

Frequently asked questions for contractors

This document was developed to provide you with answers to the most frequently asked questions we receive during the contractor background and drug screen process. This is considered a living document and we welcome additional suggestions to improve it.

Do I have to use the provider listed in this toolkit or can I use another?

Yes, you must use the provider listed in the toolkit. These providers have had long standing relationships with Southern Company and have been provided the specific directives and criteria required by Southern Company. The provider has been given access to our “contract worker dashboard” to enter your employee’s compliance status once the screens are complete. The employee dashboard is the exclusive tool used by Southern Company to determine your employee’s compliance status and to grant your employee the access they need to perform the contracted work.

My employee was recently screened under our company’s own background and drug screen program. Can we use those screens for Southern Company compliance?

No, your employee must undergo the screens using our provider and our process.

My employee was previously screened under Southern Company. However, they completed the assignment and were assigned elsewhere. Does the employee need to have their screens renewed to return to a SCS assignment? If your employee is returning to Southern Company, has had a break in Southern Company service exceeding 30 days and their previously completed screens are older than 12 months, both a background and drug screen renewal is required.

What do I need to focus on when working in the toolkit?

- Verify you are using the most recent version of the toolkit. Since the toolkit is updated periodically, it’s a good idea to check with your Southern Company project manager to ensure you have the most current version. The providers will not accept outdated versions.
- Section one of the Service Request form must to be completed by the Southern Company project manager and Section two should be completed by the person at your company who should receive the compliance results.
- All fields on the forms must be completed.
- No one other than your employee should complete the consent form. Do not complete the consent form on behalf of your employee.
- Ensure your employee has answered the criminal questions on the consent form correctly. The form asks if they have **EVER** been convicted of a crime, are on probation or have pending charges. Since the disqualification criteria includes falsification or omission, this is a critical step. The presence of criminal history is not necessarily a disqualifier, but omission or falsification can be.

What should I expect when opening an account with the screening provider?

Once you have selected a provider from the list in the toolkit, the provider will forward you a service agreement for signature. Payment is required by credit card each time a screening request is made or as required by provider. The provider may ask your employee to complete additional consent forms and will provide your employee with information regarding their right to file a dispute if any information on the background report is incorrect.

What is the expectation for my employee completing the drug screen process?

The drug screen must be scheduled through the provider. Do not independently send your employee to the local Lab Corp clinic. The provider will schedule your employee at a drug screen clinic near your employee’s home or work zip code (which may very well be the local Lab Corp clinic). The provider will forward you or your employee important facts about the drug screen, which includes the location of the clinic and hours of operation. **Your employee must complete the drug screen process within 48 hours of contact from the provider. If your employee misses this deadline, additional or alternate screening may be required.**

What happens after I've submitted the required forms (service request form and consent form) to the background/drug screen provider?

The provider will conduct the background investigation and coordinate the drug screen. Note: The provider does not issue interim updates. The provider will direct requests for additional information to your employee.

What circumstances can delay completion of a background investigation?

The goal is to complete the background process within 5 business days. However, there are times this is not possible.

Several explanations include:

- Jurisdiction requires a clerk assisted search rather than an automated search.
- In some cases, physical documents must be obtained. In some states, this is by written request only.
- A criminal "hit" is identified in the search, however there is no information regarding the final disposition.
- A criminal conviction is identified, however, since the employee did not list it on their consent form, additional research must be conducted to verify its validity.
- The background investigative report may need to go through a quality review process to determine if additional searches or requests for additional information is needed.

What happens once the screens are complete?

Once the screens are complete, the provider will review the results and assign a compliant or non-compliant status in accordance with Southern Company's criteria. The compliance result will be loaded into the Southern Company contract worker dashboard and compliance notifications will be emailed to the Southern Company project manager and the company contact you listed on the Service Request form.

The provider quoted me a price at the onset of the screens; however, once the screens were complete, there was an additional cost. Why? The price quoted for the background is based on a criminal history search using the first and last name of your employee and their residential jurisdiction (state/county). During the background process, a scan is conducted using court records, credit reporting agencies and other entities to determine if your employee has used (or been wrongly assigned) alternate last names or nicknames, or if they have lived or worked in jurisdictions other than the address disclosed on your employee's consent form. Using any additional information developed, the background investigation is conducted, searching criminal history under **all** distinctly different name variations and all additional state/county jurisdictions that were identified. Consequently, court costs increase with each variation searched and the provider must pass that cost on to you.

Is a contract worker required to retake background and/or drug screens if there is a delay in their official start date? For new contract workers, drug screens are valid for 90 days, even if there is a delay in the start date (as long as the delay does not exceed 90 days from the date of the initial screening). If the start date exceeds 90 days, a new drug screen is required.

Please Note: Background screens are valid for 12 months.

Are contract workers required to complete a background and/or drug screen if there is a break in service? Please contact Jakia Hardy (404) 506-0427, Chinika McMillian (404) 506-0389 or Sarah Lampkin (404) 506-0925 regarding break in service questions.