



Position on Criminal Background Checks

The American Camp Association (ACA) is committed to the physical and emotional safety of children and youth. This commitment is reflected in the education, training, publications, and camp standards that ACA provides. ACA believes that camps should utilize multifaceted screening and hiring programs and support practices appropriate to the clientele, staffing, supervision and program consideration of each camp.

An important aspect of any screening program is biometric-based* criminal background checks for all staff and volunteers with access to children, youth or vulnerable adults. In order for camps to implement effective biometric-based criminal background checks, a reliable federal program must be in place. ACA supports the establishment of a comprehensive federal biometric-based criminal background checking system that is reasonable in cost, timely in response, uniform in availability to camps across the country regardless of sponsorship, and consistent in the information provided according to identical pre-determined indicators of potentially harmful behavior.

In order for a federal program to be viable, ACA believes that states must mandate timely reporting to the state of information held at the county level, provide both county and state data to the federal program in a timely manner, mandate that checks be done for all staff and volunteers with access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and provide assistance to camps in accessing the system in a timely and affordable manner.

Furthermore, ACA advocates for the establishment of a coalition of agencies and associations with similar interests and concerns in order to promote a national response to this critical issue.

* Data gathered from a biological source unique to an individual – possible examples include fingerprints and retinal scans.