

Background Checks

Students pursuing a degree in Early Childhood, Elementary or Secondary Education at Salish Kootenai College are required to submit to state, federal and CPS background checks during their program of study. Candidates are required to submit a background check as soon as possible after enrolling in an education program, and maintain an updated background check every two years. Background checks are required by many school districts and early childhood programs before candidates may have contact with students, and before the Montana Office of Public Instruction will issue licensure. Background checks will be reviewed using the following policy.

Policy for the use of background check reports:

Who

All education students prior to participating in any field experience, practicum, community services or student teaching must have a background check current within two years on file in the Education Department.

Procedures

After receipt of the background check, it is reviewed and approved by the following guidelines:

- If the student has no record for the state, federal and CPS check, Education Department Chair approves the candidate for placement.
- All offenses require a review with the Education Department Chair. Some offenses may require approval from the school or program where the student is applying for placement.
- After the field experience or student teaching has started, any candidate may be removed from their assignment if knowledge of an offense occurs during the quarter in which they are enrolled. As a minimum, candidates are required to report offenses to the Education Department Chair.

Considerations of all offenses will include severity, frequency, and how recently the offense occurred.

Appeals

Candidates may appeal their background check to the agency or authority from where the background check was received.

Effect on Elementary Licensure

Acceptance or refusal to place students in the field due to a criminal record does not imply any knowledge of the candidate's ability to obtain a teaching license from the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) or other employment possibilities.

Effect on Child Care Licensing Requirements

Section 37.95.109 of the Montana Licensing Requirements for Child Day Care Centers states “Each caregiver, volunteer, support staff person or a person over the age of 18 residing in the home shall have a state criminal, child protective services/adult protective services and if applicable a tribal criminal and child protective services background check conducted. The state will not grant approval or licensure nor allow a license or registration approval if any director, caregiver, volunteer or support staff has been convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction of a felony or misdemeanor involving child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, a crime against a child or children (including child pornography) or a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault or homicide, but not including other physical assault or battery. The state shall not grant approval nor allow a license or registration approval if any director, caregiver, volunteer or support staff person or a person over the age of 18 residing in the home has within the last 5 years been convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction of a felony or misdemeanor involving physical assault, battery or felony drug related offense.”

Background Check Process:

- A. If you have a fingerprinted background check**, including state and federal, that is less than two years old AND the agency that requested the check will share the results with SKC, have a copy of the results sent to:

Education Department
Salish Kootenai College
P.O. Box 70
Pablo, MT 59855.

Montana school districts and the Office of Public Instruction have procedures for sharing background checks. If you are requesting your background check from a school district or other party, and they need a copy of these procedures, please contact the Education Department at Salish Kootenai College, and the procedures can be provided.

You must read the SKC Education Background Check Policy, sign the Consent/Release Form and return it to the Education Department.

B. If you do not have a current background check:

1. Obtain a background check packet from the Education Department.
2. Read the Background Check Policy
3. Sign and notarize the Consent and Release Form
4. Have your fingerprints taken. Local sites where this can be done:
 - Tribal Law and Order, Division Street, Pablo, MT
 - Lake County Sheriff's Office at 106 4th Avenue East Polson, MT
4. Return the following items to the SCK Education Department:
 - The completed fingerprint card with notarization
 - The Consent and Release Form

C. Storage and use of background checks:

Background check records are kept in the Education Department Office in a closed envelope in the student's file separate from the rest of a candidate's educational records. These checks are shared only according to the conditions of the Consent/Release Form, by written request of the candidate, or in accordance with an appropriate legal request. The candidate acknowledges and gives approval for SKC to share the results of the background check with any school district or early childhood program where the candidate may be placed as part of their program of study. The background checks are also shared with the Montana Office of Public Instruction as a part of the process for licensure.

D. Other behavioral expectations:

Candidates are subject to all provisions of the SKC Education Student Handbook during their program of study. They are expected to exhibit behavior appropriate to someone pursuing a career as a professional educator. Program and college personnel are available to help any candidate who feels they have a problem requiring assistance. Appropriate college personnel may suggest counseling or other assistance as necessary. Problems affecting the candidate's ability to perform the functions of a professional educator may delay or stop the candidate's progression through the education program.