

Presbytery of Philadelphia
Commission on Preparation for Ministry and Membership
Policy on Background History of Pastoral Relationships and Candidacies
(Revised July 2013)

1. Purpose:

- a. To uphold Standards of Ethical Conduct (210th General Assembly 1998)
- b. To discover and verify background information provided by all clergy seeking to become members of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, Commissioned Ruling Elder, Candidates/Inquirers of the presbytery and all those seeking to employment with the Presbytery of Philadelphia
- c. To be one component in the decision making process of Commission on Preparation for Ministry and Membership (CPMM), a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), presbytery or employing body.
- d. To strengthen the risk management practices of clergy, congregations, and the presbytery.
- e. To obtain a financial history that demonstrates a person's ability to manage money responsibly.

2. Required Background (7-yr history) Checks

- a. Criminal Record
- b. Employment History
- c. Motor Vehicle Record
- d. Credit History

3. Person Authorized to Order Background Checks and Review Reports:

- a. "Presbytery Reviewer" - Executive Presbyter or the moderator of the CPMM

4. Timing of Background Checks:

- a. Clergy and Lay Pastors seeking a position as a pastoral professional in a member church
 - i. Background Checks will be conducted before a person is invited to candidate for a particular congregation or a person is appointed to a particular congregation.
 - ii. A signed authorization/release form must be received from the person before the Background Checks are initiated.
- b. Clergy seeking membership (Active and HR), but not in an installed position i. Background Checks will be conducted before a person appears for the membership examination. A signed authorization/release form must be received from the person before the Background Checks are initiated.
- c. Inquirers/Candidates under Care of another presbytery
 - i. Will be conducted before a person appears on the floor at initial meeting

5. Cost of the Background Checks: The cost will become an expense item of the CPMM budget.

6. Procedure if the Background Check Reports Discloses No Relevant Information or Inconsistencies:

The Presbytery reviewer will notify the CPMM moderator, the PNC/Search Committee Chair

7. Presbytery Review of the Background Check Reports:

The Presbytery reviewer will consider the results of the executive-to-executive reference check and will examine the Background Check Reports, the authorization and release form and the person's Personal Information Form (PIF) to determine the existence of any of the following factors:

- a. A pending criminal or civil proceeding of any kind;
- b. A conviction involving Sexual Misconduct;
- c. A pending ecclesiastical disciplinary proceeding;
- d. A judgment or act of censure entered in an ecclesiastical disciplinary proceeding;
- e. An alternative form of resolution agreement approved by a Permanent Judicial Commission in the PCUSA or equivalent body of another church resolving an ecclesiastical disciplinary proceeding;
- f. An inconsistency between the Background Check reports and the educational, employment, and criminal background information provided by the person; and
- g. A credit history that shows a bankruptcy, pattern of failing to make payments on time, or other patterns of behavior that demonstrate poor financial management practices.

8. Procedure If the Background Check Reports Discloses Relevant Information or Inconsistencies:

- a. Notice to Person. If the Background Check reports or an executive-to-executive reference check discloses the existence of any of the information or inconsistencies noted in Section 7, the Presbytery reviewer will promptly contact the person and inform him/her. A copy of the Background Check reports will be provided to the person with a "Received" receipt included.
- b. Response from the Person. Within 10 days of the Presbytery obtaining the "Received" receipt, the person will deliver to the Presbytery reviewer a letter confirming or denying the information contained in the reports, along with any evidence relevant to support the person's position.
- c. Continuation of the CPMM, PNC/Search Processes. Upon receipt of the person's letter and supporting evidence, the Executive Presbyter and/or the Presbytery reviewer in communication with the CPMM chair, or the PNC/Search Committee will determine whether the person's process or candidacy will continue based on its consideration of all relevant factors, including, but not limited to the following:
 - i. The nature and seriousness of the matter;

- ii. The extent to which employment by the church/organization might offer the opportunity to engage in similar activity;
- iii. The time elapsed since the person's last engagement in the activity that is the subject of the investigation;
- iv. Evidence of a sincere effort to remediate the matter.

9. Maintenance of Background Check Reports that Discloses Relevant Information or Inconsistencies.

A copy of all reports will be given to the person and a copy will be maintained in a locked file within the Presbytery Office. They will not be made available for any purpose other than that which is described above.

Education Opportunity Available: The Board of Pensions offers the "Getting in Shape Fiscally" educational event several times per year in various areas. Workshop info can be found on the Board of Pension website under Seminars & e-learning for Members at www.pensions.org

Permission to Obtain a Background and Credit Check

(This form authorizes the Presbytery of Philadelphia to obtain background information and must be completed by the applicant. The Presbytery of Philadelphia must keep this completed form on file for at least five years after requesting a background check.)

I, the undersigned applicant (also known as “consumer”), authorize the Presbytery of Philadelphia through its independent contractor, LexisNexis, to procure background and credit information about me. These reports may include my driving history, including any traffic citations; a social security number verification; present and former addresses; criminal and civil history/records; the state sex offender records and credit history.

I understand that I am entitled to a complete copy of any background information report of which I am the subject upon my request to the Presbytery of Philadelphia, if such is made within a reasonable time from the date it was produced. I also understand that I may receive a written summary of my rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Identifying Information for Background Information Agency (also known as “Consumer Reporting Agency”)

Print Name: _____
 First Middle Last

Other Names Used (alias, maiden, nickname): _____

Current Address: _____
(Address of last filed tax return) Street City

State Zip Code County Dates

Former Address: _____
(Address of previously filed tax return) Street City

State Zip Code County Dates

Social Security Number: _____ Daytime Phone: _____

Driver’s License Number: _____ State of Issuance: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Gender: _____

Return form to: cpaulk@presbyphl.org | 915 E Gowen Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19150 | f: 215.242.1444