

# **NETCheck Program Manual**

Providing Accessible, Affordable and Timely FBI & State  
Fingerprint Searches for Maryland Mentoring Programs

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Created November 2008

## 1. Introduction

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### 1.1 Overview of the **NETCheck** project

In 2006, the Maryland General Assembly passed SB152 – a bill that exempts volunteers who work with children through programs registered with the Maryland Mentoring Partnership (MMP) from paying the administrative costs and fees for access to Maryland’s criminal history records.

This program is the culmination of over three years of advocacy work, which was undertaken because the current criminal background check process is cumbersome, expensive, and often inaccessible.

Through this program, local mentoring organizations in Maryland can access FBI and State fingerprint-based background checks on mentoring volunteers through MMP for \*\$15.25 as opposed to the normal rate of up to \$56.00 per volunteer. The program **NETCheck**, the MMP Discounted Background Check Program, is now being made available to Maryland’s entire youth mentoring community.

**NETCheck** may not be right for every mentoring organization. Because each county has a different system for obtaining criminal background checks, organizations in some counties may find that they have a better or less expensive system for conducting FBI and State criminal record checks. Some counties may have specific regulations requiring mentoring organizations to perform background checks in a certain way. Each mentoring organization will need to assess its county’s laws and decide whether or not to take part in the program.

To decide whether or not **NETCheck** is right for your organization, please carefully read the rest of this manual to learn more about **NETCheck**. For any questions about **NETCheck**, please use the Web site, or e-mail address:

- <http://www.marylandmentoring.org>
- [info@marylandmentors.org](mailto:info@marylandmentors.org)
- Phone: 410-685-8316

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### 1.2 Why the Program was Created

Although federal law already makes FBI background checks available to human service organizations, the current system requires organizations to submit their requests through designated state agencies. Some states are responsive to these requests. Other states, however, have not designated an agency to handle such requests or deem very few human service organizations eligible to apply. This leaves many organizations without regular, reliable access to national background checks – putting young people at risk. Even when programs are able to access these background checks, the cost is often prohibitive and the process can be time-consuming and cumbersome.

## 2. Screening Volunteers

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### 2.1 The importance of screening volunteers

Responsible mentoring programs need to incorporate a number of important program elements and policies in order to promote safe, effective mentoring relationships. MENTOR's newly revised and updated *Elements of Effective Practice* are geared toward helping these programs achieve their goals. The *Elements* include measures any mentoring program can implement to offer the best mentoring possible – mentoring that does everything in its power to help young people and keep them from harm's way. These guidelines are based on solid research that affirms the importance of accountability and responsibility in meeting young people's needs. The *Elements* are available for download on MENTOR's website:

➤ <http://www.mentoring.org/elements>

One essential element of effective mentoring practice is volunteer screening. Your organization is ultimately responsible for screening mentors and placing them in the most suitable roles. Not every individual you recruit as a prospective mentor will be suited to become a mentor. Careful screening improves the quality of your mentors and helps ensure the safety of children involved in your program, while also managing your organization's level of risk and liability.

Volunteer screening helps to retain individuals who have the sensitivity, commitment, and sense of responsibility to be great mentors, and to screen out those who may potentially harm children. Most prospective volunteers are honest and trustworthy individuals. But, criminal predators have been known to use positions in service organizations to establish contact with their victims.

Criminal background checks are critical, but they are only one part of a careful volunteer screening process. Criminal background checks, alone, are not the answer – in fact, the typical child sex offender molests dozens of victims before being caught (National Institute of Mental Health study, 1998). A robust system of reference checks and interviews of potential volunteers, evaluation of risk, and ongoing monitoring should also be part of your organization's regular procedures.

No one has a right to volunteer. Your mentoring program can decide to disqualify a prospective volunteer with a clean criminal background check if, during the screening process, something about that person makes your program coordinator uncomfortable.

