

Resources for Background Checks on Prospective Tenants

Warning: There is a possibility of facing a discrimination claim if you maintain a blanket policy of rejecting prospective tenants who have any kind of criminal history. To avoid problems, you should carefully study the post titled "Using Criminal Records to Screen Housing Applicants" on our blog.

You should check court records for the prospective tenant's possible criminal and/or civil litigation history. It should be a red flag if the tenant has been evicted by other landlords. You can also consider obtaining a credit report on the prospective tenant. If you obtain a credit report and decide to reject a prospective tenant at least partly on the basis of the credit report, you must provide the tenant with a "Statement of Credit Denial." See Form 3 on the Forms page.

Note: You should require rental applicants to show you an official photo I.D. such as a driver license because we have observed that some applicants will provide a false name to conceal prior evictions and other adverse information that might be found during background checking.

Criminal and Civil Court Cases

You can ask court clerks for information on criminal and civil court cases. You will need to make your request for information in person at the following locations:

Circuit Court Clerk
Boone County Courthouse
705 E. Walnut St.
Columbia, MO 65201
Telephone: 573-886-4000

Municipal Court Clerk
City of Columbia
600 E. Broadway
Columbia, MO 65201
Telephone: 573-874-7230

Internet Access to Criminal and Civil Court Cases

1. Go to the following web page: <https://www.courts.mo.gov/casenet/base/welcome.do>
2. Select the search method you desire at the top of the page. On the next page select the desired Circuit (Boone County is in the 13th Circuit) and enter as much information as possible to narrow your search.
3. If your search criteria match any case records, you will see a list of one or more matching cases.
4. Click on the case number of any case you want to review.
5. On the next page you will have several choices to view information about the case. Usually selecting "Docket Entries" will give you the most information in one place.

Note: For Boone County, you will receive the same information via the Internet as you can obtain by viewing the computerized records on a terminal at the Circuit Clerk's office.

Private Companies that Perform Background Checks

We are aware of only one local company, Accudata Credit Systems, that performs background checks. Contact: Kevin Thompson, 2801B W. Truman Blvd., P.O. Box 359, Jefferson City, MO 65102, telephone 573-893-7500 or 800-475-6703, fax 573-892-7211.

Most landlords use online services to check the background of prospective tenants. According to our clients, the one most commonly used is AppFolio, which also provides accounting services for landlords. Other online background checking services can be found by doing an internet search for "tenant screening." This search will also locate reviews of these services.