

Are You Gambling with the Consistency of Your Criminal Screening Decisions?

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An increasing number of management companies are utilizing criminal screening tools to improve the safety of their communities for residents, guests, and staff. While criminal screening can decrease a management company's liability due to criminal acts, it can also expose the company to Fair Housing compliance issues. In order to minimize compliance risks, it is imperative that management companies establish a criminal screening policy that treats applicants equally and fairly. While each management company should consult their legal counsel when establishing or updating a criminal screening policy, some questions to consider include:

- **Does your criminal screening policy define accept/decline criteria by specific offense type and offense date?**
- **Does your leasing staff have the skills required to interpret complicated criminal records?**
- **Are you certain that criminal screening decisions are made fairly and consistently at your properties?**
- **Can your leasing staff make criminal screening decisions without assistance from mid or senior-level management?**
- **Does your current process allow you to monitor criminal screening data, offense types found, and accept/decline trends in order to update the policy to current business conditions?**
- **Can you ensure and verify that criminal screening is run on all applicants?**

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, an automated criminal screening service may enable you to establish and enforce a more consistent and compliant criminal screening policy. With most criminal screening tools, leasing agents are expected to make real-time decisions about what searches should be conducted and to determine if criminal offenders should receive an "accept" or "decline" leasing decision. This places undue burden on the agents and increases the risk of Fair Housing violations if searches are conducted or interpreted inconsistently. Consequently, most existing criminal screening tools expose multifamily businesses to unnecessary risk.

Look for a criminal screening product that categorizes criminal records and automatically provides a clear accept or decline leasing decision based on criteria established for the community. The product should allow you to set the policies for accepting or declining criminal offenses using criminal offense categories covering crimes against person property, and society. The technology should quickly evaluate criminal record search results and automatically deliver an accept/decline decision to your staff. Ideally, your criminal screening product should include management reporting to monitor the number of accept and decline decisions returned and to view the breakdown of criminal search results by offense type. With this insight, you can monitor staff performance and adjust screening criteria to meet business and legal demands.

CoreLogic SafeRent offers an automated criminal screening service called Registry CrimSAFE[®] that frees your staff from the burden of interpreting criminal search results. Automated decisions ensure consistency and improve Fair Housing compliance. For more information about CrimSAFE visit saferent.com.