



Background Check Policy

Sorooptimist International of the Americas (SIA) is committed to ensuring the safety, well-being, and dignity of youth participants. SIA requires that all adults working with youth in the United States and Canada to obtain a background checks, which will be reviewed in accordance with the club's established [adjudication process](#). Background checks should conform to applicable local, state, and national requirements. This is required by Sorooptimist's insurance company to protect the organization and volunteers from liability that can arise from working with young people.

For countries outside the United States and Canada, rules about working with youth and background check requirements vary by country. Clubs must review applicable national and local laws to determine the appropriate screening or clearances required for volunteers working with girls.

Please refer to [SIA's Standards for Working with Youth](#) to ensure full youth compliance.

Requirements for Background Checks/Clearances

- Prior to beginning any projects involving youth, all members and volunteers must have the appropriate background checks completed according to your local, state, and national requirements. The types of necessary background checks are determined based on the activities involving the youth and the requirements applicable to your club based on its location. We strongly suggest that your club create a policy about the necessary background checks needed for your members and volunteers to work with youth based on your club's specific requirements.
- Clubs should establish their own club background check policy that is aligned with local laws, regulations, and standards. This policy should include an [adjudication process](#) for reviewing flagged background checks and an adjudication matrix to guide eligibility decisions. SIA recommends referring to applicable local school district or youth-serving organization guidelines when establishing their club policy and club-level adjudication practices. *SIA partners should refer to their organization's background check policy and adhere to local standards.*
- Program and club leaders must ensure that all adults participating in youth programs maintain current and valid background clearances.
- Volunteers who do not have cleared background checks will be reviewed according to the club's [adjudication process](#) to determine participation in projects involving youth. See "[Guidance for Not Cleared Criminal History Checks](#)" below.

- Approved background checks are valid for no more than three (3) years or for a shorter period if required by the club's background check policy or applicable law.
- SIA recommends [Global Investigative Services \(GIS\)](#) for background checks for clubs in the United States. SIA has negotiated a discounted rate for certain types of background checks through GIS. Clubs may also benefit from establishing their own direct partnership with GIS, including guidance from GIS when developing club-level background check policies.
- Check out the [Background Checks Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more details and guidance.

Guidance for “Not Cleared” or flagged Criminal History Checks

If a potential record is identified, an additional search will be required to determine whether the record is reportable. This ensures a complete and accurate review of the individual's record.

Following additional research, the criminal history background check has the potential to be **flagged** or considered “**not cleared**” if it contains a felony or misdemeanor.

If additional research results in a flagged report, SIA clubs should apply a fair, consistent, and youth-centered [adjudication process](#) when reviewing enhanced background check results.

Club Adjudication Process

An adjudication process is the consistent method used to review background check results to determine eligibility by offenses and defining appropriate outcomes. For more details, visit the [Background Checks Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Each club's background check policy should include a clear adjudication process for handling “not cleared” or flagged criminal history checks.

Decisions should consider:

- The nature and category of the offense
- The time elapsed since the offense occurred
- Whether the offense is relevant to youth safety or program integrity
- The level of youth contact and responsibilities associated with the volunteer role

SIA recommends that clubs refer to applicable local school district or youth-serving organization guidelines when establishing their club-level adjudication practices, to ensure alignment with local laws, regulations, and standards. Clubs must also ensure compliance with the specific legal and organizational requirements of their country and state.

In addition, references and work history should raise no safeguarding concerns, and there must be no proven history of abuse or serious misconduct.

Automatically Disqualifying Offenses

Individuals **may not serve in youth-facing roles** if their background check shows:

- Sexual offenses
- Crimes against children
- Violent crimes against persons
- Domestic violence and family-related violence
- Weapons-related offenses
- Human trafficking or kidnapping

These categories represent **minimum disqualifying offenses**. Clubs are responsible for establishing their **own policy adjudication practices, and adjudication matrix**, which may include additional disqualifying offenses. These recommendations are provided as guidance only.

This policy establishes minimum standards for background checks and adjudication for youth-facing activities. These guidelines are intended to support clubs in creating clear, fair, and legally compliant background check practices that prioritize youth safety. Clubs are responsible for implementing and enforcing their club-level background check policies in compliance with applicable laws and SIA requirements.

Clubs should review their policies regularly to ensure ongoing compliance with local requirements and alignment with SIA standards for working with youth.

For questions or concerns, please contact program@soroptimist.org.