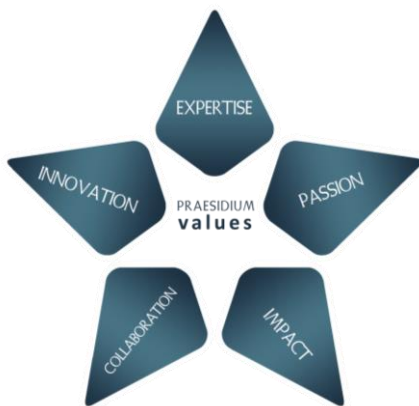# Screening and Selection:
Safeguarding Best Practices for FADICA Member Grantee Partners

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About Praesidium

"To help you **protect those in your care** from abuse and to help **preserve trust** in your organization."

25+ years of experience

More than **4,000 clients** across diverse industries

Completed thousands of **root cause analyses**

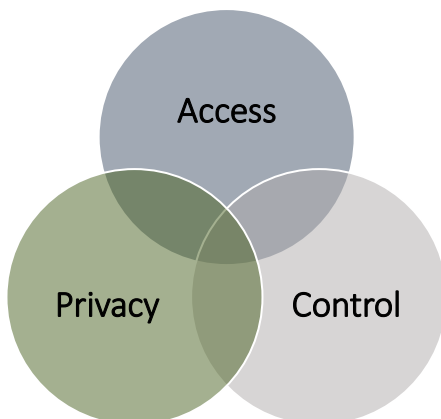Developed proprietary **abuse risk management model**

Offer complete range of **risk management solutions**

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Importance of Screening and Selection

- First line of defense against abuse and boundary violations

- Restricts access to clients – main opportunity to identify red-flags prior to access

- Not just for screening out – leverage as a supervision and training tool

- Protects your organization and the clients you serve
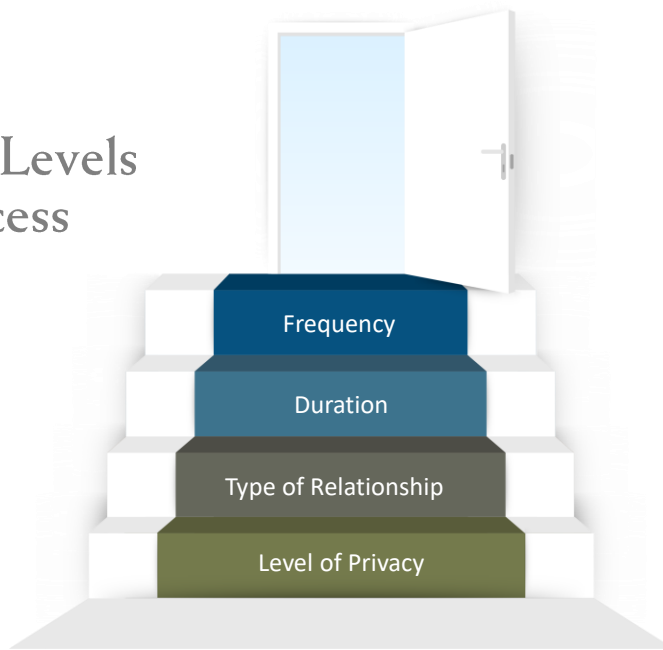
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How Adult Offenders Operate

- Access

- Privacy

- Control

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Evaluate Levels of Access

Frequency

Duration

Type of Relationship

Level of Privacy

Background Checks

The Background Check Dilemma

Why can't we rely solely on criminal background checks?
- Most offenders do not have a criminal record
- Criminal background checks are not flawless
- Criminal background checks can be limited by scope and search methodology

Why must we do them anyway?
- Industry and legal standards make them a must
- You will be held liable for anything you could have, or should have, known
- Consistent, well-publicized screening programs keep offenders away

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Best Practices in Background Checks

- ✓ Recommended checks for all applicants with high access to vulnerable populations:
  - A Multi-State Criminal Background Check
  - A National Sex Offender Registry Check
  - A Social Security Number Trace
  - A Name and Address Locator
  - County Criminal Record Search (all counties where lived, worked, or attended school for the last 7 years)
- ✓ Rechecks (frequency, type)

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Time Management & Decision-Making Process

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Managing Screening Resources

- ✓ Screen for disqualifiers early in the process
- ✓ Use the observation of others
- ✓ Eliminate unfit applicants as soon as possible
- ✓ Include interim decision-points throughout the process
- ✓ Follow-up on red flags
- ✓ Continual discussions with team and supervisor
- ✓ Use all instruments to paint full picture of an applicant

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Avoid These Common Challenges

- Mass or momentum hiring
- Fragmented understanding because not using data collectively
- Tunnel vision or only utilizing one set of eyes and ears

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Decision-Making Process

01 Follow a process

02 Document the process

03 Review all data

04 Don't get rushed

05 Allow time to follow-up

06 Identify who is responsible for which steps of the process

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Application for a Position

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Encouraging High-Risk Applicants to Self-Select Out

Inform applicants that your organization:

- Screens specifically to ensure the safety of clients
- Takes allegations of abuse seriously
- Fully cooperates with authorities in cases of abuse
- Will monitor interactions with clients
- Requires applicants to sign a Code of Ethics/Conduct

QUESTION: Will you offend good applicants by stating the above?

