

Study Finds FBI Criminal Database Search Ineffective for Employment Background Checks

08-26-2005

DURHAM -- As US employers increasingly utilize criminal background checks in their hiring process, the National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NAPBS) has identified one source of information that employers should avoid: the FBI Criminal Database.

In reaction to recent proposed federal legislation that would allow employers direct access to the FBI's database, NAPBS commissioned a study to evaluate the accuracy and completeness of this FBI criminal search.

The results were shocking.

The study found that in a significant percentage of searches, the FBI database returned erroneous or incomplete information.

The study, conducted by Craig N. Winston, an assistant professor of criminal justice at Sonoma State University, found that the FBI data lacks proper identifiers to credibly link a criminal hit with the subject of the investigation.

Another finding was the large number of missed records and false positives generated. For example, when analyzing a sampling of 93,274 background checks in the state of Florida, Winston's search revealed that the database missed 11.7 percent of the criminal records it should have identified. Even worse - of the more than 10,000 criminal records found, 5.5 percent of them were falsely attributed to those who were not convicted of a crime.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) compels employers to use the most up- to-date and accurate information when screening applicants for employment.

NAPBS co-chair Jason B. Morris says, "If employers are granted access to the FBI's data, they can easily be lulled into the false sense of security that they are availing themselves of the most accurate and comprehensive search available. As a result, they could be opening themselves to increased risk in the workplace and litigation from wronged job applicants."

Results from this comprehensive study can be found at <http://www.napbs.com> .

Founded as a non-profit trade association in 2003, the National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NAPBS) was established to promote ethical business practices, promote compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act and foster awareness of issues related to consumer protection and privacy rights within the background screening industry.