

Criminal Background and Sex Offender Check Requirement

In order to fulfill South Carolina legislative requirements and related public school policy, all students who participate in any type of field-based experience (e.g., service learning, observation, tutoring, practicum, internship) associated with schools or other educational agencies must undergo a name-based South Carolina criminal records search by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and a National Sex Offender Registry check.

Students must show a clear record on both background checks. If a criminal record is revealed, results are considered on an individual basis to determine whether or not the student should be placed in the field experience. These decisions are usually made in conjunction with the school district or educational agency. Typically students will not be placed in a field-based experience unless court records indicate that the matter was legally resolved or expunged from the individual's criminal record history. Winthrop will not place students who have been convicted of or plead guilty to a violent crime as outlined in law, whose names appear in the National Sex Offender Registry, or who have been required to register as sex offender pursuant to state law. Also, students will not be placed in a field-based experience if they have been convicted of a felony that would make the student ineligible for a Professional Teaching Certificate.

A second and more extensive FBI check is required prior to the senior year for undergraduate teacher education students or the final year for MAT students in order to meet state certification requirements. In order to be placed in field experience or internship settings at this point, students must show a clear record and no offenses that would make them ineligible for professional certification.

The College of Education has appropriate processes in place for accomplishing the SLED, FBI, and National Sex Offender Registry background checks for students. Undergraduates are charged a course fee that pays for the SLED check, and students pay for the FBI check when they complete the certification application forms. All students who transfer to Winthrop University and seek teacher certification must complete the SLED check—paying the \$25 fee through the on-line SLED process--and provide written documentation of a clear criminal background prior to enrolling in any course that requires a field-based experience or internship. The College of Education will conduct all National Sex Offender Registry checks and ensure that no student with sex offender status is enrolled in a course that requires a field-based experience.