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### 2.2 Designing your program's screening process

Before you begin screening any volunteers, your organization should develop a written policy documenting your volunteer screening process. This policy should include a list of screening elements each prospective volunteer must complete, guidelines for selecting or disqualifying volunteers, and clear instructions on interpreting a criminal history check.

### **Confidentiality**

The policy should also unambiguously require that all information learned during the volunteer screening process should be kept absolutely confidential. No one – outside of your program coordinators – should see confidential information on prospective mentors without the mentor’s explicit permission. You must have policies in writing that tell mentors and mentees about the type of information you will need to share and with whom you will share it. Then you need to obtain signed permission for disclosing that information. Confidentiality is crucial to your program’s integrity.

### **Assessing Your Program’s Level of Risk**

You will likely need to assess the potential level of risk in your program to determine what screening procedures you will use. High-risk programs will need more rigorous screening procedures. In general, the less a program supervises mentor-mentee interaction, the higher the risk. For example, a one-to-one mentoring program that allows mentors and mentees to do activities on their own is higher risk than a school-based group mentoring program that is always supervised by a program staff person.

For more information, please view the National Collaboration for Youth’s risk matrix for youth organizations:

- [http://www.mentoring.org/program\\_staff/tools/childabuseriskassess.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/tools/childabuseriskassess.pdf)

### **Screening Tools**

Based on your program’s level of risk, you should craft the screening procedures your program will utilize. Some possibilities are included below. (Items marked with \*\* are generally considered basic screening elements for mentoring that should always be present in your program.)

- A written application for all prospective mentors, which explores their interest in and qualifications for taking part in your program \*\*
- A personal interview exploring the prospective mentor’s work history and relevant experience, special interests, reasons for wanting to be a mentor, past experience with children, and any potential concerns about the mentoring experience \*\*
- Reference checks of at least three personal and/or business references \*\*
- A criminal background check
- Other possible background checks, where available, including a child-abuse registry check, a sex-offender registry check, a driver’s license check, etc.
- A psychological evaluation
- A home visit

For more information, please visit MENTOR's resources on volunteer screening, which include sample application forms, interview questions, and more:

- [http://www.mentoring.org/program\\_staff/eptoolkit/operations.php](http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/eptoolkit/operations.php)

### **Informing Prospective Volunteers**

Whatever screening tools you choose, from the start, always make sure that prospective volunteers know what you require of them. Have a written checklist that you present to volunteers detailing each of the steps they will need to go through. Often, simply having a thorough screening process in place, including a criminal background check, can act as a deterrent against those individuals who may wish to harm a child.

Some prospective volunteers may seem very eager to join your program, but never complete your screening process. There are many reasons why a volunteer might decide not to mentor. Perhaps they are too busy to fill out the forms; they may have decided that mentoring was not right for them; or they may be embarrassed about having a criminal record. Regardless of the reason, every volunteer should complete every one of your screening tools successfully to be considered for your program.

### **Criminal Record Policies**

When setting your guidelines for examining a criminal record, you should set out what criteria will or will not disqualify a prospective mentor. Perhaps your program does not wish to use any volunteer with any criminal record whatsoever. Perhaps you are willing to consider the factors surrounding the conviction – such as how long ago the crime took place, the nature of the crime, whether or not the individual is a repeat offender, and more.

Each mentoring program will have different guidelines depending on who they are serving and why. For example, a program that works on gang prevention may very well have mentors who are ex-gang members. Therefore, that program may accept volunteers with a more serious criminal record than other mentoring programs would consider accepting.

The following resources on designing a criminal background check policy may prove helpful:

- [http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/csb/csb\\_crim.htm](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/csb/csb_crim.htm)
- [http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/policy\\_manual.html](http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/policy_manual.html)

### **Documenting Policies and Decisions**

Again, whatever decisions you make for your program, make certain that you document them in your written screening policies. Also make sure your volunteer coordinators document the reasons why a volunteer was accepted or disqualified. This documentation helps verify that your program followed your written screening policies on each prospective volunteer.

