



# Glossary of Terms



# General Terms

## A

**Alias Name** - Alternate name that an individual has used or is associated with (e.g., nickname, maiden name, former legal name, etc.)

**Applicant Tracking System (ATS)** - Software used to track applicants and electronically manage hiring and onboarding documentation.

**Authorization Form** - Written consent from a consumer to proceed with a background screening. Under the FCRA, this must be a clear, standalone document that is provided to the applicant prior to initiating any background check services.

## B

**Ban-the-Box** - Sociopolitical movement centered on eliminating the “checkbox” that requests disclosure of the applicant’s criminal history on credit, employment, and housing applications. (Also known as Fair Chance Acts, or Fair Chance Ordinances.)

## C

**Chain of Custody Form** - Document used for drug and alcohol screening to identify and track a specimen from the point of collection through release of the test results.

**Collection Site** - Location where an individual submits a specimen for drug and/or alcohol testing, or Teters blood testing.

**Consumer** - The subject of a background screening (most commonly an employee, job applicant or prospective tenant.)

**Consumer File** - All of the information on a consumer that is retained by a consumer reporting agency, regardless of how the information is stored.

**Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)** - Federal agency that enforces the FCRA, protects consumers from “unfair, deceptive, or abusive practices,” and acts against companies that violate the law.

**Consumer Report** - Any communication of information by a consumer reporting agency that serves the purpose of establishing the consumer’s eligibility for credit, insurance, employment or other authorized purposes under the FCRA.

**Consumer Reporting Agency (CRA)** - Any entity that collects and/or assembles consumer information for the purpose of furnishing a consumer report.

**Credit Bureau** - An organization that collects and maintains credit records and credit scores on a consumer (the major three being Experian, Transunion, and Equifax.)

**Credit Report** - Collection of a consumer's credit history, most often sourced from a major credit bureau.

**Credit Score** - A statistically derived number used to determine credit worthiness or predict risk associated with credit-related behaviors.

## D

**Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** - Federal agency that works in conjunction with the Social Security Administration, to return E-Verify results for employment eligibility verifications.

**Disclosure Form** - Informs the consumer that a background screening will be run and details the services involved in the screening.

**Dilute Specimen** - A specimen containing abnormally low creatinine levels in comparison to normal human urine.

**Diploma Mill** - An organization (often unaccredited) that provides individuals with a degree that may be entirely fraudulent, or offers a diploma/degree for purchase with little to no academic requirements involved.

**Disparate Impact** - Employment policy, procedure, or practice that results in discrimination rather than a consequence of the intent behind it.

**Dispute Process** - The process by which incorrect information is identified on a background report and brought to the attention of the CRA for the purpose of correcting the report.

**DOB (Date of Birth)** - Arguably, one of the most important pieces of information on a background report request next to full legal name. Most records are filed by name and DOB as opposed to other identifiers, such as SSN.

**Donor** - The individual submitting a specimen for drug, alcohol and/or Titer blood test.

**Drug & Alcohol Testing** - Collection of a body fluid or hair sample to test for a specified panel of drugs.

## E

**Education Verification** - Confirmation of institution, enrollment, graduation, and type of degree earned.

**Electronic Signature** - Digital signature displayed by either typeface or finger/mouse-to-sign.

**Employment Verification** - Confirmation of dates of employment, job title, and eligibility for rehire with a previous employer.

**End User** - The recipient of a background report procured by a CRA (e.g., an employer, insurance provider, creditor, landlord, etc).

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)** - Federal agency responsible for enforcing federal laws that prevents discrimination against a prospective or current employee based on protected class status.

**EU-US Privacy Shield** - The framework for personal data transmission between EU Member States, Switzerland, and the US. Enacted as a replacement for Safe Harbor.

**E-Verify** - An online application maintained by USCIS to electronically verify employment eligibility with SSA and DHS based on the information from a completed Form I-9.

## F

**Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA)** - Federal law that governs how consumer reporting agencies and end users request, obtain and utilize a consumer's information.

**Federal Trade Commission (FTC)** - Government agency that enforces the FCRA and works to prevent business practices that are anticompetitive, deceptive or unfair to consumers.

