

Counseling Program Policy on Criminal Background Checks

One of the highest priorities of any school or agency is the safety of their students and clients. Consequently, we require criminal background checks from every student participating in a field experience.

Each semester we have a few students with one relatively minor charge on their criminal background check. With a reasonable explanation demonstrating growth and why such a problem will not occur again, schools and agencies may be forgiving. However, students with more severe charges or multiple minor charges could face more difficulty. Students should be aware that schools or agencies may refuse to accept them for field experiences due to negative findings through a criminal background check. Also, students may be turned down for licensure or employment. Students who have reports indicating violent or sexual offense convictions may face great difficulty in obtaining placement and may result in dismissal from the program. Students with concerns about their individual situation should make an appointment to see the Counseling Program Director to discuss specific circumstances. Ultimately, students with criminal charges continue in the program at their own risk of not being allowed to take courses (e.g., practicum and internship) necessary for program completion.

Be aware that criminal background check results are sent to the Counseling Program Director, Field Placement Coordinators, and COUN 602 instructors. Results may be requested by school personnel, program and agency administrators, and advisers, as necessary for field placement purposes.

Initial Criminal Background Check:

Prior to approval of their first field experience at WCU, students are required to obtain a comprehensive criminal background check. This is typically performed during the COUN 602: Professional and Ethical Issues in Counseling course.

forwarded to a full Counseling faculty review to decide if placement should even be attempted.

Self-Disclosure:

If you are arrested after the criminal background check, you must contact the Counseling Program Director within 72 hours to discuss the impact on current or future placements. Failure to disclose criminal charges may disqualify you from further Practicum/Internship placement.

Follow-Up/Updating Criminal Background Check:

Prior to starting a field experience in a school or agency, students are required to obtain a follow-up criminal background check, and may be required to update it annually if it takes more than a year to complete field placement.

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