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Best Practices in Applications

- ✅ Communicate a zero tolerance for abuse
- ✅ Create an application that allows hiring managers to quickly assess for red-flags
- ✅ Identify red-flags in the application
- ✅ Notify interviewer of red-flags for follow up

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Red-Flags in Applications

- ✅ Gaps in dates (employment, residence)
- ✅ Conflicting information
- ✅ Incorrect information
- ✅ Omitted information
- ✅ Incomplete information
- ✅ Unstable work history
- ✅ Vague reasons for leaving previous jobs
- ✅ Unwilling to use former supervisors as references

- ✅ Short-term relationships with references
- ✅ Overeducated for position
- ✅ Moving to a lesser-paying job
- ✅ Patterns or themes of preferences for a particular age range
- ✅ Patterns or themes of problems with authority
- ✅ Found out about position without a clear connection

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Behavioral Interviews

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Set the Right Tone

- ✔ Create a sense of privacy
- ✔ Minimize barriers
- ✔ Use an open communication style
- ✔ Create an environment that encourages honesty
- ✔ Decrease the consequences of telling the truth

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Structure the Interview

- 20/80 principle
- Introduction:
  - Realistic description of the position
  - Discuss hiring process and importance of an honest assessment of strengths and areas of development
  - Zero tolerance for abuse statement
  - Review the application and resume
- Take notes (facts and follow-up)
- Use more than one person when able

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Ask the Right Questions

- Use standardized behaviorally-based interview questions
- Ask questions designed to assess for abuse risk
- Ask questions designed to assess desired applicant skills

    Trainability, Policy Adherence, Patience, Supportiveness, Judgement, Boundaries

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Behavioral Interview Techniques

Best predictor for future behavior is past behavior

- What past behaviors do you want to learn about?

- What skill sets do you want to learn about?

- Creating behaviorally-based interview questions
  - **"Tell me about a time when…"**
  - **"How did you…"** as opposed to "How would you…"

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Red-Flags in Interviews

- Defensive/angry responses
- Patterns of gaining access to vulnerable populations
- Themes of preferences for particular client populations
- Found out about a position via "drop in" or unclear connection
- Perception that clients are "helpless" or "vulnerable"
- Evasive responses
- Patterns consistent with high-risk characteristics

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Reminder: High Risk Characteristics

- Social isolation or difficulty interacting with adults
- Uses excessive physical affection, particularly tickling or wrestling
- Difficulty working as a team player or working with authority figures
- Lets clients get away with things others would not approve of
- Fails to set limits with clients
- Excessively involved with individual client
- Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring

- Bends the rules for certain clients
- Using poor judgment with clients
- Having difficulty handling stress or managing stressful situations
- Presents a poor role model for clients
- Uses harsh forms of discipline
- Ignores standard policies about interacting with clients
- Behaves as a peer with clients rather than a supervising adult

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Reference Checks

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Best Practices in Reference Checks

- Use a standardized reference form for each call, but be sure to modify questions so that you can learn about the specific experiences the reference has had with the applicant
- Take notes during the call and write short quotes from the reference to prompt your memory
- Review and elaborate your notes immediately after the call
- Note areas of concern or questions to further clarify with applicant or internal team

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Considerations

- Professional reference vs employment verification
- Personal references
- Phone calls
- Written and/or electronic forms
- Utilizing a rating scale
- Triggers for follow-up
- Verification of individuals

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Professional References

- We are looking for someone who will adhere to the standard policies of our organization. How would you rate the applicant's ability to follow policies and procedures?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to use good judgment in stressful conditions?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with vulnerable populations?
- In what types of situations have you observed the applicant not working well with vulnerable populations?
- Are you aware of any reason why we should not allow the applicant to work with the vulnerable populations we serve?

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Personal References

- How long have you known the applicant?
- What is your relationship to the applicant?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to interact with and relate to vulnerable populations?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to be patient and stay calm?
- Have you ever known the applicant to use harsh or abusive discipline with a vulnerable individual?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to be genuinely supportive and understanding to a person in need?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with vulnerable populations?
- What are the applicant's hobbies and recreational activities?
- Would you be comfortable placing one of your own loved ones in the care of the applicant? Why or why not?

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Red-Flags for Reference Checks

- Reluctant references
- Does not know the applicant well
- No references from recent position
- Deceptive responses or refusal to answer
- Differs from the applicant's account
- Describes characteristics associated with adults who abuse

- Would not rehire the applicant
- Would not place their own loved ones in the applicant's care
- Not informed they would be used as a reference
- References that cannot be contacted

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Screening and Selection Summary

- ✓ Review your screening and selection practices to ensure it consists of numerous opportunities to assess abuse risk
- ✓ Consistently follow the same standardized practices for all applicants
- ✓ Integrate all information learned or known about the applicant to make an informed decision
- ✓ Identify areas in which the applicant may need additional coaching or training to increase knowledge or skills

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KEEP IN TOUCH

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