

Student Criminal Background Check Policy
University of Missouri-St. Louis
College of Optometry

A. Introduction

Recognizing the need to ensure the safety and well-being of patients, and to bolster the public's continuing trust in the health professions, and to ascertain the ability of students to maintain or eventually become licensed in the profession of Optometry a Criminal Background Check (CBC) will be performed on admitted applicants to the College of Optometry prior to their enrollment at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. The checks will be repeated prior to the start of clinical rotations.

B. Applicability

Admission to the College of Optometry is conditioned upon satisfactory completion of a CBC. All conditionally admitted applicants must consent to, and satisfactorily complete, a CBC prior to final acceptance and matriculation into the College of Optometry. Eligibility for clinical privileges during their professional education will require additional background checks.

C. Policy Statement

All admitted applicants must consent, submit to, and satisfactorily complete a CBC as a condition of matriculation into the College of Optometry. In addition, a student's continued enrollment is conditioned upon the successful completion of the CBC with results deemed acceptable to the College of Optometry. Expenses associated with the CBC are the responsibility of the applicant, either directly or through arrangements made by the College of Optometry. Applicants for admission who do not consent to the required background check, refuse to provide information necessary to conduct the background check, or provide false or misleading information in regard to the background check will not be admitted into the program.

Continuing students who prior to the start of clinical rotations do not consent to the required background check, refuse to provide information necessary to conduct the background check, or provide false or misleading information in regard to the background check will be subject to disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal from the program. Expenses associated with the CBC are the responsibility of the student, either directly or through arrangements made by the College of Optometry.

D. Implementation and Enforcement

This policy will be implemented, monitored, and enforced by the College of Optometry. The College of Optometry may collaborate with the University of Missouri-St. Louis Office of Student Affairs, UM System Office of General Counsel, UM-St. Louis Office of Equal Opportunity, UM-St. Louis Institutional Safety, and/or with outside agencies for the administration of background checks of students. The college uses the centralized application service entitled "OptomCAS" coordinated by the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO). OptomCAS as part of their operating procedures has established a relationship with Certiphi Screening, Inc. (a Vertical Screen® Company), an entity that coordinates background checks. The College of Optometry has also established a relationship with Certiphi in order to receive the results of background checks, subject to the consent of applicants to and students.

E. Procedures for Background Investigation of Students

1. Applicants who are offered conditional admission to the College of Optometry must provide consent for Certiphi in cooperation with OptomCAS to initiate a background check. The applicant is responsible for any fees associated with the search. A statement such as the following will be included on admission materials:

“I understand that, as a condition of admission, I will be required to authorize OptomCAS the nationwide application service to conduct a Criminal Background Check (CBC) the results of which will be provided to the College of Optometry. Admission to the College of Optometry is conditioned upon my passing the CBC. Further, I understand that prior to the start of my clinical training a background check will be repeated. I may need to consent to additional background checks by clinical facilities and permit the results of the CBC to be provided to UM College of Optometry and/or to clinical facilities. All expenses associated with all CBCs are the responsibility of the applicant/student. If I am offered conditional admission, the offer will not be considered final, and I will not be permitted to enroll until completion of my background check, with results deemed acceptable by the College of Optometry. If the results of the background check are not deemed acceptable by the College of Optometry, or if information received indicates that I have provided false or misleading statements, have omitted required information or in any way am unable to meet the requirements for completion of the program, the conditional admission may be denied or rescinded.”

2. Applicants will be informed in written admissions materials including the bulletin, web pages, and other promotional materials as well as on the application that final acceptance into the College of Optometry is contingent upon successfully passing a CBC.

