

## **CONDUCTING CRIMINAL BACKGROUND SCREENS**

Criminal background checks are required for every RFK volunteer who is supervising children. Local Directors and leadership are **not to completely rely** on a clear background check as an indicator that a volunteer is not a threat to the children we serve. Background checks, when accurate, simply indicate the guilty who have been caught, but they do not reveal the guilty who have yet to be caught. Our greatest protections for the children we serve are solid policies, diligent observation, consistent enforcement of the rules at Camp and Mentoring Club, and periodic evaluation of the entire process making changes as necessary. Background checks are necessary, but they are only one small piece of a very large process to keep kids safe.

Every person who applies to become a volunteer who supervises children at a Royal Family KIDS Camp or Mentoring Club must:

- Complete the current written application including references
- Be interviewed by the key members of the leadership team staff
- Complete the appropriate criminal background screening
- Attend RFK Camp and or Mentoring Club training

All background screenings require the applicant's written permission and the release should be included as part of the application process. (There are some exemptions for Camp Part-time Volunteers and Visitors, see the section on Part-time Volunteers for more information.)

### **Objectives For Conducting Background Screening:**

- 1. To ensure the safety of each child and each volunteer.**  
This safety net, common to every RFK, ensures that each Camp and Mentoring Club has done its due diligence to protect the children from abuse by known criminal volunteers and to protect the adults who are volunteering as well.
- 2. To maintain the integrity of RFK on a standardized basis nationwide.**  
Every Camp/Mentoring Club is required to indicate on the Compliance Form that they have met RFK screening requirements for all current volunteers. This RFK policy is one that every social services department should be confident of with RFK volunteers nationwide.
- 3. To identify potential volunteers with a criminal past.**  
Most prior convictions will be on record, and when discovered, will be used in the evaluation process to determine that volunteer's suitability to serve. This determination will be based on what is discovered through the criminal background check. Some potential volunteers will opt out of the process simply because they know their criminal background will be discovered and disqualify them.

**4. To have achieved due diligence.**

Due diligence is doing everything “reasonably possible” within confines of the law and high operating standards to prevent someone with inappropriate prior offense(s) from using the RFK environment to gain access to children.

**Provider Requirements**

Although a sponsoring church may use any reputable provider, RFK has chosen Verified Volunteers as our Premiere Screening Provider to conduct Criminal Background Checks. This company is familiar with Royal Family KIDS and our volunteer requirements. You may contact them to ask questions or establish an account at any time.

Verified Volunteers (VV)

Kim Johnson  
Account Manager  
970-232-3543

Verified Volunteers runs the RFK required Level 3 (VV Complete) and Level 2 (VV Advanced) Criminal Background Checks

**PLUS**

A Monthly Basic Criminal History Locator Search for 1 year – If there is a hit on a volunteer throughout the year, Verified Volunteers will notify the local Director.

**Minimum Requirements For Background Screening**

County/Social Services Requirements

Camps and Mentoring Clubs must do the minimum, as required in the Camp and Mentoring Club Directors Manuals, for their volunteer criminal background screenings. However, some counties or Social Service Agencies may require individuals who have access to children who are wards of the court in their county to fulfill **greater** requirements than those required by RFK. If so, RFK volunteers are required to conduct that which the local county requires for volunteers working with minors within their jurisdiction.

The criminal background screening is usually based on the volunteer's name, address and Social Security number, usually looking for felony and misdemeanors by county, state or throughout the nation. Some states will only provide information for the past seven years and is usually based on available public records.

**Juvenile (under 18) records** are usually inaccessible by law, therefore, Juveniles do not need a background check, but nor can they be Counselors or Mentors until they are 18 when a background check can then be processed.

**International records** are more difficult to obtain. A Director must attempt to make a reasonable effort to see if the country of origin has any type of system where criminal records can be obtained. First world countries are more likely to have something; third world countries are more likely to have nothing. At a minimum, an Internet search can be performed on the person's name, city, region, etc. to see if anything may come up. An Internet search is not a criminal background check, but it may be revealing in other ways and may simply be a part of the interview process. Without a criminal background check on an International Volunteer, take extra caution while monitoring and be particular about all other RFK processes and rules.

