

Protocol for Churchwide Officer Background Checks and Screening

The following is a protocol for implementation of Continuing Resolution 19.31.A09.

19.31.A09. *Background checks and screening shall be required and completed for persons nominated as churchwide officers prior to their election, if possible, or as soon as practical after their election. The specific procedures and timing of background checks and screening shall be determined by the Church Council.*

General Information for Background Checks for Presiding Bishop, Vice President, and Secretary

1. The Church Council Executive Committee is responsible for background checks and screening of nominees for the offices of Presiding Bishop, Vice President and Secretary in churchwide elections. The churchwide Executive for Human Resources, or a designee if the Executive is unable to serve, shall provide all necessary services related to background checks and screening.
2. Any member of the Church Council Executive Committee or the churchwide staff who intend to stand for election, or whose name is on the second ballot for an office, shall not participate in any of this background check and screening process (except as a nominee). Any person who is a close relative of a nominee for election shall not be part of the process.¹
3. The Executive Committee, in cooperation with the Secretary, will announce the background check and screening requirements to this church generally and to all voting members in advance of each Churchwide Assembly. The Rules of Organization and Procedure of the Churchwide Assembly will note continuing resolution 19.31.A09. Copies of this protocol will be made available to nominees and other individuals upon request.
4. The Executive Committee will approve forms prepared by Human Resources to be completed by nominees to comply with the background check and screening requirements. These shall include background check authorization and a screening disclosure form. Screening disclosure forms may be modeled upon the Rostered Leader Profile form disclosures.
5. Background checks for nominees may include a criminal check, financial check, driver's license check, and credentials check, and such other checks, and in such jurisdictions, as deemed necessary by the Executive Committee.
6. Best efforts will be made to complete all background checks prior to the officer's election. However, if that is not possible, the election process will not be delayed.
7. This protocol may be amended from time to time by the Church Council.

¹ This protocol is intended to handle most conflict-of-interest situations. In the event of other conflicts or the appearance of conflicts, the Executive Committee will take steps to address such concerns.

Procedures for Background Checks for Presiding Bishop, Vice President, and Secretary

1. If a pre-Assembly identification process occurs for election to the office of Presiding Bishop, Vice President² or Secretary, the Office of the Secretary will begin contacting individuals who have been identified to complete a biographical information form. Completed forms shall be returned to the Executive for Human Resources, or a designee.
2. During the Churchwide Assembly, the Executive Committee will provide biographical information, background check authorization and disclosure forms to the nominees remaining after the second ballot. A deadline for return of the forms by the nominees will be set and communicated to each nominee.
3. The Executive Committee will assign a Church Council member to each of the nominees remaining after the second ballot. That member will be responsible for distributing and collecting all the forms and information from the assigned nominee and, as appropriate, providing copies of the materials to the Executive Committee, the Office of the Secretary, and the Executive for Human Resources, or the designee, as specified below.
4. The biographical information form, background check authorization, a screening disclosure form and an envelope for returning the disclosure form will be handed out to the nominees by the Church Council member assigned to the nominee. The nominees will complete the forms and return them to the assigned Church Council member before the deadline. The background check authorization form will be given immediately to Human Resources in order to do the background checks. The disclosure form will be retained by the Executive for Human Resources, or designee, and kept confidential. The biographical information form will be given to the Office of the Secretary.
5. Upon receipt of the authorization form, Human Resources will promptly complete the specified background checks and keep all results confidential. A copy of the nominee's background check survey results will be given to the nominee. That delivery should be done by the assigned council member in a sealed, confidential envelope. Written instructions should accompany the background checks stating that any error or mistake in the report should be promptly explained by the nominee in writing to the Executive Committee. The written explanation by the nominee should be given to the assigned council member in a confidential manner for delivery to the Executive Committee.
6. Human Resources will deliver the completed background check survey along with the disclosure forms to the Executive Committee at a committee meeting held in executive session for that purpose. The results of the background check surveys and disclosure forms will be reviewed promptly by the Executive Committee in that meeting. The Executive Committee may seek the assistance of Human Resources to address any report of errors. The committee may confidentially share the information it receives with third parties to seek advice or expertise in their review process.
7. If necessary, the Executive Committee will meet again to review the background check survey disclosure forms, and nominees' explanations, if any. Concerns with the background check results and disclosure form answers should be raised and discussed with the nominee by the Executive Committee.

² In accordance with Continuing Resolution 19.31.B15. as described in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*

8. Notice that background checks and screening have been completed will be announced to the Churchwide Assembly. The Executive Committee will make a decision regarding disclosing any results of the background checks or screening information with the Churchwide Assembly as well. There must be consultation with the nominee before such disclosure occurs.
9. Copies of the background check reports and screening disclosure forms will be handled in a secure manner throughout the process. Human Resources will mark all forms “Confidential” and keep them secure. The information and reports concerning the persons elected to office will be retained in a secure Human Resources file. All other forms and reports will be destroyed.

Procedures for Background Checks for the Treasurer

1. Human Resources will be responsible for conducting a background check and screening disclosure prior to the nomination of an individual for the Office of Treasurer. Human Resources will share results with the Presiding Bishop. The Presiding Bishop may consult with the Secretary and, as appropriate, with the Church Council Executive Committee regarding results and any evaluation. A copy of the background check will be shared with the nominee.
2. Notice that a background check and screening documents have been completed will be shared with the Church Council.
3. Copies of the background check reports and screening disclosure form for the elected Treasurer will be marked “Confidential” and kept in a secure Human Resources file.