**FAQ Sheet for University of Maine Cooperative Extension   
 Volunteer Background Check**

1. **Why do I need to complete a background check to become a University of Maine Cooperative Extension volunteer?** The University of Maine is committed to providing a safe environment for leading, learning and community outreach. To reaffirm its commitment to provide a safe environment, the current policy requires all UMaine Extension staff and volunteers who work with vulnerable populations to undergo a criminal background check. Extension’s volunteer appointment process includes screening of every volunteer applicant to determine if the applicant has any substantiated charges of child abuse or neglect or criminal convictions relevant to his or her service as an Extension volunteer. Screening decisions are made at the University level.
2. **Who conducts the background check?** UMaine’s Human Resources department runs the background check. The university uses a secure site called Verified Credentials. Extension employees do not see your application. It is important that you notify your local Extension office once you submit your background check application so the process can be completed.
3. **What if I don’t have access to a computer?** If you don’t have a computer, you are welcome to come to any Extension office, go to a public library or use a computer that belongs to a trusted family member or friend. The information must be submitted to the system online; there are no paper forms available.
4. **Why do I have to provide my Social Security Number?** A Social Security Number is required in order to improve the reliability of your background report. The Social Security Number assists in:

* Validating that the Social Security Number is real, still active, and issued after the provided date of birth.
* Identifying relevant past addresses and additional alias names that are associated with the individual. If additional names and addresses are found, they are used to determine where criminal background checks should be performed and under what names they should be searched.
* Matching background check information to a given individual, depending on the source.

1. **How do I know the Verified Credentials website is secure?** Verified Credentials employs strict information handling and technology practices with your security in mind.

* All data is secured by 128-bit encryption digital solutions and EFS encryption, which provides the strongest online security for internet communications available.
* Their privacy protection standards are certified by TRUSTe, the leading internet privacy services provider.
* They mask all date of birth and Social Security numbers in shared reports.
* Comprehensive background checks are conducted on all employees as a condition of employment.
* Their business and fulfillment facility is a controlled access environment and is only accessible to authorized personnel.

For additional information about Verified Credentials, you can visit their website at [www.verifiedcredentials.com](https://www.verifiedcredentials.com/) or contact their customer service at [**800.473.4934**](tel:800.473.4934)

1. **How much will the background check cost me?** The background check is done at no cost to you.
2. **How often do I need to have a background check done?** To continue to be an enrolled volunteer, you must have a background check run every three years. You will receive a reminder from your county Extension office when you are due for your next one.
3. **What if I have questions about how to fill out the background check form online?** See our [***How to Submit a Background Check***](https://extension.umaine.edu/plugged-in/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2021/10/How-to-Submit-a-Volunteer-Background-Check.docx) instructions with screenshots. For additional questions, contact Jen Lobley, Extension Educator, Volunteer Development at 207-255-3345 or [Jennifer.lobley@maine.edu](mailto:Jennifer.lobley@maine.edu)