

## PETS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Updated July 2015

### What is PETS?

The Personnel Eligibility Tracking System (PETS) is a New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) web-based application designed to assist vendors, community-based organizations and other groups authorized to use PETS to comply with applicable NY State Education Law, NYCDOE contracts and NYCDOE Chancellor's Regulation C-105.

### Who needs to use PETS?

The statutes and regulations mentioned in the above question state that no one may be licensed, certified, employed by or work in the NYCDOE without a background investigation and clearance. Therefore, all individuals employed by a vendor and who have direct contact with NYCDOE students or confidential student data are subject to a fingerprint-supported background check to determine security clearance.

This requirement applies to individuals employed by or working in a relationship with a vendor/community based organization or its subcontractor (if any). This includes support staff, clerical, administrative, food service or custodial staff. Any of the aforementioned individuals who have direct contact with students, work in or visit a location during times that students are served there, even if such contact is on an occasional basis, or have access to confidential student data are subject to a fingerprint-supported background check for security clearance.

The NYCDOE also uses PETS to verify security clearance for school-based volunteers and student teachers working directly with a NYCDOE school. Any reference to vendor employees also applies to volunteers, as well as students of colleges and universities.

### What can PETS do?

PETS has three primary tasks:

- 1) Initiate the background investigation process, including triggering the nomination email.
- 2) Provide timely feedback on the security clearance status of vendor employees, volunteers and student teachers who will be working with or in the proximity of NYCDOE students.
- 3) Advise of changes to a person's security clearance status.

PETS enables a vendor to add individuals to their roster and receive information on whether their employee has the required security clearance to work with NYCDOE students.

### My company currently does not use PETS. How does a vendor get access?

Vendors should email [PETS@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:PETS@schools.nyc.gov) to request a profile. Only vendors doing business with the NYCDOE will be given a profile. In the email, please note the following:

- DOE vendor ID or Federal Tax ID number,
- The contract number(s) you are providing services under,
- The name of the central NYCDOE office that is overseeing/monitoring this work effort. If you have contracted directly with one or more NYCDOE Principals, please provide each Principal's name and school,
- A brief summary of the program or services being provided.

### How much will it cost to use PETS?

PETS is a free service provided by the NYCDOE's Office of Personnel Investigation (OPI). Please note that there is a fingerprint fee for individuals as part of the fingerprint-supported background check process.

### How do vendors log into PETS?

- 1) Go to <https://www.nycenet.edu/Offices/DHR/pets>.
- 2) Enter the User ID and password provided to you by the NYCDOE and click LOGIN.

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### **Is PETS hard to use?**

No. The PETS system was designed to be as user-friendly as possible and easy to access. It is a 24/7 web-based system that can be accessed from any computer with internet access. There is also PETS support via email available Monday-Friday 9am – 4:45pm.

### **What is the Bulletin Board?**

The Bulletin Board is the first thing you will see when logging into PETS. It displays a summary of eligible/ineligible employee counts by contract. The employee population included is based on the user's rights within PETS.

### **How do vendors search their staff roster?**

Please review the PETS User Guide for detailed instructions. Vendors can search their roster as follows:

- 1) Click SEARCH ROSTER from the navigation menu.
- 2) Enter any filter criteria you would like to narrow search results on, such as employee name, Social Security Number (SSN), contract and/or roster status, then click the SEARCH button.

### **How will vendors know the status of an applicant or employee?**

PETS clearly indicates if a person is eligible or ineligible to provide services. PETS indicates those persons who have not yet come down to be fingerprinted (or the fingerprint results have not yet been received).

Fingerprint results generally take 1-3 business days to be received. If an applicant informs you that he/she was fingerprinted and PETS indicates otherwise, please email [OPIINFO@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:OPIINFO@schools.nyc.gov) to confirm.

If PETS indicates an applicant's fingerprint results have been received and the applicant is still ineligible, the applicant can email [OPIINFO@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:OPIINFO@schools.nyc.gov) to determine if a background investigation has been initiated.

### **What is the difference between “inactive” and “ineligible”?**

“Inactive” indicates that an individual is not part of a vendor's current roster list, most likely because the person no longer works for the vendor or the DOE has directed that the individual no longer have contact with NYCDOE students. This function is managed by the vendor.

“Ineligible” indicates that an individual does not have security clearance and is not allowed to provide NYCDOE services or be in contact with NYCDOE students, usually due to adverse information the NYCDOE has received. This function is managed by NYCDOE staff.

Ineligible individuals must be removed from work with NYCDOE students and immediately made inactive on their roster, if not so already.

### **How often should vendors update the staff roster?**

Providers are required to update their rosters as they hire new staff members, when a staff member no longer works for the vendor or the NYCDOE indicates an individual no longer has security clearance. You may need to make updates daily as needed.

