

# Not all national background screenings are created equal

By Tanya Crites

In the last few years the standard of care for the background screening of applicants, employees and volunteers has evolved. WCIA's recommendation to its membership has been to use a qualified private vendor to perform national background screening when hiring or using employees or volunteers in positions that may involve unsupervised access to children under the age of 16, developmentally disabled persons or vulnerable adults. It seems the number of companies willing to perform a "national background screening" is increasing all the time. The caution to our membership is, "national background screening" does not mean the same thing to every one of these vendors.

When requesting a national background screening on an applicant, employee or volunteer who may have unsupervised access to the vulnerable populations listed above, it is important that what you are requesting, paying for and receiving is what you are entitled to under the Child and Adult Abuse Information Act (CAAIA).

Members should ensure the background screening vendor is providing, at a minimum, a search for other names/aliases and addresses of the person, state and all counties-of-residence criminal record searches, national criminal searches involving multi-jurisdictional criminal databases covering all 50 states and territories, (including but not limited to FBI Most Wanted and INTERPOL) and sex offender registry searches covering all states. These searches may include courthouse records checks as well as multiple database searches.

When shopping for a vendor to perform these services, it is recommended that cost, while a valid factor, is not the only consideration. Also consider the services that are included in that cost.

WCIA has many resources that address CAAIA background screening. The Liability Resource Manual guideline, *PAR.20 Background Screening for Park and Recreation and Other Programs Where Staff May Have Contact with Children, Developmentally Disabled Persons and Vulnerable Adults* details the process and steps that should be followed when performing these background screenings. The Liability Resource Manual is available through the Member Resources page on the WCIA website: <http://www.wciapool.org/member-resources>.

While WCIA has not vetted any background screening vendors and cannot address the quality of any of their services, a Risk Representative can provide a list of a few of the private background screening organizations that some of the members use.