A mentoring organization ultimately bears full responsibility for the screening of mentors and the placement of mentors in the most suitable roles. *The Maryland Mentoring Partnership* is not in any way liable for any screening decisions that anyone in the mentoring organization makes about a volunteer's status based on information obtained in the **NETCheck**.

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## **2.3 Types of background checks**

The criminal background check system in this country today is complicated. Each state is the "gatekeeper" for background checks – they decide who can access background checks and for what purpose. Each state sets its own laws on background checks, which means there is no consistency from state to state on eligibility, process, cost, and turnaround time. In many states, the most thorough types of background checks may not be accessible at all to mentoring organizations. Because of these limits, private vendors have sprung up to provide access to background checks as well.

It can be very confusing to sort through the types of background checks that are available and decide what is the best. There are several different kinds of criminal background checks available today, each with its own pros and cons. Below you will find information on things to consider when selecting the background check your organization will use. There is no single criminal database in this country that includes every criminal record, so there is no one "perfect" background check. Because of this, many organizations use a combination of two or three types of checks to get the most complete information.

### **Fingerprint-based vs. Name-based**

A name-based check uses a person's name and Social Security number to match any possible criminal records. There are several weaknesses with a name-based check:

- The volunteer could provide you with a false name and Social Security number. Over 1% of the 45 million individuals in the FBI criminal database have used over 100 aliases and false Social Security numbers.
- Female volunteers may have two or more different last names if they have been married one or more times. If you only check their current name, you can miss criminal records.
- Criminal databases can have mistakes in the spelling of an individual's name and other relevant information. A name-based check might miss a criminal record if the record itself has mistakes.
- Due to common names, you can get "false positives" – in other words, your volunteer appears to have a criminal record, but the crimes were actually committed by another individual with the same or similar name.

A fingerprint-based check is the only way to verify a person's identity, and to ensure that the criminal records found are for the right person.

### **Convictions vs. Arrests**

One of the imperfections with criminal databases is that, often, an arrest will be recorded, but the courts or police do not update that arrest record with the ultimate result. Without that update, we don't know if the individual was convicted, had the charges dropped, or was found not guilty. These incomplete records are often called "open arrests." Some types of background checks only access convictions. When that happens, you are missing any of those open arrests, and run the risk of using a volunteer with an arrest record. Make sure you always know whether or not arrests are included in the criminal background check you are performing.

### **County/Local Checks**

Background checks of a county or local jurisdiction can be obtained through the local police department. These checks include only the crimes committed within that jurisdiction. Conducting a county search is better than doing no background check at all, but there are many weaknesses.

People are very mobile in today's society. Not only do they move around a lot, but many people work in a different county than where they live. In metropolitan areas with multiple counties in a small area, an individual may pass through three or four counties in the course of a day's activities. People take vacations and business trips or serve military duty in different counties and states than where they live. Plus, if you check the counties where your volunteer has lived over the past 3-5 years, you are relying on the volunteer to be truthful about their past residences.

Use county or local searches with caution because you will miss any criminal offenses committed in other jurisdictions.

### **State Background Checks**

These background checks are obtained through a state agency (which agency it is varies from state to state). These checks include only the crimes committed within that state, so the same limitations in a county check also apply to a state check. The costs and response times vary widely from state to state. Some states do allow fingerprint-based checks, some only allow name-based checks, and some offer both types for different fees. Most state checks also include arrests, but a few include only convictions. A list of state agencies that perform background checks is available at:

- [http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/csb/csb\\_crim.htm#apndxb](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/csb/csb_crim.htm#apndxb)

### **Private Vendor Checks**

There are dozens of private vendors that advertise their ability to conduct criminal background checks. The costs, response times, and quality of these checks vary widely from company to company. Private background checks are generally name-based and often only access convictions, not arrests. There are two basic methods that these private vendors use for providing background checks.

