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New Aurora hires face extensive background checks

By Carlos Illescas
Denver Post Staff Writer
DenverPost.com

Aurora - The city is now mandating criminal background checks on all new employees after a former parks worker and convicted sex offender allegedly assaulted a teenage boy he met this summer at a city event.

The cost of the expanded checks, which began this month, is more than 800 percent greater per person than before, but it's money well-spent, officials said.

"We have to learn from our mistakes," City Councilman Ryan Frazier said. "If that's what it takes to minimize this from happening again, absolutely it's the right thing to do."

The Mountain States Employer Council runs expanded checks on all new hires, according to human resource director Kin Shuman. They include checks of the National State Offender Registry, local and state criminal checks and even checks in other states applicants have lived in.

Before, criminal checks were done only on people who worked closely with the public or handled money, and that was through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

The new measures apply to all new employees, whether they are temporary, contract, seasonal or full-time workers. Between 10 to 20 new employees are hired every week, Shuman said.

Using Mountain States for the expanded checks costs the city \$65 a person, compared with about \$7 for the CBI check.

"If you compared what we get from the two different checks, we get so much better info from our expanded background checks," Shuman said.

What sparked the new effort was that under the previous policy, the city didn't perform a background check on seasonal parks employee Jermaine Vaden.

Vaden, who had volunteered at the annual KidSpree event July 16, met a 15-year-old boy there and allegedly sexually assaulted him the next day at Vaden's home, according to police.

Vaden, 29, is a registered sex offender from Oklahoma who spent nine years in prison for assaulting two boys. He hadn't registered in Aurora, which requires convicted sexual offenders to notify authorities within five days of relocating.

The city also is in the process of devising a plan to check the criminal histories of all its 3,000 employees, said City Attorney Charlie Richardson.

"I think we're in the forefront right now in screening new employees," Shuman said. "This makes everyone feel more comfortable."

Staff writer Carlos Illescas can be reached at 303-954-1175 or cillescas@denverpost.com.