

Background checks for local, regional and national youth ministry: Creating a safe environment for our children and teens.

The Southeast Region of Unity Churches requires that all adults attending a regional or sub-regional event, where youth are present, have undergone a national background screening with the results on file at their home church. The Southeast Region of Unity Churches strongly suggests and encourages individual Unity ministries to conduct background screen on all adults- either staff or volunteers-working with children and teens. The Southeast Region also strongly suggests that federal fingerprint checks be done on all adults -either paid staff or volunteers-working with minors.

Youth and family ministry provides high risk opportunities for adults to be alone with a child or teen during church hours and off-site activities. Background screening provides the church with information that may safeguard our children, our adult volunteers and the church. Screening will not eliminate risk altogether but does show that the church has acted in good faith to place appropriate adults in responsible positions.

A background screening would include:

- an application on file
- documentation that personal references given on the application have been checked
- a face-to-face interview with the applicant
- a criminal background screen.

We suggest the churches use a professional background screening company or the local police department. Background screenings should include a national criminal search. Driving background should be mandatory for those individuals who will be transporting minors.

All reports are to be considered confidential and stored in a locked area with limited access. Only the minister/and or another staff member (perhaps youth ministry director) should have access.

Due to the structure of the Association of Unity Churches International, each church is responsible for creating and implementing risk management procedures such as the above. This not only safeguards your children but also those of other Unity ministries with which you interact.

If you have questions about who should be screened, contact the Children's or Teen Coordinator at the Association of Unity Churches International. If you need suggestions about professional screening companies, please contact Cathy Christy at the Association office, 816-524-7414.

The policies of the Southeast Unity Region for creating a safe environment for our children and teens are in alignment with the Association of Unity Churches International. For more information on risk management, please refer to the Youth and Family Ministry Guide (available through the Association), Chapter 16, or go to the Association website <http://www.unity.org/education/adult-srv-yth.html>.