



West Chester University Professional Education Unit

Criminal, Child Abuse, and TB Clearance Information
for Teacher Certification Candidates
January 20, 2010

Background

West Chester University teacher education candidates are required by Pennsylvania law to obtain an Act 34 Pennsylvania State Criminal History Record Report, an Act 114 Federal Criminal History Report, and an Act 151 Child Abuse Report before they can participate in field-based courses or student teaching. In addition, candidates are required to have a tuberculosis screening (“TB Test”) prior to entering a field-based course or student teaching. Members of the Professional Education Unit at West Chester University have an obligation to collect, inspect, and maintain criminal history report and TB information on teacher education candidates who participate in field-based experiences in Pennsylvania public and private schools, intermediate units, and area vocational-technical schools.

This document outlines a temporary set of procedures intended to inform candidates, faculty, and staff until such time as permanent procedures are approved by CPE.

Specific Requirements for Obtaining Clearances

The state requirements differ for the four required clearances. This section provides details about the state requirements for each clearance and stipulates West Chester University’s present approach for the completing requirements. In some cases our guidelines differ from state requirements.

- The Act 34 **Pennsylvania State Criminal History Record** is required by PA law. Title 24 P.S. 1-111, as amended by Act 114 of 2006, stipulates that if a candidate is continuously enrolled in a teacher education program, the criminal history report initially submitted (prior to the first field) shall remain valid and in force during the period of enrollment. (Sources: Pennsylvania Act 34 of 1985, Pennsylvania Act 114 of 2006, PASSHE Office of Legal Counsel)

Although there should be no need to renew this clearance annually, the fact is that most school districts require up-to-date clearances (i.e., renewed annually). Therefore, candidates will need to renew this clearance so that it is current (less than one year old) **for the entirety of each semester** in which the candidate will complete a field experience.

- The Act 114 **Federal Criminal History Record** is required by PA law. Title 24 P.S. 1-111, as amended by Act 114 of 2006, stipulates that if a candidate is continuously enrolled in a teacher education program, the criminal history report initially submitted (prior to the first field) shall remain valid and in force during the period of enrollment. (Sources: Pennsylvania Act 114 of 2006, PASSHE Office of Legal Counsel)

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renew this clearance so that it is current (less than one year old) **for the entirety of each semester** in which the candidate will complete a field experience.

- The **Act 151 Child Abuse Background Check** can be no more than one year old when a candidate enters a field placement. There is no provision for continuous enrollment. Act 151 clearances will need to be renewed each academic year in which a candidate will enroll in an early field course or student teaching. (Source: Pennsylvania Act 151 of 1994)

WCU teacher education candidates need to follow this state requirement.

- According to the PA Department of Health, a **TB Test** is required just once, within 3 months of first field placement. No retest is necessary during continuous enrollment in a teacher education program. An exception is for ECE or EGP candidates completing early field placements in day care settings, who need to repeat the test every two years. (Sources: Communiqués from PA Department of Health and WCU Student Health and Wellness Center).

WCU teacher education candidates need to get the initial TB test within a three month window preceding the first day of their initial field placement. Candidates completing field experiences in day care settings should plan to get a TB test every two years. Despite what Department of Health guidelines say, candidates preparing to student teach need to renew their TB test so it is less than one year old on their first day of student teaching.

The Collection, Examination, and Maintenance of Clearances

We have a legal and professional obligation to ensure that the candidates we recommend for early field placements and student teaching are TB-free and have not been convicted of any of the felonies outlined in 24 P.S. 1-111, crimes that would prevent them from being legally hired by a school district for a period of five years. To that end, we need to collect clearances from candidates, examine them to ensure the candidates can legally complete the field experience, and store the clearances in a secure location. **Again, no WCU teacher education candidate can enter a P-12 classroom for an early field or student teaching experience without possessing the background clearances discussed in this document.**

The Teacher Education Center collects all four clearances using LiveText **as a part of the student teaching application**. However, since no central mechanism exists for the collection and examination of clearances for early field courses, **faculty members teaching courses with field components, or an appropriate designee, have an obligation to ensure that clearances are collected and examined prior to field experiences**. Programs and departments should make arrangements to store copies of clearances in a secure manner. Please consider using LiveText for this purpose. However the clearances are stored (program or department level), they need to be made available should someone with proper authorization request to view them. Candidates should always retain their original clearance documents in case they are asked to produce them in the field.

If candidates do not have a paper copy of the Act 114 clearance because they did not order one when they applied, a designated member of the WCU faculty or staff will need to access the clearance in the federal database. Secondary education majors should see the secretary in the Department of Professional and Secondary Education (rather than their home content department outside the College of Education) for this purpose.