

## Tips for Departments Completing Background Checks

The Background Check Team is dedicated to ensuring the most efficient processing of your candidates possible. Here are a few simple ways you can help us keep things moving without delay.

**Start by explaining the two-step background check process to your candidate.**

- **Under New York City law, background checks must be run in two steps (see below). This requirement applies to ALL employers in New York City, including Columbia University. For more information please review the material available at the [Fair Chance Act in Employment web page](#).**

It is very important that your candidate understands that they may receive **TWO INVITATIONS** from our vendor, Truescreen, if you make them a conditional offer of employment. The first invitation is for the **Step 1: Pre-Offer: Education and Employment Verification**. If you decide to make an offer once **Step 1** is cleared by the Background Check Team, your candidate will receive a second invitation to complete Step 2: The Post-Offer Criminal Check.

### Step 1: Employment and Education Verification (The Pre-Offer Background Check)

The candidate will receive an invitation email from **applicationstation@truescreen.com**. They must provide the following information.

- **Full Legal Name** (e.g., maiden name and all aliases)
- **Email Address**
- **Phone Number** (with area code)
- **Date of Birth**
- **Social Security Number** (Please ask your candidates to double-check for accuracy; incorrect entries will significantly delay the process.)
- **Address History** (past 7 years)

Please note: In the event the candidate doesn't have a SSN, they can select a different country on the application and enter the ID from that country. See below "Other Country ID."

Please select and enter at least one government identification number: \*

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U.S. SSN *	<input type="text" value="555-55-5555"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Canadian SIN	<input type="text" value="e.g. 111-234-890"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Country ID	<input type="text" value="Select Country"/> <input type="text" value="Enter ID"/>



**Employment Verification:**

- The candidate must provide contact information for their employers for the past 7 years.
- The employment information your candidate provides in Truescreen must match the information they provided in TalentLink and on their resume. If there are discrepancies, this will cause significant delays.
- If there are gaps in employment, the candidate should offer an explanation (e.g., “attended school full-time,” “COVID-19 shutdown,” etc.).
- A candidate should not list employment lasting less than six months, volunteer roles, or unpaid positions unless the department is using these positions to meet minimum job requirements. If this is the case, the department should contact the Background Check Team **before running the search**.
- If Truescreen cannot verify your candidate’s experience, your candidate **may have to provide documentation supporting the start and end dates of their positions. This could significantly delay the verification process.**

**Supporting Documents:**

- **Tax Documents:** Candidates may be asked to supply W-2s, 1099s, or pay stubs if Truescreen is unable to verify the candidate’s previous employment
  - **For each case where Truescreen is unable to verify employment, your candidate should supply COPIES OF THEIR W2s or 1099s for each year they held that position. WAGE AND SALARY INFORMATION MUST BE REDACTED. Candidates SHOULD NOT upload tax returns.**
  - Candidates may download free copies of their wage and transcript forms by going to the **IRS Get Transcript** website ([IRS Get Transcript](#)). If they have not done so already, your candidate will need to create an account, and then select the WAGE and INCOME transcript option. This process takes less than five minutes.
  - This information is also available for free if the candidate chooses to visit an IRS office in person.

**If you have questions about obtaining information from the IRS, we are happy to assist you.**

**Self-Employment Documents:** If your candidate was self-employed during the last seven years, they must provide 1099s for each year of self-employment. If the candidate cannot supply 1099s, they will be asked for additional documentation (client name, license, etc.) to verify self-employment.

**Education Verification:**

**For Officers of Administration, and Union and Non-Union Support Staff roles, Truescreen will attempt to verify only the highest level of education the candidate achieved.** If Truescreen cannot verify the candidate's high school, college, or university diplomas or degrees, the candidate must either:

- request an **official transcript** from their college or university OR
- If the highest level of education achieved was high school, and the candidate went to school in New York, they can request an official transcript from the Department of Education. To contact New York State's Department of Education for a copy of a high school transcript, please have your candidate go to the [DOE site](#).  
OR
- The candidate can also provide a photograph of **their diploma or degree which should be sent to [hrcs-bc@columbia.edu](mailto:hrcs-bc@columbia.edu)**.

