

## Criminal Background Checks

In order to comply with recommended safe church practices, the Commission on Ministry approved the following policy at its meeting on May 26, 2009:

*Pittsburgh Presbytery requires a Criminal Record Check and a Child Abuse History Clearance issued by each state in which the individual has resided during the previous 10 years from every teaching elder (or commissioned ruling elder) beginning a new position in Pittsburgh Presbytery.*

This policy will be carried out through the following practices:

1. A teaching elder or commissioned ruling elder will produce a Criminal Records Check and a Child Abuse History Clearance from his/her current state of residence and from each state where he/she has resided in the ten year period preceding a call or appointment in Pittsburgh Presbytery. The clearances will have been completed within one calendar year prior to the beginning of the call or appointment.
2. The COM can order the required background checks upon receipt of a signed *Permission to Obtain Background Check*. The church that requests the background check will be billed for the cost of the service (usually \$9). If the teaching elder or commissioned ruling elder is being cleared for a position outside of a congregation, the bill will be sent to the teaching elder or commissioned ruling elder. In some situations, such as when the teaching elder or commissioned ruling elder has resided in more than one state or if a more extensive search is required, the cost may be higher. In such cases the entity responsible for payment will be notified of the cost before the search is ordered.
3. If either the Criminal Records Check or the Child Abuse History Clearance cannot be produced or yields questionable information, a waiver can be provided only by the appropriate pastor to presbytery and the COM chair. This waiver and the reasons for the waiver being granted will be placed in the teaching elder or commissioned ruling elder's permanent file.
4. Copies of each of the required background checks will be provided to COM before a call or appointment will be recommended to presbytery. The copies will be held in the teaching elder or commissioned ruling elder's file at the presbytery office.

