

Applicant Screening and Homeland Defense? © **by Ernest F. Oriente, *The Coach* {Article #111}**

Over the years I have helped a number of my property management clients strengthen their applicant screening process, which improves the financial performance of their company and increases the resident retention at their apartment communities. During more recent months, many clients have expressed their fears and concerns about the F.B.I. warnings of possible terrorists living in their apartment communities. As a result of these concerns, we hosted a series of PowerHour® conference calls and invited Mike Britti, the CEO of TransUnion Rental Screening Solutions {www.rentport.com}, to help property management professionals around the country become more knowledgeable about the applicant screening process.

As a result of these PowerHour® conference calls, below are important questions to consider with your applicant screening process:

Applicant Screening Best Practices

- Is every applicant being screened exactly the same way?
- How are you and your property management team handling adverse action letters?
- What criminal and credit consents are being used?
- Is every adult resident being screened, not just the person(s) signing the lease?
- Have you and your property management team compared your current applicant screen service to other services around the country?
- Are criminal background checks part of your applicant screening process?
- What form of ID is acceptable? What forms of ID are considered red flags?
- What confidentiality is required when handling credit reports?
- When was your screening criteria last adjusted for market conditions and changes in occupancy trends?
- Are you and your property management team searching sexual predator databases as part of your screening process?

What Has Changed Since September 11th?

- The number of criminal background checks has significantly increased.
- Criminal background checks are looking deeper into where a future resident has previously lived.
- Terrorist databases are being searched as part of the applicant screening process.
- County and State data are more closely being compared, to better identify a criminal match.
- Employees and contractors/vendors are being screened.
- Vigilance has greatly increased. Suspicious behavior, paying cash in advance, and residents who do not occupy an apartment are all being reported to the local authorities.
- Residents, service teams and vendors are being asked to more quickly report suspicious activities.
- Apartment inspections and the frequency of these inspections have greatly increased.
- Non-citizens are “consistently” being screened more carefully.

Tip From The Coach: Are you and your property management team honoring the “best practices” for applicant screening? When was the last time you reviewed and strengthened your applicant screening process? Please know...in a small—but significant way, every property management professional can contribute to our homeland defense by considering applicant screening a part of our security process. Ask those on your team to be more aware of the things happening on their properties...today, and each day moving forward. When it comes to homeland defense...every effort, helps!

Want to learn more about applicant screening or to hear what others are doing around the country? **Fax a note on your letterhead to 435-615-8670 or send an E-mail to ernest@powerhour.com and *The Coach* will fax/E-mail you a **free TeleForum invitation**.** During this call we will discuss how to implement the steps in this article.

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