

## Criminal Charges/Conviction, Police Record Checks, and Regulation 521/01

Educators play a critical role in maintaining safe, supportive learning environments, and recent regulatory changes have strengthened these responsibilities. Amendments in December 2025 to [Regulation 521/01](#) under the *Education Act* expanded school boards' obligations by requiring a new police record check every five years, or any time an educator is charged with or convicted of a *Criminal Code* offence, in addition to ongoing annual offence declarations.

Similarly, updates to the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* and the *College of Early Childhood Educators Act*, effective December 8, 2020, introduced mandatory self-reporting of both charges and convictions, including any related bail conditions, reinforcing transparency and accountability across the profession.

### Police Record Checks: What They Include

Educators working closely with students are generally required to undergo a vulnerable sector check (VSC), which is the highest-level type of police records check in Ontario. This requirement reflects the heightened responsibility and trust inherent in their roles.

A VSC may contain information such as criminal convictions, discharges, outstanding charges or warrants, judicial orders, findings of not criminally responsible, and, in some cases, certain types of record suspensions. In rare cases, information about incidents that did not result in a conviction may be included in a police record check, provided certain legal requirements are met.

If members believe the information disclosed on a VSC is inaccurate or improperly disclosed, they may request that the police service responsible for issuing the check review or reconsider the disclosure.

### Timelines and Renewal Cycles

School boards will collect updated police record checks on a five-year cycle, tied to the last day of the member's birth month. Checks must be completed within six months of submission. In the years when a new police record check is not required, members will complete an offence declaration by September 1.

## Obtaining a Police Record Check

School boards will provide members with documentation outlining the requirement for a VSC. This documentation can be used to complete an online application or taken directly to your local police service if an in-person process is required. While most members will be able to apply online, some may be asked to attend in person, particularly if fingerprinting is needed to confirm identity.

Members who reside in Canada but outside of Ontario may submit a VSC from their local police service. Members who reside outside of Canada should contact their local ETFO office or the ETFO PRS department for more information.

Processing times differ significantly across police services, and delays are common. Members are strongly encouraged to keep proof that they submitted their application on time, as this documentation may be required to demonstrate compliance with board deadlines. In situations where a police record check is not provided by the required date, a school board may implement temporary measures until the check is received. Failure to cooperate in completing the police record check within the required timelines may result in consequences. Members should contact their local ETFO office or the ETFO PRS department for assistance.

Unless your collective agreement specifies otherwise, members are responsible for the cost of obtaining their police record checks.

## If You Are Charged or Convicted of a Criminal Offence

If a member is charged with or convicted of a criminal offence, it can have immediate implications for both employment and professional certification. School boards must obtain a new police record check from the member as soon as reasonably possible when they become aware of a charge or conviction, which may lead to temporary reassignment or home assignment, disciplinary action, or additional measures while the matter is reviewed.

At the same time, both the OCT and the CECE require members to self-report charges, convictions, and any related bail conditions, and failure to do so may result in professional misconduct proceedings.

These situations can escalate quickly and affect a member's employment and certification status. Members should contact their ETFO local or ETFO PRS immediately for confidential advice and support.

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