



National MS Society Comprehensive Volunteer Screening Policy

Introduction & Information for Volunteers

To ensure that those affected by MS receive the highest quality programs, services and resources, the Society has the responsibility to select the most qualified individuals to help meet our objectives. Therefore, we have developed a screening policy for volunteers. A comprehensive screening process can help to:

- identify the most qualified individuals to advance the Society's strategic goals,
- identify individuals who will not create any risk to the Society while working with vulnerable populations (people with disabilities, children etc.), and
- exclude individuals who may increase the level of acceptable risk to the Society overall.

Although screening cannot eliminate all individuals who may present an unacceptable risk, proper screening can reduce the likelihood of inadvertently selecting those individuals to join the Society. General screening includes position description, candidate application, interview, and reference checks.

All of our applicants are subject to a full screening process that includes the basic screening elements listed above. The need for more extensive screening is generally relative to the intensiveness of contact with vulnerable service recipients and high risk activity. Positions that offer a higher level of risk for specific exposures (ex. working with children, handling cash, visiting in the homes of clients, providing transportation) will require a more exhaustive screening process such as state-level criminal history and sex offender record checks, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) checks, and use of national credit reporting information. Specific examples of high risk activities are:

- anyone who enters a client's home (ex. friendly visitor, chore service, care managers),
- anyone working with children (kids camp, family weekend retreat),
- anyone working in a physical activity type program (e.g., water therapy) where "touching" may be involved,
- anyone working with clients in a position of relationship building and/or influence (self-help group leaders, peer support volunteers, information and referral volunteers),
- anyone handling checks or cash, and any one providing transportation for any reason (ex. SAG drivers for Bike MS, Walk MS and Challenge Walk MS).

What is the process for securing a background check?

Each applicant must complete a background check authorization form which provides the HR representative (the Society) authorization to access their personal history. To maintain proper controls through this process, this form is maintained in a lock file cabinet that is only accessible to the HR representative and the Chapter President. The HR representative must submit a signed authorization form for each candidate either on-line or fax directly to our vendor. Most background results are available within one week. Those results are maintained in the locked cabinet. The HR representative must review each report to determine that the candidate's history meets the Society's criteria for acceptable behaviors based on the specific job responsibilities.

"Grandfather clause" - Will existing staff and volunteers be required to undergo a screening process?

Volunteers currently serving the Society prior to fiscal year 2009 will not be required to undergo a background check. However, chapters must clearly communicate to all current volunteers serving in high risk capacities that while they may be exempt from this process, the Society reserves the right to perform a background check should we become aware of past "questionable activity" that raises concern.

How often do these need to be done?

Currently, there is no provision to repeat the overall background check. DMV checks should be repeated annually.

What is included in the background check?

Social Security Number Trace - This report will verify the issue date of the social security number, if the number has been reported deceased or not yet been issued. The report will also reveal other names used by the applicant, such as maiden names or alias' and addresses listed by applicant when they have applied for credit (information comes from credit bureaus and other sources)

Multi-State Criminal Search - Multi-State Criminal Search provides access to criminal records for 46 states plus DC. The four states not included in are Delaware, Massachusetts, South Dakota and Wyoming. Information comes from various jurisdictions including county court records, state repositories, department of corrections, administrative office of the courts, and department of public safety, traffic court and proprietary offender data.

National Sex Offender Registry - Our extensive sex offender search checks registered sex offender data sources nationwide, such as: Bureaus of Investigation, Departments of Law Enforcement, Departments of Corrections, Departments of Justice, Departments of Public Safety, Sheriff's Departments, State Attorney General's Offices, and State Police. This database is compiled from violent and sex offender registries in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Motor Vehicle Check – This is only added to the process if the volunteer will be driving on behalf of the Society. It covers driver history for the past 5 years.

Criteria for Selection Process

The National MS Society will use the following criteria in determining unacceptable behaviors that do not meet our staff selection criteria. Depending on the position in question, one or more offenses under the following categories will result in a declination of the candidate

Criminal Record

If a candidate has been convicted of, pleads “guilty” to or “no contest” to any of the following types of crimes within the past 10 years, consideration for job position must be void:

- Sexual misconduct/offences
- Commission of a felony
- Violent Crime
- Any crime involving illegal use or possession of controlled substances
- Illegal use or possession of a firearm
- Child abuse or domestic violence

If a deposition is pending regarding any of the above actions, candidate must be disqualified from consideration of serving as a volunteer.

Motor Vehicle Driver History

One major violation (including accidents) within the last five years:

- Manslaughter or negligent homicide using a motor vehicle
- Driving while license is suspended or revoked
- Driving under the influence, (DUI, DWI)
- Operating a motor vehicle for the commission of a felony
- Aggravated assault with a motor vehicle
- Permitting an unlicensed person to drive
- Reckless driving
- Fleeing or evading police or roadblock
- Resisting arrest
- Racing (speed content)
- Hit and run (bodily injury or property damage)
- Failure to report an accident
- Illegal passing of a school bus
- Having a license suspended in the past related to moving violations
- Other violations considered serious by state law

Rating Basis – Unacceptable Infractions:

- One fault accident and two or more moving violations in a 12 month period or,
- Two or more fault accidents in the past seven years

Please note that a driver's history may reflect motor vehicle accidents based on the following types of liability:

- No Fault (no Liability on driver's part)
- At Fault (Liability on driver's part)