averse action.
County contact will meet with individual at their request, and upon completion of the questions, share the pre-adverse process, provide the summary of the rights under FCRA, and upon completion of the questions, will recommend action to the council.

If an adverse decision is made, an adverse action notice must be sent to the individual informing him/her that information from the background screening process impacted the decision to either not hire as staff or not accept as a volunteer. Notice located at: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/content/countyCouncils.

Record Keeping

The signed and dated Volunteer/Employee Background Screening Authorization and Disclosure forms are to be kept. Applicants wishing to see their background screen results are to contact First Advantage Services.

Transition plan for FY14 to FY16:

To assist with creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for ISU Extension and Outreach a transition plan for county extension staff and volunteer background screening follows:

- All new staff and new volunteers are screened at application.
- All current staff give permission to do a staff background check in FY14 prior to the annual performance review. In the absence of staff consent, an open records search will be conducted. (Applies to current staff only)
- All higher risk volunteers are screened in FY14 prior to their volunteer re-application.
- Counties could check all volunteers immediately or to minimize the financial impact, counties could do one-third in FY14, one-third in FY15, one-third in FY16.

Resources:

- Summary of Your Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act
  www.extension.iastate.edu/Documents/CtyServices/SummaryOfRights.pdf
- Template for pre-adverse notice (available soon)
- Template for adverse notice (available soon)

Document approval: MOU FY14 –17
These documents are available at http://www.extension.iastate.edu/content/countyCouncils

Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability.