

Screening Made Easy

Background Checks for ISKCON Centers and Projects

Who to Screen?

All ISKCON leaders (GBCs, gurus, temple presidents, project directors and managers etc.) are obliged to follow the guidelines for screening **those who live on ISKCON property and serve with our temples, schools, farms, and other projects.**

ISKCON law February 1998

The Central Office will develop systems and policies for hiring/ screening throughout ISKCON (**who stays in our ashrams, works for us, teaches in our schools, and becomes an initiated disciple**). Such screening will be mandatory for all ISKCON centers, educational projects, etc...

ISKCON CPO Guidelines page 30

Management Responsibility:

Employ appropriate screening and evaluative techniques to assure the fitness of all residents, clergy, personnel and volunteers serving in positions of trust, including CPO clearance, with a strong recommendation that criminal background check and contacting references are carried out.

ISKCON CPO Guidelines page 10

How to Screen?

There are three essential components:

1. Obtaining a written application
2. Conducting background checks:
 - a) CPO clearance;
 - b) Criminal record check;
 - c) Contact references (work, personal, internet search, social media check)
3. Interview with the applicant

This is the CPO recommended process for screening residents, employees, management and volunteers who serve in trusted positions at ISKCON centers or projects.

1. Written Application

The written application is where you gather immediate and long-term useful information. A sample application designed for a variety of needs is available from the CPO of North America.

Make sure all information is complete on the application before moving to the next step.

* If someone is unwilling to go through the background check process it may be a sign of concern.

2. Conducting a Background Check

It is important to do a comprehensive background check on all residents, employees and volunteers. This is done with information gathered from the written application.

a) Child Protection Office Clearance

To obtain CPO clearance go to this link and submit these 5 pieces of information:

<https://forms.gle/huy7o8RmotL8V4aV7>

- 1) Initiated Name/ AKA
- 2) Legal Name
- 3) Age/Date of Birth
- 4) Initiating Guru's Name
- 5) Country of Origin (where they are from)

ISKCON CPO records will be checked to see if there has been a child maltreatment complaint or case regarding the applicant. You will receive an email reply.

b) Criminal Background Check

Your temple/project can set up a branch account with Trusted Employees through the NACPO. The base package includes searches of: national criminal records, county court documents for the address(es) you provide, the national sex offender registry and Social Security number verification. You can add other items if you want such as DMV if the applicant will be driving temple vehicles.

Information required to conduct the criminal background check:

- 1) Legal Name
- 2) Birth Date
- 3) Address history (7 years minimum)
- 4) Social Security Number (Only used once for this check then deleted from record unless they are an employee and you need to retain it. If the applicant wants to put in their own SS# there is a link to do so.)
- 5) Signed consent to run the background check

All of this information is on page 1 and 4 of the sample application provided by the CPO.

- Background checks run through a branch account with the CPO (using one county) cost approximately \$20 per person within the U.S. Additional counties may add to the cost depending on the county. The more extensive the search the more complete your results so adding counties is recommended, especially if you have concern. Please note some counties, e.g. in N.Y. and Hawaii charge significantly more to run criminal background checks.
- International background check costs vary per country. Trusted Employees is set up to do both domestic and international checks.
- The applicant generally pays the cost, unless the temple chooses to absorb this cost.
- This investment of time and money into reducing liability is minuscule compared to the financial and spiritual costs to your temple and ISKCON if someone abuses a child, steals from the temple, or creates any number of other disturbances that could have been prevented by implementing these simple steps to make an informed decision about who you are engaging in service.
- You may choose to use a company other than Trusted Employees to run criminal background checks for your center if you prefer however make sure all items listed above are included in the package you get. Setting up a branch account for your temple through the CPO is an option that provides you direct access to your criminal background checks at lower than market cost.

c) Contacting References

References should be non-relatives that the applicant has served/worked under or with such as a supervisor, temple manager, team leader or department head. Call at least 3 references. It is ideal if you speak with someone you trust who knows the character of the applicant.

Temple management needs to be aware of the history of those serving in trusted positions or living on ISKCON property. Friends and relatives are not appropriate references. The guru of the applicant may not be in a position to give the kind of candid information the temple/project requires.

The internet is also a place to gather information about the applicant, i.e Google search, social media.

3. Interview the Applicant

Talking with the volunteer/employee directly helps you ascertain their nature and ensure the situation is a good fit for both parties - the temple and the applicant. This is an opportunity to go over information given in the written application and discuss any questions, concerns, interests and expectations. Taking the time to talk can result in fewer problems or misunderstandings later, a more harmonious service relationship in the long run as well as more productivity. Rather than simply putting the person in where you need help, there can be a view to placing the applicant in service according to their strengths, abilities and interests while simultaneously avoiding any ill-fitting service position.

Designate someone to do interviewing of applicants

Interviews generally take place in the presence of 2 parties. The designated devotee(s) should speak with anyone wanting to stay at an ISKCON center. If it is for a single night, the person should be able to provide some references. If the devotee or guest is allowed to stay overnight, basic information: name, address, phone number, etc..., should be obtained, as well as making a photocopy of their driver's license or other identification. It is always good policy to check with ISKCON CPO to find out if there has been any complaint or case regarding the individual. *See CPO clearance above.*

ISKCON centers are not hotels or crash pads. You have the right to decline overnight stay to anyone who does give notice ahead of time, who does not check out or who is not a good fit for your center.

A non-discriminatory screening policy is essential. Screening old and young, new or known, male or female, etc... is the most appropriate and effective standard. Selective screening weakens the system, can cause devotees to feel singled out and can diminish the faith devotees have in its effectiveness.

* During the adoption of this process, established members of ISKCON have the opportunity to set an example of raising the bar to a more responsible way of handling employees, volunteers and residents through their own compliance with this policy. Their cooperation and participation is appreciated.

If there is someone with experience in Human Resources at your temple this service may be a good fit for them to help your temple with this process. Screening extends beyond child protection concerns.

*** **Social Security Numbers***** For the security of the applicant, it is strongly advised **NOT** to keep Social Security numbers on file. Block out after use. It is intended for one time use (unless needed for employment purposes by the temple).

All applications should be kept in a locking file cabinet or password protected site for reference of important personnel information and for future reference in the event an issue/complaint/allegation arises.

Questions? Contact the Child Protection Office at 352-575-0780 or Info@SafeTemple.org.