

# Northeastern University

## **POLICY CATEGORY: HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Effective Date:** 10.1.2013

**Date Revised:** 8.31.2013

**Supersedes:** Background Check  
Policy, Credential Verification  
Policy

### **Related Policies:**

### **Responsible**

**Office/Department:** Human  
Resources Management

**Keywords:** background check,  
credit check, CORI

## **Policy on Background Checks and Credential Verifications**

### **I. Purpose and Scope**

Northeastern University is committed to promoting a safe and healthy learning, teaching, working, and research environment for all students, faculty, and staff, and to furthering the safety and well-being of our enrolled students, employees, volunteers, and visitors. The University also recognizes the importance of protecting its property and funds, and safeguarding and conserving University resources. In all hiring decisions, the University intends to select well-qualified individuals of the highest ethical standards. To assist the University in meeting these commitments, this policy sets forth the credential verification and other background information checks that will be conducted as a condition of employment.

This policy applies to candidates for employment, to current employees seeking promotional or transfer opportunities, and to current employees being assigned new duties, including on an interim basis, that require a criminal background check. It also applies to students who are hired to drive University vehicles, to serve as Resident Assistants, or work in the Russell J. Call Children's Center.

Employees who will supervise, coach, teach, or otherwise interact with minors in connection with a program for minors, as defined by the University's Policy on Programs Involving Minors, will be subject to the provisions of that policy whether or not they also come within this policy.

This policy does not apply to employees of companies that contract with the University to provide services on campus, as those individuals are covered by the University's Background Check Policy for Contractors and Vendors.

## **II. Definitions**

A Candidate is an individual who has applied for employment with Northeastern University, or who is already an employee but is applying for promotion or transfer to certain positions.

A Selected Candidate is the finalist for a position who will be or has been offered the position, contingent upon the verification and reviews required by this policy.

Hiring Unit refers to the office or department that will interview and select the candidate for a position.

Credential and Reference Verification refers to the process of checking and verifying a candidate's references, educational and employment history, and other information under Part III.A of this policy.

Criminal background check refers to obtaining and reviewing the results of a candidate's criminal history.

CORI refers to the Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information, which is a person's criminal history, and may also refer to a CORI-equivalent check in other jurisdictions where an employee or selected candidate has lived in the last seven years.

SORI refers to a person's Sex Offender Registry Information, which in Massachusetts is a record of convictions for specified sexual offenses committed as an adult or juvenile. A SORI, or SORI-equivalent check from other jurisdictions, will be required whenever a criminal background check is required under this policy.

## **III. Policy**

### **A. Credential and Reference Verification**

As a condition of employment, candidates for all faculty and staff positions who are selected for hire are subject to credential and reference verification. All information contained in the application form is subject to verification. The hiring unit is responsible for verifying employment history, educational credentials, and professional references of all selected candidates. For certain positions additional verification or information is required, as indicated in Part 2 below.

For All Faculty and Staff, the University requires:

- i. Verification of post-high school education credentials for those positions that specify an educational requirement.
- ii. Verification of actual employment dates for a minimum of the prior seven years.
- iii. A minimum of two professional work references from a manager or supervisor.

- iv. For positions that require professional certification or licensure, the hiring unit must obtain from the selected candidate a copy of a current license or registration, where applicable, or verify with the accrediting or licensing authority that the selected candidate is duly accredited or licensed, and that such accreditation or licensure is current.
- v. In limited circumstances where the need to fill a position is urgent, the selected candidate may be permitted to start in the position, conditioned upon the hiring unit's completion of the credential and reference verification.

**B. Additional Employment Verification Requirements**

**i. For positions where the employee may be required to drive Northeastern vehicles:**

A selected candidate or employee who will be driving University vehicles must provide the hiring unit with a copy of a current, valid driver's license, must verify annually that their driver's license has not been revoked or suspended, and must report any suspension or revocation immediately.

For selected candidates in Public Safety, driving records will be reviewed and evaluated by the Public Safety Department. All other candidates' driving records will be evaluated by the Human Resources Management department.

**ii. For Officer and College Dean positions:**

Given the breadth and range of responsibilities for these positions, the University requires a full background check to include the following:

- a) Verification of educational credentials
- b) Verification of actual employment dates for a minimum of seven years
- c) Multiple professional references
- d) Nation-wide criminal history
- e) Credit history

**iii. For positions that require credit checks:**

Some positions may warrant additional background checks, including credit checks. Positions where credit checks are required include, but are not limited to, those in which the incumbent can sign University checks, wire-transfer money, negotiate or authorize arrangements or accounts with banks, or sign contracts, and their designees.

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), no credit check will be conducted without consent. The hiring unit must provide the selected candidate or employee with a copy of the "Summary of Rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act," attached as Appendix A, and obtain written consent to obtain information from credit reporting agencies and forward the signed authorization form to Human Resources Management.

#### **iv. Criminal Background Checks**

In addition to the verification of information required above, Northeastern University requires a criminal background check (CORI or CORI equivalent), for selected candidates and employees applying for, holding, applying for promotion to, or transferring into, certain sensitive and confidential positions at the University. Job postings generally will indicate whether a criminal background check is required. The criminal background check will be conducted in all jurisdictions where the candidate has resided for a minimum of the last seven years. Criminal background checks may be conducted for positions of exceptional trust with students, as well as positions providing extensive and unmonitored access to confidential files or sensitive data. Criminal background checks will be conducted for positions for which a criminal background check is or becomes required by law, as well as for Officers and College Deans, positions in Public Safety, Human Resources, University Health and Counseling Services, and positions with key /card access to residence halls. Certain positions in Information Technology Services, including IT Security roles that have access to or responsibility for maintenance of the University's computer networks, will require a criminal background check.

