

50 Questions to Ask a Background Screening Firm

1. Are you a member of National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NAPBS), a non-profit trade association representing the interest screening industry, and does your firm actively participate in and support professionalism in the screening industry?
2. Is your background screening firm accredited by the NAPBS Background Screening Credentialing Council (BSCC) as successfully proving compliance with the Background Screening Agency Accreditation Program (BSAAP)? If not, why not?
3. Does your background screening firm have legal staff and help desk with expertise on pre-employment screening and the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and equivalent state laws?
4. Do you provide clients with all necessary FCRA and state specific forms and procedures?
5. Do you notify your clients of changes in the FCRA and other applicable laws?
6. Is a member of your background screening firm a nationally recognized subject matter expert and speaker on safe hiring, the use of criminal records, and the FCRA?
7. Has the firm been the subject of a lawsuit for violations of the FCRA or equivalent state laws?
8. Does your background screening firm have real-time “assured compliance” built into the system assuring that all forms, notices, disclosures, and consent documents are always up to date for use in all 50 states?
9. Does your background screening system make all information about your applicants available on the web 24/7, including real time status of every search complete with notes so nothing falls through the cracks?
10. Do you offer 24/7 online ordering that gives an employer total control over the ordering process and speeds up turnaround time?
11. Does your screening firm operate on a platform that is HR-XML compliant that integrates seamlessly into HR Information Systems (HRIS) and Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)?
12. Can your background screening firm provide control features so an employer can set-up multiple sub-accounts, so that the Administrator can view all accounts, but each sub-account can only view their own reports?
13. Are your background screening reports easy to read with important information summarized at the top for ease of use and do they come with delivery options?
14. Are all employees with your background screening firm subject to an intensive training when they are hired, and attend documented ongoing training?
15. For employment verifications, are anti-fraud procedures in place, such as verifications of all past employer phone numbers instead of relying upon an applicant supplied number?
16. Is your firm aware during employment verifications that several states and cities in the America have laws prohibiting employers from seeking salary history information about job applicants as part of a “pay equity” movement to narrow the gender wage gap between women and men?



17. Are steps taken during education verifications to verify if a college or university is accredited and to watch out for “diploma mills” that offer worthless fake degrees?
18. Are all employment and education checks conducted by well trained personnel in a controlled, call center environment with nothing being sent to cheaper at-home workers where data privacy and the quality of work is at risk?
19. Do you have a policy of NO Set-up fees and no minimum usage? (Credit report access requires a credit bureau mandated on-site inspection that is subject to a third-party fee fee.)
20. Does your background screening firm carry errors and omissions (E&O) insurance coverage of at least \$2,000,000?
21. Does your firm carefully select court criminal researchers and have policies and procedures to monitor their quality and turnaround time, require them to carry E&O insurance, and conduct searches using primary sources with most accurate means available?
22. Where third party databases are used as a supplement to a primary source criminal records check, are results verified at the source before being reported?
23. Do you search for both felonies and misdemeanors when available?
24. When a criminal hit is reported, does knowledgeable person in your background screening firm report the findings (as opposed to having the information entered by some unknown court researcher)?
25. When there is a felony or high-level misdemeanor criminal record found, are you proactive in calling the client to advise them there is a potential problem?
26. Does your background screening firm take measures to ensure that ALL legal and relevant criminal records are searched, as opposed to just going back "seven" years, which can leave an employer exposed?
27. Do you accurately describe the pros and cons of criminal databases and ensure clients are informed databases are research tools only and subject to false negatives and false positives?
28. As of January 2018, 30 states and more than 150 cities and counties in America have “Ban the Box” laws that remove questions about criminal history from job applications and delay such inquiries until later in the hiring process. Does your firm know how to deal with the myriad of overlapping local and statewide Ban the Box laws?
29. Does your firm have a documented dispute process in place as well as trained personnel who can assist consumers in the event of a dispute of a report or a request for information?
30. Is your average turnaround time (TAT) 72 hours less?
31. If there is a delay for reasons that are out of your control, do you notify us online with in-depth notes and the estimated time of arrival (ETA)?
32. Does your background screening firm have large clients with nationally recognized names?
33. Do you partner with leading web sites and HR service providers?
34. Will there be a customer service representative assigned to our account who is familiar with our needs?
35. Does the President of your background screening firm have an “open door” policy for any customer issues or questions?

36. Does your background screening firm provide no-cost training programs and webinars?
37. Do you offer ordering options such as customized packages or individual searches and competitive pricing?
38. Do you provide a guide to the significant rules for all 50 states when it comes to screening?
39. Has your firm published a book, whitepapers, or other educational materials on background checks and safe hiring that demonstrates expertise and commitment to helping employers?
40. Can your background screening firm archive all records so an employer can maintain paperless systems?
41. Does your background screening firm have a highly automated completely paperless online system and processes that requires no special software and provides Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant security and data privacy protection?
42. Is all work on domestic screening done in the USA to protect privacy and control quality since nothing is sent offshore to India, the Philippines, or other “cheaper” locations that puts the personally identifiable information (PII) of applicants and quality control at risk?
43. Does your background screening firm have extensive international capabilities?
44. Has your firm received notification from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s International Trade Administration (ITA) that its self-certification of adherence to the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield Framework that allows companies to transfer consumer data from the European Union (EU) to the United States (U.S.) in compliance with EU law is approved and effective?
45. Effective May 25, 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is the primary law regulating how companies protect the personal data of citizens in the EU. Is your firm in compliance with GDPR privacy rules when performing international background screening in the EU to avoid stiff penalties that can total €20 million Euros (\$24+ million U.S. Dollars)?
46. Does your screening firm undergo a yearly SOC 2® (SSAE 16) Audit Report that confirms the company meets high standards set by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) for protecting the privacy, security, and confidentiality of consumer information used during the background check process?
47. National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) statistics reveal more than 90 Americans die of an opioid overdose every day, and more than 33,000 Americans died of an opioid overdose in 2015. Is your firm aware of the growing opioid crisis in America the need for advanced drug testing for both natural and synthetic opiates in the workplace?
48. Does your screening firm know that workplace drug testing will have to deal with states in America that allow medical marijuana and/or the recreational use of marijuana by adults?
49. With “Millennials” overtaking “Baby Boomers” as the largest segment of the U.S. workforce, does your firm provide “applicant friendly” background checks with a “humanizing” approach to leave a good first impression for tech-savvy Millennials about their potential employers?
50. Does your firm recognize the need to screen the “extended workforce” with non-traditional employer-employee relationships that consist of independent contractors, freelancers, temps, vendors, consultants, and workers for “gig economy” firms like Uber and Lyft?