



Clearinghouse for Health Care Applicant Screening

State of Florida
Agency for State Technology
&
Agency for Health Care Administration

Category: Government to Business

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Executive Summary

The Florida Care Provider Screening Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) was developed under a federal pilot program to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of criminal background employment screenings for staff working with vulnerable persons. The Clearinghouse is hosted by the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and was developed after legislation that passed in 2012. The Clearinghouse serves as a host to multiple state agencies that work with vulnerable individuals, and streamlines the background screening process by allowing an individual to use one screening across multiple agencies. A “Rap Back” notification feature was also incorporated in the Clearinghouse; if an individual is arrested after passing their background screening, the agencies participating in the Clearinghouse are notified.

The Clearinghouse has proven to serve as a major cost-saving initiative for the state, while also ensuring that vulnerable citizens are tended to by only those who are eligible to care for them. Since its implementation, the Clearinghouse has provided the following benefits:

- Over 1.2 million screenings have been processed through the Clearinghouse.
- Health care providers and licensees have collectively saved over \$10.4 million by sharing screenings through the Clearinghouse.
- After implementing Rap Back:
 - Nearly 35,000 individuals have been arrested AFTER they were screened
 - 30% of those arrested went from Eligible to work with vulnerable individuals to Not Eligible for offenses including:
 - Grand theft
 - Battery and assault
 - Sex offenses
 - Exploitation of the elderly
 - Offenses against a child
 - The provider received immediate notification where in the past they and the agency may not have known about these arrests until the next required screening (5 years later).
- All specified agencies are now fully implemented in the Clearinghouse: AHCA, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA), Department of Children & Families (DCF), Department of Health (DOH), and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at the Department of Education (DOE). The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is expected to be implemented in July 2016.

Concept

The catalyst of the Clearinghouse was legislation that passed in 2012. Florida was looking for a way to streamline the criminal screening process for individuals that work with vulnerable citizens. Under the previous screening process, it was far more likely for a person with a criminal background to slip through the cracks. The Clearinghouse project required coordination among seven state agencies to agree on a database system that would work for all agencies. After that coordination, it took the perseverance and effort of AHCA to design the Clearinghouse to the specifications of the other agencies while at the same time enhancing a current system in use by AHCA. Extra care was also required as the sensitive nature of the data shared needed to meet security requirements in excess of those previously used by AHCA.

The Clearinghouse has resulted in over \$10 million in cost savings since its implementation. For example, under the prior screening process, a nurse who sought to work with vulnerable citizens through several different agencies would have been required to go through the same background screening multiple times. Now, that same nurse can have the criminal history results obtained from that one screening passed on to other participating entities of the Clearinghouse for eligibility determination.

Perhaps the most innovative tool of the Clearinghouse is the ability for agencies to receive “rap back” notifications if an individual is arrested after passing their background screening. To date, nearly 35,000 individuals were arrested following their screening, and 30 percent of them saw their status change from eligible to not-eligible. Previously, providers and agencies may not have known of these offenses for up to five years when the individual would have had their next required screening. With the help of the Clearinghouse, individuals who commit violent crimes, exploit the elderly, or commit offenses against children, immediately have their eligibility to work with vulnerable citizens revoked.

The Clearinghouse utilizes an external web portal for providers to access results, initiate screenings, and update their employee roster. It also uses an internal portal for each specified agency to process screenings and exemptions from disqualifications for their providers and the providers’ employees and applicants.

Significance

The Clearinghouse has proven to be an innovative tool without placing an undue burden on state agencies or their associated providers. This initiative has worked to advance the goals of government efficiency while making it easier for providers to make hiring decisions without waiting for the results of a background screening.

The Clearinghouse also provides a great service to individual citizens who may work with vulnerable individuals for a living. Instead of someone having to pay to have a background screening done multiple times, they are able to make use of the Clearinghouse when applying with different providers or agencies.

This initiative makes everything about the background screening process for those working with vulnerable individuals smoother and more transparent. Providers are able to finalize hiring decisions quicker, licensees are able to start working sooner, and vulnerable citizens and their families can be assured that their caretakers are among the most qualified in the state.

Impact

The Clearinghouse has already led to a significant cost savings for providers, licensees, and managed care health plans. It is expected that these savings will continue to grow annually as more state agencies fully implement the Clearinghouse for their own use, cutting down on duplicate screenings.

While the savings are very beneficial, the most important impact of the Clearinghouse is the improved safety and care of vulnerable citizens. New employees and licensees enjoy a considerable reduction in wait time due to the innovations of the Clearinghouse, and providers are able to immediately revoke eligibility for those who are arrested following their initial screening.

Moving forward, these benefits will only continue to snowball as more providers and state agencies are able to collaborate with each other to allow for efficient screenings. As people continue to move to Florida and more vulnerable citizens require assistance, the Clearinghouse will continue to ensure that providers and state agencies are hiring qualified personnel while limiting government red tape (multiple screenings) and lowering costs.

Reference links:

<http://www.ast.myflorida.com/doc%20library/2015%20Technology%20Florida.pdf#page=18>

(from “Technology Florida” publication, in collaboration with <http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/>)

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0400-0499/0435/Sections/0435.12.html

(Section 435.12, Florida Statute – Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse)