

## 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 applicants 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.

### Will a list of registered applicants be provided to my location at the beginning of each week?

No. Applicants will arrive at fingerprint sites during published hours of operations.

### How am I supposed to schedule my employees if I don't know when applicants will arrive?

During the month of April, and possibly May, scheduling employees to work the Livescan will be a challenge. Nobody knows, not the State, not Cogent Systems or the Schools know the flow that applicant enrollment will take. We do know from similar Statewide networks in Florida and Ohio that the first month will be hectic, but that it will calm down. Once the applicants better understand the use of the service, determining the expected flow of applicants to your site will become science, and can be planned for in advance.

### What hours of operation do you recommend?

There are two schools of thought. One. Open as many hours as possible. Spread the expected number of applicants across as many hours as you can. Two. Provide restricted hours and optimize your resources. I have always suggested Option One. Once you better understand the flow of applicants to your site, adjustments to your hours of operation can be made. For retail locations, opening up fingerprint services one hour after store opening and closing fingerprint services one hour before store closing is common.

### What should I expect the first week? The first month?

No matter how much information is pushed out to applicants, many don't get the message. All information required by an applicant can be found on the Cogent website for Pennsylvania. Most of the

issues that cause frustration during the first week or month are summarized below. All the below issues will go away with either greater Livescan operator experience or greater applicant's understanding of the fingerprint service.

- Information – Applicants who call and request confirmation of procedure and/or of hours of operation.
- Procedure – Applicants who arrive at the fingerprint site having registered, but not paid... or vice-versa
- Social Security/Confirmation Number – Applicants arrive on site and give a SSN or confirmation but the applicant's data can not be found.
  1. If the applicant has both, try both.
  2. If the applicant still can not be found, verify again payment method. Remember; click AUTO-PAY only when applicant is having their transaction billed to a third party. If payment cannot be verified, or if payment has not been made, it will appear as if the applicant is not registered.
  3. Have applicant call Cogent help desk for resolution of payment issues.
- Receipts – Receipts will be made available online as proof that fingerprinting has occurred. These receipts do not take the place of the official PDE clearance.

### **How best can I prepare the schools and universities in my area?**

Assume they know nothing. Contact the district offices of local schools. Contact the College of Education at Universities in your area. Contact the suppliers of services to local schools. Let them know where you are located and that services for fingerprinting are available. Inform them that large groups of applicants must be managed properly and have a plan on how best to proceed.

### **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

### **Can I bill my background check to my employer?**

Provisions have been made that would allow billing of an employer to occur. The employer must download an AGENCY BILLING AGREEMENT (available at <https://www.pa.cogentid.com>) and submit a completed copy to Cogent Systems. Once the employer has been approved for billing, an Agency Billing ID (ABID) will be issued to the employer. An ABID entered during applicant registration will allow the transaction to be billed to the employer.

In most cases an employer will want to keep their ABID private. In that circumstance, employers may be required to register the applicants themselves. Speak with your employer to determine if they intend to

make the billing of your background check possible. Billing accounts must be established prior to sending applicants to a fingerprint site.

### **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.

### **Can I have my employees fingerprinted at my company or facility?**

If you have a requirement to fingerprint a large group of applicants (example... 300 college education majors, a contractor's entire staff of 120 employees, 50 bus drivers, etc.) mobile fingerprint units may be available. Some fingerprint service sites have the ability to bring portable equipment to your site. If you are in need of Group Fingerprinting Support, visit <https://www.pa.cogentid.com>. Services sites in your area that have mobile equipment will be listed. **NOTE:** Mobile service requires the visited site to provide broadband internet access and access through any network firewall. This is the visited sites responsibility to ensure this network functionality exists. Sites that offer mobile services can provide you instructions, in advance of their visit, that would allow fingerprinting to occur at your site. You must however, plan ahead. Requirements and guidelines for hosting a mobile Livescan operation can be found at <https://www.pa.cogentid.com>.

**We encourage you to utilize mobile printing service if it is available but you must plan ahead. Please do not overwhelm the service by sending large groups of applicants to the fixed site locations. If you must send your large group of applicants to a fixed site, please plan for their arrival to occur over days and weeks, not hours.**

### **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?**

The fingerprint based background check is conducted in addition to your other State required checks.

**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)