### **A vendor has added an applicant to their PETS roster and now receives daily notifications that the individual is ineligible. Should the vendor representative change their roster status to ‘Inactive’?**

If the individual has never been fingerprinted by the NYCDOE, we ask that you leave the roster status in PETS as “Active”. If the individual does not have to undergo a full background investigation, their eligibility status will typically update within 1-3 business days. (cont.)

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If PETS indicates an applicant's fingerprint results have been received and the applicant is still ineligible, the applicant can email [OPIINFO@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:OPIINFO@schools.nyc.gov) to determine if a background investigation has been initiated.

### **Why are vendor representatives required to provide an email address?**

The DOE will contact vendors for various reasons via email, including changes in employee eligibility status. It is important that vendors maintain current contact information and not share user IDs. Each vendor representative must have their own user ID tied to a unique email address.

### **Who do vendor representatives contact for assistance?**

A vendor can contact PETS Administrative Support at [PETS@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:PETS@schools.nyc.gov) for general and technical assistance. PETS Administrative Support will normally respond to all incoming emails within one (1) business day.

When emailing PETS Administrative Support, please include the name of your organization, your name and contact information, the reason for emailing and, when applicable, the full name and last four digits of the Social Security number of the person in question.

### **An applicant forgot their Social Security Number (SSN), claims they do not have a SSN or submitted an invalid SSN. Can the individual still be added to a vendor's roster?**

The PETS system works through the Social Security Number because of state and federal fingerprinting requirements. Therefore, it is essential that the Social Security number entered into PETS is correct. It is recommended that an official Social Security number document/card is reviewed before entering a Social Security number into the PETS system.

You must not use "dummy" Social Security numbers or the nomination will be held up while the matter is fixed. PETS checks for known invalid SSN's and will reject the dummy or fake SSN.

Do not accept an ITIN in place of an SSN for employee identification or for work. An ITIN is only available to resident and nonresident aliens who are not eligible for U.S. employment and need identification for other tax purposes. You can identify an ITIN because it is a 9-digit number, beginning with the number "9" and is formatted like an SSN (NNN-NN-NNN).

### **A vendor has entered the wrong Social Security number when inputting an applicant into PETS. Can it be fixed?**

Mistakes when entering the Social Security number into PETS may require duplicate fingerprints that would be paid for by the applicant or the vendor.

If the mistake is caught prior to the individual being fingerprinted, immediately email [PETS@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:PETS@schools.nyc.gov) and [FingerPrintUnit@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:FingerPrintUnit@schools.nyc.gov) with the individual's name, the incorrect Social Security number inputted into PETS and a scanned copy of the individual's valid government ID and an official Social Security number document/card with the correct Social Security number.

### **What should a vendor do if an applicant does not have an email account?**

Please kindly ask the person to sign up for a free email account through services such as Yahoo or Gmail. NYCDOE requires a valid unique email address in order to send a nomination email to the applicant, volunteer or student teacher.

The email address must be accessible to the person applying for the position. Vendors are not allowed to input email addresses that the applicant cannot access.

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### **What is the procedure for getting fingerprinted in order to receive NYCDOE security clearance?**

Individuals must first be entered onto a vendor's PETS roster with a roster status of "active" to initiate the nomination process. After receiving the nomination email, the applicant should follow the directions in the email to register and complete online forms. The applicant will then be able to print Fingerprint Referral Form that indicates they are ready to be fingerprinted.

For questions regarding the fingerprint process, please go to the HR Connect Walk-in Center page: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/DHR/Fingerprinting+Employee+IDs+and+Smart+Cards.htm>

Applicants should be reminded to bring the Fingerprint Referral Form and at least one form of valid Government ID (e.g. Driver's license, Passport).

PETS will interface with NYCDOE HR systems and security clearance status will be posted on the PETS roster. Only individuals "Active" and "Eligible" on a roster may begin to work with NYCDOE students.

### **Can a vendor send someone down to be fingerprinted who has not been added to a PETS roster?**

No. The NYCDOE no longer accept hand written Fingerprint Referral forms or paper Background Questionnaires. Vendors acknowledge they wish to hire someone by adding the individual to their PETS roster. This action initiates the Applicant Gateway nomination process.

### **Previously, vendors sent applicants to be fingerprinted first and then made an email inquiry for fingerprint results. Once a vendor starts using PETS, how can a vendor check for results?**

Previously, a vendor would have called or emailed different offices to obtain results. Since October 21, 2013, PETS has been the sole source of eligibility information. PETS will provide real-time updates on a person's eligibility. Since the PETS system can be accessed from any computer with internet access, it is a simple way to check an employee's eligibility status.

