

Background checks (which may include fingerprinting) are often required for service-learning students who come into contact with protected classes of people, such as children, persons with disabilities, and persons living in assisted living facilities. The decision of a learning site to require a background check is solely up to the learning site's interpretation of the laws or regulations that govern it. Learning sites are solely responsible for requesting background checks for service-learning students placed at their sites. The university plays no role in this decision and only needs to know which learning sites require background checks.

Federal and state laws and regulations governing background checks are very strict regarding the privacy of the person being reviewed. Most allow only the entity requesting the background check to have access to the results. Consequently, because the university is not the requesting agency, no faculty or staff member will ever be given the specific results of a student's background check. Learning sites are under strict guidelines to keep all background check information private, and can have their licenses revoked if they violate this right of privacy. This means that if a student takes two separate service-learning courses, each requiring a background check, the student needs to submit to two background checks so that the results can be sent to two separate locations. This is true even if the service-learning courses are in the same semester.

Although it is the sole responsibility of the learning site to determine whether a background check is necessary, that does not mean that the learning site is always responsible for paying for the process. If the learning site cannot cover the cost of the background check, then it is the student's responsibility. If the student has to pay for the background check, that information should be made clear to the student at the beginning of the course and written into the syllabus.