3. Criminal Background Check Procedure

a. A CBC will be conducted as part of the routine admissions process for the College of Optometry. College application materials will include inquiries about criminal convictions, and a release/consent form that authorizes the College of Optometry (or its designated agents) to conduct a background investigation on applicants offered acceptance into the program. Accepted applicants who refuse to complete these inquiries, do not answer truthfully and completely, or refuse to consent to a CBC will not be allowed to enter the College of Optometry professional program.

b. The specific source documents searched is determined by Certiphi but may include the following .:

- Social Security Number Search

A search of credit report header data to help confirm the applicant's identifying information such as name, aliases, address(es), Social Security Number and to determine areas of prior residence.

County Criminal Records Searches

A direct search of county courthouse records for any felony or misdemeanor criminal history. All records are researched to help ensure positive identification.

Statewide Criminal Records Search

A search conducted through statewide criminal records repositories or court systems for any felony or misdemeanor criminal history.

Federal Criminal Records Search

A direct search of federal courthouse records for any felony or misdemeanor criminal history.

National Criminal Database Search

This search is an instant, multi-jurisdiction private database search covering more than 194 million criminal records collected from across the country. All database “hits” are verified directly through the source of information to ensure that records reported are current and up-to-date.

National Sexual Offender Database Search

A search of a national private database which contains sex offender data collected from across the United States.

US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General List of Excluded Individuals /Entities Search

A search of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General List of Excluded Individuals/Entities (LEIE), a database which provides information to the public, health care providers, patients, and others relating to parties excluded from participation in the Medicare, Medicaid, and all Federal health care programs.

Search for Dishonorable Discharge from the Armed Forces

Military records are verified through either telephone interviews with the subject's former commander or by obtaining the applicant's DD-214 form. Verification generally includes subject's name, Service Number, rank, dates of service, awards and decorations, and place of entrance and separation.

SanctionsBase Screening

A search covering sanctions, disciplinary and administrative actions taken by hundreds of federal and state healthcare regulatory authorities, including FDA, NIH, GSA, OFAC, terrorist watch lists and more.

c. Consideration of criminal background activities.

The CBC will include a record of all convictions. For the purposes of this policy, a conviction is considered to be a guilty plea, a guilty verdict, or a Nolo Contendere (“No Contest”) plea.

The existence of a conviction or guilty plea does not automatically disqualify an applicant from entering the College of Optometry. Relevant considerations may include, but are not limited to: the date, nature, and number of convictions or guilty pleas; the relationship the conviction or guilty plea bears to the duties and responsibilities of the position; and successful efforts toward rehabilitation. Any decision to allow an applicant to enter the College of Optometry with a conviction is solely at the discretion of the College of Optometry.

d. Examination of information obtained through criminal background investigations.

i. A designated individual within the College of Optometry will review the initial CBC report results for all conditionally admitted applicants.

ii. Conditionally admitted applicants who receive an acceptable background check (with no “findings”), and who have continued to meet the College of Optometry’s academic standards as specified in their letter of acceptance will receive a letter of final admission.

iii. If adverse information is obtained in the admitted applicant's CBC report, the designated individual will refer the CBC to the review committee for review and determination of eligibility of that applicant for admission into the program.

e. Review Committee

i. A Review Committee comprised of faculty and appointed by the Dean of the College of Optometry will be responsible for reviewing all relevant materials related to any adverse background check report containing information that could be relevant to the conditionally admitted applicant's suitability for enrollment. At least one member of the committee will be recommended by the college faculty.

ii. Members of the Review Committee will function in consultation with the UM-St. Louis Office of Student Affairs, UM Office of General Counsel, and the UM-St. Louis Office of Equal Opportunity. Members of the college of optometry faculty may be asked by the review committee to provide input into the deliberations however, individual demographic information will be shared only as necessary for deliberation and then only to members of the Review Committee.

iii. Based on institutional policies and procedures, a careful review of the self-reported information in the conditionally admitted applicant's file including criminal convictions and the information found within the CBC report will ensue. Applicants may submit relevant supplementary materials from other sources including court documents. Factors involved in the individual case review may include, but not be limited to:

