CRIMINAL BACKGROUND SCREENING POLICY for STUDENTS

Policy Statement

Western Carolina University and the College of Health and Human Sciences (College) is committed to the safety of the campus community and the agencies, clients, and patients we serve. All students who are formally accepted into undergraduate or graduate programs that require clinical internships\* in the College of Health and Human Sciences must participate in a criminal background screening prior to placement in the clinical internship. The individual degree program(s) will determine initial and subsequent criminal background screening requirements and deadlines. Students who do not comply with the program requirements may delay their clinical placement, delay their progression within the program, and/or may be dismissed from the program.

\*Exceptions to this Policy (do not require clinical internships):

Environmental Health

Online EMC program

Undergraduate Communication Sciences and Disorders

Undergraduate Nutrition and Dietetics

Procedures:

1. Initial criminal background check (CBC) will be performed by a third party vendor under contract with UNC/WCU/College of Health and Human Sciences (e.g., Certiphi), with the results of the Investigation sent to the College of Health and Human Sciences Dean's Office for review and judgment in accordance with applicable College policies and procedures.
2. All initial, additional and subsequent required criminal background screenings will be at the student’s expense.
3. The program designee will submit student names and the deadline for when the CBC must be completed to the Dean’s Administrative Assistant (DAA). The DAA in the College of Health and Human Sciences will monitor completion of the CBC and report incomplete screenings to the appropriate Program Designee prior to clinical placement. If CBC information is not available at a designated time, the student’s matriculation through the program may be negatively impacted as clinical sites can make the ultimate decision on pass vs. fail of a CBC; therefore; clinical placement is not assured.
4. If a CBC indicates a criminal history that could impact the student’s ability to be placed in a clinical setting, progress in the specific program, and/or successfully complete the specific program, the DAA will notify the College Dean, the College Associate Dean, and Program Designee of the students’ identity. The Program Designee will then notify the student that the CBC Review Committee will be reviewing his/her case. The Associate Dean will assemble the CBC Review Committee; an ad hoc subcommittee of the College Clinical Education Committee composed of five members including the Program Designee and the College Associate Dean who will serve as ex officio (non-voting) chair of this committee.
5. At the request of either the student or the CBC Review Committee, the student may present additional information to the CBC Review Committee. Additional information must be made available to the College Associate Dean within 5 calendar days following notification to the student that the CBC Review Committee will be reviewing the case.
6. Once all information is available, the CBC Review Committee will make a recommendation based on criteria listed in Appendix A, and any materials presented by the student. The College Associate Dean will communicate the committee’s recommendation to the student, the Program Designee and the College Dean.
7. The College Dean shall have access to all information regarding the student, including but not limited to all information made available to the CBC Review Committee. In addition, the College Dean may request new information from the student, which must be presented within 5 calendar days of the request. The College Dean will either accept the recommendation of the CBC Review Committee or make an alternative decision. The Dean's office will notify the appropriate Program Designee and the student of the final decision.

Note: Confidentiality of Records

Criminal background check records are confidential and will not be shared with anyone other than (1) faculty/staff involved in the review as indicated above, including the CBC Review Committee membership, and (2) with the agencies or hospitals that request them pursuant to applicable law and policy.

Individual Courses

On occasion students who take particular courses, but are not yet accepted into any programs within the College, are required to submit a CBC to participate in an "observation activity" at a particular agency that requires background screening. In these cases the results will be submitted to the agency/hospital setting for review as appropriate. Those students who are unable to participate in the activity due to activity discovered on their CBC will be required to withdraw from the course or receive a failing grade.

APPENDIX A

The CBC Review Committee will review the student’s CBC for the following felonies. A conviction or plea of guilty or no contest to any of the felonies noted below may disqualify the student from participating in a clinical learning experience in the College. Additionally, this may preclude a student from being admitted or completing an academic program within the College.

* 1. Homicide
  2. Kidnapping and abduction
  3. Assaults with weapons or inflicting serious injury
  4. Rape or other sex offense
  5. Abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, disabled adults or elder adults

Other types of felony or misdemeanor convictions, including sale, possession, distribution or transfer of controlled substances, robbery or larceny, program specific offense as supplied by the program to the College Dean, or questionable criminal histories will be reviewed by the CBC Committee in accordance with the following criteria:

1. Would the student pose a threat to the health and safety of the university community and any patient or client?
2. Discipline expectations and requirements (e.g.. Program specific offenses).
3. Discipline received from external sources (e.g. courts, administrative agencies, etc)