

10 Reasons Why Church Leaders Should Take Screening Seriously by James F. Cobble, Jr. and Richard R. Hammar

Key Point. Proper screening costs very little but increases safety a great deal. It helps to:

- safeguard the church and its members;
- provide vital information to church leaders;
- identify important qualities and characteristics of applicants; and
- reduce the risk of negligent selection if a problem should occur later.

Here are 10 reasons your church or ministry should take screening seriously.

1. One of the greatest risks facing churches today is the problem of child sexual abuse. Thoroughly screening workers helps to ward off potential molesters.
2. If sexual abuse does occur in a church program, churches that have screened the alleged perpetrator will be in a better position to reduce their liability risk by showing they acted with reasonable care in the selection of the worker. A charge of negligent selection can be devastating both to a church and its leaders.
3. Another risk facing churches is the negligent selection of drivers. Conducting a Motor Vehicle Check is important, both for the safety of the passengers, as well as to reduce potential liability risk to the church.
4. Conducting a Credit File Check helps to protect the financial assets of the church. It makes sense to screen individuals who have responsibilities for the oversight and management of the church's finances.
5. Screening can identify individuals with criminal backgrounds. One recent study indicated that 5% of church applicants had a criminal background. Today, church leaders need to be informed of such information, and take it into account in the selection and assignment of employees.
6. Screening helps validate information provided in an employment application. A significant number of people provide inaccurate information on employment applications. Knowing that an applicant is honest and trustworthy is important.
7. Screening can identify omissions of information on an application. That provides church leaders with the opportunity to probe more deeply to determine if the omissions are simple oversights, or an attempt to hide information that may be relevant and important to the selection process.
8. Screening can validate an application's professional qualifications, and is in good standing with a professional association or denominational agency.
9. Screening can collect information on an applicant's previous work history, job performance, and reason for changing jobs. Such information can play an important role in assessing the applicant's qualifications and suitability for a church position.
10. Screening can provide information on an applicant's character, reliability, knowledge, skills, and overall suitability for a specific position. In the long run, it reduces the enormous costs associated with hiring the wrong person due to poor or missing information.