**For GED recipients:**

Your candidate can visit the New York State Education Department to request a copy of their GED certificate. They can follow this link or go to: [HSE, GED and TASC Documentation | New York State Archives](#).

***Please note: FOR GED - Truescreen has a question on the Education Section of the application asking for the highest degree received, followed by "Did you graduate"? If you received a GED, please respond "YES" to that question regarding graduating.***

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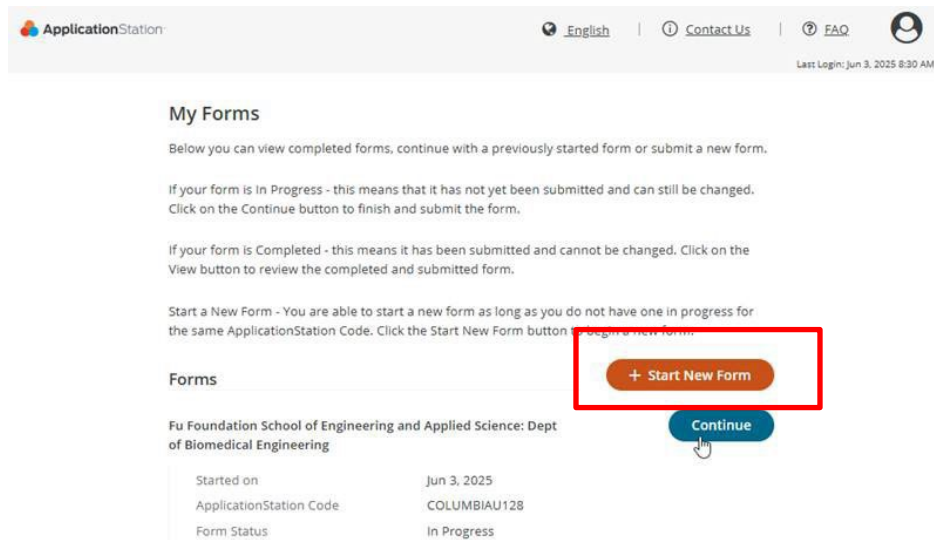
## PART TWO

### Step 2: Criminal Background Check Verification (The Post-Offer Background Check)

- After the candidate's Step 1 Pre-Offer Education and Employment Check is **cleared** by the Background Check Team, the hiring department is free to make the candidate a conditional offer of employment. Only after the candidate has signed their conditional offer will The Columbia background check team initiate **Step 2: The Criminal background check**.

When the Background Check Team initiates the Post-Offer Background Check, please also reach out to your candidate and let them know they will receive a **NEW** invitation from Truescreen ([applicationstation@truescreen.com](mailto:applicationstation@truescreen.com)). This invitation looks similar to the invitation they received for the Step 1 Education and Employment Background Check, but it has a **NEW** case number. The candidate needs to respond to this invitation before Truescreen can proceed.

When your candidate selects the link in the email for the Post-Offer, it will read: "Below you can view completed forms, continue with a previously started form or submit a new form." In order to proceed with Step 2, they should select the button "**Start New Form**" as depicted in the screenshot below:



The screenshot shows the ApplicationStation web interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the ApplicationStation logo, language options (English), contact information (Contact Us, FAQ), and a user profile icon. Below the navigation bar, the main content area is titled "My Forms". It contains instructions for viewing completed forms, continuing with a previously started form, or submitting a new form. A red box highlights the "+ Start New Form" button. Below this, there is a "Forms" section with a table of active forms. The table has columns for "Started on", "ApplicationStation Code", and "Form Status". The first row shows a form started on Jun 3, 2025, with code COLUMBIAU128, and status In Progress. A "Continue" button is visible below the table.

Started on	ApplicationStation Code	Form Status
Jun 3, 2025	COLUMBIAU128	In Progress

- Columbia University expects all employees to maintain the highest standards of honesty and ethical conduct, and we urge all candidates to disclose any criminal convictions when asked about their history. Candidates **should not** tell us about sealed convictions, however.
- If your candidate has a criminal conviction in their history, the Background Check Team will reach out to you to determine next steps.

