

Community Mediation Maryland
AmeriCorps NSOPR and State Criminal History Background Checks
Policy
2008 - 2009

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to delineate two policies that Community Mediation Maryland (CMM) follows that are required by AmeriCorps State and National Service:

1. The National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) website background check, and
2. The state criminal history background check

CMM's Perspective and Experience

Through community education and outreach CMM makes free mediation accessible to every community in Maryland. CMM values ethnic, age, gender, socioeconomic, and sexual orientation diversity. Included in this spectrum we value the diversity of experiences. Therefore, CMM would not see a criminal history as a contraindication of AmeriCorps service. Rather we value the diversity of experiences that an applicant/member who has a criminal record may have. We know that the most effective and sustainable outreach is indigenous. Because the need for conflict resolution is as great in a community with people who have been in jail or prison as it is in other communities, we regularly recruit people who are preparing for release from prison to serve as AmeriCorps members or as volunteer mediators. It is our goal to engage and communicate equally, effectively, and inclusively with all communities.

Federal Register Definitions

AmeriCorps programs are required to conduct background checks on applicants/members who have direct contact or recurring access to vulnerable populations that are the beneficiaries of the AmeriCorps grant. Direct contact includes phone, email, or face to face interaction. Vulnerable populations are defined by the federal register as; children 17 years or younger, elderly people 60 years or older, and the disabled. Beneficiaries of our AmeriCorps grant are those who receive our mediation services, those to whom outreach is conducted, and those who are recruited to serve as volunteers.

CMM's Policy

1. National Sex Offenders Public Registry

All CMM AmeriCorps staff member names and AmeriCorps member/applicant names are searched in the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry website. AmeriCorps State and National Service requires that if an individual is registered in this system they cannot serve as an AmeriCorps member. Currently an offense that requires registration at this site is the only offense that prohibits an applicant or member from serving in AmeriCorps.

2. State Criminal Background Checks

All CMM AmeriCorps staff members and AmeriCorps Member/Applicants will receive a state criminal history background check.

Permission must be given in writing by the AmeriCorps Applicant/Member to CMM before the state criminal history background check is performed. Our permission form is included as part of this policy document.

Transparent Process

If a registration in the DOJ NSOPR is found, CMM will provide reasonable opportunity for the applicant to review and challenge the factual accuracy of a result. The only people who will review the results will be the CMM AmeriCorps Applicant/Member, the CMM AmeriCorps Program Coordinator, and the CMM Executive Director.

A criminal record which does not require registration in the NSOPR does not preclude an individual from serving as an AmeriCorps member. CMM is required by AmeriCorps State and National to conduct the background check(s). The only people who will review the results will be the CMM AmeriCorps Applicant/Member, the CMM AmeriCorps Program Coordinator, and the CMM Executive Director.

Permission

I _____, authorize Community Mediation Maryland to conduct and document a state criminal registry check on me for the state of Maryland and the state where I reside. I authorize CMM to share the results of these checks with the CMM Executive Director and the CMM AmeriCorps Program Coordinator.

I understand that while my state criminal history check is pending I am not allowed to have direct contact or recurring access to vulnerable populations(children under 17 years old, persons aged 60 years or older, or individuals with disabilities).

Authorization

The Applicant, Program Coordinator and Executive Director hereby acknowledge by their signatures that they have read, understand, and agree to all terms and conditions of this policy.

Community Mediation Corps Applicant/Member Date

Community Mediation Maryland, AmeriCorps Coordinator Date

Community Mediation Maryland, Executive Director Date