**Form I-9** - Employment Eligibility Verification form established by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). As mandated by federal law, this form must be completed on each new employee hired after November 6, 1986.

**Fraud and Abuse Control Information System (FACIS®)** - Aggregate data used to identify exclusion, debarment and restricted status of medical providers and those in the medical field.

## I

**Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** - Federal agency responsible for enforcing immigration law and as part of those duties, the lawful use of Form I-9 and E-Verify.

**ICE Audit** - Audit of an employer's Form I-9 and E-Verify performed by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

**Identifier** - Personal information used to match a record to the subject of a background report (e.g., name, DOB, SSN, etc.)

**Individualized Assessment** - Consideration of additional information about the individual and criminal record before making an employment/hiring decision.

**International Criminal Search** - A jurisdiction-based search for criminal records outside of the domestic United States.

**Investigative Consumer Report** - Background screening that reports information on a consumer's character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living that is acquired through personal interviews with neighbors, friends, associates or acquaintances.

## L

**Lab** - Location in which full clinical testing takes place for drugs, alcohol and Titters. This differs from Collection Site (see Collection Site) and MRO (see Medical Review Officer).

## M

**Medical Registry Search** - A background search for medical restriction, sanction and debarment from various lists.

**Medical Review Officer (MRO)** - Licensed physician responsible for evaluating medical explanations before issuing a final drug test result.

**Motor Vehicle Records (MVR)** - Verification of driver's license and driving record history through the issuing state's Department of Motor Vehicles.

## N

**National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NAPBS)** - Non-profit trade association founded in 2003 to represent the interest of companies offering employment and tenant background screening services, and to establish and promote high ethical and performance standards.

**Notice of Inspection (NOI)** - Notice provided by ICE to employers informing them of an upcoming inspection and compelling employers to produce Forms I-9 and supporting documentation, usually within three business days.

**Notice of Intent to Fine (NIF)** - Notice given to an employer by ICE identifying errors/omissions with Forms I-9 following an audit.

**O**

**Office of Inspector General (OIG)** - A division of the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) charged with protecting the integrity of the Department, and the health and welfare of program beneficiaries.

**OIG Search** - Search of OIG records for fraud and abuse involving Health and Human Services (HHS) programs and beneficiaries.

**P**

**Panel** - A list of drugs that are tested for in a body fluid or hair specimen provide by a donor.

**Permissible Purpose** - Reasons under which a background report may be lawfully requested, obtained and/or procured.

**Point of Collection Test (POCT)** - Onsite, instant or rapid drug and alcohol test when the specimen is immediately tested for drugs/alcohol at the same location in which it was collected, such as at the worksite.

**Pre-Employment Background Screening** - The use of various background screening services to confirm qualifications and/or background of a prospective employee.

**Primary Source Verification (PSV)** - Record that is confirmed at the original source of its filing.

**Professional License Verification** - Confirmation of status, issue and expiration date, and restrictions associated with a particular type of license.

**R**

**Rental History Search** - Interview with previous landlords to gain perspective on their former tenant.

**S**

**Safe Harbor** - An agreement between EU Member States and the US to enable transfer of personal data for the purposes of background screening. Supplanted by EU-US Privacy Shield.

**Search Scope** - Narrowly defines a background screening service in terms of sources, time, location, and information obtained.

**Social Security Administration (SSA)** - Federal agency that, along with Department of Homeland Security (DHS), returns E-Verify results for employment eligibility verifications.

**Social Security Number (SSN)** - 9-digit code assigned to a US Citizen, permanent resident or temporary resident.

**Specimen** - Sample of body fluid or hair provided by an individual for the purpose of drug, alcohol or Titters blood testing.

**Specimen ID** - Unique number sequence assigned to a specimen at the collection site for a drug, alcohol or Titters test and used for quality control (namely tracking the movement of the specimen).

**Specimen Validity Testing (SVT)** - Used during a drug and alcohol test to detect substitution, adulteration, or dilution (excessive water content).

**SSN Randomization** - A change implemented in 2011, affecting the way SSNs are issued in order to extend the longevity of the nine-digit SSN and protect the integrity of the numbers..

