The purpose of this document is to provide guidance regarding the impact of state and federal criminal background check statutes on field experiences, student teaching, teacher certification and future professional educator employment. Shippensburg University (SU) teacher certification programs prepare teachers for PK-12 classrooms of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and other states by providing programs of preparation that include, among other activities, field experience activities and student teaching. SU maintains partnerships with local public and approved private school programs for the purpose of providing opportunities for the program specific requirements.

Recent amendments to the Public School Code of 1949 mandate student teacher candidates to provide the following background check information in a manner prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) prior to the start of their student teaching experience:

1. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal History Record (Act 34)
2. Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 151)
3. Federal Criminal History Record Information (Act 114)

Shippensburg University requires background checks for students in all field experiences prior to and including student teaching. Any student whose background checks are not completely clear will be required to meet with the Director of Field Experiences and Partnerships before being allowed to continue in any teacher certification programs.

Students enrolling in teacher certification programs and student teacher candidates should also be aware that some school districts have stringent policies that preclude students from being in the building for field experiences or as student teachers if any criminal citation is noted on a criminal background check. SU will abide by those district policies when making field experience and student teaching placements.

The University highly recommends that all students enrolling in teacher certification programs and student teacher candidates review the criminal background requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Education as they are subject to change. The requirements and the procedures to follow in order to secure criminal background information are set forth at the following PDE webpage:

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/background_checks_%28act_114%29/7493

If a student has further questions or concerns about how these policies and requirements impact his/her future in the field of teacher education, the University highly recommends that additional legal counsel be obtained.
Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are summary alcohol offenses?

Summary offenses are the least serious of criminal offenses. The most common among college students are alcohol summary offenses. Examples include:
   - Purchase, consumption, possession, or transportation of alcohol by a minor (also known as an Underage Drinking (UAD) offense)
   - Misrepresentation of age (first offense)
   - Public drunkenness

2. How does a UAD offense impact my plans related to teaching?

Neither summary offenses nor expungements can be used in consideration of acceptance or denial of a state teaching certificate. Therefore, you will still be eligible for teacher certification. However, a school district may deny employment to an applicant based on any kind of past citation. Even though a UAD citation may not appear on a background check, it does remain on record with the police and can be accessed by any school district that chooses to search for the information.

3. What is a misdemeanor?

A misdemeanor is a more serious offense than a summary offense, but a lessor crime than a felony. Misdemeanor offenses appear on a criminal background check. Alcohol misdemeanors include but are not limited to the following:
   - Driving under the influence
   - Purchasing and/or furnishing alcohol to minors
   - Misrepresentation of your age to buy alcohol
   - Carrying or manufacturing a false ID

4. How does a misdemeanor impact my future as a teacher?

Individuals convicted of misdemeanors of the first degree are eligible to enroll as a student teacher candidate or be employed in a public or private school only if a period of five years has elapsed from the expiration of the sentence for the misdemeanor offense.

Individuals convicted more than once for an offense under 75 Pa. C.S. §3802(a), (b), (c) or (d) (relating to driving under the influence of alcohol or controlled substance) and the offense is graded as a misdemeanor of the first degree under 75 Pa. C.S. §3803 (relating to grading) are eligible to enroll as a student teacher candidate or be employed in a public or private school only if a period of three years has elapsed from the expiration of the sentence for the most recent misdemeanor offense.

5. What is a felony offense?

A felony offense is the most serious type of criminal offense. Individuals convicted of a felony offense of the first, second or third degree other than those listed below are eligible to be enrolled
as a student teacher candidate or be employed in a public or private school only if a period of ten years has elapsed from the expiration of the sentence for the felony offense.

6. What felony offenses prohibit student teaching and my future employment?

Students planning to enroll in a teacher certification program are advised that certain criminal convictions preclude them from ever enrolling as a student teacher candidate or being employed as a teacher in the Commonwealth. Specifically, Section 111(e) of the Public School Code of 1949 precludes individuals convicted of a specific list of crimes from being a student teacher candidate or being employed in a public or private school. That list of crimes can be found on page 2 at the following URL: http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/document/1195897/arrest_or_conviction_form_pdf