UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

UME Volunteer Background Check Policy FAQ for Volunteers

The UME Volunteer Background Check policy will go into effect in 2021. All new volunteers will be screened starting February 15, 2021 and all current volunteers will be re-screened through an alphabetical cohort process starting on March 15, 2021. The chart below reflects the type of background check that will be required for each volunteer role.

Volunteer Type	Appointment Term	New Background Check	Type of Screening
Tier 1			**NO COST**
Episodic Volunteers	Limited to two months of service within a calendar year	Every three years	Basic Screening (Maryland Case Search and National Sex Offender Database Search)
Tier 2			**$15.00**
Certified UME 4-H Volunteers 4-H Club Volunteers	One year	Every three years	Commercial Criminal Background Check
Master Gardener Volunteers	Three years	Every three years	Commercial Criminal Background Check
Watershed Stewards	Three years	Every three years	Commercial Criminal Background Check
Tier 3			**Approximately $55**
Overnight 4-H Volunteer (Camp Staff)	One year	Every three years	CJIS Background Check
Overnight 4-H Volunteer (Trip Chaperone and/or, Event Chaperone)	One year	Every three years	CJIS Background Check

Certified UME 4-H Volunteer (Day Camp Staff)	One year	Every three years	CJIS Background Check

What are the different types of background checks?
★ *A CJIS Background Check is a fingerprint background check and will be assigned to volunteers with a high level engagement.*

University of Maryland programs, activities, and facilities are available to all without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, religion, protected veteran status, genetic information, personal appearance, or any other legally protected class.

★ *A Commercial Criminal Background Check is a data driven check using an individual's social security number.*
★ *A Basic Screening is a check of the Maryland Case Search Database and the National Sex Offender's Database that will be conducted by the Operations office.*

Who made the decision to change the background screening process for volunteers? *The decision was made by the Senior Leadership Team (AD/ADO and the Assistant Directors) with significant input from the AGNR Fiscal and Human Resources offices. This FAQ was developed in response to questions submitted through the faculty and staff survey that was distributed in November 2019.*

Why was this decision made? Why now?
The Senior Leadership Team has been working on this issue for over two years. The decision was made to protect the organization, UME programs, UME volunteers, youth and the stakeholder base served by UME. This is an update to the current UME Volunteer Policies and Procedures and is based on current volunteer trends and legal concerns. UME will review and update these policies and procedures on a regular basis.

Some volunteers have served UME for many years without being screened, why do they need to be screened now?
Various levels of volunteer screening have been in place within UME for over 20 years as per the UME Volunteer Policies and Procedures. Given the ongoing and future expansion of volunteer opportunities throughout Extension across all programs, the screening process must be more consistent and formalized to minimize risk.

Do current volunteers need to be background checked through this process? *All current volunteers will need to be screened. A systematic process will be implemented after the policy is initiated with new volunteers starting on February 15, 2021. Screening for current volunteers will begin on March 15, 2021 in a staggered process.*

If volunteers work for the Federal Government, can their clearance count as a background check?
No, since there are different levels of clearance and different criteria/concerns that would be considered in either a commercial criminal background check or fingerprint background check.

If a volunteer only helps at one annual event, do they still need to be background checked? *Yes,*

all volunteers must submit to a background check. There are three types of background checks that are assigned to a volunteer based on their level of engagement with the program.

If volunteers are not working with youth, do they still need to be background checked? *Yes. Volunteers serve on behalf of the University of Maryland in many different capacities. UME is working to reduce potential liability on a variety of fronts, with the intention of minimizing risk and fostering a safe environment for all.*

Some programs have guidelines specifying the proper supervision ratios of participants to leaders. If UME volunteers are following these guidelines, why do they need to be background checked?

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Ensuring proper supervision ratios is one cautionary step taken to protect our constituents, but it does not account for the liability that may be created by issues in an individual's history. The background check process is an important additional step to protect UME and our constituents.

Is there a level of volunteer involvement a volunteer can do that would not require them to be background checked?
UME volunteers serve in a variety of roles, and each one is a representative of the organization, therefore all volunteers must submit to a background check.

How much will this cost for a volunteer?
The cost of the background check will depend on the type of background check required for the type of volunteer role (see Background Check Chart). The majority of Extension volunteers will be required to submit to a Commercial Criminal Background Check (Tier 2) which will be conducted through Sterling Volunteers and cost approximately $15. Volunteers serving in Tier 3 role will be required to submit to a CJIS Background Check which requires fingerprinting, the cost of which is approximately $55, but varies depending upon the facility that the volunteer chooses to utilize.

Why do volunteers have to pay the cost when they are performing service for UME? Why do I have to pay to be a volunteer?
Volunteers are not being asked to pay to be a volunteer. Federal, state, county EAC, or university funds cannot be used to cover the cost of background checks. This includes reimbursement. Requiring volunteers to pay for a background check is not uncommon in many organizations.

How often will volunteers need to be screened?
Volunteers will need to be re-screened every 3 years.

Where do volunteers have to go for their background checks? How much time / travel will be required of the volunteer to complete this task?

Most volunteers won't have to go anywhere. Only Tier 3 volunteers, those requiring a CJIS Background check will have to go to a facility to be fingerprinted. Operations office will be communicating information with volunteers regarding all volunteer background checks.

What happens to a volunteer if they do not agree to go through the screening process?
Volunteers must submit to and pass a background check in order to serve UME. If an individual chooses not to go through the screening process, they may not serve as a volunteer for UME.

What personal information will be subject to a background check?
The information collected as part of this process will include a volunteer's address, phone number, social

security number, driver's license number, or other potential identifying information. The information checked as part of a record examination may include driving record, criminal or legal history. This information will be gathered through the background check process with Sterling or CJIS.

If a volunteer has already had a background check done (for instance as a teacher or a law enforcement official), do they need to be background checked again or can those prior results be shared with UME?
Due to confidentiality and privacy concerns, this type of information is not transferable, therefore all UME volunteers must submit to the UME background check process.

How will a volunteer's privacy be protected?
The CJIS screening and the Commercial Criminal Background check processes are confidential. As stated above only the Assistant Director of Operations and the Business Services Specialist will have access to the actual documentation.

Can a volunteer be reimbursed for this cost?
Volunteers may not be reimbursed for the cost of the background check by federal, state, county or EAC dollars.

Is there a scholarship or grant money available to cover the cost for volunteers who cannot afford it?
Currently there is no scholarship or grant funds to cover the cost. UME has worked diligently to consider the impact of cost on volunteers and has created a tiered system in which the bulk of the volunteers (over 85%) will pay a nominal fee for the background check.

If a volunteer does not have funds to pay for this, does that mean they can no longer volunteer for UME?
If a volunteer does not complete a background check, he or she may not be a UME volunteer. Federal, state, county and EAC funds may not be used to cover the costs.

UME Volunteer Taskforce
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