

VERIFYING SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS'S (SSN's)

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The single greatest significance of the SSN to anyone screening employment applications is its' usefulness in establishing identity. Are the applicants that you are screening really who they say they are? Why is true identity important? The answer is quite simple. The most common means by which applicants attempt to (and often succeed in) avoiding the detection of a criminal arrest and/or conviction history is by use of a false SSN and a false date of birth declaration.

Any pre-employment screening which ignores an examination of the SSN as it relates to the applicant is flawed. While the Social Security number is NOT a true document of identification, tying the SSN number to the applicant is a very accurate and effective means of establishing a true identity.

There are two comprehensive methods to fully utilize the information available from the SSN for employment screening purposes. The first is the SSN Trace Report, which will identify all names associated with the subject SSN. This report will reveal if there are multiple names linked to one SSN, as in the case of a number being illegally sold. The legitimate holder of a stolen SSN will appreciate the opportunity to contact the Social Security Administration to clear this problem. In addition, the address history of the subject as it is recorded by the credit bureaus providing the database is shown. This will enable the researcher to pinpoint all counties of record for a thorough criminal record search. The SSN Trace Report is the building block from which a legal and comprehensive background check is produced.

The second means of establishing identity through the SSN is by utilizing a Consumer Credit Report, appropriate for employment purposes and with a clear permissible use. This information, strictly regulated by the Fair Credit Reporting Act, ties the use of an SSN to an individual with detailed credit history information. These employment credit reports can be obtained directly from credit reporting agencies, such as HIRE~SAFE, who retrieve the reports on behalf of client companies who have signed agreements to abide by the restrictions and guidelines of the Fair Credit Reporting Act. Because of industry wide history of abuse of consumer credit reports, most "private investigative" companies have been barred to legally retrieve and resell consumer credit report information.

The courts have consistently ruled across the country that employers have a responsibility to verify the accuracy of the information provided by a job applicant. Fortunately, this procedure has become fast, cost-effective and readily available to keep all employers in compliance with the law.