



Risk Management *Tips*

Are Background Checks Enough?

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Year after year, sex offenders apply for staff and volunteer positions at youth-related organizations because of the *perceived* unlimited access to children and weak screening practices.

Many organizations rely solely on criminal background checks to screen out these offenders. Although background checks are a good starting point, keep in mind that they may not tell the whole story. Consider these facts and strategies from Praesidium, Inc., the national experts in child abuse prevention and risk management:

- Only 4-6% of child molesters have a criminal record.
- Studies suggest that criminal background checks are only about 50% accurate.
- Juvenile records are usually sealed and don't show up on a background check.
- International criminal background checks are costly and often unreliable.
- Offenders often plead guilty to a lesser offense, keeping a sex crime off their record.

Below are five tips to strengthen your organization's screening and selection practices:

1. Create a standardized application which includes your "zero tolerance for abuse" statement designed to encourage high-risk applicants to self-select out of the hiring process.
2. Carefully review completed applications and look for missing or incomplete information.
3. Complete a face-to-face or phone interview with each applicant. Include mandatory behaviorally-based interview questions designed to assess for abuse risk.
4. Check both personal and professional references. Ask references specific questions about the applicant's suitability to work with minors and document their answers.
5. Train hiring managers in how to spot red flags during the screening process.



If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.