

Background Checks for Sports Officials

As of July 1, 2001, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) requires that all officials go through a background check to ensure the safety of our children. It is a New York State regulation, part of Education Law 305, not only a Section II requirement. Enforcement has been lax to say the least but schools are now being audited to ensure that they are adhering to these requirements. All officials must go through the background check, which involves fingerprinting. The State Law applies to all schools, any number of games officiated and any level of school officiating.

We recommend that every official go through the procedure to avoid potential conflicts in the future, including game fee collection and the possible loss of assignments. The steps are:

1. Establish an account with the New York State Education Department TEACH web site.
2. Request fingerprinting cards.
3. Go to a facility that will perform the fingerprinting process.
4. Send the cards to OSPRA.

After OSPRA receives the cards, the background check is processed in less than two weeks. Full details to assist you are noted below.

Your first step, should be to logon to the TEACH System web site. The web site address is <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/teach/login.html>

If you have not registered on this site before, select Self-Register to create an account. Follow the directions carefully, and pay attention to input format, etc.

After filling out all of the information there will be a fee request of \$94.25. They will accept VISA or MasterCard. You can also print a payment coupon that will allow you to mail a check. I would recommend using a credit card, as you will receive an immediate confirmation, which will allow you to continue the process immediately. That was the easy part, now let's go get fingerprinted.

Individual fingerprint cards may be available at your local school district, charter school, BOCES, colleges with teacher preparation programs or by sending a request to the Office of School Personnel Review and Accountability (OSPRA) at the address below. I checked with my local school and they had no idea what I was talking about so our recommendation is that you request the cards directly from OSPRA. Mail your request to:

Office of School Personnel Review and Accountability (OSPRA)
New York State Education Department
987 Education Building Annex
Albany, NY 12234

Alternatively, e-mail your request to ospa@mail.nysed.gov

Once you have your cards (2 sets), make an appointment with one of the following agencies at a location convenient to you:

- New York State Police (including local Barracks) (Troop G, Troop K, Troop F)
- Your County Sheriff's Department
- Any City Police Agency

The New York State Police do not charge for this service. Local Sheriff and City Police agencies may charge from \$10 to \$45 for the service.

Your location of choice may also use a scanning system that does not require the cards. Your fingerprints are transmitted via web, so be sure to carry all of your paperwork with you. They will need to reference your Teach System registration.

If your local agency can only do card fingerprinting, then after filling out the cards, you must mail them (along with payment confirmation) to:

Fingerprint Processing
NYS Education Department
PO Box 7352, Albany, NY 12224

Upon receipt of your fingerprint cards and fee confirmation, OSPRA will process your fingerprints with the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). DCJS and the FBI provide OSPRA with a copy of your criminal history background, if any, so that OSPRA can make a determination on your clearance for employment or application for certification. After receipt of the criminal history, the Department then analyzes any information received in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Law and the Corrections Law.

OSPRA will notify the Education Department's Office of Teaching Initiatives if your fingerprints have been cleared.

Once you are in the system it is the school's responsibility to confirm that you are approved within this system.

If you would like to review the entire process, the web site address is
<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/ospra/fpprocess.html>

This information is provided as a service of CDFOA and CDBWBO. Your local officiating organization is not directly involved in this process so if you have any questions with regard to the process please contact Office of School Personnel Review and Accountability (OSPRA) at ospira@mail.nysed.gov.