Some vendors search county record repositories for the volunteer's county of residence for the past 3-5 years. This has the same drawbacks as a county search. Other vendors maintain databases of criminal records, often searchable

online. Some of these vendors advertise their background checks as national in scope. But, these databases are actually only really “multi-state.” These vendors buy their criminal data from the states. However, many states have strong privacy laws, so they do not sell any criminal data. Other states only sell a portion of their data (for example, parole records or current inmates – but not the full conviction or arrest files). This means that when you run a search through a company like this, you are accessing complete records from some states, partial records from many states, and no records from many states.

When using a private vendor check, try to find out as much information as you can about what method they use to conduct the background check and what data is accessed.

### **FBI Checks**

The FBI maintains the most complete criminal database in the United States. It contains over 200 million arrest and conviction records concerning over 45 million individuals. All records are fingerprint-based. Five to seven thousand new individuals are added to the FBI database every day after they are arrested for the first time. The database is made up of all federal crimes plus approximately 70-90% of each state’s criminal databases. Low-level misdemeanors and citations make up the portion of state records that are generally not present in the FBI database. Because of this, many programs that use an FBI check supplement it with a driver’s license check or state or local-only background check to find any driving citations, DUIs, or low-level misdemeanors that wouldn’t be present in the FBI database.

1. FBI checks are fingerprint-based and include both convictions and arrests. An FBI check is the best background check available, but it is not always accessible or feasible. Generally, an FBI check must be obtained through your state background check agency. When FBI checks are accessible, they may be very costly or have a lengthy turnaround time. Fortunately, these FBI background checks are what are provided through the **NETCheck** program.

### **Other Background Check Options:**

Many mentoring programs conduct other types of checks to supplement their criminal background checks. Examples include:

- **Driver’s license check:** This would catch any tickets, citations, or convictions related to poor driving, including DUIs. A list of state DMVs is available at:
  - <http://www.drunkdrivingdefense.com/national/dps-offices.htm>
- **Sex offender registries:** Most states now have sex offender registries available online, which means it is fairly easy to search several states for an individual. There is also a new national sex offender registry that aggregates all state registries. Crimes that would cause an individual to be on a sex offender registry should show up in an FBI criminal background check, but this is a good “double check.”
  - National registry: <http://www.nsopr.gov/>

- List of state registries: <http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/cac/states.htm>
- **Child abuse registries:** A few states will allow organizations that work with children to check an individual against the child abuse registry. These databases often include complaints of abuse that never result in arrest or prosecution and so would not be in a criminal database. Try contacting your state's department of child welfare to see if the child abuse registry is accessible.

### **Request for Release of Criminal History Information**

Depending on your program's screening procedures, and what you learned in the rest of the screening process, there may be instances in which you consider approving a volunteer who received a negative report. A few examples follow.

- Volunteer A disclosed a long-ago conviction and says they have never committed any other crime.
- Volunteer B received "may not meet the criteria". The volunteer explains that they were falsely arrested for a crime, and that all charges were dropped.
- Your program works with juvenile offenders and some of your best mentors have been in trouble with the law in the past but have since turned their lives around. Volunteer C appears to be in that category.

In all of these cases, you need a way to confirm the volunteer's explanation of their criminal history before making your final decision. You need to verify that Volunteer A truly does have a clean record except for one "youthful indiscretion". You need to know where Volunteer B's false arrest took place so you can contact an official in that jurisdiction to find out more information. You need to know the details of Volunteer C's criminal record to make sure they did not commit a serious offense. In other words, you need the volunteer's full criminal record.

If your volunteer agrees to have their full criminal record released to you contact CJIS for the procedures.