## **Criminal Background Check Requirements**

Level 3 (VV Complete) Background Includes:

**FBI Fingerprint**

OR

**Social Security (SS) Complete Criminal background check including:**

1. Address Trace.
2. Criminal History-a real-time county or state search of all jurisdictions revealed on the Address Trace for a minimum of seven (7) years. This should also include alias/maiden names.
3. Dru Sjodin (NSOPW)/Department of Justice Sex Offender Registry.  
<http://www.nsopw.gov/en-US/Home/DruSjodin?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>
4. Validated Nationwide Criminal Database- if a potential hit is found, it must be validated at the county or state level using real-time data.
5. For Mentoring Clubs only (not applicable to Camp volunteers) a Driving Record Check for Mentors or Mentoring Club Staff who will drive children.

Level 2 (VV Advanced) Background check Includes:

**Social Security (SS) Complete Criminal background check including:**

1. Dru Sjodin(NSOPW)/Department of Justice Sex Offender Registry.
2. Current county or state of residence check using real-time data extracted from the county courthouse.
3. Validated Nationwide Criminal Database- if a potential hit is found, it must be validated at the county or state level using real-time data.
4. For Mentoring Clubs only (not applicable to Camp volunteers) a Driving Record Check for Mentors or Mentoring Club Staff who will drive children

## **Frequency of Background Checks**

### **Camp Requirements**

First Year or Lapsed Volunteer

(Lapsed = inactive in Camp, Mentoring Club or Church for one year or more.)

Level 3 (VV Complete) Criminal Background Check

### Returning Volunteers

Level 2 (VV Advanced) Criminal Background Check run every 3 years or 36 months as long as the volunteer has remained active in the Camp, Mentoring Club, or Church. If volunteer is active in both Camp and Mentoring Club then follow the Mentoring Club requirements.

For States or Counties that require a criminal background check **annually**, a Level 2 (VV Advanced) can be performed annually instead of every 3 years. Camps required to have annual checks should contact the RFK National Office to see what other options are available for criteria and frequency. (Mentoring Clubs already require annual checks.)

### **Mentoring Club Requirements**

#### First Year or Lapsed Certified Volunteers

(Lapsed = inactive in Camp, Mentoring Club or Church for one year or more)  
Level 3 (VV Complete) Criminal Background Check + Motor Vehicle Check

#### First Year Non-Certified Volunteers

Level 3 (VV Complete) Criminal Background Check

#### Returning Certified Volunteers

Level 2 (VV Advanced) Criminal Background Check + Motor Vehicle Check every year

#### Returning Non-Certified Volunteers

Level 2 (VV Advanced) Criminal Background Check every year

### **Camp & Mentoring Club "Director Of Record" Requirements**

#### First Year or Lapsed Camp Directors

Initial Level 3 (VV Complete) Criminal Background Check will be run by RFK National Office when registering for Director or Scepter Training.

#### Ongoing Camp Directors

Level 2 (VV Advanced) Criminal Background Check run or verified through the RFK National Office every 3 years or 36 months.

#### First Year or Lapsed Mentor Directors

Level 3 (VV Complete) Criminal Background Check will be run by RFK National Office when registering for Mentoring Club Directors or Scepter Training.

#### Ongoing Mentoring Club Directors

Level 2 (VV Advanced) Criminal Background Check run or verified through the RFK National Office every year.

A Monthly Basic Criminal History Locator Search for 1 year – If there is a hit on one your **Annually, Camp and Mentoring Club Directors will be required to verify through the RFK Compliance Report that they have run Criminal Background Checks that met or exceeded the above RFK requirements.**

## **What to do if a Criminal Background is Discovered?**

Department of Labor report:

It is estimated that about **one in three adults has a criminal history record** - which often consists of an arrest that did not lead to conviction, a conviction for which the person was not sentenced to a term of incarceration, or a conviction for a non-violent crime. Each year 700,000 people are released from prison and almost 13 million are admitted to - and released from - local jails.

(OMB NO: 1250-0006 - <http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/directives/dir306.htm>)

If one in three adults has an arrest record, then the local Camps and Mentoring Clubs **will** find some volunteers who have something in their past. If a potential Camp or Mentoring Club volunteer has a criminal background, the following criteria will help local leaders make the best decisions before accepting or rejecting a volunteer.

### **Confidentiality:**

Once a volunteer's criminal background is discovered, it **must be held in strict confidence**. Generally, the information should be seen and discussed by limited people who need to know to make proper decisions about acceptance and placement. Confidentiality requirements may differ by type of check, i.e. social security number trace or fingerprint trace, by County or State laws where obtained and by agencies issuing the information. State or local laws most likely restrict one Camp or Mentoring Club from sharing this information with another Camp or Mentoring Club. **Keep it limited and keep it locked up.**

## **Criteria for Accepting Volunteers**

### **Existing Criteria-**

Review and follow any existing criteria that may already be in place from the Sponsoring Church and from the State and County Services where the children are supervised.

