

## **Why do I need to do a background check?**

Volunteers are background checked for many of the same reasons employers conduct pre-hire screenings. The ultimate goal is to verify identity and weed out potential problems, especially problems that could arise from an undisclosed criminal history when working with sensitive populations such as children, the disabled, or the elderly.

## **Do organizations have a choice in background checking volunteers?**

Sometimes yes and sometimes no. In the aftermath of terrorist attacks and numerous highly reported crimes against children, state and federal lawmakers have adopted new laws that either require or facilitate employee and volunteer background screening. In some cases, new laws have been passed to strengthen existing, but poorly crafted, laws. In Georgia, The Department of Early Care and Learning requires that volunteers working closely with children be background checked prior to beginning their service.

## **Should I worry about my personal information?**

In these days of identity theft, it is understandable that you may be hesitant to share your personal information with outside entities. To begin with, background screening involves gathering information about an individual, such as name, address, telephone number, present and past addresses, and Social Security number. At LaAmistad, we want our volunteers to know that we understand your concerns, and that the safety of your personal information is extremely important to us. It is equally important to us, however, that the students in our programs remain safe from individuals who may want to do them harm, and that we remain in compliance with state and federal law.

When you submit your information via our online portal it is NEVER seen by any members of our staff or by any other participating individuals. Your data goes straight to a heavily encrypted screening service with a long and solid history of keeping volunteers personal data under wraps. To date we have had zero data breaches while using this service. We trust them with our own personally identifiable information, and we know that you can as well. We share a common goal: to assist students and families by volunteering our time, and legally these are the measures we are required to take in order to facilitate that.

You have a legitimate right to know that your personal data will be kept safe throughout the background check process. LaAmistad understands this, and has effectively balanced the safety of our students and the safety of volunteer information for over 17 years.

## **Legal References**

**National Child Protection Act of 1993 (NCPA)**, 42 USC § 5119(a)

**Volunteers for Children Act of 1998 (VCA)**, (Public Law 105-251)

*"Safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear."* -Nelson Mandela