



Background Check & Screening Policy

Quick Summary - What You're Agreeing To

- Employees, volunteers, and certain contractors may be screened before starting.
- Screening may include an application, interview, references, and a consent-based background check.
- Enhanced checks may be required for roles with financial, sensitive, or vulnerable-person access.
- Some offenses (abuse, sexual, financial crimes) automatically restrict specific roles.
- All past convictions are reviewed case-by-case with appropriate guardrails.
- All background information is kept confidential and handled in compliance with the law.
- You'll have the chance to see and respond to any findings before decisions are final.
- Ongoing reaffirmation, training, and supervision support community safety.

This summary is for convenience only. Please read the full policy below.

1. Introduction

The Empower Network, Inc. ("The Empower Network," "TEN," "we," "our," or "us") is a peer-led, community-based nonprofit initiative (501(c)(3) status pending) dedicated to empowering individuals with chronic illness and disability through education, connection, and support.

This Background Check & Screening Policy establishes the standards, definitions, and procedures by which The Empower Network screens employees, volunteers, contractors, and others engaged in organizational work in order to safeguard our community, fulfill our duty of care, and comply with applicable laws. This policy reflects our belief in **second chances with appropriate guardrails**, balancing the inclusion of individuals with lived experience and the protection of our members, staff, and organizational reputation.

2. Definitions

For purposes of this policy:

- **Member:** An individual who has paid membership dues or has been awarded a scholarship for membership. Membership is a status within the organization and does not imply employment or volunteer service.
- **Employee:** A person who is compensated by the nonprofit (wages, salary, stipend) for work performed under the direction of the organization. Employees are subject to labor and employment laws.
- **Volunteer:** An individual who provides services **without compensation** (beyond minimal expense reimbursement). Volunteers are generally excluded from “employee” status under Kansas wage law (K.S.A. 44-1202), but may be considered “employed” for certain purposes, such as proposed Medicaid Community Engagement Requirements or offender registration requirements (K.S.A. 22-4902(i)). Volunteers are not employees for wage/hour purposes and do not receive benefits, but are expected to comply with organizational policies and standards.
- **Contractor:** A person or entity engaged to provide specific services on a temporary or project basis. Contractors may be subject to screening requirements depending on access to vulnerable people or sensitive information.

3. Who is Screened

Employees: All prospective employees are subject to background checks prior to hiring.

Volunteers: Background checks are required for all “high-risk volunteer” positions, defined as roles with:

- Direct access to people with disabilities;
- Access to organizational funds, banking, or sensitive data;
- Public-facing roles that may impact the reputation or public perception of the organization.
- Volunteers in other roles may also be screened, depending on risk factors.

Members: Membership status alone does not require a background check. However, members who also serve as volunteers or employees are screened under those categories.

Paid Contractors / Consultants: Contractors / Consultants whose work involves financial access, sensitive information, or interaction with members may be subject to screening.

International Volunteers: Must provide an official police clearance certificate from their country of residence (e.g., RCMP certificate in Canada, DBS in the UK, Führungszeugnis in Germany). If unavailable, the organization may accept reference checks, proof of residence history, or

self-disclosure statements. In rare cases where documentation cannot be obtained, alternative forms of vetting may be accepted at the discretion of leadership.

4. Screening Practices

Basic Screening: At minimum, screening includes an application, an interview, reference checks, and a criminal background check with the individual's consent.

Enhanced Screening (for higher-risk positions): For roles involving financial responsibility, access to vulnerable participants, or sensitive information, additional screening measures may be required. These may include identity verification, expanded background checks, driving record checks, or other appropriate measures.

All screenings are proportionate to the level of risk of the position.

Screenings are conducted by designated leadership (Executive Director, HR lead, or designated Board member).

5. Commitments

When The Empower Network conducts a background check, we commit to:

- ☐ **Get your written consent** before any background check is performed.
- ☐ **Provide you with notice of your rights:** [Fair Credit Reporting Act \(FCRA\): Read Here](#)
- ☐ **Share a copy of the report** if any adverse information may affect your role.
- ☐ **Give you the opportunity to respond or explain** before any final decision is made.
- ☐ **Ensure confidentiality** by keeping all background check information secure and only shared with those who need to know.

6. Disqualification & Guardrails

Automatic restrictions (examples):

- Individuals with convictions for crimes against children, abuse of vulnerable populations, or sexual offenses will not be placed in roles involving direct interaction with vulnerable participants.
- Individuals with theft or finance-related convictions will not be granted access to money or sensitive information.
- These individuals may be considered for other roles that carry no such risk, subject to case-by-case review.

Case-by-case review: Other convictions (e.g., non-violent, older than 7-10 years ago, or unrelated to the role) will be evaluated individually, with possible conditions or restrictions.

Second chance philosophy: Whenever possible, The Empower Network seeks to provide opportunities for safe and meaningful participation, with protective guardrails in place.

7. Post-Hire / Post-Onboarding Expectations

All volunteers and employees can expect:

- A formal onboarding meeting reviewing the following:
 - Community Standards
 - Safeguarding Policy
 - Incident Reporting Process
 - Privacy Policy
- Renewal screenings conducted as needed based on the role.
- Annual reaffirmation of policies and disclosures: [Annual Conflict of Interest & Disclosures Form](#)
- Ongoing training and supervision to support safety and retention.

8. Compliance, Confidentiality & Recordkeeping

All screenings will comply with federal and Kansas state law. Volunteers who fall outside of this jurisdiction are responsible for assisting with the screening process.

Consent forms and screening records will be securely maintained.

Background check results and related personal information will be kept strictly confidential and shared only with those making placement decisions.

Documentation of decisions (including case-by-case evaluations) will be retained to ensure fairness and consistency.

If an adverse decision is made based on background check results, the organization will provide required notices in compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA).

9. Review & Updates

This policy will be reviewed and updated as needed to reflect best practices in safeguarding and community care.

10. Connection to Other Policies

This Background Check & Screening Policy is one part of The Empower Network's broader set of community policies, which together guide how we operate and protect our members. Volunteers, staff, and participants are expected to comply with all applicable policies, including (but not limited to):

- **Privacy Policy** – how we collect, use, and protect personal information.
- **Website Terms of Use** – conditions for accessing and using our site and online platforms.
- **Membership Agreement** – expectations and responsibilities for members.
- **Volunteer Agreement** – expectations and responsibilities for volunteers.
- **Community Standards** – day-to-day commitments to confidentiality, respect, inclusion, and conduct.
- **Safeguarding Policy** – standards and procedures to prevent and respond to abuse, exploitation, or harm.

These documents are intended to work together. In the event of overlap or inconsistency, The Empower Network leadership will interpret and apply them in the manner that best protects the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of our community.

Contact Us

For questions, concerns, or to report a problem, please contact us.

The Empower Network, Inc.

Email: support@empower-network.org

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