

# Episcopal Diocese of Colorado



## Using Trak-1 Technologies for Conducting Background Checks in the Diocese of Colorado



The Episcopal Diocese of Colorado  
Office of Faith Formation  
1300 Washington Street  
Denver, CO 80203  
(303) 837-1173      (800) 446-3081

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## **Introduction**

Track-1 is a full service personal background research company specializing in the accumulation and distribution of public records via state-of-the-art internet technology. They currently have offices in Houston, Phoenix, and Denver, although the Denver office will move to San Diego in August. We believe Trak-1 to be the best choice for Episcopal churches in Colorado to perform background checks on all non-ordained staff and volunteers who work with children and youth according to policy because of the breadth of coverage in their checks, ease of use, affordability, and great customer service.

Signing on with Trak-1 will make it easy for Episcopal churches in Colorado to begin doing background checks on current and potential volunteers and non-ordained staff who work with children and youth. In addition, signing on as a diocese will give Colorado churches discounted rates on background checks. We still recommend that churches use Oxford Documents to perform checks on incoming clergy because Oxford performs, among other things, a bishop check on each applicant. Using Trak-1 will serve the churches in the diocese by assisting them in complying with policy and helping them to make their churches a safe place for people of all ages to worship.

## **Policy**

Paragraph 3.1 of the *Episcopal Diocese of Colorado: Policies for Parish Ministries with Children and Youth* states “Church Workers who regularly work with or around children or youth must be appropriately screened. Screening must include at least the following:

- A standard application completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks...
- Criminal records check of all applicants, except Sunday school teachers, in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church.
- Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years.
- Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person will be regularly transporting children or youth.”

## **Coverage and Pricing**

Two discounted packages have been put together for the Diocese of Colorado:

**Package #1: National Criminal and Sexual Offender Search** (Instant and Online) Includes 42 States Criminal and the District of Columbia and **All 50 States and District of Columbia Sexual Offender Registry**. In-depth Colorado Criminal and Sex Offender search is also included along with a social trace for identity verification. **\$27.00 per search.**

This package is ideal for non-staff members whose background must be checked according to policy. For those who will be transporting children or youth (whether in their own vehicles or church vehicles) or who will handle money, the following add-ons are available:

**Motor Vehicle Record:** \$5.00 for Colorado, prices vary for other states.

**Full Credit Report:** \$9.00

**Package #2: Full Executive Staff Member Screening Package** includes a National Criminal and Sexual Offender Search augmented when necessary by individual county searches of addresses over the past 7 years (maximum – 2 counties). Also includes a full credit report or a credit header to verify identity, a motor vehicle driving report and previous employment and education verifications. **\$94.00 per search.**

This package is ideal for non-ordained staff and is far more affordable than Oxford. We still recommend Oxford for clergy checks because Oxford performs a bishop check on each applicant.

**\*\*\*NOTE:** Some counties (especially those in the eight states whose criminal records are not online) cannot have their records accessed online and require an additional fee (usually \$14.99 but can be up to \$55.00) to pull criminal records manually. Note that package #2 comes with two free such checks. Track-1 provides a comprehensive list of which counties' criminal information is not online. Trak-1 continuously works to provide better coverage on their national criminal search and are by far have access to the most automated information than any other background check company.

## **Customer Support/Learning the System**

Trak-1 offers outstanding customer support which is available during normal business hours by phone and by email. In addition, we will be offering training sessions on how to perform background checks using Trak-1. The Office for Faith Formation can also present sessions on what to look for and how to respond to information obtained in a background check.

## **The Role of the Diocese**

The diocesan office will have access to information pertaining to which churches in the diocese are obtaining checks with Trak-1, who they obtain them for, when they obtain them and how many. Beyond that, the diocese will have access to no other information, including information contained in the background checks. It is the role of the parish to acquire the background checks, pay for them, review the information they contain, decide whether to allow the individual to work with children or youth, and to maintain the records in a secure manner. The diocese will monitor compliance with the policy and ensure that required screenings are being done.

## **So...how do we get started?**

Getting signed on with Trak-1 and doing the first check is very simple. The Bishop and Diocese of Colorado will sign an agreement with Trak-1 regarding pricing for volume discounts, but each individual parish will sign its own contract with Trak-1 and will have its own account, sign-on, invoice, etc. To obtain an account with Trak-1, each individual parish should:

- Decide who will perform the background checks (who is the “rector’s designee?”)
- Make sure the church has a locked file cabinet in which to store the sensitive information
- Prepare the consent/information form for applicants to sign (churches need to use the provided letter and can only change it by adding the church’s name and letterhead). This form cannot be incorporated into an application for employment/volunteering and should have its own signature
- Develop a plan of action (which should include consulting a lawyer) for if, how, and when the church decides to take adverse action on an applicant (i.e. decides not to hire a staff member or volunteer)
- Provide church and payment information on the contract
- Sign the contract and send or fax it to Trak-1

Upon receipt of the contract, Trak-1 will process the church’s application and will quickly send an email to the contact person with the church’s sign-on information. The rector or rector’s designee for performing background checks will then use this information to request background checks. The interface is very easy to use and Trak-1 provides instruction on using their site. In addition, Trak-1 customer service representatives are very willing to walk new users through their first few checks.

Trak-1 bills each church individually. Churches can opt to pay automatically by credit card or to be invoiced by email or regular mail.

## **Other Questions**

**Q:** Can a church choose to use Trak-1 but not do the searches online?

**A:** Yes; there is a \$2.00 fee to fax the order to Trak-1 and have them do the check.

**Q:** Can entities within the diocese share information on applicants with one another if a staff member or volunteer temporarily helps out at another church, camp, or other activity within the diocese (e.g., if a volunteer at Good Shepherd serves as a counselor at Trinity Ranch)?

**A:** Yes; it is recommended that the applicant sign a letter giving permission to share this information.

**Q:** If we can share this information with one another within the diocese, does this mean that a new background check is not necessary if a staff member or volunteer transfers to another church within the diocese?

**A:** No. In order for a church to show due diligence in adequately screening new applicants, each “new hire” (whether paid or volunteer) should have a new background check performed.

**Q:** What if some churches desire not to use Trak-1?

**A:** Each church is still responsible for conducting background checks on individuals in that church who work with children or youth. Each church must demonstrate due diligence to make sure applicants are adequately screened. If a church desires to use another form of screening, it must first receive approval for and alternate to Trak-1 from the Standing Committee or Bishop of the Diocese of Colorado