

The Most Common Causes of Screening Delays

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Time-to-hire is a critical metric for almost any staffing agency and HR department, large or small. Employers need to fill seats, and employees need to fill mouths; there isn't much time for unwanted bottlenecks.

As an employment screening partner, we understand the frustrations that unforeseen delays in the screening process can cause. While just a small piece of the hiring undertaking, screening has become an integral part of the equation, and delays can extend hiring dates and cause strain if not duly accounted for and addressed.

The truth is that delays can often be shortened or altogether avoided, but not always. There are times when CRAs are simply at the mercy of data providers, candidates, or circumstance. Here are some of the common causes of screening delays that pose a threat to timely completion.

Federal Holidays

As could be expected, the retrieval of court records is often delayed when the courts are closed. While some courts offer record retrieval via online means, most fulfill record requests through court clerks and manual processes. Courts are closed on the following days:

- New Year's Day, January 1
- Martin Luther King's Birthday 3rd Monday in January
- Washington's Birthday 3rd Monday in February
- Memorial Day last Monday in May
- Juneteenth National Independence Day June 19
- Independence Day, July 4
- Labor Day 1st Monday in September
- Columbus Day 2nd Monday in October
- Veterans' Day, November 11
- Thanksgiving Day 4th Thursday in November
- Christmas Day, December 25

Court Delays

There are thousands of courthouses in the United States. On occasion, certain jurisdictions may be impacted by natural disasters or other circumstances that require closure. As was seen in Michigan in 2023, court systems may also undergo technology or legislative overhauls that can significantly impact data retrieval for a time. When these types of events occur, it is not so much a matter of "what can be done to speed up the process?" but rather, "what can be done to best communicate these delays to employers?"

Though rare and not often widespread, unforeseen court delays will always be a possibility. When such delays infringe on your processes, prompt communication from your screening provider is key.

Incomplete or Inaccurate Information

Data entry errors on the part of the employer or candidate can also cause delays, though they are not often significant.

The most common example is when a candidate inputs their social security number incorrectly. There are also times when conducting verifications that the employer information provided is inaccurate or incomplete. However, in most instances, these inaccuracies can be resolved quickly with little impact on the report turnaround time.

Verification Process

When verifications are conducted manually, turnaround times mainly depend on the responsiveness of the employer, institution, or reference. While verification specialists can increase their outreach and employ various outreach methods, they are still ultimately at the mercy of another.

Verification delays aren't the norm, but when they occur, it's important for screening specialists to communicate with the employer, informing them of the delay and the course of action to complete the report.

MRO Review

The MRO is a physician who reviews positive drug test lab results.

The primary role of the MRO (Medical Review Officer) is to connect with the sample doner and verify any possible prescriptions that could have impacted the results. Of course, this process requires direct communication between the MRO and the candidate. If the candidate is not responsive to MRO outreach, the completion of the drug screen will be delayed.

Conclusion

In the competitive talent acquisition landscape, organizations cannot afford unnecessary delays in the background screening process. That being said, many delays can't be avoided and are simply inherent to the industry. By properly identifying and addressing these delays, screening providers can work with employers to streamline hiring procedures, enhance candidate experience, and obtain results as quickly as possible.