

Appendix O6

Clergy and Employee Background Check Policy, Employee Questionnaire and Authorization

Adopted March 8, 2008; revised June 5, 2018; December 2021

A. Purpose of this policy

HRP adopts this policy so that Pastor Nominating/Search Committees, the Committee on Ministry, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), and the Personnel Committee may make informed decisions about those seeking membership or employment among us. This policy reflects Hudson River Presbytery's (HRP) commitment to exercise appropriate diligence with and oversight for our churches and minister members.

B. Scope of this policy

1. HRP will conduct background checks as part of the clearance process for all Ministers of Word and Sacrament seeking to become members of HRP, commissioned ruling elders (CRE), candidates, those wishing to be on the Pulpit Supply list, those serving in validated ministries, Parish Associates, applicants for HRP staff positions and those current members who change their position more than five years from their last background check. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis by the General Presbyter or the COM Executive Committee when a person has had a background check within the past three years.
2. Pre-employment screening will include a mandatory Criminal History Background Check as well as a search of the appropriate sex offenders' registry. This screening will be performed for HRP by a private online firm, which will access the misdemeanor and felony conviction records in states of the applicants previous 10 years' residences. In addition, pre-employment screening will include specific questions related to previous complaints of sexual misconduct contained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Personal Information Form.
3. Background checks for all those included in item B1 shall be repeated if it has been 10 years since their last check.
4. Sessions/Councils of member churches are required to adopt a screening and clearance procedure consistent with this policy for those who serve their congregations, both paid and volunteers who work with children and/or youth.

C. Process

1. HRP's COM shall engage a firm that is experienced and recognized as a timely and reliable resource to conduct these checks.
2. HRP will conduct the background checks as part of the clearance process, with the churches for which a background check is being conducted assuming the cost, ordinarily part of the budget for the pastoral search process.
3. The Presbytery will pay for background checks for candidates, Presbytery staff and positions mandated by the Presbytery.
4. Ministers of Word and Sacrament seeking to join HRP as members at large, honorably retired pastors and those serving in validated ministries will be asked to pay for their individual background checks.

D. Procedure

1. Prospective members and employees of HRP shall be informed during the search and selection process that a background check will be conducted requiring a signed consent and release form for authorization.
2. Copies of this form will go to the assigned HRP staff, at which time a background check will be initiated.
3. Background check reports will be sent to the office of the General Presbyter, where they will be reviewed. Where appropriate the General Presbyter and the COM chair/s will counsel both the prospective Minister of Word and Sacrament/CRE/staff and the calling congregation or HRP's Personnel Committee if staff.
4. The COM will take into account the failure of a candidate to volunteer critically important information regarding criminal or misdemeanor history.
5. A Minister of Word and Sacrament or potential HRP employee who believes that information in the report is inaccurate, misleading, false or incomplete shall have the right to dispute it with the COM or Personnel Committee, respectively.
6. These reports will be kept confidential according to HRP's established policy of protecting member privacy.

BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY FORM
PRESBYTERY OF HUDSON RIVER

Name_____

E Mail_____Cell_____

Address_____

Business Phone_____ Home Phone_____

Have you ever been known by any other name? No___ Yes___

Name_____

Have you ever been ordained, licensed, commissioned or otherwise credentialed as a minister by more than one denomination or religious body? No___ Yes___

Have you ever resigned from any ministerial position with any church or religious organization to avoid discipline or dismissal? No___ Yes___

Have you ever had your ministerial credentials revoked or suspended by a church or other credentialing body? No___ Yes___

Have you ever been dismissed from any ministerial position with any church or religious organization? No___ Yes___

Have you ever been suspended or dismissed by an educational institution while preparing for the ministry? No___ Yes___

(If you have answered yes to any of the above, please explain fully on a separate sheet of paper.)

BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY: Employment Record
PRESBYTERY OF HUDSON RIVER

List current and previous employers for the past 10 years. If in one position for 10 years or longer, please list information from the next previous employment.

Employer _____

Address _____

Supervisor _____ Phone _____

Employed from (month/year) _____ to (month/year) _____

Why did you leave? _____

Employer _____

Address _____

Supervisor _____ Phone _____

Employed from (month/year) _____ to (month/year) _____

Why did you leave? _____

Employer _____

Address _____

Supervisor _____ Phone _____

Employed from (month/year) _____ to (month/year) _____

Why did you leave? _____

AUTHORIZATION/RELEASE

I understand and authorize that a background review shall be conducted with respect to the information provided on my Personal Information Form, that a criminal history background check and review of the sexual offenders' registry will be performed, and that the information may be verified by contacting persons and organizations with whom I have had contact or who may have information concerning me. I also understand that this information may be used to deny me a call and/or employment.

I agree to release from liability and damages the Presbytery of Hudson River and its agents who conduct and participate in any such review and those individuals, organizations and their agent(s) who provide information about me during this review, only to the extent that such information is released without malicious intent. I authorize all such persons to treat a photocopy of this authorization as though it were the original executed Authorization.

I understand that this background check will be conducted by an independent investigative firm and will be paid for by

The church with whom I am interviewing _____

Myself _____

The Presbytery of Hudson River _____

(If you or the session/council believes this presents undue financial difficulty, you or the clerk of session/council may request Presbytery funds for this background check by contacting the General Presbyter.)

Dated this _____ day of _____, 20____

City, State

Social Security Number

Date of birth

Signature

Please print name

e mail address