4 Questions About Volunteer Background Checks

1. Why am I being asked to complete a background check?

- You have chosen to spend your free time working toward the **greater good for a cause you care about**. Unfortunately, not all volunteers have pure intentions like yours.
- **1 in 10 volunteer background checks** come back with a previously undisclosed criminal history.
- Even though you mean no harm, you – and every other individual that wants to donate their time – must undergo a screening process. It’s the only way to **ensure your safety** and the safety of everyone around you.

2. Do other nonprofit organizations require background checks for volunteers?

- According to The National Center for Victims of Crime survey, **72% of nonprofit organizations** submit their volunteers to a background check.
- In a 2016 survey, **84% of respondents** believed that the safety provided by background checks was more important than an applicant’s right to refuse a background check.
- In a 2016 survey, **95% of respondents** believed in mandatory criminal background checks.

3. Who is being protected by our background check policy?

- The percentage of organizations, like Hearts & Horses, that serve **vulnerable populations has increased to 88%** in 2016 from 77% in 2015. Vulnerable populations include children, individuals with disabilities, and the elderly.
- Hearts & Horses is dedicated to protecting the **safety and well-being of the people our programs serve**, as well as our horses, volunteers, staff, and reputation.
- In the end, a good screening process shows that Hearts & Horses **cares about our program and the quality of individuals who help us**.

4. Will any previous criminal history mean I am ineligible for volunteering?

- Information discovered in a volunteer background check is kept **confidential and is not an automatic disqualifier** but rather used as grounds for a conversation with the Volunteer Manager.
- During this conversation, volunteers will have the opportunity to **discuss the findings** and explain any extenuating circumstances before a final decision is reached.
- The following types of convictions are of **highest concern** to Hearts & Horses: Felony Convictions, Theft, Violent Crimes, Drug Crimes, Sex Offenses, Child/Domestics Abuse Crimes, Animal Abuse Crimes.