**SSN Verification & Address History** - Verifies the name associated with a SSN and retrieves address history from a variety of sources. Additional information may include year of birth, date of birth, Death Master Index, and issuing state.

**Substitution** - using a synthetic substance instead of human urine, in an attempt to force a negative result in a drug/alcohol test.

**Summary of Rights** - A summary of the consumer's rights under the FCRA, as it applies to background screening. Consumers must receive a copy of the FCRA Summary of Rights.

## T

**Tenant Screening** - A background check report used to gain insight into a prospective tenant's past (including creditworthiness, employment and criminal history) in order to make a tenancy decision.

**Third Party Administrator (TPA)** - An organization that manages areas of employment or employment activity for a separate entity.

**Titers Blood Test** - The act of testing one's blood for the presence of antibodies, most often used in the healthcare setting to mitigate the spread of communicable disease.

## U

**United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** - Federal agency that operates and maintains the official E-Verify portal, which is integrated into Choice Screening Form I-9 Comply™ online management tool.

**User Certification** - Provision in the FCRA that states a CRA may only furnish a consumer report if the user has affirmed its compliance with the FCRA and applicable laws, including but not limited to only using the provided background report for a specified purpose.

## V

**Verification Services** - Confirmation of an applicant's qualifications typically provided on a resume-employment history, education, professional references, personal references, professional licenses and certificates.

## W

**Wet Signature** - A hand-written signature.

**Workers Compensation History** - Summary of worker compensation claims filed in a specified state.

**Writ** - a written court order or judicial process.

# Criminal Background Check Terms

## A

**Abated by Death** - Case disposed of by death.

**Accessory** - An individual, who although not the perpetrator of a crime, was in some way involved in the commission of said crime without being present.

**Accessory After the Fact** - Individual who helps a criminal evade arrest.

**Accessory Before the Fact** - Individual who induces another to commit a crime.

**Acquittal** - Jury verdict that the accused is not guilty; a judicial finding that evidence is insufficient to support a conviction.

**Adjudication** - Judicial decision that brings a criminal or civil case to a close.

**Adjudicated Guilty Conviction** - Formal judgement declaring that the defendant has been found guilty of the charges brought against them.

**Adjudication Withheld** - Court decision that does not result in a conviction, pending the successful completion of probation.

**Affray** - A brawl or disturbance that is not premeditated.

**Aggravated** - circumstances surrounding the commission of a crime or tort, which increase its injurious consequences.



**Aiding and Abetting** - Inciting another person to commit, and/or assisting with the commission of a crime.

**Arraignment** - A call to the accused to come before the court to hear charges or enter a plea.

**Arrest Record** - An official form completed by the police department when a person is arrested; a cumulative record of all instances in which a person has been arrested.

**Arrest Warrant** - An official court document that authorizes a police officer to arrest the person(s) named on the warrant.

**Assault** - Intentional or threatened infliction of injury to another.

## B

**Bail** - An amount of money set by a judge at an initial appearance, to ensure the return of the accused at subsequent proceedings.

**Battery** - Crime of making non-consensual, unlawful, physical contact with another.

**Bench Warrant** - Official document issued by the court when an individual is held in contempt, charged with a crime, or was ordered to appear in court, but has failed to do so.

**Bound Over** - A case that is sent to another court to continue with proceedings.

## C

**Charge** - An allegation that an individual has committed a specific offense.

**Civil Disorder** - Any public disturbance involving acts of violence by three or more people, which causes danger, damage or injury to the property or person of another individual.

**Conditional Release** - Release from incarceration before the full sentence has been served, contingent upon on specific conditions being met. Failure to meet the prescribed conditions may lead to revocation.

**Concurrent Sentence** - Criminal sentences that are served at the same time.

**Consecutive Sentence** - Criminal sentences that are served back to back.

**County Civil Search** - Civil record research sourced directly from county court files.

**County Criminal Search** - Criminal case research sourced directly from county court records.

## D

**Deferred Adjudication** - Occurs when a defendant enters a guilty or no contest plea before the court and the sentence is placed on hold (or deferred) until a later date. Also commonly referred to as "Deferred Judgment" and "Probation Before Judgment."

