

# BACKGROUND SCREENING COMPARISON

Professional Background Screening vs. FBI Fingerprint Check

PBSA  
Members

FBI



Pushed by market forces to maintain high levels of accuracy to remain competitive.



Applicant's identity can be confirmed through alternate means such as middle name, DOB, address and other unique identifiers.



Encourages review of sources other than databases to verify completeness of records.



Incomplete or inaccurate records are easily disputed.



Initiating a dispute can be as simple as making a phone call.



Pushed by market forces to return results — both positive and negative— in a timely manner.



Screening allows supplementation of database records with the complete record and disposition information obtained directly from the source.



Collection of information performed as part of an investigative process.



Collected data gathered, investigated, analyzed, and checked for accuracy by a Professional Screening Firm.



Screening is tailored to provide a more complete picture of an applicant and may include education verifications, employment verifications, references and driving records based on the nature of the position and an employer's needs.



Applicant screening process protected by the Fair Credit Reporting Act.



Applicant screening process protected by state privacy laws.



Requirement to "assure maximum possible accuracy" before reporting information as prescribed by the FCRA.



Can include information from sources within the United States and globally.



Results generally returned within 48-72 hours.



Used to screen out potential threats to vulnerable populations and certain regulated industries.



Incorrect information may be disputed by an applicant.



Applicants are required to submit fingerprints and are identified solely by existence of a fingerprint — no fingerprint, no information.



Can only be performed when granted access by state or federal statute.



Screening reliant solely on completeness of records in a database.



# Example: Reliance on Fingerprints in Virginia's Criminal Records Database Led to Hundreds of Thousands of Missing Records

As staff members of the Virginia State Crime Commission were reviewing the state's Central Criminal Records Exchange, they found **that hundreds of thousands of criminal records are missing**. The database is used by police to check a person's prior record or determine eligibility to purchase a firearm and employers attempting to determine if an applicant has a criminal conviction that would disqualify them from a job. **The failure of the system stemmed from its sole dependence on fingerprints to identify criminal history.**

The major gaps in Virginia's Central Criminal Records Exchange is a prime example of why fingerprint-based background checks should not be solely relied upon when conducting background screening. **In Virginia, more than 750,000 criminal records were missing**, including murder convictions, drunk driving arrests, family abuse and drug charges, among others. **In 90% of the cases, this was due to missing fingerprints.** While this development is startling, it is nothing new. In 2015, a Government Accountability Office report found significant gaps in the FBI fingerprint database because many state and local jurisdictions fail to report arrest records or a court dispositions.

According to reports, **40% of inquiries to the database were for background screening.** It is frightening to think of how many people were permitted to work with vulnerable populations like children and the elderly because their employer relied solely on fingerprint-based databases. It is exactly because of incomplete records like we are seeing in Virginia that **NAPBS encourages comprehensive screens utilizing both private databases, as well as primary source data like county, state and federal repositories.** Fingerprint-based databases can be a valuable tool, but it is important to use multiple sources to create the most complete and accurate report possible.