- the nature, circumstances, and frequency of any reported offense(s)
- the length of time since the offense(s)
- available information that addresses efforts at rehabilitation
- the accuracy of the information provided by the applicant in their application materials
- the relationship between the duties to be performed as part of the educational program and the offense committed

iv. Applicants will be invited to provide clarifying statements and/or materials for items contained within the criminal background report. When appropriate and necessary, a member of the review committee may consult with the applicant for clarifying information. The admitted applicant may be asked to meet with the Review Committee.

v. The Review Committee will be responsible for deciding whether the results of the background investigation disqualify the admitted applicant from entrance into the College of Optometry. They will forward their decision in writing to the applicant, the Admissions Committee and to the Dean of the College of Optometry.

f. Determination of the review committee with regard to applicants shall be final.

g. Maintenance of Records and Confidentiality. Information obtained for the purpose of and during the CBC, will be retained by the College of Optometry separate from other student educational and academic records. Confidentiality will be maintained consistent with FERPA guidelines.

4. Additional Considerations for CBC

- a. Applicants and/or admitted students, as well as currently enrolled students of the College of Optometry, must be aware that:

1. A criminal background check is required for enrollment and participation in patient care courses or externship clinical rotations.
2. The expense for the check must be borne by the applicant/student. Costs are subject to change, and beyond the control of the University or the College of Optometry.
3. Once enrolled, students are required to submit to, and satisfactorily complete, a CBC as a condition of continued participation in clinical/patient care experiences (typically prior to obtaining clinical privileges). Failure to submit to such a check and satisfactorily pass the same may limit the ability of the student to complete the Optometry program.
4. If a student fails to pass a CBC, they may be ineligible for enrollment in patient care or externship courses, and therefore ineligible to continue in the College of Optometry.
5. The Review Committee. A Review Committee appointed by the Dean of the College of Optometry as described above will be responsible for reviewing all relevant materials related to any adverse background check report containing information that could be relevant to the conditionally admitted applicant's suitability for enrollment.
 - i. Members of the Review Committee will function in consultation with the UM-St. Louis Office of Student Affairs, UM Office of General Counsel, and the UM-St. Louis Office of Equal Opportunity.

6. Appeals Process

Currently enrolled students may appeal a CBC Review Committee decision according to procedures set forth in the Rules of Procedures in Student Conduct Matters [Collected Rules 200.020; Right of Appeal (University expulsion, University dismissal, or University suspension only)].

7. Any student convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, except for minor traffic violations, while a student in the College of Optometry must report that to the Dean in writing within 30 days of the conviction. Convictions include guilty pleas.

Appendix

OptomCAS Information Regarding CBC

http://www.OptomCAS.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=66&Itemid=44

What is the Centralized Criminal Background Check (CBC) Service and how much will it cost?

Many OptomCAS participating programs require a national background check on you upon your initial, conditional acceptance to optometry school. The rationale for performing criminal background checks on accepted optometry school applicants is, in part, to ascertain the ability of a student to meet the requirements of clinical education sites and to become licensed optometrists.

In support of this, the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) has initiated an OptomCAS-facilitated national background check service, through which Certiphi Screening, Inc. (a Vertical Screen® Company) will procure a national background report on you at the point of acceptance. ASCO has initiated this new service in order to recognize the desire of optometry schools to procure appropriate national criminal history reports, and to prevent you from paying additional fees at each optometry school to which they are accepted.

The background check fee will vary (based on the number of addresses you have lived) and will be paid to Certiphi by the applicant. If you are accepted by multiple schools and colleges of optometry that require a background check through Certiphi, you will only undergo a single search and pay a single fee.

If I designate a CBC School do I have to have a criminal background check?