**Deferred Prosecution** - Occurs when a defendant is required to abide by agreed upon conditions prior to submitting a plea. (This is not considered a conviction while under deferment.)

**Dismissed** - Court decision in which the charges against a defendant are dropped.

**Dismissed With Prejudice** - A case that has been dismissed and cannot be filed again for the same matter.

**Dismissed Without Prejudice** - A case that has been dismissed, but can be brought again regarding the same matter.

## E

**Expunged** - Files that are completely removed from public record, either by destroying the file, returning the file to the petitioner or removing all information pertaining to the petitioner.

## F

**Felony** - a crime, typically involving violence, regarded as more serious than a misdemeanor, and usually punishable by imprisonment for more than one year or by death.

## G

**Grand Jury** - A jury that determines the validity of an accusation, but does not try or decide the case.

**Gross** - Flagrant.

**Guilty** - Court decision that finds an individual responsible for wrongdoing.

**Guilty in Absentia** - Decision of guilt in the absence of, or without requiring a court appearance by the defendant.

## H

**Hit** - A criminal record.

## I

**International Criminal Search** - A jurisdiction-based search for criminal records outside of the domestic United States.

## J

**Jurisdiction** - Most often, the geographical area in which a case was held.

## L

**Legislation** - The collection of laws surrounding a specific topic.

**Litigation** - The process of taking legal action in a criminal or civil matter.

## M

**Misdemeanor** - A crime that is less serious than a felony, for which the punishment is usually imprisonment for a year or less.

**Mistrial** - A trial which is terminated or declared invalid.

## N

**National Sex Offender Registry** - Nationwide search for sexual offender history and registration.

**National Wants and Warrants** - Nationwide search for open and active wants and warrants. This search does not include arrest or conviction records and will not include additional criminal record details. It should be noted that wants and warrants do not imply conviction.

**Nolle Pros (or Nolle Prosequi)** - Formal notice of abandonment by a plaintiff or prosecutor of all or part of a law suit or legal action.

**Nolo Contendere (No Contest)** - Plea made by the defendant that is not an omission of guilty, but is conceding the charge without presenting a defense.

## P

**Pending** - A case that has not yet been decided by the court.

**Plea** - A defendant's formal statement in response to criminal charges.

**Possible Hit** - A hit that is in the process of being verified with court records.

**Public Record** - Publically available record held by the court concerning criminal or civil matters.

## Q

**Quash/Quashed** - Declined to prosecute but with the option to reopen the case.

## S

**Sealed** - A record that is not removed from a defendant's file, but is "hidden" from public access. These records are available only to law enforcement and the court. Others, such as an employer, can only receive and use the record if permitted by law.

**Statewide Criminal Search** - Aggregate of criminal record data within a specified state.

**Suspended Sentence** - Sentence that is ordered by the court but not imposed at the time it was handed down.

## U

**U.S. Federal Civil Search** - A search of all federal courts for civil disputes filed in the federal court system, including antitrust, bankruptcy, disputes that cross state lines, and cases where the government is a party.

**U.S. Federal Criminal** - Search of all federal courts for criminal records where Federal courts have jurisdiction.

## V

**Vacate (Judgement)** - To make void; or cancel a court decision.

**Voluntary Dismissal** - The court or district attorney dismisses the charges against an individual.

## W

**Waiver by Magistrate** - Charges are waived after the defendant agrees to pay a fine.

**Waiver of Jury** - The right to a jury trial is waived and the judge makes the decision of guilt or innocence.

**Warrant** - Order of a court or law enforcement agency issued when an individual fails to appear in court, is in contempt of court, or has an outstanding balance of fines owed.

**Writ** - a written court order or judicial process.



## Y

**Youthful Offender** - Individuals generally ranging from 18 to 25 years of age, who are may be given special sentencing consideration for the purpose of rehabilitation.

**Youthful Trainee Act** - Guidance for criminal sentencing as it applies to juvenile first-time offenders. The act states that if a juvenile complies with their sentence, the case will be dropped from their record once the offender reaches adulthood.