

# OFFICE OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

## Questions & Answers for Fingerprint Services in the State of Pennsylvania

### **Why conduct FBI background checks**

Act 114 of 2006, Section 111 of the Public School Code was amended effective April 1, 2007. **All** student teachers (participating in classroom teaching, internships, clinical or field experience) and prospective employees (including but not limited to administrators, teachers, substitutes, janitors, cafeteria workers, office employees) of public and private schools, Intermediate Units and area vocational-technical schools, including independent contractors and their employees and bus drivers, who have direct contact with children, must provide to their employer a copy of their Pennsylvania State Criminal History Background Check and their Federal Criminal History Record that cannot be more than one (1) year old. This only applies to employees hired on or after April 1, 2007. Employees hired prior to April 1, 2007, are only required to provide the Federal Criminal History record if they have lived outside of the state for at least two years immediately preceding their application for employment.

### **When does the new law begin?**

April 1, 2007. You have 90 days after April 1, 2007 to complete your fingerprint based background check. Who is affected by this new law? See above.

### **Do I have to schedule an appointment to be fingerprinted?**

There are no scheduled appointments (time or location) for fingerprinting. You do however need to register with Cogent Systems before being fingerprinted.

All fingerprint collection locations work on a first come, first serve basis. Be advised that during the initial few weeks of the program, fingerprint traffic may be heavy. Plan your visit to fingerprint locations accordingly. Do not send large groups of employees at one time. Plan to send employees to print locations over weeks, not hours. Contact the fingerprint site nearest you if you require a large group of employees to be printed. Ask the fingerprint site how they want to handle the processing of prints. Some sites may be able to provide mobile printing. Visit <https://www.pa.cogentid.com> to learn which sites offer mobile printing.

### **Where do I register for fingerprinting?**

Registration involves collecting pertinent demographic information that is required by law from each applicant. During registration you will also be given the chance to pay electronically for your background check. Registration is best conducted online at <https://www.pa.cogentid.com>. This way you can insure the correctness of all demographic information you submit. Online registration alleviates many data collection problems and effectively speeds processing at the fingerprint site.

You may also register by phone at 1-888-439-2486

### **How can I pay for my fingerprinting?**

Applicant background checks are \$40.00. Payment may be made online at the time of registration using a debit or credit card. Payment may also be made with a Money Order or Cashiers Check at the fingerprint location. Money Orders and Cashiers Checks must be made out to COGENT SYSTEMS. **NO CASH, PERSONAL CHECKS and NO ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS** for background checks will be accepted at the fingerprint sites. Go online at <https://www.pa.cogentid.com> to make register and make payment

### **Where are the fingerprint locations in my area?**

There are fifty-four (54) fingerprint machines established across the State. Fingerprint sites hours of operations and procedures may differ from site to site. Please review the Cogent Systems web site at <https://www.pa.cogentid.com> often and the site specific web page (if provided) to learn more about the site nearest you.

### **What am I required to bring to the fingerprint site?**

You must be registered first before proceeding to a fingerprint site. At the fingerprint site you will be asked to produce a qualified State or Federal photo ID before processing may begin. See “What to bring” for a list of approved ID types at <https://www.pa.cogentid.com>. Applicants will not be processed if they cannot produce acceptable identification.

### **What happens to my fingerprints once they are submitted?**

The applicant’s scanned fingerprints will be electronically transmitted to the Pennsylvania State Police, who in turn submits the fingerprints and demographic information to the FBI as required by federal statute. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will receive the Federal Criminal History Record from the FBI. PDE’s School Services Unit will return the Federal Criminal History Record to the applicant. The Record will be printed on standard 8.5” X 11” paper with the Commonwealth Seal imbedded on the paper. **This document constitutes an official Record.** If an applicant presents their Federal Criminal History Record and the Commonwealth Seal is not embedded on the paper, it should be considered as invalid and not an official Record.

### **What happens if I do not receive my official Federal Criminal History Record?**

After your fingerprints have been submitted, do not contact the fingerprint site. Do not contact Cogent Systems. Cogent Systems does not have the means to give the applicant the status of their background check nor are they involved in the summary execution of your background check. If the applicant does not receive the Criminal History Record from PDE within eight weeks after being fingerprinted, they should call (717) 783-3750 or email PDE at [dwolfgang@state.pa.us](mailto:dwolfgang@state.pa.us).

### **Will I still have to complete my other required background checks?**

Yes. The fingerprint based background check is conducted in addition to your PA State Criminal Record Check and PA State Child Abuse History Clearance.

### **How do I know if my personal information is secure?**

Your personal data traveling from the fingerprint equipment is comprehensively secured and regulated by both Cogent Systems and State and Federal regulations governing the use of that data. The Cogent statewide fingerprint service is housed within a secured network that is protected by firewall devices configured explicitly to allow only permissible protocols and traffic. Cogent ensures that all of the fingerprint machine’s background check submissions adhere to both the FBI’s and Pennsylvania State Police’s Security requirements. All communication traffic to and from the fingerprint machine is either encrypted or conducted through encrypted ports.

### **I still have additional questions, who do I call?**

The fingerprint sites cannot answer questions except those involving times and locations of their fingerprint machines. All additional information regarding process, policy and print locations may be found at

<https://www.pa.cogentid.com>.

Fingerprint applicants should contact Denise Wolfgang at (717) 783-3750 or [dwolfgang@state.pa.us](mailto:dwolfgang@state.pa.us)