



Fingerprint Collection Among State Agencies

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State Auditor

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Members of the Legislative Audit Committee:

In June 2011, the State Auditor's Office surveyed 20 state agencies regarding their collection of fingerprints (see text box for additional information on the survey). The majority of the state agencies surveyed reported that they used fingerprints for conducting criminal history background checks. In addition, the majority reported that they used the services of the Department of Public Safety's Fingerprint Applicant Services of Texas (FAST) contractor—L-1 Identity Solutions—to collect fingerprints.

Key survey results related to state agencies' collection and use of fingerprints included the following:

Background Information

The State Auditor's Office conducted a survey of selected state agencies about their collection of fingerprints. Agencies selected to participate in this survey had previously responded to a State Auditor's Office survey and reported conducting criminal history background checks using fingerprints. All 20 state agencies surveyed responded to the survey.

The majority of the state agencies surveyed reported that they used fingerprints for conducting criminal history background checks. Specifically:

- Fifteen (75 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they used fingerprints to conduct criminal history background checks when individuals obtain professional licenses.
- Eight (40 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they used fingerprints to conduct criminal history background checks on employees.
- Five (25 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they used fingerprints for other reasons, such as (1) performing criminal history background checks when organizations apply for new credit union charters, (2) performing criminal history background checks for officers and directors of insurance companies and health maintenance organizations, and (3) performing criminal history background checks to prevent potentially dangerous caregivers from having access to vulnerable clients.
- Seven (35 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they used fingerprints for more than one purpose.

Most state agencies surveyed generally reported that they used one state vendor to collect fingerprints.

- Seventeen (85 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they used a third-party vendor to collect fingerprints. Of those 17 state agencies, 16 reported that they used the services of the Department of Public Safety's FAST contractor—L-1 Identity Solutions—to collect fingerprints. L-1 Identity Solutions contracts and works with the Department of Public Safety to provide fingerprinting services throughout the state.

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- Eleven (55 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they exercised their option to use the services of a local and/or state law enforcement agency to collect fingerprints.

Most state agencies surveyed reported that they collect fingerprints from all fingers and the thumb.

- Nineteen (95 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they collected fingerprints from all fingers and the thumb.
- One (5 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that it collected fingerprints from multiple, but not all, fingers.
- None of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they collected fingerprints for just one finger.

Fingerprint collection methods vary.

- Fourteen (70 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they collected fingerprints both electronically and on paper fingerprint cards.
- Three (15 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they collected fingerprints only on paper cards. Another three (15 percent) of the 20 state agencies surveyed reported that they collected fingerprints only electronically.
- Some state agencies surveyed reported using paper cards to collect fingerprints; they reported that they do so to facilitate the collection of fingerprints from out-of-state applicants.

Responses to the survey did not reveal any duplication of effort in state agencies' collection of fingerprints. The attachment to this letter contains the detailed survey results.

Sincerely,

John Keel, CPA
State Auditor

Attachment

cc: Executive Directors of the Following Agencies
Board of Chiropractic Examiners
Board of Examiners of Psychologists
Board of Law Examiners
Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners
Credit Union Department
Department of Aging and Disability Services
Department of Banking
Department of Family and Protective Services

cc: (continued) Executive Directors of the Following Agencies

Department of Insurance
Department of Licensing and Regulation
Department of Public Safety
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending
Department of State Health Services
Funeral Service Commission
Health and Human Services Commission
Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner
Optometry Board
Racing Commission
Texas Board of Nursing
Texas Education Agency
Texas Medical Board



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Attachment

Section 1

Detailed Information on the Survey

In June 2011, auditors conducted an email survey of 20 executive directors at state agencies that previously reported they conducted criminal history background checks. The survey's purpose was to determine how agencies collect fingerprints. The most significant survey responses are summarized in Table 1 below. It is important to note that some agencies submitted multiple answers to certain questions because they use fingerprints for multiple purposes. As a result, the summarized responses to some questions may exceed 20 agencies or exceed 100 percent.

