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Northeastern State University

TO: All Current and Entering Nursing Students

FROM: Dr. Joyce A. Van Nostrand
Chair: Department of Health Professions
Chair: Nursing Program

RE: Criminal Background Checks

DATE: January 21, 2009

The State of Oklahoma law requires employees and volunteers (students) working in facilities that cared for individuals less than 18 years of age to be checked for felonies, abuse, violence, and sexual abuse. In 2004-05, the Joint Commission of Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JACHO) addressed criminal background information in its revised standards and included students. As a result, all of our nursing affiliation facilities have changed their policies. Background checks are a current requirement in all of our nursing Clinical Agreements. Throughout the State of Oklahoma, all nursing and other healthcare programs are now requiring formal Criminal Background Checks. The norm is that these background checks must be from all states that the student has resided or worked in during the past year. At present, this is a one time check, unless otherwise warranted.

Consequently, all students who are currently enrolled in the nursing program (field experience courses), or who plan to formally enter the program in Fall or Spring, must have clear Criminal Background Checks on file in the Nursing Office. Please complete the appropriate Criminal Background Check forms (see Instructions). Those who have or are residing in other states must use their relevant state forms; those residing in Oklahoma and working in another state (and vice versa) must complete forms for both states. When you receive the original completed report, you must mail or physically submit it and the Release form to me; you can mark the envelope as "Confidential" and only I will open it. Please note: a National Criminal Background Check (fingerprint) is not required, nor will it substitute for a state background check.

All Criminal Background Checks are retained in my office under lock and key, and are separately kept apart from your regular file. If a Criminal Background Check is not clear, further investigation may be required. At a minimum, I must collaborate with each facility that the student desires to use for a field experience; the facility makes the final decision as to whether field experience there is possible. This information and arrangement is only shared with the relevant instructor(s).

Since most of the Criminal Background Check Requests require 4-6 weeks to process and return, I strongly recommend that you complete the relevant form and submit it several months before it is due (e.g., June/July or October/November). If you have any questions, please contact me by phone or e-mail at vannostr@nsuok.edu