

ACF Child Care-Interstate Background Checks

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Project Description. The purpose of this contract is to understand the state of the field and to identify promising solutions for implementing interstate background check requirements for child care staff, as mandated by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014. The background check provisions in the CCDBG Act are uncharted territory due to their comprehensive nature, the use of specific checks that have not previously been used for employment purposes (including interstate checks), the large number of child care staff that must be checked, and the need for timely results for hiring decisions.

States were initially required to implement these requirements by September 30, 2017; however, all states applied for and received a one-year extension through September 30, 2018 based on their good faith effort to implement the requirements. Even with this one-year extension, states have reported that they will still need additional time due to the unprecedented nature of this work—particularly to complete the interstate checks and clear the backlog of existing child care staff reviews.

The goal of the study is to provide the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Office of Child Care (OCC), and Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) administrators with timely information to support states’ and territories’ adherence to the provision in the law.

Research Questions.

- What processes are states currently using to implement interstate background checks to meet the requirements of the Child Care and

Development Block Grant (CCDBG) requirements?

- What can states not currently implementing CCDBG requirements learn from states successfully implementing these checks to be in compliance?
- Are there redundancies in the requirements that, if changed, would make interstate checks more efficient and easier to implement?

Methods. This contract involves multiple activities, including:

- Synthesis and Review of Available Information
- Environmental Scan – Surveys and interviews with representatives from all states and territories
- Demonstration Study – In-depth case studies in 3-5 states or territories
- Prevalence Study – Calculation of frequency of disqualifiers identified through each component of the background check
- Coordination of an interagency workgroup for Child Abuse and Neglect Registries

Progress Update.

To date, the CNA has developed a comprehensive synthesis and review of existing research and information on interstate background checks. They have developed survey and interview instruments that will be used to gather information from multiple participants in states on the state’s current interstate background check processes. Data collection is scheduled to begin in April 2019. CNA has also convened two expert panel

sessions, and two meetings for the Interagency Workgroup for Child Abuse and Neglect Registries.

Implications for policy/practice.

Information from this project will help ACF recommend best practices to states for completing the required checks. It may also provide input for lawmakers that will make developing future interstate background check requirements faster and more efficient, thereby providing increased safety to children and other vulnerable populations.

The background check provisions are of keen interest to Congressional members and their staff, as well as to other stakeholders, who are concerned with ensuring children's safety. Other programs that serve vulnerable populations are considering similar requirements, so the need to solve interstate transfer of criminal, sex offender, and child abuse and neglect data is likely to increase. Additionally, there may be other national priorities that elevate the importance of solving challenges to interstate background checks, such as the recent attention to background checks for the purchase of firearms.

For more information:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/child-care-interstate-background-checks-cc-ibacs>

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