Table 1

Survey of State Agencies' Collection of Fingerprints	
Answer	Number of Respondents
Does your organization have polic(ies) that require the use of fingerprints?	
Yes.	20 (100%)
No.	0 (0%)
For what purpose(s) does your organization use fingerprints?	
Employee criminal history background check.	8 (40%)
Professional license criminal history background check.	15 (75%)
Unique identification and verification of clients (for example, to prevent identity theft).	1 (5%)
Verification and restriction of access to resources (for example, security clearance).	2 (10%)
Other.	5 (25%)
Who collects the fingerprints for your organization?	
Our organization.	4 (20%)
Local law enforcement agency.	5 (25%)
State law enforcement agency.	6 (30%)
Third-party vendor.	17 (85%)
Other.	3 (15%)
Who stores the fingerprints for your organization?	
Our organization.	6 (30%)
Local law enforcement agency.	0 (0%)
State law enforcement agency.	15 (75%)
Third-party vendor.	5 (25%)
Other.	4 (20%)

Survey of State Agencies' Collection of Fingerprints	
Answer	Number of Respondents
How frequently does your organization require fingerprints to be collected?	
Once during initial fingerprinting.	15 (75%)
Annually.	2 (10%)
Multiple times upon change to position or responsibility.	3 (15%)
Other.	10 (50%)
How are the fingerprints collected?	
Paper fingerprint card.	17 (85%)
Electronic fingerprint system.	17 (85%)
If your organization uses an electronic fingerprint system, what is the image quality of the scan?	
Minimum scan quality of 500 pixels per inch as required by the Federal Bureau of Investigation per the National Institute of Standards and Technology Special Publication 500-275.	6 (30%)
Quality greater than 500 pixels per inch.	1 (5%)
Quality less than 500 pixels per inch.	0 (0%)
Do not know.	14 (70%)
What fingerprints does your organization collect?	
Single thumbprint.	0 (0%)
Single fingerprint.	0 (0%)
Multiple fingerprints, but not all fingerprints.	1 (5%)
All fingerprints and thumbprints.	19 (95%)
All fingerprints, thumbprints, and palm.	0 (0%)
Other.	0 (0%)
To whom does your organization submit fingerprints?	
Texas Department of Public Safety.	19 (95%)
Federal Bureau of Investigation.	15 (75%)
Database developed or maintained by our organization.	0 (0%)
Third-party contractor or vendor proprietary database.	3 (15%)
Other.	1 (5%)
Does your organization require a new set of fingerprints for subsequent fingerprint processing of an individual for whom it has previously collected fingerprints?	
Yes.	8 (40%)
No.	8 (40%)
Both.	4 (20%)
Note: The 4 agencies included in the "Both" category answered both yes and no to this question. Some of those agencies commented that they require a new set of fingerprints in certain situations, but not in others, when processing an individual for whom it had previously collected fingerprints.	

Survey of State Agencies' Collection of Fingerprints	
Answer	Number of Respondents
Who pays the fingerprint-related fees for your organization?	
Employee.	3 (15%)
License applicant.	16 (80%)
Our organization.	7 (35%)
Contractor or vendor.	1 (5%)
No fee collected.	1 (5%)
Other.	4 (20%)

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Objectives

The objectives of this survey were to (1) survey state entities regarding their collection of fingerprints and (2) identify any duplication of effort in state entities' collection of fingerprints.

Scope

The scope of this survey covered 20 state agencies that had previously responded to a State Auditor's Office survey on criminal history background checks and indicated that they used fingerprints. The State Auditor's Office received survey responses from the following 20 agencies:

- Board of Chiropractic Examiners.
- Board of Examiners of Psychologists.
- Board of Law Examiners.
- Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners.
- Credit Union Department.
- Department of Aging and Disability Services.
- Department of Banking.
- Department of Family and Protective Services.
- Department of Insurance.
- Department of Licensing and Regulation.
- Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending.
- Department of State Health Services.
- Funeral Service Commission.
- Health and Human Services Commission.
- Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner.
- Optometry Board.
- Racing Commission.
- Texas Board of Nursing.

- Texas Education Agency.
- Texas Medical Board.

Methodology

The survey methodology included surveying 20 selected state agencies about their collection of fingerprints. Auditors obtained additional background information about fingerprint collection from the Department of Public Safety.

Information collected and reviewed included the following:

- Agencies' survey responses.

Procedures and tests conducted included the following:

- Reviewed survey response data.
- Analyzed survey response data.
- Interviewed staff from the Department of Public Safety.

Project Information

Survey fieldwork was conducted in June 2011. This project was a survey; therefore, the information in this report was not subjected to all the tests and confirmations that would be performed in an audit. However, the information in this report was subject to certain quality control procedures to help ensure accuracy.

The following members of the State Auditor's staff performed the survey:

- Kels Famer, MBA, CISA (Project Manager)
- Juan R. Sanchez, MPA, CIA, CGAP (Assistant Project Manager)
- Dana Musgrave, MBA (Quality Control Reviewer)
- Nicole Guerrero, MBA, CIA, CGAP, CICA (Audit Manager)