Optometry schools may require criminal background checks and/or drug tests in order to verify that you are able to participate in experiential education rotations, to confirm your eligibility for optometry licensure, and to ensure patient safety. If you designate at least one optometry school that is participating in the OptomCAS-facilitated national background check service, you will be required to submit to a national background report at the point of initial, conditional acceptance. Please note that the requesting school will be notified if consent is not provided, and that failure to provide consent may result in failing to meet the requesting school's admissions requirements. Many optometry schools not participating in our new service during this year may also require you to undergo a separate national background check process. Contact your designated optometry schools directly for specific policies.

Participating Institutions for 2012-2013

Indiana University School of Optometry

Midwestern University Arizona College of Optometry

New England College of Optometry

Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry

The Ohio State University College of Optometry

Pacific University College of Optometry

Southern California College of Optometry

Southern College of Optometry

University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry

University of Missouri at St. Louis College of Optometry

Western University of Health Sciences College of Optometry

If I designate a school NOT participating in the CBC Program do I have to have a criminal background check?

Many optometry schools not participating in our new service during this year may also require you to undergo a separate national background check process. Contact your designated optometry schools directly for specific policies.

What does the background check include?

Below is a description of checks conducted by OptomCAS's service partner, Certiphi Screening, Inc. The results of the background search do not include juvenile records.

Social Security Number Search

A search of credit report header data to help confirm the applicant's identifying information such as name, aliases, address(es), Social Security Number and to determine areas of prior residence.

County Criminal Records Searches

A direct search of county courthouse records for any felony or misdemeanor criminal history. All records are researched to help ensure positive identification.

Statewide Criminal Records Search

A search conducted through statewide criminal records repositories or court systems for any felony or misdemeanor criminal history.

Federal Criminal Records Search

A direct search of federal courthouse records for any felony or misdemeanor criminal history.

National Criminal Database Search

This search is an instant, multi-jurisdiction private database search covering more than 194 million criminal records collected from across the country. All database "hits" are verified directly through the source of information to ensure that records reported are current and up-to-date.

National Sexual Offender Database Search

A search of a national private database which contains sex offender data collected from across the United States.

US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General List of Excluded Individuals /Entities Search

A search of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General List of Excluded Individuals/Entities (LEIE), a database which provides information to the public, health care providers, patients, and others relating to parties excluded from participation in the Medicare, Medicaid, and all Federal health care programs.

Search for Dishonorable Discharge from the Armed Forces

Military records are verified through either telephone interviews with the subject's former commander or by obtaining the applicant's DD-214 form. Verification generally includes subject's name, Service Number, rank, dates of service, awards and decorations, and place of entrance and separation.

SanctionsBase Screening

A search covering sanctions, disciplinary and administrative actions taken by hundreds of federal and state healthcare regulatory authorities, including FDA, NIH, GSA, OFAC, terrorist watch lists and more.

What is the background check process?

Upon your initial, conditional acceptance by a participating optometry school, Certiphi Screening, Inc. will send an email to the preferred email address you entered in your OptomCAS application. This email will provide you with access to a secure, online form via which you will provide basic identifying information and consent for this report to be procured. Your consent will serve for all optometry schools participating in the OptomCAS-facilitated CBC process, and you will not be asked to provide consent upon receiving additional, conditional acceptance offers by participating optometry schools.

Once you have provided consent, Certiphi Screening, Inc. will procure a national background check on you (Background Check Details). Once the report is complete, Certiphi Screening, Inc. will send an email to your preferred email address requesting that you review the report prior to its distribution. Upon receiving this email:

You will have ten (10) calendar days from the date this email is sent to review your report prior to this report being made available to the participating optometry schools who request this report. If you do not review this report, the report will be distributed after this period elapses.

You will be provided with an opportunity to contest the accuracy of the contents of the report within the specified ten (10) calendar day period.

Once you have reviewed and released this report, or after the specified ten (10) calendar day period has elapsed, the report procured on you will be made available to the participating optometry school who offered an acceptance and initiated the request for this report.

Additional Notes

The report procured during this process will not be released to any party other than the optometry schools requesting this report.