The NYCDOE, including OPI, will no longer provide verbal or written confirmation of eligibility. The PETS application is the only source for eligibility information

### **Do minors need to be fingerprinted?**

Yes, a minor would need to be fingerprinted if he/she is being added to PETS. There are very limited instances where a minor will not need to be fingerprinted, but you should email [PETS@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:PETS@schools.nyc.gov) for guidance BEFORE inputting the individual(s) into PETS.

### **How do vendors confirm their rosters are complete and accurate?**

Please review the PETS User Guide for detailed instructions for each step. Vendors confirm their roster as follows:

- 1) Review the roster using the SEARCH ROSTER screen.
- 2) Click on an employee's name to edit the employee's status/profile and ensure the employee is active on the correct roster(s).
- 3) Add new or missing employees using the ADD EMPLOYEE screen. Be sure to assign the new employee to the correct contract.

### **How do vendors handle staff that were previously fingerprinted by the DOE?**

Once an individual is entered on a roster, the nomination email will be sent to the applicant. After the individual registers and completes online forms, the system will automatically verify if the person needs to be fingerprinted. For those people that have already been fingerprinted, a vendor can verify the person's eligibility as soon as they have completed the online forms.

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### **Can an individual be an employee of multiple vendors?**

Yes, an individual can be employed by multiple vendors at the same time.

### **What should a vendor do if PETS shows an error message indicating that an applicant is already nominated for another position?**

NYCDOE HR systems do not allow more than one open nomination at a time. If you attempt to add someone to your PETS roster who has another nomination by the DOE or another organization, you will receive a message indicating the individual is already nominated for another position.

We recommend the individual first complete the prior nomination. He/she should have received a nomination email from the NYCDOE and should open and complete the required steps. If the individual no longer has the nomination email or claims they never applied for a position with the DOE or another organization, please email [PETS@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:PETS@schools.nyc.gov) for assistance.

### **How do vendors handle staff employed by multiple agencies? Do vendors need to add an applicant that was previously added to another vendor's PETS roster?**

There is only one profile per employee. If the employee currently works for multiple agencies or previously worked for an agency that does business with the NYCDOE, the vendor representative would add the individual to their roster just as it would any other individual. Vendors can only view their own rosters.

### **If an individual employed by multiple vendors is found ineligible, is he/she barred from working for all vendors?**

If an individual is ineligible on one roster, the individual would be ineligible on all PETS rosters.

### **If an individual employed by multiple vendors is inactive on one roster, are they barred from working for the other vendors?**

No, an employee no longer working for one vendor can continue to work for the other vendors as long as their status remains eligible.

### **What do vendors do if a staff member is no longer active?**

If a staff member is no longer working for the organization (voluntarily or involuntarily), the vendor representative must update the individual's roster status from ACTIVE to INACTIVE. Please review the PETS User Guide for detailed instructions how to change an individual's roster status.

### **Can a staff member continue to provide services if they no longer have security clearance?**

No, a staff member cannot continue to provide services that brings them into contact with NYCDOE students or have access to DOE confidential records until OPI grants security clearance. The individual must be removed from contact with NYCDOE students and DOE confidential records.

### **What is the vendor's responsibility when notified that a staff member no longer has security clearance?**

The vendor must follow all instructions and directions given in the email by OPI and/or PETS, including updating roster status in PETS.

### **Why might someone be found to be ineligible?**

An individual can be ineligible for many reasons, including, but not limited to: adverse information during the security clearance review, an open arrest, an open investigation and/or other negative information discovered by the NYCDOE. The NYCDOE cannot provide vendors with the detailed reason why someone is ineligible due to privacy concerns.

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### **What happens if a vendor does not take appropriate action when notified of an employee's change in security clearance status?**

It is the responsibility of the vendor's designated point person/vendor representative(s) to follow up on all changes in security clearance status. DOE Program Managers will be contacting the vendor if appropriate action is not taken within five (5) days. Repeated violations may result in further action, including, but not limited to, an audit of vendor's roster and/or the contract(s) being cancelled.

### **How do vendors view an individual's fingerprint and/or DOE record information?**

The NYCDOE is contractually not allowed to share fingerprint results with third parties. In addition, the NYCDOE is not allowed to provide a copy of an individual's criminal history record to anyone.

Organizations should be concerned with ensuring that their staff has security clearance and is "Active" and "Eligible" prior to starting work.

### **How long does it take for a background investigation to be completed?**

OPI conducts applicant background investigations; not PETS. OPI does not set timeframes for the completion of a background investigation, as every case is unique and there are a variety of factors that can impact the time needed to complete an investigation.

### **Can I remove someone from a roster/contract?**

No. For auditing purposes, no one can be removed from a PETS roster once entered. If an individual is no longer interested in working for your organization, please update the roster status to "Inactive".