### **Royal Family KIDS Criteria-**

#### **Strict criteria**

1. Violent or sexual crimes against a **child. No Acceptance.**
  - Knowledge need not be limited to a background check. If you know of offenses against a child from another credible source, you must take that into consideration.
  - Violent crime is usually defined as: murder, rape, robbery, or aggravated assault involving force or threat of force.

2. Sexual crimes against an **adult**. **No Acceptance.**
  - Sexual crimes will place the person on the sex offender list and bar them from service. In extremely rare cases, a person may be on a sexual offender list and not be a threat to a child, however, 99.9% of the time, that crime is enough to bar them from service AND, most Social Services criteria will bar anyone on the list regardless of the crime, story or changed heart.
3. Violent crimes against an **adult**. **Limited Acceptance.**
  - Most violent crimes should bar the volunteer from service because it involves force or the threat of force. There is limited room for acceptance based on the crime, the time and the change of heart and life. The more severe, and or, the more recent indicate the volunteer should not be accepted. For example, any abduction is far more severe than a single fistfight 10 years ago.

For clarification about any of the above 3 items, call the RFK National Office for guidance.

Acceptance criteria for #3 above and other non-violent crimes-

Here are three filters to **think about** before saying "yes" and allowing a volunteer to participate in the program.

#### **Filter One**

Look at the convictions

1. **How severe was the offense?**
2. What was the **duration**? A One-time offense or 10 years of crime?
3. **How long ago** was the offense? Last year or 20 years ago?
4. What has **happened since** the offense? Has there been any repentance, turning from crime, a changed heart or are they just smarter and not getting caught now?

#### **Filter Two**

Look at applicant's history and ministry involvement

1. Does the applicant have **History** with credible & verifiable ministry?
2. Does the applicant have **History** with a credible & verifiable organization of any kind?
3. Does anyone on the team have a direct history with the applicant in ministry or over time? (This gives first-hand experience of a changed heart and behavior).

#### **Filter Three**

Look at the position the applicant is applying for or would be serving in.

**A Staff** person at Camp or Mentoring Club has some direct exposure to the kids.

**A Counselor** at Camp has significant & direct exposure to kids.

**A Mentor or Certified Mentoring Club Staff** has the greatest direct exposure to kids and one-on-one time.

### **Something Else to Consider**

In the event of an accusation or unforeseen circumstance, the selection committee (the leadership team(s) deciding who is accepted) will need to be able to defend its decision to place a volunteer in his/her role at Camp or Mentoring Club. The selection committee may be asked by a Social Worker why they placed this person in a position of Counselor, Mentor or Staff given their history. The selection committee will need to be able to defend its decision and prove due diligence was done to protect the child. If the committee has solid answers, based on the criteria above, as to why they placed this person in their role, then they have something with which to defend their actions as "reasonable".

If the only defense to that question is, "Well we needed more men volunteers/mentors," that answer will not be considered a credible reason to have that person as an RFK volunteer.

Denying a volunteer based on their criminal background is to be approached prayerfully and with the safety of the children as your utmost concern. The children are relying on YOU to keep them safe. The children do not know anything about the volunteers working with them, but you do! It is incumbent upon you to be wise and discerning.

If a volunteer has a criminal past and the team is unsure, it may simply be an opportunity to put them into a volunteer role with less access to the children. This will allow an opportunity to observe their work and their attitude towards the rules and the culture of the program. If they are successful in attitude and compliance, their role can be reevaluated the next year. If they display a poor attitude and lack of respect for the rules and procedures, their future role may be eliminated or reduced.

### **Note Specific to the Mentoring Club**

Mentors and Certified Staff have the clearance to transport children who are enrolled in the RFK Mentoring Club. Therefore, there are some additional background criteria to consider when placing a volunteer into either of these roles. Volunteer driving records need to be included in the background clearance process and should be reviewed and deemed suitable for transporting children.

### **Resources**

The American Camp Association provides a resource that may provide additional assistance and has a link for some of the State requirements. The document is titled, *Guidance for Camps and Other Youth-Serving Organizations: Developing Criminal Background Thresholds Updated January 2012*. An Internet search should provide access to it. The RFK National Office can also provide the document.