#### Drug Screening (if applicable):

In some cases, we may ask a candidate to undergo a drug screening, depending on what role they are being considered for.

- Candidates will receive a link to schedule a test at Labcorp or Quest. The test must be completed within three days, or their candidacy will be cancelled.

#### Hires Made Outside of Talentlink

It is Columbia University's policy that all jobs must be processed through Talentlink. If you believe that your hires should be made outside of TalentLink, please contact the Background Check Team ([HRCS-BC@columbia.edu](mailto:HRCS-BC@columbia.edu)) before you are ready to initiate Step One: Pre-Offer.

- You must include your Truescreen Division Number when submitting a background check request outside of TalentLink. If you do not know your Division code you can find it on the Background Check page on the Human Resources web site:  
<https://humanresources.columbia.edu/content/truescreen-division-numbers>
- When requesting a background check for a candidate being hired outside of Talentlink, you must let us know why the hire is being made outside the system.
  - **For Pre-Offer**, please include a resume for the candidate when making your request.
  - **For Post-Offer**, you will be required to provide us with a copy of the signed conditional offer letter before we can initiate **Step 2: Post Offer Background Check**.

#### For Candidates Transitioning from Contractor to Employee

- A **new background check** will be required.

You must be prepared to provide CUHR with written **references** from the candidate's supervisor(s) from their time working at Columbia. If the candidate was hired by an outside agency through the Columbia University Employment Center, for assistance you can contact: 'tempstaffing@columbia.edu.' Failure to secure written references prior to the initiation of Step 2-Post-Offer Criminal Check may impact the hiring of the candidate.

The reference should address:

1. The candidate's performance and work during their time at Columbia.
2. The relationship of the candidate to the person providing the reference.
3. How long the person providing the reference worked with the candidate.
4. Any concerns about their candidacy.

**Protection of Minors (POM) Background Checks – Applies to persons who will be working with minors**

**Please view the information and Job Aid located here:**

<https://humanresources.columbia.edu/content/requesting-protection-minors-background-checks>

- Your candidates will receive an email invitation from Truescreen which will come from [applicationstation@truescreen.com](mailto:applicationstation@truescreen.com).
- Columbia University expects all employees to maintain the highest standards of honesty and ethical conduct, and we urge all candidates to disclose any criminal convictions when asked about their history. Candidates **should not** tell us about sealed convictions, however.
- If a candidate has a criminal conviction in their history, the Central Background Check Team may reach out to discuss this with them.

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**Our Team is Here to Help**

If you (departments) have any questions or need assistance with the process, feel free to reach out to us.

[hrcs-bc@columbia.edu](mailto:hrcs-bc@columbia.edu)

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**If your candidates have questions, please direct them to the resources below:**

The Columbia University HR service Center at

**Phone:** 212-851-2888

**Office Hours:**

- Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
  - Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.
  - Friday: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Or submit a ticket at: <https://humanresources.columbia.edu/askhr>

If your candidates are having any **technical** difficulties completing the background check, please have them reach out to Truescreen on the portal where they can select the “Contact Us” link and connect to Truescreen via phone or live chat (See Below).


## Personal Information


Please provide the following information.

Legal First Name*	<input type="text" value="John"/>
Legal Middle Name	<input type="text" value="Q"/>
Legal Last Name*	<input type="text" value="Public"/>
Legal Suffix	<input type="text" value="Select One"/>



### Contact Us

 **Phone**  
**Technical Issues**  
To contact one of our support representatives, please dial: 1-833-802-6381

 **Online Chat**  
Use chat to contact our operators instantly

[Open chat](#)

**OHS Support**  
For assistance with a drug screen, physical or other health screening, call OHS at 1-800-799-0965

**International Support**  
For non-US callers, please call +12158766000 for

All sites referenced in this document may be found using the following QR codes:

Truescreen Division Numbers



High School Equivalency (HSE), General Educational Development (GED), and Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) Documentation Site



Department of Education (DOE) Site



Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Site



New York Fair Chance Act Information

