



The National Criminal Database Search – What Does It Really Get You?

By Marc Feinberg, President of PreciseCheck

The National Criminal Database search is one of the most common components found in background screening packages today. In fact, most companies want to have a Social Security Number (SSN) Trace, County Criminal searches, and a National Criminal Database search as a starting point for their base package.

The SSN Trace will inform a user of the counties his/her applicant has lived in. The user will then use the County Criminal searches to check and see if his/her applicant committed any misdemeanors or felonies in those counties. When the National Criminal Database search is included in the package, the commonly held belief is if the applicant committed a crime outside of the counties in which he/she lived, it will be identified by the National Criminal Database search. This is exactly what the National Criminal Database search is intended to do, but there are a few flaws that you need to be aware of, and they are as follows:

Access to Records

The National Criminal Database search only accesses those court houses which have their records online. There are over 3,100 county court houses in the USA and approximately 2/3 of them have their records online. Therefore, the National Criminal Database search is missing approximately 1/3 of the criminal records throughout the USA. It is still better to have this search than not to have it, because it gives you more coverage. However, it does not cover every court house in the USA.

Incomplete Records

The records that are found from a National Criminal Database search are often incomplete and missing key information that should be provided on a background check report. Some examples of this are the disposition, disposition date, and sentencing information. In addition, some databases only contain felonies, while others may be missing middle names or birth dates, making it extremely difficult to be certain that you have the right person.

Recommended Action

It is very important to check for records of criminal activity outside of the counties where your applicant has lived. However, when you find a hit from the National Criminal Database, it is almost always necessary to order a County Criminal search to verify and obtain all the information necessary to report. Furthermore, it is advisable to have unlimited County Criminal searches in your package so that if you find a hit on the National Criminal Database, there will be no additional charge to search an additional county (other than possible county court fees).

The National Criminal Database search is a valuable tool to have in your background check package. Yet it contains some flaws and its best to be aware of these when deciding upon which components to choose for your background check package.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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