The University reserves the right to require a criminal background check for any position or in any situation where it is deemed appropriate to protect the interests of the University. Hiring units must confer with Human Resources Management about requiring a criminal background check for any positions not coming within the parameters listed above, or not posted as a position requiring a criminal background check.

- a) The criminal background check will be performed by the University, which is registered under the provisions of M.G.L. c. 6, § 172 to receive CORI reports, or its authorized vendor.
- b) Any candidate with a criminal history will be subject to further review. A previous conviction does not automatically disqualify a candidate. In determining whether criminal charges and/or convictions will preclude candidates from being hired, University officials will consider and determine suitability by considering factors that include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - 1. Age at time of conviction(s);
  - 2. Number of convictions;
  - 3. Nature of conviction(s);
  - 4. Severity of conviction(s);
  - 5. Length of time since conviction;
  - 6. Behavior since conviction
  - 7. Any other potential risk factors to be weighed, including the relevance of the offense(s) to the position applied for.
- c) In accordance with state and federal law, no background check will be conducted without consent. The selected candidate or employee must personally authorize Northeastern University and/or its agent(s) to conduct a CORI or CORI equivalent records check. The hiring unit will ask the selected candidate to sign an authorization

form and, where the University contracts with a Consumer Reporting Agency to conduct the criminal background check, provide the selected candidate with the Summary of Rights (Appendix A), and then forward the signed form(s) to Human Resources Management. If the selected candidate or employee declines to sign an authorization, the individual will no longer be considered as a candidate for the position.

- d) For positions requiring a criminal background check, the hiring unit or department must notify Human Resources Management. In general, the criminal background check will be completed before an offer of employment has been made; in certain cases an offer can be made contingent upon a satisfactory background check. The hiring unit will bear the cost of the check.
- e) Pursuant to 803 C.M.R. 2.17, should Northeastern University be considering an adverse decision based on the background check information, the candidate will be notified of the potential adverse employment action, provided a copy of the background check report, and notified of the specific information in the CORI report that is the basis for the potential adverse action. The candidate will be given a copy of this policy and a copy of the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services information regarding the process for correcting criminal record information. The candidate will be provided the opportunity to dispute the accuracy of the information contained in the CORI report.
- f) Information obtained during the criminal background check that requires further review will be shared with the appropriate trained University Official. The hiring unit must consult with Human Resources Management and the final decision will be made by the Human Resources Management Consultant and the Director of Public Safety, in consultation with the area vice president or his/her designee.
- g) Positions in Public Safety requiring a more comprehensive criminal background check are conducted, and hiring approvals are made, by Public Safety officials.

### **C. Candidates for Employment and Employees of the Russell J. Call Children's Center**

Pursuant to regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, candidates applying for positions at the Russell J. Call Children's Center will be subject to Background Record Checks at time of hire. Incumbent employees will be subject to Background Record Checks every two years.

### **D. Students Hired by the University for Certain Positions**

- i. Student drivers. All students who drive University vans carrying five or more passengers must be at least 21 years old and have three years of driving experience. Such students are also required to produce their driving record showing evidence of responsible and safe driving history, complete an on-line training course and exam for student drivers, and take a driving test. They must provide a copy of their driver's license annually, and attest annually in writing that they are not under disciplinary sanctions through OSCCR.
- ii. Resident Assistants and students with key card access. Students who are selected to serve as Resident Assistants, or who have jobs with Business Services, Facilities, or another University Department for which they are given key card access to residential halls, will be required to have a criminal background check as a condition of the position.
- iii. Students Working at the Russell J. Call Children's Center. Students hired on co-op as assistant teachers, and other work study or student assistants at the Children's Center who may have direct and unsupervised time with children are required to have a Background Record Check pursuant to 606 C.M.R. §14.0.

### **IV. Additional Information**

- A. Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 151B, §§ 4(9), and 4(9 1/2) and M.G.L. c. 6, § 172, and based on the current CORI requirements issued by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS), Northeastern will adhere to the following procedures:
  - i. All CORI and/or criminal background check information is confidential. Access to CORI information will be limited to those individuals who have a "need to know" which may include, but not be limited to, hiring managers, staff submitting the CORI requests, and staff involved with processing job applications.
  - ii. Human Resources Management will maintain and keep current a list of individuals authorized to have access to, or view, CORIs. The University will also ensure that authorized individuals will be trained on the applicable laws and regulations.

- iii. The University will maintain confidential files of all criminal history records, in a file separate from the personnel file, in accordance with its retention policy.

- B. The University expects all members of the University community to adhere to and act in accordance with this policy. Managers in hiring units who do not meet their responsibilities under this policy may be subject to discipline up to termination. Falsification or omission of information in an application may result in an offer or appointment being rescinded or in discipline, up to termination, of an employee.

## **V. Contact Information**

HRM Customer Service Center: 250 Columbus Place; 617-373-2230; [HRMInfo@neu.edu](mailto:HRMInfo@neu.edu)