

CANDIDATE CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK AND DRUG SCREENING POLICY

1. Introduction

It is a condition of initial enrollment in any initial teacher education program in the Cato College of Education (COED), and a condition of eligibility to continue enrollment, that COED candidates meet all academic and other requirements imposed by COED, as well as all requirements of each external Agency and/or School district where COED attempts to place the candidate in a given semester.

COED must secure cooperation of external Agencies and School districts to provide appropriate education, internship, clinical, or field experiences for its candidates. Increasingly, those Agencies and School districts will not accept candidates who do not meet requirements that apply to employees and/or volunteers at the Agency or School district, including drug tests and criminal background checks. Because criminal background checks are now required by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for all licensure applicants, many Agencies and Schools now require that COED candidates who will intern, student teach, and participate in field experiences at their sites successfully complete criminal background checks and drug screening.

Many public and private schools and other service agencies also require criminal background and drug screening of COED candidates who interact with P-12 students and/or clients. Thus, in addition to meeting all COED academic and other requirements, candidates have the additional responsibility to meet requirements imposed by each Agency where they will receive clinical or field experience, including student teaching and graduate internships. Candidates must adhere to the deadline established by the school or district for the completion of the criminal background check and drug screening.

A student who is rejected by any Agencies/School districts because of failure to meet the respective criminal background and/or drug testing requirements may be subject to dismissal from the COED Program. Failure to comply with Agency/School district deadlines for completion of the criminal background check and/or drug testing may result in the dismissal or postponement of the student teaching internship.

2. Criminal Background Check Requirements

a. Comply with the criminal background check requirements for the College of Education.

All candidates are required to complete a Criminal Background Check prior to admission to the College of Education. Candidates will bear all expenses associated with meeting this requirement. The results of the Criminal Background Check will be emailed to the candidate from Certiphi. Candidates with convictions including a sex offense, felony, drug/narcotic, violent act, or act against a child will be denied admission to the College. A candidate with two or more non-violent criminal convictions within the previous three years will also be denied admission.

If a candidate is involved in an incident potentially affecting the background check between the time of completion of the background check and the beginning of the field experience or during the time of

participation in a field experience, it is the responsibility of the candidate to disclose the incident to the Office of Teacher Education Advising and Licensure (TEAL). If the candidate is participating in a field experience at the time of such an incident, it is the responsibility of the candidate to refrain from participation in the field experience until the candidate has received clearance by the TEAL office to continue. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the COED program.

b. Comply with the criminal background check requirements at each Agency and/or School to which candidates are assigned.

In some cases, the Agencies/Schools will facilitate criminal background checks. Candidates may have to bear all expenses associated with meeting these requirements. **COED will receive notice only if the candidate is rejected by the Agency/School.** If a candidate is rejected, COED will attempt to place the candidate in no more than two other Agencies/Schools (depending on offense – patterns of drug and/or alcohol offenses, assaults, use of firearm or other weapon, and any felonious charge are examples of offenses that will result in no further placement attempt). If those Agencies/Schools do not accept the candidate, he/she will be subject to dismissal from the COED Program.

3. **Agency/School Drug Screening**

Comply with the drug screening requirements at each Agency and/or School to which candidates are assigned.

In some cases, the Agencies/Schools will facilitate drug screening. Candidates may have to bear all expenses associated with meeting these requirements. **COED will receive notice only if the candidate is rejected by the Agency/School.** If a candidate is rejected from the Agency/School due to a positive test or “refusal to test” which is defined as leaving the testing area without permission or declining to take the test, the candidate will be removed from the placement in the semester the test occurs. COED will attempt to place the candidate in no more than two other Agencies/Schools based on the following conditions.

a. **Early Field Experiences and the Yearlong Internship (YLI) Semester**

The candidate must submit a negative drug test to the Office of School and Community Partnerships (OSCP) no later than the published date identified as the “last day to register, add, drop with no grade via the web” in the UNC Charlotte Official Academic Calendar. The test results must be submitted to the OSCP no later than noon on that date.

If the candidate is rejected by the Agency/School at the end of a semester (e.g. in conjunction with the yearlong internship orientation), a negative drug test must be submitted to the OSCP prior to securing another placement.

b. **Student Teaching/Graduate Internship**

The candidate must drop or withdraw (depending on the time within the semester) from the student teaching/internship semester immediately. Due to the time constraints and requirements related to the intensity of this semester, the candidate must withdraw from or drop the student teaching/internship course. The candidate will not be placed again during the semester the candidate is found to have a positive test result. The candidate will have to resubmit the student teaching/graduate internship application for the following semester and complete the placement and screening process again in the Agency/School district in which the candidate is placed.