



# BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY

## 1. PURPOSE

Background checks have become an integral part of many faith-based communities' trust and safety programs. Many states now require organizations including non-profits to run background checks for anyone working with vulnerable populations. Vulnerable populations are generally defined based on certain factors like age, particular health conditions, diseases, or disabilities. Churches and other volunteer organizations must maintain the trust of their members, donors and communities. Maintaining this trust often includes a thorough background check process for people working in sensitive roles.

## 2. VULNERABLE POPULATION

NorthStar Ministries has identified that the vulnerable population as it relates to our church shall include children 18 years of age and under and those older who are under protective guardianships due to physical or mental deficiencies.

NorthStar Ministries has identified that the following positions could or will be working with vulnerable individuals or in financial related positions as part of their duties:

- A. All pastors;
- B. All members of the Administrative Board;
- C. Business Administrator; and
- D. All individuals who staff, lead or otherwise assist in the nursery, children and youth programs.

Any person refusing to have a background check performed or has an unclear or questionable history will not be permitted to serve in any of the positions identified.

## 3. PROHIBITED HISTORY

NorthStar Ministries will not permit an individual to be involved with our vulnerable population if the background check determines any of the following:

- A. The member is currently engaging in illegal use of a drug including any legal use of marijuana. *(For purposes of this section a member is "currently engaged in" the criminal activity if the person has engaged in the behavior recently enough to justify a belief that the behavior is current); or*
- B. There is reasonable cause to believe that a member's past illegal use or pattern of illegal use of a drug may threaten the health or safety of others; or
- C. Fugitive felons, parole violators and persons fleeing to avoid prosecution, or custody or confinement after conviction, for a crime, or attempt to commit a crime, that is a felony under the laws of the place from which the individual flees; or

- D. Any member is subject to a registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program; or
- E. Any member of the household's abuse or pattern of abuse of alcohol; or
- F. Has been convicted of fraud, theft, or other similar offense; or
- G. Has a current behavioral or mental health condition which would not be conducive to the population that the member would be working with.

#### **4. METHOD OF PERFORMING A BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION**

NorthStar Ministries has chosen to partner with the Planning Center and Checkr to perform background checks on the selected members of our congregation who will be working in sensitive roles. Checkr offers a number of search types and are available based upon the diverse resourcing needs of our church. The Basic+ report package offered by Checkr, which will serve as the minimum search criteria, includes the most common searches:

- Social Security Number trace
- Sex offender registry search
- Global watchlist search
- National search

Any potential person who will be driving a NorthStar Ministries owned vehicle will be subject to a review of their Motor Vehicle Records as part of the above check.

The use of Checkr is not considered to be an all-inclusive tool and NorthStar Ministries reserves the right to use other factual sources to make an informed decision in our responsibility to protect those vulnerable populations.

The background checks will be performed by the Business Administrator who will inform the Administrative Board of with an overall Information gained from any of the above background checks will be held in confidence and shared with Administrative Board individuals only on a need-to-know basis. Background checks will be reordered on individuals remaining in sensitive roles on a five-year basis or sooner if the Administrative Board has reason to suspect or believe that a change has occurred.

#### **5. UNFAVORABLE REPORT**

Checkr does not provide NorthStar Ministries with details about the individuals history, only an overall result. Members who receive an unfavorable finding has options available to them to review the report. If the member desires, he/she may request a meeting with the Administrative Board to discuss the findings.

#### **6. MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES**

In the event that an unfavorable or "not clear" report is received, the individual may claim mitigating circumstances which must be verifiable. NorthStar Ministries shall consider the following:

- A. the time, nature, and extent of the individual's conduct and all factors that might indicate a reasonable probability of favorable future conduct;

- B. Mitigating circumstances when verified, indicate that the reason for the unsuitable history and behavior is no longer in effect or is under control; and
- C. If the individual asserts that mitigating circumstances relate to a change in disability, medical condition or treatment, NorthStar Ministries shall refer such information to persons qualified to evaluate the evidence and verify the mitigating circumstance. NorthStar Ministries shall also have the right to request further information to verify the mitigating circumstance, even if such information is of a medically confidential nature. Such inquiries will be limited to the information necessary to verify the mitigating circumstances.
- D. Examples of mitigating circumstances might include:
  - 1. Evidence of successful rehabilitation (including relapses) from an accredited counseling or rehabilitation center;
  - 2. Evidence of the individual's participation in social service or other appropriate counseling service;
  - 3. Evidence of successful and sustained modification of previous disqualifying behavior;
  - 4. Consideration of mitigating circumstances does not guarantee that the individual will qualify for approval to work with the vulnerable populations.
  - 5. Northstar Ministries will consider such circumstances in light of:
    - (a) the individual's ability to verify the mitigating circumstances and prospects for improved future behavior;
    - (b) the nature and seriousness of any criminal activity, especially drug related criminal activity that appears in the individual's record.

## **7. ADDITIONAL REVIEW**

Any individual offered a position that has the responsibility for initiating or affecting financial transactions will be required to provide a credit score report. These responsibilities could include among other things, collecting or handling cash or checks, writing checks or approving them, access to a direct money stream, or being a fiduciary to NorthStar Ministries.