



WHITE PAPER

# HOW LONG DOES A BACKGROUND CHECK TAKE?



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Running an employment background check is an integral part of the hiring process. A quick turnaround time on these checks is vital to a smooth onboarding process for your candidates and your organization.

When placing your order for a background check, there are many things you can do to help speed up the time it takes to receive your completed results. There are also things to consider if a check is taking longer than you expected to return, and there's often much more going into a background check than meets the eye.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act requires due diligence of Consumer Reporting Agencies (CRAs). This means CRAs should have reasonable procedures in place to verify the information provided to an employer is accurate. CRAs also have an obligation to ensure the information is complete, and up-to-date. For example, Cision's due diligence process includes layers of verification on adverse criminal records before the record is returned to the employer, allowing Cision to maintain 99.9993% accuracy.

As you can imagine, achieving this level of accuracy on each and every record takes time. There are a few things you can do to ensure the quickest turnaround time possible on your background checks.

## What Affects Turnaround Time?

### WHEN PLACING AN ORDER

Missing or incomplete information is the primary cause of a delayed background check when placing the order. This includes the employer providing a completed disclosure and authorization form, as well as ensuring all candidate information is thorough and correct, including legal name, aliases, social security number, former addresses, and driver's license number. For education records, verify accurate former names at the time of graduation, as well as the date of graduation.

### WHEN ORDERING:

- Ensure you're providing a legally compliant disclosure & authorization form from the candidate.
- Use the legal name provided on the candidate's license and/or social security card.
- Provide any nicknames, former names, or aliases currently or previously used by the candidate.



## AFTER PLACING AN ORDER

There are a number of factors beyond the control of a CRA that may affect the turnaround time of a record after an order is placed, including:

- **Holidays:** Holidays mean that courts, schools, and other public facilities may be closed. This also tends to create a backlog of records to work through due to the closures when these institutions reopen.
- **School Breaks:** If education verification is required, spring/summer/winter breaks may delay the return of an education verification. This is amplified for smaller districts who lack the support staff or automated processes to work through verifications.
- **Natural Disasters/Weather:** Closures caused by inclement weather and natural disasters, or even a pandemic as we learned in 2020, can be frustrating as they're often unexpected and may also cause backlogs.

## RECORD TYPES

Some components of a background check may return the same day, while others inherently take longer than others. Components that typically take longer include:

- **References:** These are dependent on the response from references requested by the employer. If a candidate's references don't respond in a timely manner, these can delay the return of a record.
- **Military Service:** Verifying military service may take longer than other records, due to the process required to obtain information.
- **Clerk-Assisted Searches:** Searches that are not automated and require a clerk to assist in obtaining the record include many criminal searches, manual employment verifications, and education verifications. Courthouse limitations such as staffing shortages, budget cuts, and archived records – literally physical paper records stored away in boxes in a storage facility – may also delay turnaround time.
- **Education:** Often, high schools and other smaller schools are not as robust and are not able to respond as quickly as a larger university would.
- **Common Names:** Candidates with common names will often take longer to verify, particularly on criminal records, as additional research is required to ensure the CRA is providing information on the correct person using multiple touch points.





## LEGISLATION

Various legislation, such as recent personally-identifiable information (PII) redaction efforts on court records in California and Michigan, may slow down a CRA's ability to verify information about candidates who live or work in these states. This trend is likely to continue in more states in the coming years.

Cisive maintains a court delay list to help employers manage expectations on turnaround time in these states and counties. Cisive also provides an ETA on orders based on current standards in each jurisdiction.

## EMPLOYER WORKFLOW & OPTIMIZATION

Maintaining a consistent background screening workflow will help employers prevent duplication and speed up overall processes. Consider partnering with a provider like Cisive, who can provide suggestions for areas of improvement and optimization. Cisive can also offer full integrations for significant streamlining of the background screening process.

## CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

The better a candidate's experience is with the background screening process, the more responsive they are likely to be with any requests. Longer report turnaround times are frustrating for the candidate too, but keeping a candidate informed may help manage expectations. Maintain communication with your candidates so they are aware exactly where they are in the onboarding process.

Employers may also consider utilizing contingent hires, where permissible, pending a completed background check to improve the candidate experience.

## Best Time to Submit Background Checks

- Order early in the day, and early in the week.
- Consider the business hours in the time zones where you're ordering, particularly for courts and schools.
- There are peak and slow hiring seasons. These vary by industry, but generally:
  - Peak season is late spring to early summer. There are peaks around spring and winter graduation times.

- Slow seasons are at the beginning of the year, end of the year, and around major holidays. However, courts are often less-staffed around holidays so this may slow down some searches.

## Other Tips for Faster Turnaround

- Respond quickly to any Requests for Information (RFIs).
- Include the full legal name, including middle name.
- Be mindful of court queues. Refer to the court delay list.

## Follow Best Practices for Faster Results

There's a lot going on behind the scenes to process your background checks, and several factors affect the time it takes for them to return. Keeping these factors in mind and following these best practices can help keep turnaround times to a minimum and help manage your candidates' expectations.

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## ABOUT CISIVE

At Cative, we are experts in the specific risks and regulations that apply to the financial services and other highly regulated industries including healthcare and transportation. For many years, we have provided tailored solutions to meet the unique requirements of our enterprise clients.

Cative's service model provides a single, integrated system throughout the globe using complete applicant information and country-specific forms. Cative returns information to our clients through a centralized system for analysis, quality control, presentation, and billing.

With over four decades of experience and expertise in working with many of the world's largest financial services institutions, Cative's deep insight into employment screening practices and industry knowhow, is unlike any other background screening provider in the industry.

Your business will not only get a background screening provider, but a lifelong partner – a company that stands by their work; protects their clients and provides the consultation and guidance world class act organizations are looking for.

## CONTACT US



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