### 3. Details of the **NETCheck** Program

To participate in the **NETCheck**, mentoring organizations must first apply to The Maryland Mentoring Partnership for an eligibility determination. All mentoring organizations must submit a **Program Information Form** to MMP. Several factors will be examined to determine your program's eligibility:

1. Your organization must either be exclusively a youth mentoring program, or offer mentoring services among your other offerings for youth. Organizations providing non-mentoring services, even if they are for youth – such as tutoring, after-school care, or group scouting – are not eligible.
2. Your program's activities must meet the definition of mentoring:
  - **Either 1 adult to 1 youth; or 1 adult to no more than 5 youth.** Programs must have one adult matched consistently with one child or a small group of children.
  - **Long-term relationship** (at least nine consecutive months). The young person(s) must be consistently matched with the same adult mentor for at least three consecutive months.
  - **Frequent contact** (at least four hours per month). Again, the young person(s) must meet with the same adult mentor for at least four hours per month.
  - **Location can be site-based or community-based.** Mentoring can take place in schools, churches, places of business, community organizations, or online. If community-based, it can take place wherever the mentor and mentee decide to meet.

Based on the eligibility criteria, these are some examples of programs that **would not be eligible**:

- A YMCA that offers a wide variety of programs for youth – camping, sports activities, child care, and more – but that does not have a mentoring program [does not provide mentoring services]
- A scouting program in which one or two adults work with a large group of youth [youth-to-adult ratio is greater than 5-to-1]
- An after-school tutoring program in which the children meet with any adults who are available that day – sometimes it could be the same adult and child matched and sometimes not [not a long-term relationship with a consistent adult]
- A mentoring program where adults meet with their mentees once a month for one hour at a time [contact is not frequent enough]

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### **3.1 Who can be screened?**

Your program may also only screen volunteers *who currently are or wish to become mentors and program staff*. If your program offers other youth-serving programs in addition to mentoring, you may not screen individuals who are volunteering to serve in any capacity other than mentoring – even if they will be working with children.

A mentoring organization ultimately bears full responsibility for the screening of mentors and the placement of mentors in the most suitable roles. The Maryland Mentoring Partnership is not in any way liable for any screening decisions that anyone in the mentoring organization makes about a volunteer’s status based on information obtained from **NETCheck**

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### **3.2 What kind of background check will be performed?**

**NETCheck** allows mentoring organizations access to a fingerprint-based FBI and State criminal background check. To obtain a FBI fingerprint background check, a volunteer must complete a “ten-print” fingerprint card in which all ten fingers are inked and rolled onto a special fingerprint card. These fingerprints are then compared with the digitized fingerprints and criminal records in the FBI’s master criminal record database (called IAFIS), the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and the National Sex Offender Registry. Since the system is automated, the criminal background checks can be done very quickly.

IAFIS contains criminal records on over 45 million individuals, with 5,000 to 7,000 new individuals being added every day (after they are arrested for the first time). All federal crimes are included in IAFIS, plus the large majority of non-federal crimes, which are maintained by the states. IAFIS contains both arrest and conviction records. It is the most complete criminal history database in the country, and is continuously updated to ensure data integrity and quality. NCIC includes a Wanted Persons File with 1.2 million records, and the National Sex Offender Registry includes over 300,000 offenders.

#### **Weaknesses in the System**

Even so, there are some weaknesses in the system. States submit the records of crimes committed in their jurisdictions to the FBI. However, the FBI does not require states to submit low-level misdemeanors (i.e. bouncing a check, a DUI that does not result in injury or property damage, etc.) to the FBI master criminal database. This means that some low-level crimes may not be found by doing just an FBI criminal background check. Approximately 70-90% of all state records are in the FBI database. In addition, the FBI’s data can lag behind that of the states, since some states first update their own databases before submitting their criminal record data to the FBI.

Another weakness is that approximately 50% of the records in IAFIS do not contain a “disposition”. A disposition tells you the result of an arrest, such as: the prosecutor dropped all charges, the individual was found not guilty, the individual was convicted and sentenced to jail time, etc. Without a disposition,

you know only that the individual was arrested but not whether that arrest resulted in a conviction.

