

Is your Camp in Compliance with New Jersey's Criminal Background and Sex Offender Registry Staff Screening Requirements for 2010?

As your hiring process gets in full swing for the 2010 camp season, it is important to keep in mind your camp's new responsibilities as it relates to New Jersey's new staff screening requirements for youth camps.

New Jersey now requires a four part staff screening process: (1) Review of prior employment history for new staff; (2) Three character reference checks for each new staff; (3) Criminal history check for each new adult staff member; and (4) Annual sex offender registry check for all staff.

Prior Employment/Character References. While these requirements are not new, the state has added an additional character reference requirement taking it from two to three under the new regulations.

Criminal History Checks. Effective for the 2010 season, you will need to obtain a criminal history check on all adult staff at your camp by June 15, 2010. The Department is recommending youth camps use the New Jersey State Police website to obtain Criminal History Record Information ("CHRI") as part of this staff screening requirement or use an alternative vendor with comparable screening information.

Recognizing the rush and expense to comply with the regulation in its initial year, the Department has agreed to accept criminal history checks previously obtained by the camp for adult staff members on or after June 15, 2009. For those criminal history checks obtained prior to June 15, 2009, the Department will accept a notarized statement from that staff member indicating that nothing has changed since the last criminal history check by the youth camp.

Remember, once you get passed the 2010 camp season, this requirement is only for "new" adult staff at youth camps. For purposes of this staff screening requirement, the state considers a staff to be "new" if they have a break in employment with your camp that is greater than 12 months. For all other returning or year round adult staff the Department will accept a notarized statement indicating that nothing has changed since the last criminal history check by the youth camp. This affidavit is necessary each season for all adult staff that is year round or returning from the previous season.

Sex Offender Registry Checks. For the 2010 camp season, New Jersey is also requiring an annual sex offender registry check for all staff (minors and adults). In order to comply you must use a national sex offender registry or a vendor that can retrieve New Jersey's sex offender registry information from a national sex offender registry check. Please note that New Jersey's regulations differ from ACA Standard HR-4 A since New Jersey requires minors in its sex offender registry check requirement and ACA limits it to adult staff.

For more information, please visit the Advocacy section of the ACA NJ website for a copy of the staff screening regulations or contact me at Claudine@acacampsnj.org to help you prepare for these new requirements for the 2010 season.