### **Benefits of the FBI Background Check**

Even given these limitations, the FBI criminal background check is by far the most complete background check available. There is simply no single database that contains all criminal record data. To access every criminal record available, an organization would have to require a volunteer submit to 51 fingerprint cards to each state and the FBI, or perform county courthouse checks in every county in the nation. These are simply not feasible options.

The FBI criminal background check is the same type of background check or better than the ones federal law requires of hazardous cargo drivers, nuclear power plant operators, airline employees, and other individuals who have the potential to endanger national security if not properly screened.

By using **NETCheck**, mentoring organizations in Maryland will be able to access nationwide criminal records for the first time. Without access to the FBI background check, organizations would not know that a potential volunteer could have a criminal record in another state.

Another important benefit of the FBI background check is that it is fingerprint-based. Because no two individuals have the same fingerprints, a fingerprint background check is much more reliable than a name-based check in positively identifying an individual. One percent of the individuals in the FBI criminal database have over 100 aliases associated with their criminal record. An FBI check is the only fingerprint-based national check available.

Name-based checks simply cannot catch a criminal record if the individual is not being truthful about their name. In July 2002, a convicted pedophile in Pennsylvania used his grown son's name and social security number to clear a name-based criminal background check. Based on the clean criminal record, he was allowed to become a foster parent to 12-year old boy. The ruse was discovered after the boy came across images of child pornography on the foster parent's computer. A fingerprint background check would have prevented this grave situation from occurring.

Commercial background screening companies generally only have access to conviction and parole records, since their criminal background checks must be performed in compliance with employment laws. Volunteer background checks are not subject to the same restrictions. Plus, since some states have closed criminal records, a commercial provider may only have access to limited criminal records in those states.

### **Other Background Check Options**

Depending on the level of risk in your program and what types of criminal records you wish to access, you may wish to do other types of checks to supplement the

FBI fingerprint background check. Some of these options may not be available in your Maryland, depending on state laws and regulations. Some possible options include:

- A state background check, to access any low-level criminal offenses that are not in the FBI database.
- A state driver's license check to catch any tickets or citations for poor driving. Tickets and citations may not be in the FBI database unless the incident resulted in criminal charges (such as bodily injury or property damage.)
- A check of your state's abuse registry, as often, abuse complaints do not result in criminal charges, and would not be in a criminal database.
- Although a sex offender check is not necessary as any relevant crimes will be pulled by the FBI background check, you may wish to conduct such a check if your state makes the information readily available.

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### **3.3 How much does it cost and how long will it take?**

#### **Cost**

The fee for the **NETCheck**, FBI and State background check is \$15.25\* per volunteer. This \$15.25 fee does not include any costs that you may incur in obtaining fingerprints from your volunteers.

\* This fee is set by CJIS and is subject to change

#### **Response Time – Volunteer Background Check**

The current response time for a FBI background check is 4-6 weeks and 10 days or less for the State background check.

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### **3.4 Where can volunteers be fingerprinted?**

There are several possible ways to have fingerprints taken. All of these options may not be available in your community. Make sure that you investigate your options before you screen volunteers, so that you can instruct volunteers on how to obtain fingerprints. Notify volunteers about any fingerprinting fees, and any limitations in times or dates at your fingerprinting location. Try to provide your volunteers with as many options as possible. The more dates, times, and locations available to the volunteer, the more likely the volunteer is to get the fingerprint taken quickly.

- Local law enforcement departments will do the traditional "ink" fingerprinting. They may have designated hours and days during which civil fingerprints can be taken – be sure to call ahead. They may also charge a fee, generally around \$3-5 per fingerprint card, but possibly more.
- In some jurisdictions around the country, you may have access to a "Livescan" machine at your local police department, a government agency, or other location. Livescan machines scan and digitize fingerprint. However, you will need to verify that the Livescan machine has a printer attached to it.
- One of your program's staff can learn how to take fingerprints. Often the state police or bureau of identification services will offer classes in how to

fingerprint. Your local police department may also be willing to show you how to fingerprint. Some states may only allow law enforcement officials to learn how to fingerprint, so check with your state. We do not recommend that your staff do the fingerprinting without training, as that can result in a large number of fingerprints being rejected for poor quality.

- Depending on your jurisdiction, you may be able to hire an off-duty local law enforcement official to do volunteer fingerprinting for you during certain hours that are more convenient for your volunteers. If you are having a volunteer recruitment session or orientation when many volunteers will be present, this may be a worthwhile option. Or, perhaps one of your current volunteers is a law enforcement official who would do fingerprinting for you.

You should also check with any of your partner organizations. Some companies or schools may have a human resources professional who knows how to fingerprint individuals.

## 4. Step-by-Step Procedures

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### **4.1 Applying to join NETCheck**

To take part in the **NETCheck**, mentoring organizations must first apply to The Maryland Mentoring Partnership (MMP) for an eligibility determination. Organizations will not receive discount cards until they have been approved for participation.

MMP has prepared an online application for mentoring programs that want to apply for participation. Please ensure that the most appropriate person for your organization is completing the application.

By applying to participate in the program, the mentoring organization understands and accepts the terms contained within the **NETCheck Manual**, including any disclaimers of liability on the part of The Maryland Mentoring Partnership (MMP)

Completing the application requires a few easy steps:

1. Go to <http://www.marylandmentoring.org> and click on **NETCheck**
2. Complete the **CJIS General Registration Form** application. **On section II of the application -Reason For Request -check the box for 'Child Care' only.** Mail or fax signed form to CJIS at address listed at the bottom of the application. It takes approximately two weeks to receive your authorization number from CJIS
3. If you have not already done so, complete the **Program Information Form** and email or fax to MMP at [info@marylandmentors.org](mailto:info@marylandmentors.org)
4. When you receive your authorization number from CJIS, complete the **Program Agreement Form** and mail to MMP:

The Maryland Mentoring Partnership  
517 N. Charles St. Suite 200  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
Attn: NETCheck

Once you submit the Program Agreement form, MMP staff will examine your application. We will use the information provided to confirm your program's eligibility. If we have any questions or need any additional information, we will call or e-mail your program coordinator. It takes approximately 7-10 business days to process your application.

If, for any reason, we must deny your program application, we will e-mail you with an explanation. You may then contact MMP to discuss your application further.

If your program application is accepted, MMP will send you a welcome packet containing your Program ID Number and your requested discount cards. Expect to receive the discount cards approximately 7-10 business days after receipt of all required documents.

### **Making the Final Decision on a Volunteer**

The criminal background check results are only one part of what should enter into your decision. You need to consider all other factors of your screening process when deciding whether to include a prospective volunteer as a mentor.

Make sure that you carefully document the reasons for your decision, and that your reasoning conforms to your organization's written screening policies and guidelines. Keep your documentation in the volunteer's confidential files along with the results of the criminal background check and your other screening procedures. If you opt to use a volunteer with a criminal record without a logical, documented reason, you could increase your program's liability.

You must always keep the any criminal records in a private and secure location. All of the information garnered through the criminal background check must be kept absolutely confidential. Only staff members directly involved in the volunteer screening process should have access to this information. It is solely for your program's use. *You may never, for any reason, share the information with anyone else outside of your program's authorized staff.* If you violate this confidentiality, you could be liable for defamation of character or even prosecuted for violating the privacy of sensitive criminal history information.

**A mentoring organization ultimately bears full responsibility for the screening of mentors and the placement of mentors in the most suitable roles. The Maryland Mentoring Partnership is not in any way liable for any screening decisions that anyone in the mentoring organization makes about a volunteer's status based on information obtained in the NETCheck program.**

